

The Death Drive Revisited:
A Reexamination of Psychoanalytic Drive Theory and its Implications for Critical Theory

Benjamin Yen-Yi Fong

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2013

© 2013
Benjamin Yen-Yi Fong
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

The Death Drive Revisited:
A Reexamination of Psychoanalytic Drive Theory and its Implications for Critical Theory

Benjamin Yen-Yi Fong

This dissertation is a reexamination of Sigmund Freud's mature drive theory, also known as his theory of the death drive, and its relevance for critical social theory, and in particular that of the so-called "Frankfurt school." By tracing the emergence of Freud's theory in his enigmatic *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and then its development in the hands of Hans Loewald and Jacques Lacan, I aim, in the first three chapters, to articulate a drive theory centered around the opposition between what Freud calls the death drive and the drive to mastery, as well as the developmental hazards therein. In the last two chapters, I then attempt to integrate this drive theory into the Frankfurt school's analysis of the intrusion of mass media and state institutions on the developmental process with the aim of both providing historical weight to the dialectic of death and mastery articulated in the first part of the dissertation and also strengthening the psychological component of critical theory.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	iv
Dedication	vii
Introduction	1
1. A Defense of Drive Theory in Three Parts	
a. Psychical Reality	3
b. What are drives?	7
c. Why We Do What We Do	13
2. The Use and Abuse of Death	17
3. Conversation Partners	24
4. Chapter Summary	43
Chapter 1 Death, Mastery, and the Origins of Life:	48
Sigmund Freud’s Metapsychological Narrative	
1. A Brief History of Mastery and Death in Psychoanalytic Theory	50
2. Life After Death: Freud’s Account of the Origins of Life	61
in Sections IV and V of <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>	
3. Primal Repression, or	74
Tying off a Loose End in “The Economic Problem of Masochism”	
4. Death and Mastery	78
Conclusion	81
Chapter 2 From Whence We Came:	83
Hans Loewald and the Primordial Density	

1. The Primordial Density	86
2. The Birth of the Superego	95
3. Mourning and Language Acquisition	100
4. Religious Experience	105
Conclusion	112
Chapter 3 Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis (Reprised):	115
Jacques Lacan and the Problem of Mastery	
1. The Mirror Stage Revisited	117
2. Recognition	122
3. Towards a New Theory of Aggressivity	127
4. Mastery and Aggressivity: Lacan on the <i>Project</i>	131
5. From Imaginary to Symbolic Identification	135
Conclusion	143
Chapter 4 The Domestication of the Death Drive:	147
Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and the Crisis of Internalization	
1. The End of Internalization Revisited	149
2. <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i>	162
3. Resisting the Culture Industry: Adorno <i>contra</i> Horkheimer	170
Conclusion	180
Chapter 5 Aggressivity Sublimated:	183
Herbert Marcuse and the Lure of Technological Innovation	
1. Aggressivity Sublimated	188
2. Death and Aggressivity	194

3. Who and What	197
4. Technics, Capitalism, Subjectivation	201
5. Technics, Language, Liberation	211
Conclusion	215
Conclusion	219
Afterword	226
Bibliography	234

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is not simply for the sake of convention that most acknowledgements begin by sheepishly recognizing that there are simply too many people to thank. I have been overwhelmed by the tremendous amount of support I've received during my graduate studies and while writing this dissertation. I am grateful first of all to my advisor, Mark C. Taylor, who has offered me the perfect balance of guidance and freedom from the beginning of my time at Columbia. His feedback on all of my work, not just the dissertation but the many essays and shorter articles with which I've burdened him, has been invaluable. In addition, I have profited greatly from his ample advice about navigating the academy and his compelling narrative of the history of western philosophy and theology. Wayne Proudfoot, who has been as generous with his time as Professor Taylor, must be mentioned in the same breath: his feedback has been just as insightful and plentiful, and his guidance as helpful. I consider myself incredibly lucky to have had such two, devoted mentors whose interests and approaches complement each other so well.

Much of this project was formulated in my time as an Affiliate Scholar at the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research. Fred Neuhouser, whose courses on modern and social philosophy I had the immense pleasure of taking and who provided valuable feedback on a longer paper that eventually became Chapters 1 and 2, first alerted me to the Center's course offerings. Eric Marcus very kindly admitted me to the theory courses and waived the normal fees. All of the instructors were phenomenal,

though special thanks must be accorded to Kevin Kelly, whose positive feedback on Chapters 1 and 2 gave me the confidence to move ahead with the dissertation. I doubt it would be possible to make Freudian metapsychology more interesting than Dr. Kelly is able to make it. I must also thank the associate instructors, who made a graduate student in religion feel at home amidst doctors: Wendy Katz, Rebecca Chaplan, Alison Brown, and Sandra Park.

In the course of writing the dissertation, I have been lucky enough to receive a great deal of feedback and help from a wide range of colleagues, mentors, friends, and family members. Gil Anidjar and Courtney Bender both offered valuable comments on an early paper that eventually became Chapters 1 and 2, and both also kindly served on my M.Phil. examination committee. Joshua Dubler has never tired of serving as my sounding board, from the humble beginnings of this dissertation to its more formed articulations, and his feedback always demonstrates an almost intimidating investment in what he is presented with. Lisa Cerami generously helped me work through some of the more impenetrable passages in Adorno. Andrea Sun-Mee Jones also provided a great deal of feedback on the project, and she is in many ways responsible for my current intellectual interests. I was fortunate enough to have Liane Carlson and Yonatan Brafman in my entering cohort of Philosophy of Religion Ph.D. students and cannot express how valuable I've found our ongoing conversations. My parents, Hon and Jo Fong, my sister, Christina Fong, and my mother-in-law, Rosemary Easter, all were very supportive of my graduate studies, despite not always having the greatest handle on what I was doing and how I was going to make a

living doing it. Meryl Marcus and Julia Clark-Spohn in the Religion department deserve a great deal of thanks for their support throughout my graduate studies. I am also extremely grateful to them, as well as all of my dissertation committee members (Mark C. Taylor, Wayne Proudfoot, Gil Anidjar, Bernard Faure, and Kevin Kelly), for working so quickly to get my dissertation committee formed and my dissertation defense scheduled. Many thanks also to the Jacob K. Javits Foundation, which supported the last four years of my doctoral work.

Lastly, I thank my wife, Alison Easter, who has been forced to listen to me work out my ideas about Freud and the Frankfurt school for the last two years and who could not have been more supportive while doing so.

For Alison and Jaya

INTRODUCTION

On the Outmoded

What psychoanalysis needs might not be a 'new language' but a less inhibited, less pedantic and narrow understanding and interpretation of its current language, leading to elaborations and transformations of the meanings of concepts, theoretical formulations, or definitions that may or may not have been envisaged by Freud.

- Hans Loewald¹

The psychoanalytic model of the mind has undergone multiple transformations since its first unveiling in 1900. On rare occasions, changes are proposed *through* Freud's work, but, for the most part, the additions, subtractions, and translations to his corpus are asserted in a more appropriately oedipal fashion: something to which Freud the bourgeois was blind, something that Freud the obsessive repressed, something that Freud the ambitious disavowed. His defenders, for their part, will point out the tentative spirit in which his theories were offered to support the conclusion that we are dealing less with a coherent structure than a loose configuration of good ideas, but the good doctor's own repeated attempts to systematize psychoanalytic metapsychology testify to the contrary. Freud's ideas do, nonetheless, often point beyond themselves, as if they were guided by some inner teleological drive toward conceptual evolution, as if they would *revise themselves* were there not self-proclaimed theoretical innovators to do so less organically.

Perhaps no idea of his demonstrates this quality better than the death drive [Todestrieb], the proposal that all living things are unconsciously driven to return to the

¹ Hans Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 193.

inanimate ooze from which they came and thus to perpetual unrest until the final day comes. In his own life, this unrest spurred Freud on to propose a new psychic topography (known today as the “structural” model) and metapsychological revisions that occupied him throughout the 20’s and 30’s. One gets the impression, reading the ever more searching papers of his later years, that the death drive was far from through with Freud when his physical body expired.

Yet despite his increasing attachment to the theory of the death drive from its introduction in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) to its affirmation as a centrally organizing concept in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940), his otherwise fawning colleagues and students reserved nothing but scorn for the concept. The primary aim of this dissertation is to raise Freud’s maligned theory, long ago buried and forgotten by most, from its unusually deep grave. When taken in a “less inhibited, less pedantic and narrow” manner than it is typically interpreted, I believe that it offers a convincing framework for thinking about not only the primary motivational conflicts in childhood development but also the psychic transformations accomplished by the structures of interpellation under late capitalism.

Before getting there, however, a more humble line of entry into a reconsideration of Freud’s theory: I begin this introduction, in Section §1, with a defense of drive theory in general. Drive theory is often taken to be bad biology or else a “poetic description” of psychic life. I argue first that the drives are what Freud refers to when he speaks of “psychic reality,” and then reconstruct the evolutions in his own drive theory as a means to

affirm his mature conception of psychic reality. I then end this section with a comparison of drive theory to other motivational frameworks to highlight its distinctiveness. Section §2 then tackles the other term that comprises the hybrid *Todestrieb*. The theme of death has been a mainstay of twentieth-century philosophy: through a comparison with the Kojévian and Heideggerian treatments of death, I aim to point out the uniqueness of the psychoanalytic conception. I end, in Sections §3 and §4, with a brief literature review and chapter summary. My hope here, especially in the first two sections, is to open up a space within which the death drive may be reconsidered as what William James calls a “live option.”²

§1 A Defense of Drive Theory in Three Parts Part I: Psychological Reality

In response to Alfred Adler’s criticism that he did not pay sufficient attention to “reality factors,” Freud introduced the reality principle in 1911 in “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning.” He explains there that the hallucinatory

² My own confrontation with Freud’s theory has elicited what Theodor Adorno argues is the mark of all outdatedness: “shame that overcomes the descendant in face of an earlier possibility that he has neglected to bring to fruition” (Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott [London: Verso, 2005], 93). Like Hans Loewald, the subject of Chapter 2, as well as the critical theorists of the so-called Frankfurt School, including Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, all of whom appear in the second half of the dissertation, I am stubbornly attached here to “outmoded” terms, though not simply out of a nostalgia for bygone eras. The “outmoded” is only outmoded inasmuch as it has been made familiar and easy to process. To really understand outmoded works “involves fracturing the patina of false familiarity with which they have been glazed,” which in turn means defamiliarizing the present through which they had been familiarized (Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* [New York: Routledge, 1998], 106). The curt tendency of the present age to view even ideas from the recent past as “outmoded,” as no longer applicable to the rapidly changing world in which we live, amounts to an insulation from tradition. I might even agree with Walter Benjamin that “revolutionary energies... appear in the ‘outmoded’” (Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund F.N. Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter [London: Verso, 1979], 229). It is for this reason that I have never taken seriously pronouncements of death, which seem to say more about the eulogizer than the deceased.

presentation of objects of instinctual need is frustrated by the “non-occurrence of expected satisfaction,” which leads the psychical apparatus to “form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world.”³ To be conversant with reality, Freud argues, is to bear the capacity for attention and notation, for impartial passing of judgment and for proper action based upon rational thought. In short, it is to be in touch with an empirical reality that can be tested scientifically.

This reality was not, however, the only one that appears in Freud’s work: in contrast to this “material reality,” Freud posited a “psychical reality,” which, according to Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, designates “whatever in the subject’s psyche presents a consistency and resistance comparable to those displayed by material reality; fundamentally, what is involved here is unconscious desire and its associated phantasies.”⁴ Overly influenced at the time by Lacan, they wrongly use “unconscious desire” here instead of *drive* [*Trieb*], though the basic definition is a good one. Psychological reality is comprised of the drives, which, difficult to know in themselves, can be divined in the unconscious fantasies in which they find expression. Like material reality, psychological reality bears an uncompromising force: one can no more ignore or avoid it than one can walk through a wall.

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1966), 219.

⁴ Jean Laplanche and Jean Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973), 363. It is a commonplace for psychoanalytic defectors, those who joyously proclaim the death of psychoanalysis *ad nauseum*, to argue that Freud was a delusional narcissist lost in his own fantasyland, with little interest in the trappings of reality (see, for instance, Todd Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000], 6). The question, of course, is *which* reality they refer to.

Unfortunately, the present has received Freud's conception of psychical reality in a doubly watered-down form: first, psychical reality is, more often than not, thought to be composed simply of the fantasies themselves. One thinks, for instance, of the case of the Wolfman or the conclusion of *Totem and Taboo* or the whole of *Moses and Monotheism*. To his detractors, these essays seem typical of Freud's delusion. His defenders, on the other hand, laud him for asserting in these instances the "reality of fiction."⁵ Too much energy, to my mind, has been spent trying to justify or deny the reality of the fantasies Freud offers up under the name "primal scene." Although I agree, for what it's worth, that they are indeed *real* in some sense, what I dislike in this conversation is that it shifts emphasis away from the reality of the drives that undergird them. When the debate is over whether the Wolfman *actually* witnessed his parents copulating *a tergo* at the young age of 18 months instead of whether the Wolfman had *drives* that operated without his volition or control, it is easy for the question of psychical reality to turn into a parody.

This already false dichotomy between fantasy (taken to mean psychical reality) and reality (material reality) is worsened by an elision of the *unconscious* nature of fantasy. One thinks, for instance, of Joseph Sandler's concept of the "representational world," an

⁵ Peter Brooks, for instance, assumes the orthodox story that Freud switches out "primal phantasies" for "primal scenes" in his later work and calls this move "one of the most daring moments of Freud's thought, and one of his most heroic gestures as a writer" (Peter Brooks, "Fictions of the Wolfman: Freud and Narrative Understanding," *Diacritics* 9:1 [1979], 78). Freud's narrative suggests, according to Brooks, "another kind of referentiality, in that all tales may lead back not so much to events as to other tales, to man as a structure of the fictions he tells about himself" (*Ibid.*, 78). Jonathan Culler goes further than Brooks in following Freud's assertion of the irrelevance of the nature of the primal scene but concludes that one cannot have it both ways: "the difference between an event of the plot and an imaginary event is irreducible" (Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction* [London: Routledge, 1981], 202). In other words, Culler believes that Freud is simply trying to blur the line between two domains we know very well to be separate.

enduring set of representational images and organizations that is a kind of internal theater, separate from but not unrelated to the *real* world.⁶ In this double dilution, Freud's original proposal of a psychical reality has become a subjective "reality" that is "real" in the sense that it matters in some way for the subject of analysis but that is clearly distinguished from, well, *reality*, i.e. the objective reality accessible to observation. What is elided in this transformation is the Freudian rediscovery of a dimension of human being inaccessible to both neurology and phenomenology but nonetheless *real* in neither an objective nor a subjective sense. This is the reality of *the drives*. When Jacques Lacan proposed his understanding of the Real as a realm inaccessible to reflection and symbolization, he was only reaffirming this original Freudian conception of psychical reality.

This simple assertion, that *drives are real*, is axiomatic for this dissertation. In the following chapters, I examine Freud's proposal of a death drive, which he believed was the most fundamental of the drives. I find Freud's own story to be rather convincing when its terms are rescued from the narrow manner in which they are normally taken, but the success or failure of this particular proposal does not confirm or deny the reality of the drives in general. In recent times, the exploration of these unconscious drives has been renounced, largely in favor of cognitive science and neurology. I agree with Jonathan Lear that the turn to these disciplines away from psychoanalysis represents a surrender to complacency in understanding the human condition.⁷ "The heart of Freud's insight,"

⁶ Joseph Sandler and Bernard Rosenblatt, "The Concept of the Representational World," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 17 (1962).

⁷ Jonathan Lear, *Freud* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-2.

which cognitive science and neurology ignore, is “that humans tend toward certain forms of *motivated irrationality* [i.e., *humans have drives*] of which they have little or no awareness.”⁸

Part II: What are drives?

In the middle of the 1910s, Freud set about to systematize psychoanalytic metapsychology (his stock of theories regarding the most basic principles and forces of life). Central to this endeavor was his *Triebe und Triebchicksale* (1915)⁹, a veritable mess of contradictions that foreshadows, in marking off the limits of one line of thought, the Freudian turn to come. Perhaps the most glaring inconsistency in this piece regards the definition of drive: at first, it is said to be a “stimulus applied to the mind” that “does not

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹ Against James Strachey (“General Preface,” *Standard Edition* I, xxiv), I have chosen to use the term “drive” for the German *Trieb*, though I am not fully on board with the contemporary rejection of “instinct.” While “instinct” does lend *Trieb* a more determinate, animal quality, it also captures its unmanageability, its relentlessness. The term “drive,” on the other hand, can connote too much conscious control: for instance, in the sentence, “he has the drive to succeed,” one understands that he is a hard-working go-getter, not that he has impulses that operate without his volition. Second, as Strachey himself points out (*Ibid.*, xxv-xxvi), there is no suitable adjectival form for drive as there is for instinct (instinctual); I am thus made more hesitant to mangle his translation further by introducing the awkward construction “drival.” Finally, the endorsement of “drive” over “instinct” follows from a general retreat from metapsychology as a whole, one which I am wholeheartedly rejecting. Thus, while I will use the term “drive” throughout this dissertation, I will not shy away from “instinct” and its various derivatives. The two words ought thus to be taken as synonymous in these pages. As evidence that commitment to one or the other translation does not determine the worth of one’s understanding of the term *Trieb*, the best characterization of the term I have found comes from someone who accepted Strachey’s translation: “*Triebe*, instincts, were – much more than scientists, doctors, ministers, judges (‘the educated circles’) wanted to admit or know – what made the human world go around, what drove people to act and think and feel the way they do, in excess as well as in self-constriction, inhibition, and fear, in their daily lives in the family and with others, and in their civilized and profession occupations and preoccupations as well. They dominated their love life and influenced their behavior with children and authorities. They made people sick and made them mad. They drove people to perversion and crimes, made them into hypocrites and liars as well as into fanatics for truth and other virtues, or into prissy, bigoted, prejudiced, or anxious creatures” (Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 125). In these pages, I will follow Loewald in thinking of *Triebe* in this broad sense of motivation.

arise from the external world but from within the organism itself.”¹⁰ Only a few pages later, however, he slightly alters his stance: “a [‘drive’] appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism....”¹¹

Although much has been made of the ambiguity of Freud’s descriptions of the drives in this piece¹², I believe the difference here is ultimately terminological: in both conceptions, a biological force imposes on the psyche from a place *outside* the psyche (namely, the body). Whether we call the force itself or its “psychical representative” *Trieb* does not alter the basic model: one of a mechanical “instrument – however complex – that processes incoming stimuli [extraneous to the mind itself but having nothing to do with the outside world] to discharge them again in some modified form.”¹³

This “mechanism” analogy is slowly replaced during the war years by the comparison of the psyche to a living “organism” (in Jean Bertrand Pontalis’ pithy formulation, “the psyche becomes body”¹⁴) and this substitution, which reaches explicit expression in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, comes to revolutionize drive theory.¹⁵ Whereas

¹⁰ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV, 118.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹² See Strachey’s introduction to *Triebe und Triebchicksale* (*Ibid.*, 111).

¹³ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 119.

¹⁴ J. B. Pontalis, “On Death-Work in Freud, in the Self, in Culture,” *Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Literature: A French-American Inquiry*, ed. Alan Roland (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 91.

¹⁵ One might say that the mechanism analogy is responsible for the topographic model and the organism analogy for the structural model.

the world had no sway over the instincts in the mechanism model, it is afforded no such strict externality after 1920; as Hans Loewald explains, “an organism is embedded in its environment in such a way that it is in living contact and interchange with it; it modulates and influences the environment by its own activity, and its activity is modulated and influenced by the environment.”¹⁶ Similarly, the drives themselves are no longer external to the psyche, “as they had been when... seen as disturbing an apparatus that wanted to be unstimulated;” they are rather “forces within the psychic organization and not stimuli which operate on the system from without.”¹⁷ Under the influence of the organism analogy, Freud is forced to come to a very different conclusion than the one he had reached in 1915: namely, that *drives are formed in relation to the environment*.

It only makes sense, then, that Freud became a rabid Lamarckian and thought that psychoanalysis might eventually explain his theory of biological adaptation. In a letter to Karl Abraham, he expressed his desire “to put Lamarck entirely on our ground and to show that the ‘necessity’ that according to him creates and transforms organisms is nothing but the power of the unconscious.”¹⁸ No doubt his ambition to ground psychoanalysis in the biology of his day was a retrospective embarrassment, given the discrediting of Lamarck’s “soft inheritance” theory; but the introduction of the organism model to drive theory is a case of new wine bursting old wineskins. For if drives are *acquired* in the early

¹⁶ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 119-120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122-123.

¹⁸ Frank Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 275.

stages of life in relation to the environment, how can they be solely our “inheritance from the animal world?”¹⁹ The environment in which the human organism comes to maturity is, after all, a distinctively human one, shaped by forces that have less to do with biology than social, cultural, political, economic, etc. histories. The basic insight that drives are formed in relation to the environment needn’t be implicated in Freud’s misguided biologism, and one might even say that his turn to an explicitly biological metaphor paradoxically and definitively severs drive theory from biology.

In any event, his affirmation of Haeckel’s law (“ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”) paved the way for an ontogenic translation of his origins of life narrative. Although this task is taken up in limited form by many of Freud’s followers, nowhere is it more fully developed than in the work of his most lucid interpreter, Hans Loewald. In Chapter 2, I will describe more fully Loewald’s translation of Freud’s metapsychological narrative into a developmental theory. For the moment, the payoff is simply this: whereas Freud imagines the emergence and separation of a living organism from an “inorganic” environment, Loewald describes the emergence and separation of an infant’s psyche from its parental environment. Drives, in his view, which do not exist at birth, are *formed* in relation to the care, protection, and mutuality found in the infant’s environment.²⁰ Stated thusly, I find

¹⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ In Loewald’s own words, drives, “*understood as psychic, motivational, forces, become organized as such through interactions within a psychic field consisting originally of the mother-child (psychic) unit*” (Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 127-128). “In the process of a mother’s caring activities,” he continues, “which consists of spontaneous stimulations as well as responses, [drives] come into being in the child” (*Ibid.*, 131). There is no pre-given way to satisfy drives, as in the mechanical model, because drives themselves are not pre-given; satisfaction of drives, as opposed to the satisfaction of biological needs, is thus a “creative process in which appropriate environmental activity does not necessarily or only reduce or abolish excitation but also

the assertion of the existence of drives to be fairly uncontroversial. Only the coldest of rationalists or determinists would deny that the mostly-forgotten interactions we have as infants with the people responsible for our very *being* later form the basis for much of the motivational structure of our adult behavior.

One additional word on the question of biology: I do not deny, to repeat, that Freud *did* often present his *Triebe* as biological forces in the human body that found expression in the psyche. There is no sense in avoiding this fact, nor is there any reason to avoid rejecting the equation of drive and instinct (though it is important to reiterate that the reduction is far from definitive in his work).²¹ Unfortunately, however, this admission often goes hand in hand with a “poetic” interpretation of drive theory,²² i.e. treatment as a brilliant extended metaphor that (to furnish the point with a polemical edge) only a narrow exegete would take literally. Despite *not* being biological instincts, I believe, with Freud, that drives are more than “poetic descriptions” of states of human being, that they find objective manifestation in the human body, and that any understanding of the body that excludes the drives is at best incomplete.

engenders and organizes excitations processes” (Ibid., 130).

²¹ As Dufresne explains, “the continued interest in the death-drive theory, or in what passes for it, is in part perpetuated by a general disinterest in the untenable biological side of Freud’s argument. Outside of a handful of historians of science, it is decidedly unfashionable to attend to this confusing aspect of Freud’s troubled legacy. On the contrary, it has proven far more profitable for theorists to strip *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [here representing Freud’s metapsychology as a whole] of the broad historico-intellectual context within which Freud produced psychoanalysis, and re-cover it with some elaborate, if eccentric, tapestries” (Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 26-27).

²² Michael Eigen, *Eigen in Seoul: Madness and Murder* (London: Karnac, 2010), 6.

In addition to being ensembles of physiological functions, our bodies are also fields of disproportionate investment of drive energy. The mouth is more than a nourishment-intake point. The anus is more than the site of excrement expulsion. The vagina and the penis are more than organs of sexual reproduction. And it is not just that these parts of the body bear a heightened symbolic value: they, and other “cathected” areas of the body, are impacted by this investment in ways very much open to observation. One does not have to believe in conversion hysteria²³ to know that psychical processes often find physical manifestation. Freud himself was keenly aware of this fact. His talk of the “somatic” and “organic” aspects of psychical struggle was thus not a flight of fancy, but a response to an empirical phenomenon. If he was unable to resist the temptation to think of his *Triebe* as intimately related to biological processes, it was because the problem of the relation between bodily pains, tics, and affectations and their psychic underpinnings was one of the first properly psychoanalytic problems to occupy him. While Freud’s own way of conceiving the relation between drives and the body leaves much to be desired, his critics on this particular issue, who dismiss drive theory as simply bad biology and thereby abnegate the question of the relation between psychical reality and the physical body, throw out the baby with the bathwater.²⁴

²³ The occasional outbreaks of “hysteria” (most recently, in Buffalo, NY in 2012) demonstrate the continued bafflement at the relation between *psyche* and *soma* (Caitlin Flanagan, “Hysteria and the Teenage Girl,” *The New York Times*, 28 Jan. 2012, 13 May 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/opinion/sunday/adolescent-girl-hysteria.html?_r=0>).

²⁴ More generally, as a final note to this digression, it is a shame that psychoanalysis (psycho- from the Greek *psukhē*) should remain relatively untapped in the contemporary preoccupation of the humanities and social sciences with the question of *life* given its etymological heritage. If one looks to Aristotle’s *De Anima*, for instance, one finds him endeavoring there to discover the general principle of life, which he

Part III: Why We Do What We Do

To elucidate the distinctiveness of drive theory, I will oppose it to three other frameworks for explaining why human beings do what they do. The first stresses human freedom: we do what we do because we *choose* to do so. In Immanuel Kant's exemplary formulation, we are immoral because we decide in a state of freedom to subordinate the moral law to our own inclinations. This theory of human action tends to emphasize conscious decision and places the source of various doings squarely in the subjective realm. In certain academic circles, there could be no more insidious kind of explanation, but the dogma of self-mastery and personal responsibility is today still quite prevalent, if selectively marshaled.

A second kind of explanation is objective and deterministic: human beings do what they do because it is in their genes to do so. Where the question of human doings is simply a biological, neurological, or genetic affair, there is little reason to find the current world affirmable, and in any event, there is no impetus to ask what we can do in concert to improve our lot. The task of bettering the world is, in this view, a strictly technical affair, a question of our capacity to manipulate the human genome so that death, disease,

finds, with a good bit of reworking, in the term *psukhē*, a concept meant to account for both the capacities for self-sustenance, growth, and decay characteristic of living beings in general as well as the specific instance of this life known as *bíos*. Thus, as Eugene Thacker explains, "for Aristotle, *psukhē* is the *archē* of *zoē* and *bíos*; it is the principle of life, or the life that is common across every instance of life" (Eugene Thacker, *After Life* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010], 13). To illustrate the nature of this *psukhē*, Aristotle offers the well-known analogy of the eye: "If the eye were an animal, sight would be its *psukhē*" (Aristotle, *De Anima: Books II and III (with passages from Book I)*, trans. D.W. Hamlyn [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 10). Sight is that in virtue of which an eye is an eye. Of course, there may be eyes without the capacity for sight, but if it were not for its potential to see, an eye would not be an eye. Similarly, the *psukhē* is that in virtue of which a body with the capacity to live lives: "It is, then, because of this first principle [the *psukhē*] that living things have life" (Ibid., 12). In short, the *psukhē* is that in virtue of which living beings are what they are.

unsociability, aggression, etc. are no longer attributes of the human species. Despite its faults, the “subjective” explanation at least contains an implicit theodicy and theory of human betterment: if we are born with the capacity to choose the good, it is possible to act on ourselves and in concert in such a way that the world and our place in it can be seen as affirmable. The “objective” explanation, by contrast, contains no such “world-hood.”²⁵

A third might be labeled the “social constructionist” position: in this view, the best way to explain an individual’s choice to do x is neither to look to the individual’s agency nor to her brain chemistry but rather to her social, cultural, political, and economic milieu. The subjective explanation, for the social constructionist, does not account for the preconditions of the subject’s supposed “state of freedom:” as Durkheim said, Kant’s transcendental subject is a social product and not an ontological substratum. The objective explanation, by contrast, lends itself to a rigid fatalism: mistaking social constructions for objective facts, it denies from the outset our ability to change our own situation. When we see that “undesirable” human behavior is not hard-wired, we can go about changing the social conditions in which that behavior emerges.

Drive theory, in fact, shares a great deal with this third kind of explanation. Like social constructionism, it rejects both subjectivism and objectivism: unlike the “subjective” explanation, drive theory does not assume total, conscious, volitional activity. And unlike

²⁵ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen claims that “psychoanalysis was never a psychological science, but rather a metapsychological fantasy, the product of Sigmund Freud’s utter indifference to the world and to others” (Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, “Foreword” to Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, x). I would agree that it was never a psychological science, as the term is employed today, but that it is not scientific precisely for the reason that Freud *did* care about the world and others.

the “objective” explanation, drive theory does not assume non-conscious, volitional passivity: our actions are more than the precipitates of our genetic make-up. Although it is never possible to be in complete control or understanding of either drives or social conditions, it is possible to *better* control and understand them. Drive theory is also similar to social constructionism in being primarily *narrative*: since drives are *acquired* during the early stages of life, there is a story to how they are formed, and that story is just as essential to drive theory as the drives are in themselves.²⁶ Freedom *is*. Determinism *is*. But social formations and psychic drives *come to be*, and they can also *be differently*. One could say that both theories are kinds of *theodicy*, both in the etymological sense of an attempt to do justice [*dike*] to the mystery [*theos*²⁷] of human being, but also in the more common sense of a narration that makes sense of various evils in the world without demolishing its affirmability²⁸ and our capacity to enact change within it.²⁹

²⁶ As Peter Sloterdijk has recently illustrated in the first volume of his *Spheres* trilogy, Freud's metapsychology is deeply indebted to the tradition of vitalism, from Jöns Jacob Berzelius, who first coined the term “organic” to name the mysterious “life-force” of living creatures, to less reputable proponents like Franz Mesmer, whose theories of “animal magnetism” (from the Latin, *anima*) were as popular in their brief heyday as they were ridiculed in the aftermath of Louis XVI's investigations into the scientific worth of Mesmeric theory (Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Volume 1: Bubbles*, trans. Wieland Hoban [Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011]). A key distinction, however, separates vitalism and metapsychology. Like freedom and determinism, vitalism is another static answer to the question of human doings: life itself, in all its opacity, is, for vitalists, the ground of explanation and the source of their ethical vision. Metapsychology (at least, Freud's metapsychology after 1920), on the other hand, offers a narrative in which drives are formed and deformed.

²⁷ “The term ‘theo-logy’ implies, as such, a mediation, namely, between mystery, which is *theos*, and the understanding, which is *logos* (Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], xiii).

²⁸ Here I am following Frederick Neuhouser's understanding of theodicy, which cannot “reconcile us to present reality – cannot guarantee that the promise of good that is hidden in the evils of our actual circumstances is or ever will be realized,” but which can still offer a kind of reconciliation: “affirmation of the world in its basic structure” (Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Recognition, and the Drive for Recognition* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 6).

Unfortunately, and perhaps since Michel Foucault's rise to Patristic status in the humanities, drive theory has been edged out of contemporaneity by social constructionism. Psychological theories, in this view, are but reflections of larger discursive shifts in power relations, themselves to be explained through historicization and contextualization. Like Adorno, I am extremely skeptical of the reduction of the psychological to the sociological because it leads to "simplistic correlations between the individual and society."³⁰ Rejecting the possibility of unifying sociology and psychology, he writes: "Our psychological analyses lead us the deeper into a social sense the more they abstain from any reference to obvious and rational socio-economic factors. We will rediscover the social element at the very bottom of our psychological categories, though not by prematurely bringing into play economic and sociological surface causations where we have to deal with the unconscious, which is related to society in a much more indirect and complicated way."³¹ In Adorno's view, we learn more about society through psychology than we do through a sociology that cavalierly subsumes psychology.³²

²⁹ The questions that lead to Freud's introduction of the death drive, like the questions of theodicy, ask about the root of human evils: Why do we irrationally aggress other beings? Why do we tend towards lifeless repetition? Why are we constantly attempting to shed our own existences? And his answer to these questions, in addition to involving the postulation of a new drive opposition, is essentially narrative.

³⁰ Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 92.

³¹ Quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1996), 230.

³² "The cry for the integration of the disciplines [of sociology and psychology] is an expression of helplessness, not progress. There is more hope that concentration on the particular isolate will break through its monadic crust to disclose the universal mediation at its core than that the conceptual synthesis of real decomposition could actually stop the rot" (Theodor W. Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology, Part I," *New Left Review* 1/46 [November-December 1967], 74).

I most certainly do not wish to hold up drive theory as a superior alternative to these three other modes; in a comprehensive explanation of why human beings do what they do, agency, biology and society all have a place. My point here is only to reserve a distinct space for a theory that the present moment has conspired to collapse. If I object to something in these dominant theories, it is their tendency to erase the “indirect and complicated” in favor of a false transparency. The distinctive feature of drive theory, in other words, is its respect for the complexity of mediation and its corresponding preservation of the element of *mystery* in human doings.

§2 The Use and Abuse of Death

Spurred on by two world wars that left the foundations of western civilization in question, philosophy in the twentieth century was obsessed with the theme of death. The two major figures in this discourse were Alexandre Kojève and Martin Heidegger, who together provided the conceptual frame within which questions about death have been examined. Kojève addressed death through the so-called “master/slave” dialectic in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*: in the battle for recognition characteristic of the emergence of human beings into self-consciousness, one party, in the face of death at the hands of the other, chooses life and thereby enters servitude to the other. The slave shudders deeply with “the fear of death, the fear of the absolute Master,” but this “enslaving dread” bears the seeds of liberation.³³ For only the slave understands, in catching “a glimpse of himself as

³³ Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols (New York:

nothingness,” that “the given natural world is hostile to him,” and that nature must be negated through the work of time.³⁴

Although Kojève was explicitly working with Heideggerian themes in his celebrated lectures on Hegel, he and Heidegger come to opposing conclusions about the work that death does in life. For Kojève, the refusal and terror of death is the positive condition of earthly work and therefore human time, whereas the acceptance of death, as exemplified in Christ, signifies a sublation of mortality, the realization of human transcendence, and the end of history.³⁵ For Heidegger, on the other hand, only by accepting death does Dasein authentically live up to the historical being that it is. By relating to death as its “ownmost possibility,” Dasein embraces its own temporality, its being in both the past and the future, and for this reason attempts to resolutely confront the repeatable possibilities of the past to the ends of an authentic relation to its future. In the words of Robert Pogue Harrison, “Repetition [is] a future-directed retrieval of the past that is based on Dasein’s resolute embracing of its mortality. The more resolutely we anticipate our death, the more decisively we are *thrust back upon our personal heritage*.”³⁶

Without taking anything away from the brilliance of their philosophical contributions, which I will rely upon here, my two primary objections to the twentieth-century discourse on death can be traced back to Kojève and Heidegger. From Kojève

Basic Books, 1969), 21 & 28.

³⁴ Ibid., 47 & 29.

³⁵ Ibid., 148.

³⁶ Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 95.

came the equation of the question of death with questions of aggression, destruction, violence, and the like; for him and his students, death is always first and foremost a *fight to the death*.³⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, refers to Hegel's master/slave dialectic throughout his *oeuvre*, and, like Kojève, his thoughts on death, the "non-transcendable and threatening term of every life," are intimately bound up with aggression.³⁸ "By conflict," he writes, "life reveals itself in its precious uniqueness, in its irreversibility, in its fragility, and in its fierce assertion of itself, through the alternative: kill or be killed."³⁹ Jacques Lacan also makes great use of the master/slave dialectic⁴⁰, which he transposes into a

³⁷ This neo-Hegelian discourse was reinforced by the *biological* equation of death and violence, the emergence of which is charted in Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* and Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*. According to Foucault, when life is treated in its "non-perceptible, purely functional aspect," as it is in the work of Georges Cuvier, a distinction emerges between an organic "inside" (the object of inquiry) and a dead, inorganic "outside" upon which the inside feeds and against which the inside struggles (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [London: Routledge, 2002], 292). Thus, according to modern biology, "living bodies should be considered as kinds of furnaces into which dead substances are successively introduced in order to be combined together in various ways" (Ibid., 298). And in turn, this death at the heart of life is projected outwards into all organic relations: The animal appears as the bearer of that death to which it is, at the same time, subjected; it contains a perpetual devouring of life by life.... The same movement that dooms it to death reveals it to be murderous. It kills because it lives" (Ibid., 302).

As Arendt writes, "Nothing, in my opinion, could be theoretically more dangerous than the tradition of organic thought in political matters by which power and violence are interpreted in biological terms. As these terms are understood today, life and life's alleged creativity are their common denominator, so that violence is justified on the ground of creativity.... Moreover, so long as we talk in nonpolitical, biological terms, the glorifiers of violence can appeal to the undeniable fact that in the household of nature destruction and creation are but two sides of the natural process, so that collective violent action, quite apart from its inherent attraction, may appear as natural a prerequisite for the collective life of mankind as the struggle for survival and violent death for continuing life in the animal kingdom" (Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1970], 75). Although I agree with Arendt about the danger of conceiving of human aggression as a biological fact, I believe it is nonetheless important to analyze its *psychological* foundations.

³⁸ Quoted in Ronald E. Santoni, *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 58.

³⁹ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁰ For Lacan, "Hegel had provided the definitive theory of the specific function of aggressiveness in human ontology" (Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink [New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002], 98).

developmental, “mirror” stage, in which the infant reenacts the struggle unto death with its own idealized image. Although he was later to revise his position⁴¹, Lacan argued in the late 40s that “the enigmatic signification that Freud expressed in the term *death instinct*” reveals an aporia that “lies at the heart of the notion of aggressivity” (his term for the developmental struggle). Like Kojève and Sartre, then, the early Lacan’s thoughts on death are inseparable from his conception of aggression. While there is no doubt a connection between death and aggression, violence, destruction, etc., this neo-Hegelian discourse places severe limits on the topic of death and fails to investigate *how* death and aggression are linked. Death is more than a possible outcome of struggle, and absolute terror is not the only way human beings relate to it. In Chapter 3, I attempt to precisely define the connection and, more importantly, the difference between the death drive and aggression in psychoanalytic meta-narrative outlined in the first two chapters.

From Heidegger, on the other hand, we have inherited the notion that confronting one’s own death is a sign of existential *gravitas* and courageous authenticity. Here I am in general agreement with the overwrought but nonetheless incisive assessment of Heideggerian existentialism by Henri Lefebvre: “Philosophers, metaphysicians, you are like dogs baying at death! Or rather – excuse me – I should say *pretending* to bay at death. For you death is like a perfect thought which you can recall, repeat and merge with every moment of your lives; and you are inviting us to follow you, to accept this final phantom

⁴¹ See Chapter 3, Section §5.

from the other world, and it really is no more than a phantom.”⁴² Like religion for the theologian Karl Barth, death is a dangerous topic in the hands of the overeager. As Lefebvre rightly points out, the existentialist death discourse is, in fact, a specifically *youthful* one, which goes on about “the-other-than-being” without talking about the sadder reality of old age. The topic of death is thus avoided, refashioned to lend the metaphysician an inflated sense of confidence and exaggerated emphasis on “*really* living before you die.” This way of confronting death, he contends, is only an immature way of stimulating one’s sense of being alive.⁴³ As Paul Tillich asks, in characteristic fashion, “if one is not able to die, is he really able to live?”⁴⁴ Like the visitors at Georg Lukacs’ “Grand Hotel Abyss,” philosophers of death take up residence at “a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity. And the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainments, can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered.”⁴⁵ Or, as Jean Baudrillard summarily states, “Death as ‘authenticity’: there is in this, in relation to a system that is itself mortifying, a vertiginous escalation, a challenge which is in fact a profound obedience. The terrorism of authenticity through death remains a secondary process in

⁴² Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore (London: Verso, 1991), 126.

⁴³ “If young people feel the need to think about death to stimulate their sense of being alive, if they proclaim their youth arrogantly in the belief that the simple fact that they are young suffuses their lives with truth – and if at the same time their youth becomes blighted by the obsessive thought of death – then one can only pity such premature senility” (Ibid., 127).

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, “The Eternal Now,” *The Meaning of Death*, ed. Herman Feifel (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 32.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: The Merlin Press, 1971), 22.

that, by means of dialectical acrobatics, consciousness recuperates its ‘finitude’ as destiny. Anxiety as the reality principle and as ‘freedom’ remains the imaginary which, in its contemporary phase, has substituted the mirror of death for that of immortality.”⁴⁶

In Freud’s formulation, death is neither an absolute event before which life gains meaning nor the terrifying conclusion of a struggle for dominance, but rather a primary motivational force within psychic life. Although one might read the death drive as a contribution to the Kojévian violence discourse that Hannah Arendt so vehemently rejects or to the Heideggerian authenticity discourse that Henri Lefebvre laments with equal ire, I intend to show that Freud’s speculations, at least in their initial formulation, recoil from both the equation of death and aggression and also the privileging of death as somehow evincing “authenticity.”

The kind of death that concerns Freud, and by extension that concerns me in this dissertation, is *psychic* death, the collapse of one’s psychic coherence into oblivion.⁴⁷ One might object that defining death in this way is a way of evading the brute biological fact of death, which is supposed to be the “normal” conception of death. On the contrary, I would argue that psychic death is always primary. As Heidegger emphasized, my own death matters to me because it signifies the end of my possibilities, the definitive collapse of my inner being, and not simply because I fear biological demise. Similarly (and as Heidegger

⁴⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Sage Publications, 1993), 190.

⁴⁷ For Freud, “the words ‘life’ and ‘death’...do not designate biological life or death but their ‘analogues’ in mental life and psychical conflict” (Jean Laplanche, “The So-Called ‘Death Drive’: a Sexual Drive,” *The Death Drive: New Life for a Dead Subject?*, ed. Rob Weatherill [London: Rebus Press, 1999], 49).

did *not* emphasize), we care about the deaths of others not because their bodily functions have ceased to operate but because their interiority formed a part of our own and vice versa. We mourn the deaths of those with whose souls ours have communed, with whom we have *been through* something and thereby acquired a bit of ourselves that was not there before. We weep not because their hearts have stopped beating but because we will never again share the living bond that human communication brings.⁴⁸

The death drive, I will argue, is a drive towards the annihilation of one's psychic boundaries and the immersion in a pre-psychic state of undifferentiation. It is thus primarily a drive towards the erasure of the subject/object divide and therefore an essentially anti-social force. In Hans Loewald's definition, one which I explain and affirm in Chapter 2, the death drive is an "urge toward the bliss and pain of consuming oneself in the intensity of being lived by the id"⁴⁹; which is to say, of being lived *without* the ego, the "I." This kind of death is a death of both self and other inasmuch as ego structure is both formed by and makes possible social interaction. It thus precedes aggression, which requires a certain development of psychic structure (as I aim to demonstrate in Chapter 3). On the other hand, dealing with the death drive does not mean confrontation with an absolute limit but channeling one's primary motivational force towards ends that are not "natural" to it. Thus, though subject to pitfalls of its own, Freud's conception of the death

⁴⁸ And in the case of the comatose and brain dead, biological death is cause for grief only because it is an outward, definitive sign of the psychic death that has already occurred.

⁴⁹ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 68.

drive falls prey to neither the Kojévian nor the Heideggerian temptations on the topic of death.

§3 Conversation Partners

I cover some of the history of the reception of the death drive in broader strokes in Chapter 1, but some discussion of particular interpretations of the death drive that this dissertation works with and against (aside from those of the protagonists of each chapter) may help illuminate the terrain to be explored in what follows.⁵⁰ I will begin with the book

⁵⁰ In this literature review, I only cover the monographs devoted to the topic of the death drive. The relevant articles might include: everything collected in the transcription of the first symposium of the *Fédération Européenne de Psychanalyse* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1997), which is cited throughout; Rob Weatherill's collection of essays on the death drive (*The Death Drive: New Life for a Dead Subject?*), with contributions that I employ from Rik Loose and Jean Laplanche, as well as an excellent introduction; *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*, ed. Michel Plon et Henri Rey-Flaud (Ramonville-Saint-Agne: érès, 2004), Bernard Sichère and Monique Schneider's contributions to which I have found the most valuable; Thierry Bokanowski's excellent critical bibliography of the death drive ("Le concept de pulsion de mort," *Psychanalyse.lu*, 10 Jan 2013, <<http://www.psychanalyse.lu/articles/BokanowskiPulsionMort.htm#fn13>>); Ernst Simmel's "Self-Preservation and the Death Instinct" (*Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 13 [1944]), which falls prey to the biological treatment of aggression; Sacha Nacht's "Les manifestations cliniques de l'agressivité et leur rôle dans le traitement psychanalytique" (*Revue française de Psychanalyse* XII 3 [1948]), where aggressivity is related back to "la tendance constante à éliminer ce qui, par son état d'excitation, donc de tension, troublerait l'équilibre de l'organisme" (Ibid., 313), an idea that I consider with Roger Dorey in Chapter 3, Section §1; Dorey's own treatment of the death drive, mastery, and aggressivity (Roger Dorey, "The Relationship of Mastery" trans. Philip Slotkin, *The International Review of Psychoanalysis* 13 [1986]), which I rely upon heavily in Chapter 3; J. B. Pontalis' "On Death-Work in Freud, in the Self, in Culture," an intuitive but ultimately muddling treatment of the concept of death in Freud (see Chapter 1, fn. 39); Louis Beirmaert's intuitive but short reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ("La pulsion de mort chez Freud," *Études* [Mars 1975]); Michel de M'Uzan's analytic history of Freud's relation to the theme of death ("Freud et la mort") and his distinction between the death instinct and destructive drives in "Un cas de masochisme pervers" (144-145), both collected in *De l'art à la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Guy Rosolato's explication of the connection between the death drive and the "relation to the unknown" in Freud ("L'ombilic et la relation d'inconnu," *La relation d'inconnu* [Paris: Gallimard, 1978]); Jean Bergeret's hypothesis of a "violence fondamentale" beyond ambivalence, an idea inimical to my own conception of originary psychic states ("La violence fondamentale (l'étayage instinctuel de la pulsion libidinale," *Revue française de Psychanalyse* XLV 6 [Novembre-Décembre 1981]), as well as Benno Rosenberg's equally extreme hypothesis of a primary "masochisme érogène" that is "le meilleur rempart contre la destructivité" ("Masochisme mortifère et masochisme gardien de la vie," *Masochisme mortifère et masochisme gardien de la vie* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003], 91); and Nicholas Royle's treatment of the death drive via bullet points in Chapter 5 of *The Uncanny*, which attempts to create an uncanniness through stylistic flourishes

that started me on the path toward a reassessment of post-1920 Freudian metapsychology, Jean Laplanche's *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, a whirlwind tour of drive theory that leaves very little of the original material in familiar form. Thanks to his encyclopedic knowledge of Freud, Laplanche opens up a number of new lines of inquiry, asking the basic questions that also concern me here: What exactly is a drive? In his own drive theory, is Freud truly a dualist? How precisely do the drives contribute to the construction of the ego? And, most importantly of all, what is "the function of the death drive in the overall structure of Freud's work?"⁵¹ Laplanche ultimately comes to the conclusion that the death drive is a kind of "unbound" [*déliée*] sexual drive, a libido that is not integrated within the psychic structure.⁵² As I argue in Chapter 1, I do not believe the libido is primary in Freud's later metapsychology, nor even do I agree with André Green that the libido and the death drive constitute a "conceptually inseparable coupling."⁵³ In the narrative that occupies Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the death drive is its own character and in any event the primary referent of his second dual drive theory. However, although I have not followed Laplanche in his detours through Freudian drive theory, his influence can be divined throughout this dissertation.

like repeating bullet points but is not so concerned with actually returning to Freud himself to discover something foreign (Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* [London: Routledge, 2003], Chapter 5).

⁵¹ Dominique Scarfone, *Jean Laplanche* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1997), 22.

⁵² Jean Laplanche, "La pulsion de mort dans la théorie de la pulsion sexuelle," *La Pulsion de Mort* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), 17.

⁵³ André Green, "Narcissisme négatif, fonction désobjectalisante," *La Pulsion de Mort* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), 54. This was a point of disagreement with Laplanche in this debate.

Also fundamental in the formation of this dissertation were Jacques Derrida's masterful confrontations with the theory of the death drive, including *The Post Card* and *Archive Fever*. In *The Post Card*, Derrida offers an "athetic" reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in recognition of "the essential impossibility of holding onto any thesis within it."⁵⁴ Relating Freud's speculative efforts not only to the death of his daughter Sophie (as Wittels had long ago done) but also to Freud's own position as authoritative "grandfather" (PP)⁵⁵ of the psychoanalytic movement, Derrida argues that Freud himself is engaged in a "Fort-Da" in the text, with himself and with his theory of the death drive. Freud is waffling, unable to decide, and this indecision is built into both the content and the form of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "Freud does with (without) the object of his text exactly what Ernst does with (without) his spool."⁵⁶ While Derrida's reading brilliantly highlights a number of previously uninvestigated relations between *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the events of Freud's life, and the crisis of his own authority that he creates in the text, his reading also suffers from this breadth: he claims, for instance, that there has been no mention of death in the text until Freud defines the term instinct.⁵⁷ This is simply untrue: nine pages earlier, Freud is discussing how the death [Absterben] of the outer layer of the organism protects its

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 261.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁵⁷ "Dead silence about death. It has not yet been mentioned. Almost half the book" (*Ibid.*, 353). Freud's definition of an instinct as "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" comes in *Standard Edition* XVIII, 36.

inner layers.⁵⁸ In Chapter 1, I argue that this is the key to understanding the relation between Sections IV and V of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In what follows Derrida's erroneous claim, it is clear why he has skipped this previous discussion of death: the introduction of death as the ultimate goal of *Trieb* allows him to compare Freud's understanding of death with Heidegger's. Both, he thinks, relate authenticity with "dying on one's own terms."⁵⁹ An interesting connection, no doubt, but one that impoverishes his reading.

The most relevant portion of Derrida's reading for my own purposes is his intuitive but nonetheless misleading highlighting of the term *mastery* in the text. He first notes the "strangely erased role"⁶⁰ of the term *Bemächtigungstrieb*, before, in the penultimate section of the reading, claiming that *Bemächtigung* becomes the originary drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, no longer "derived" from others: "the motif of power is more originary and more general than the PP, is independent of it, is its beyond."⁶¹ He relates *Bemächtigung* to *Bewältigung*, as I also do, but without investigating the innumerable previous appearances of the term in Freud's work (as I do in Chapter 1). He also defines *Bewältigung* as a "violent exercise of power, domination," which is never how Freud uses the concept.⁶² Once again, Derrida has turned to the theme of power, ignoring the rich history of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁹ Derrida, *The Post Card*, 358.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 404.

Bewältigung in Freud, in order to make a comparison, this time with Hegel: “we are reading Freud with one hand, and with the other, via an analogous vocabulary, the Hegel of the dialectic of the master and the slave.”⁶³ In so doing, he participates in the mashing together of the concepts of death and aggression that I have just described.

Derrida’s *Archive Fever* (the title actually refers directly to the death drive⁶⁴) is, for this dissertation, the more interesting contribution to Freudian metapsychology. Derrida argues that the death drive is an “archivolithic” force, one that “leaves nothing of its own behind.”⁶⁵ It is thus not only anarchic but “anarchontic,” “archive-destroying”: the very act in which Freud confirms the theory of the death drive (writing as archivization) is inimical to the death drive itself.⁶⁶ Yet at the same time the death drive can be “reinvested in another logic, in the inexhaustible *economistic* resource of an archive;” that which is “archive-destroying” is also the position condition of the archive.⁶⁷ After proposing this idea of a reinvestment of the death drive in an opposing drive (what I argue, in Chapter 1, is what Freud calls the drive to mastery), Derrida then returns to an analysis of “the relations between the model of archivization, technicality, time, and death” first started in “Freud and the Scene of Writing.”⁶⁸ Derrida argues again that Freud focuses too exclusively on

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 394.

⁶⁴ “The death drive is... what we will call, later on, *le mal d’archive*, “archive fever” (Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995], 12).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

the “so-called live memory” to the neglect of its technical prostheses: “in spite of resorting to what he holds to be a model of auxiliary representation, he invariably maintains a primacy of live memory and of anamnesis in their originary temporalization.”⁶⁹ He thinks that the psychological apparatus is better represented when conceived in relation to the “technical mechanisms for archivization and reproduction.”⁷⁰ Thus, he proposes that the contemporary “state of the technology of communication and of archivization” (“MCI or AT&T telephonic credit cards, portable tape recorders, computers, printers, faxes, televisions, teleconferences, and above all E-mail”) alters the psyche itself. No one has more doggedly followed this insight than Derrida’s student Bernard Stiegler, whose own work informs the theory of the relation between technical and psychological development offered in Chapter 5.

Other authors of works on the death drive with and against whom I work include Sarah Kofman, Pierre Marty, Piera Aulagnier, Serge Leclaire, Richard Boothby, Todd Dufresne, Cordelia Schmidt-Hellerau, Michael Eigen, André Green, and Robert Rowland Smith. In *Freud and Fiction*, Sarah Kofman treats the theory of the death drive through an investigation of Freud’s own claim, in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” that his own drive theory bears a great resemblance to the cosmogonic philosophy of Empedocles of Acragas: “The two fundamental principles of Empedocles – **φιλία** and **νεῖκος** – are both, in name and function, the same as our two primal instincts, *Eros* and *destructiveness*,

⁶⁹ Ibid., 15 & 92.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 15.

the first of which endeavours to combine what exists into ever greater unities, while the second endeavours to dissolve those combinations and to destroy the structures to which they have given rise.”⁷¹ Kofman uses the connection to explore the relationship between drive theory and myth as well as to note how the two differ in ways that Freud glazes over.⁷² Productive as her analysis can be⁷³, she does not register that the Empedocles analogy comes fairly late in Freud’s career, when he had already transformed his fledgling death drive into “destructiveness.” In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud speaks not of Empedocles but of Aristophanes, not of “hate” but of being “torn apart;” the difference, I argue in Chapters 1-3, is important to understanding his initial proposal of a death drive, and the dialectic of death and mastery that emerges from it.

Pierre Marty adapts Freud’s instinctual dualism into a psychosomatic theory of individual evolution in *Les mouvements individuels de vie et de mort*. Unabashedly taking up the very element of psychoanalytic theory that most psychoanalysts dismiss as bad biology,

⁷¹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XXIII, 246.

⁷² Kofman points out, for instance, that in Empedocles, “hate is not a principle of absolute disorder: it disturbs the unity of the sphere, causing great disasters and storms (in this sense it differs greatly from the silent death instinct) by its opposition to love, but it is by this very action that it provokes the activity of the latter” (Sarah Kofman, *Freud and Fiction*, trans. Sarah Wykes [Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991], 40).

⁷³ Kofman makes the important observation that “the Greek word Empedocles uses to designate love is never Eros, although he does use a plurality of names: Philotes, Philia, Aphrodite, Harmonia, Kypris, Storge. Hate is never designated by **θάνατος**, but by **νεῖκος**, **Πόλεμος**, **Ἔρις**, **κότος** [strife, war, conflict, division]” (Ibid., 39 & 172). It is interesting to note here that Freud turns that which leads from the primal unity of the sphere to the world of change into a *subjective* element (hate), whereas Empedocles uses objective terms. Translating Empedocles’ myth into object relations terms, one could say that the primary unity of the sphere represents the early mother-infant field, and that **νεῖκος** represents not an internal drive to discord but rather the simple fact of separation, of the necessary breaking up the primordial density.

Marty imagines a struggle between organizing and disorganizing forces⁷⁴ within the psychosoma, in which the “counter-evolutionary movement of disorganization” (the death drive) comes to the fore at traumatic moments that unleash a “self-destructive tendency” that leads to sickness.⁷⁵ I am especially drawn to Marty’s contention that the forces of death, when in the service of life, “do not operate in instinctual discharge or in aggression but in the construction of defense systems that constitute stages of fixation.”⁷⁶

Piera Aulagnier’s *The Violence of Interpretation* might be mentioned in the same breath: like Marty, Aulagnier sets out to reinterpret Freudian metapsychology in psychosomatic terms. Aulagnier believes that the death drive operates in the “primal process” (a process that precedes the primary and secondary processes, and which conditions them) as a force of disinvestment resulting in a “radical hate” directed at what she calls the “outside-of-self” [*hors-soi*].⁷⁷ Like Aulagnier, I argue, in Chapter 3, that important psychic conflicts precede and make possible what Lacan calls the “mirror stage.”⁷⁸ Despite, however, developing Freud’s metapsychology into fascinating

⁷⁴ “Nous cherchons à examiner, dans la mesure du possible, tous les mouvements d’organisations et de désorganisations de l’individu dans la continuité de sa vie jusqu’à sa mort” (Pierre Marty, *Les mouvements individuels de vie et de mort: Essay d’économie psychosomatique* [Paris: Payot, 1976], 18).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 120 & 126.

⁷⁶ “La liaison des forces de mort aux forces de vie ne s’opère ni dans la décharge instinctuelle, ni dans l’agression, mais par l’édification de systèmes de défense qui constitueront des paliers de fixation” (Michel Fain, “Une Conquête de la Psychanalyse: *Les mouvements individuels de vie et de mort* par Pierre Marty, *Revue française de psychanalyse* XL 4 [Juillet-Aout 1976], 744 [my translation]).

⁷⁷ Piera Aulagnier, *The Violence of Interpretation: From Pictogram to Statement*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001), 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 24-26.

nosographic conceptions of psychopathology, Marty and Aulagnier's projects are ultimately too distanced from psychoanalytic terrain for any sustained conversation with the present project.⁷⁹

In *A Child is Being Killed*, Serge Leclaire links the death drive to primary narcissism through (what he claims is the common) fantasy of “*the child to be killed*, the child to be glorified, the all-powerful terrifying child.”⁸⁰ The prevalence of this fantasy, Leclaire believes, must be understood as reflective of the difficulty of overcoming the primary narcissistic position: “To undertake the ‘killing of the child’ and sustain the necessary destruction of the primary narcissistic representation (primary narcissism in Freud’s text) is everyone’s task, as imperative as it is impossible to complete.”⁸¹ While Leclaire points to an important connection between the death drive and the overcoming of infantile omnipotence, his belief that the death drive is best thought of as a pressure to “constantly repeat” the killing of the omnipotent child suffers from the Kojévian conjunction of death and aggression that is the unfortunate inheritance of many Lacanians.

Richard Boothby’s *Death and Desire*, which views Lacanian theory through the lens of Freudian metapsychology, was important in the development of Chapter 3. In this chapter, in which Lacan plays a starring role, Boothby’s understanding of the Lacanian triad real, imaginary, symbolic served as the basis of my own. In addition, his explanation

⁷⁹ That is, without a great deal of work drawing the connections between the drive theory outlined here and their own psychosomatic theories of individual evolution and language acquisition.

⁸⁰ Serge Leclaire, *A Child is Being Killed: On Primary Narcissism and the Death Drive*, trans. Marie-Claude Hays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

of Lacan's re-reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* first sparked my interest in the intricacies of that text, though I ultimately reject the Boothby/Lacan reading (see Chapter 3, Section §4). I believe that Boothby's understanding of the death drive is antithetical to that of many "neo-Lacanian," including Slavoj Žižek, Rik Loose, and Lee Edelman, all of whom I explicitly argue against in Chapter 3.

Aligning himself with the leaders of the anti-Freud movement (Borch-Jacobsen, Roustang, Crews, Sulloway), Todd Dufresne devotes his *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context* to definitively putting psychoanalysis to "death by context." His thesis is that psychoanalysis has thrived, despite its dogmatic nature and lack of efficacy, on the mysteries it invokes to bolster authority. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he thinks, is exemplary in this regard. He thus aims to trace the emergence and influence of this mysterious text in the effort to reveal, in short, that it is biological non-sense, philosophical plagiarism, and ugly psychoanalytic political maneuvering. Dufresne's axe-grinding nearly makes his work a parody of itself, but he does manage to provide a fairly comprehensive history of the death drive and its receptions. What he does not do so well, however, is tend to the "text" part of his subtitle: in dealing with Freud's biologism, for instance, Dufresne spends a good deal of time explicating Sándor Ferenczi's *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*, which he argues is an extension of Freud's speculations in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and "no more absurd than anything Freud proposed in his published and unpublished metapsychology papers."⁸² Dufresne uncovers a few frankly hilarious

⁸² Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 62.

anecdotes from this lesser known work⁸³, but his strategy of hanging Freud with Ferenczi's neck simply does not work. The same goes for his effort to impugn Freud through criticisms of Klein, the Frankfurt school, Lacan, and Derrida. Without, again, taking away from the extraordinary effort of *contextualizing* the death drive, Dufresne avoids the text itself.⁸⁴ In Chapter 1, I provide a reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* without judging it by its later developments.

In her *Life Drive and Death Drive, Libido and Lethe*, Cordelia Schmidt-Hellerau provides a comprehensive reinterpretation of Freudian metapsychology, the inconsistencies of which she smoothes out in a set of mathematical formulas that aim at logical coherence.⁸⁵ Reading like Heinz Hartmann's painstaking formalization of psychoanalytic

⁸³ For instance: "To leap the gap between ontogenesis and phylogenesis, Ferenczi employed analytic techniques of interpretation. From this perspective he put Darwin to one side while he employed 'the more psychological concept of Lamarck', according to which there is always a *motive* behind development: 'This motive may well be the striving to restore the lost mode of life in a moist *milieu* which at the same time provides a supply of nourishment; in other words, to bring about the *reestablishment of the aquatic mode of life in the form of an existence within the moist and nourishing interior of the mother's body*'. According to Ferenczi, the very moisture of the sexual encounter mimics the primal ocean out of which life supposedly began: 'The amniotic fluid represents a sea 'introjected,' as it were, into the womb of the mother'. He even contends, in an especially ridiculous passage, that a certain fishy odor is the ontogenetic repetition of this phylogenetic origin: 'The genital secretion of the female among the higher mammals and in man, the erotically stimulating effect of which...may be traceable to infantile reminiscences, possesses a distinctly fishy odour (odour of herring brine)...; this odour of the vagina comes from the same substance (trimethylamine) as the decomposition of fish gives rise to'" (Ibid., 61).

⁸⁴ Dufresne claims that "any return to Freud, in this case to the circumstances of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is thus conditioned upon a working-through of this mass – which I would suggest is also a mess – of interpretive efforts that have bombarded the field with hints, assertions, denials, rejections, additions, revisions, and so on. Any rigorous return to Freud's view of death, in other words, is always already a return to the reception of this body of work at the hands of his followers, friends, foes and critics" (Ibid., 13). I simply disagree with this assessment: one can always return to a text and read (perhaps the most difficult and least taken path). No doubt its reception and development affects this reading so that it may never be "pure, but a text always offers a counter-force to its commentary. It is a fact inherent in the technology of writing. In any event, I much prefer the path of naïve reading than cynical contextualization.

⁸⁵ Cordelia Schmidt-Hellerau, *Life Drive and Death Drive, Libido and Lethe: A Formalized Consistent Model of Psychoanalytic Drive and Structure Theory*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New York: Other Press, 2001).

“science” and seeming just about as contemporary, Schmidt-Hellerau’s intimidatingly archaic venture is equal parts stimulating and mind-numbing. Like Schmidt-Hellerau, I admittedly defend the position that the death drive should be understood as a “quietistic” and not as an “aggressive” psychic force; I reach this conclusion, however, through a close reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and not through a synthesis of the disparate strands of Freudian metapsychology. I find Freud’s thought as a whole to lack the unity that she attributes to it and am more generally weary of the kind of systematization that requires the erasure of ambiguity.

Michael Eigen’s *Psychic Deadness* provided a source of continual inspiration throughout the writing process. Part I: “Theoretical Soundings,” in which Eigen mines the work of Freud, Klein, Bion and Winnicott for their positions on the influence of death in the psychoanalytic process, proved particularly helpful in delimiting my own approach. Although Eigen spends a good deal of time working through Klein and Bion’s conceptions of “the destructive force within,” the main focus of his work is not destructiveness but *deadness*, a kind of ego impoverishment in which one is numb to life, a response which he finds in patients who have been “overwhelmed or flooded by energy, stimuli, drives, emotions, ideas.”⁸⁶ He describes this deadness as “linked with active mastery attempts gone wrong,” in which an “originary affect flow got frozen in a limited sampling of positions by inhospitable climatic conditions.”⁸⁷ Although I follow Eigen in focusing on this arrest of

⁸⁶ Michael Eigen, *Psychic Deadness* (London: Karnac, 2004), 8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 & 43.

traumatic flooding in Chapters 1 and 2, I disagree with Eigen's Winnicottian praise of aliveness *über alles* to the detriment of the *positive* function of deadness, one which I attempt to correct in offering a *liminal* vision of psychic health (see, in particular, the conclusion to Chapter 2).

Late in life, André Green returned to the death drive⁸⁸ in *Pourquoi les pulsions de destruction ou de mort?*, where he traces the emergence of the death drive in Freud's work, its reception by his followers, and its fate in more "applied" works. Although he entertains alternate conceptions of the death drive, such as Winnicott's equation of the death drive with a regression to a "fundamental solitude" and Lacan's "indirect" treatment of the death drive in the concept of *jouissance*, Green ultimately thinks it is best to reduce the question of the death drive to that of a "double destruction:" "If one avoids the controversial term death drive and remembers above all that we are dealing with a question of (self- and other) destruction, things become clearer."⁸⁹ Given the amount of work done on the death drive in France, his conclusion is surprisingly weak and takes almost nothing from the reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he undertakes in his first chapter: "I cannot decide if the death

⁸⁸ Green had originally treated the concept in *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism*, where, recoiling from Freud's dual drive theory, he subsumes the death drive to "negative narcissism" (André Green, *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism*, trans. Andrew Weller [London: Free Association Books, 2001]). Francis Pasche, it should be noted, had earlier proposed a very similar idea with the term "antinarcissism" (Francis Pasche, "L'antinarcissisme," *À partir de Freud* [Paris: Payot, 1969]). As I argue in Chapter 3, the death drive should not be confused with the narcissistic struggle of the mirror stage, which it precedes and makes possible. In my view, the equation of the death drive and narcissism does more to muddle than to clarify both terms. Although I do not fully endorse his conception of imaginary identification, I believe Jacques Lacan was on a better path in relating narcissism to *aggressivity*.

⁸⁹ André Green, *Pourquoi des pulsions de destruction ou de mort?* (Paris: Éditions du Panama, 2007), 116, 119 & 202 (my translation).

drive is essentially of an internal origin, aiming at the death of the subject, or if it is primarily of external orientation, aiming at the death of the other. It appears to me that experience is of little help in reaching a conclusion here. What seems important is the reference to an originary destructiveness of dual orientation that remains for the most part unconscious.”⁹⁰ This conclusion is, for all intensive purposes, the polar opposite of my own. Instead of tracing the emergence of destructiveness, as I attempt to do in Chapters 1-3, Green universalizes the drive to destruction and makes it even more imprecise than in Freud’s original conception.

Finally, in *Death-Drive: Freudian Hauntings in Literature and Art*, Robert Rowland Smith interprets the death drive as a counter to death itself: “Left to itself, death would destroy everything. What the death-drive does is to preserve, in the midst of death, a leastness, a less than being that is more than nothing.”⁹¹ Unsurprisingly, Smith links this “presence-that-isn’t-one” to aesthetic creation, which aims to return to the inorganic in order to come back as living, in order to *haunt*.⁹² By “tarrying on the edge of creation,” the artist is able to take on “a different, a resistant relationship to death and the destructiveness by which it operates.”⁹³ Smith’s thesis is that “in the name of pleasure, the death-drive tries to preserve, then, and in the midst of death, a trace of life both after it has died and before

⁹⁰ Ibid., 204 (my translation).

⁹¹ Robert Rowland Smith, *Death-Drive: Freudian Hauntings in Literature and Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 10.

⁹² Ibid., 20.

⁹³ Ibid., 21.

it has lived, and it is this pleasurable quasi-nothingness from which life, creation, will have been generated.”⁹⁴ I find much in this definition intriguing, but ultimately only that: Smith has turned the death drive against the aim that Freud attributes to it without tracing the transformation of the death drive that Freud again finds so crucial to the beginnings of life. He has similarly run with the basically good intuition that the death drive and the pleasure principle share essential features, but without distinguishing the two properly. This lack of conceptual distinction allows him to offer an unwieldy definition of the drive in which one can see a great deal, but only opaquely. Smith’s book is an excellent illustration of how the theory of the death drive, when it is taken seriously at all, has suffered from its extraction from the larger Freudian constellation.

In the second half of the dissertation, I employ the interpretation of the death drive offered in the first three chapters to renew the psychological foundation of the critical theory of the Frankfurt school. A separate, brief literature review is thus necessary for the relation between psychoanalysis and critical theory that I explore in the last two chapters. As he did for so many, Martin Jay first introduced me to the Frankfurt school’s appropriation of psychoanalysis in the third chapter of *Dialectical Imagination*. Jay has us wonder at the beginning of the chapter at the “audacity of the first theorists who proposed an unnatural marriage of Freud and Marx,” given the radical disjunction between the Marxist’s revolutionary aspirations and “Freud’s basic pessimism about the possibilities for

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

social change.”⁹⁵ At the time, Jay was attempting to make the familiar unfamiliar, but no sooner had the project of “marrying” Marx and Freud been accepted as viable than its real importance was placed in question. The influence of psychoanalysis on critical theory, and in particular on the work of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, is often regarded today as having been overblown: Freud was important, of course, but his categories were never “centrally organizing” as, say, Weber’s, or Lukacs’, or Nietzsche’s were.⁹⁶ This claim of exaggerated importance, combined with a retreat from the purportedly “patrocentric” implications of the critical theorists’ conception of the decline of the family (see Chapter 4), has made for a dearth of studies devoted to the psychological component of critical theory, despite the fact that Horkheimer himself claimed that Freud’s “thought is one of the foundation stones without which our philosophy would not be what it is.”⁹⁷

A few important studies have nonetheless been devoted to the relation between psychoanalysis and critical theory, of which Joel Whitebook’s *Perversion and Utopia* was the most influential on this project. Whitebook argues the postmodern attack on the rationalism of Freudian psychoanalysis and ego psychology has gone too far, causing us to give up on any notion of ego integrity *qua* psychic health. At a time needing in analysis of the “problem of omnipotence,” evidenced in the “resurgence of religion” as well as the “reappearance of militant nationalism,” Whitebook finds it absolutely necessary “to

⁹⁵ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 86.

⁹⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or The Persistence of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 1990), 26.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 102.

reinvigorate the psychoanalytic dimension of Critical Theory” against its postmodern detractors.⁹⁸ Unfortunately, the polemical frame in which Whitebook analyzes the relation between psychoanalysis and critical theory makes its way into the content of his analysis. Adorno and Lacan, for instance, are lumped together as representative of the postmodern impulse to see reason as violence: “Critics of the ego, like Adorno and Lacan, prompted by a philosophical suspicion of synthesis, tend to hypostatize pathological, rigidified forms of ego formation into the ego as such. As a result, they are left only with a choice between two poisons, namely, violent unification or no unification at all. The alternative is, as I have already suggested, to attempt to conceptualize nonviolent forms of ego synthesis.”⁹⁹ As he recognizes later in the book, however, Adorno’s concept of mimesis could itself be thought of precisely as this kind of nonviolent synthesis. Whitebook’s analysis is thus ultimately weakened through this process of enemy creation, as Adorno and Lacan both have a great deal to offer his model of psychic health (as I intend to show in Chapters 3 and 4). I nonetheless rely on Whitebook’s excellent examination of the concept of sublimation in Chapter 4.

C. Fred Alford’s *Narcissism: Socrates, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalytic Theory* also helped a great deal in laying out the relations between post-Freudian psychoanalytic developments (specifically around the concept of narcissism) and critical theory. Alford identifies four key themes regarding narcissism: that “narcissism persists throughout life

⁹⁸ Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 5, 6 & 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

and is not superseded by object love,” that primary narcissism consists in a lack of self/other distinction, that individuals attempt “to achieve a level of mastery and control over self and world sufficient to compensate for” “narcissistic injury” (or “lost omnipotence”), and “narcissism seeks fusion and wholeness by merging with something complete and perfect.”¹⁰⁰ These are all themes that equally concern me here, though I take my task to be one of reintroducing distinction where the discourse on narcissism has blurred boundaries. In Chapter 3, for instance, I distinguish between the self/other undifferentiation that is the aim of the death drive and the drive for omnipotence characteristic of aggressivity. More helpful than his work on psychoanalysis, however, are his connections to critical theory; his analysis of utopianism in Marcuse and its relation to narcissism in particular aided me with Chapter 5.

Although his interest is not, like Whitebook’s and Alford’s, primarily in “reinvigorating” the connection between psychoanalysis and critical theory, Axel Honneth has devoted a great portion of his work to bringing psychology, and specifically intersubjective theory, back to critical theory. Though generally sympathetic to the communicative turn accomplished by Habermas, he also finds Habermas’ focus on language to elide the “moral experiences as feelings of social disrespect” that are the “normative core of “notions of justice” that motivate social protest.¹⁰¹ Thus, Honneth finds a place for “the emotional concern familiar from relationships of love and

¹⁰⁰ C. Fred Alford, *Narcissism: Socrates, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 68-69.

¹⁰¹ Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 71.

friendship” alongside “legal recognition and approval associated with solidarity as particular ways of granting recognition” in a comprehensive vision of psychic and political health.¹⁰² In this dissertation, I am also attempting to bring to light the relevance of what goes under the headings “object relations” and “intersubjectivity” in psychoanalytic theory to critical theory, though I am simultaneously working against later psychoanalytic developments to show that the theorization of the “mother-infant field” is already in Freud, in an admittedly twisted manner. Though, as a result, my project differs drastically from Honneth’s, his basic insight that critical theory desperately needs a psychological “foundation stone” is one that inspired this research from the beginning.

Finally, though they do not deal directly with the Frankfurt school’s appropriation of psychoanalysis, I must mention the new “Freudo-Marxism” that has emerged from the Lacanian synthesis that runs through Louis Althusser to Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou. Žižek and Badiou were both instrumental in the formation of this project, though I ultimately come to contest the former on many points of psychoanalytic theory, including his conception of the death drive (Chapter 3, Section §5), his connection between language and violence (Chapter 3, fn. 47), and his theory of superego development (Chapter 5, fn. 57). Much as I have gained from their work, however, I am continually disappointed by their lack of treatment of the Frankfurt school’s integration of psychoanalysis with Marxism. In pairing Lacan with Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, I hope to provide a point of entry for this work.

¹⁰² Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 94.

§4 Chapter Summary

The dissertation sprouted from an attempt to make sense of the middle two “speculative” sections of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Freud offers an account of the origins of life on earth as a curious and, most commentators would add, confused way of making sense of the novel clinical problems he had introduced in the first three sections (problems generally relating to what he calls the repetition compulsion). Like many, I could not make heads or tails of these two sections when I first read them and found that psychoanalytic consensus was that confusion was the justified response, given both that this part of Freud’s work was enmeshed in bad biological assumptions and also that it was his most speculative and ungrounded in clinical practice. Despite these, in truth, very good reasons for writing off these sections, I found that Freud was also dealing there with major themes that had concerned him since the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* back in 1895, and not only that but was synthesizing those themes in a fundamentally new way. Through a close reading of these two sections in Chapter 1, I attempt to show that Freud was trying, perhaps in a misguided and stilted manner, to offer the rudiments of a new drive theory, one that he would eventually describe in terms of an opposition between Eros and the death drive, but one that is better described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in terms of an opposition between the death drive and what he calls the drive to mastery [*Bemächtigungstrieb* or *Bewältigungstrieb*].

At least as he describes it there, the death drive is a drive to eliminate any self/other distinction: it is the sole drive of the first living organism, to cast off its difference from its

environment and reimmerse itself in the primordial ooze. The drive to mastery, by contrast, is a drive to build and reinforce the living organism's protective structures. Whereas one aims to destroy the organism, the other aims to protect it; one seeks to stop the process of individuation, one to promote it. This is the basic form of ambivalence and the crux of this underexplored drive theory.

While intriguing on its own as a new take on Freud's dual drive theory, this work is enhanced in my encounter with Hans Loewald in Chapter 2. On my reading, Loewald translates what he calls Freud's "biologistic" theory into developmental terms: instead of a living organism, Loewald imagines an infant struggling between, on the one hand, a desire for increased independence, autonomy, and mastery, a drive to gain the kinds of psychic structure that allow her to more skillfully navigate the world, and on the other, a desire to be rid of her independence, to be at one with her parents and cared for as if still in the pre-natal state. In addition to being generally convinced of the worth of Loewald's developmental narrative, I was elated to see the drive theory developed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* formulated in demythologized language. My aim in Chapter 2 is thus simply to introduce the reader to Loewald through his very faithful translation of Freudian drive theory into developmental terms.

Chapter 3 confronts the work of Jacques Lacan, who also links Freud's concerns in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* back to his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* in *Seminar II*. Unfortunately, Lacan is dead-set there on reading gestalt theory into both books and ends

up offering an extremely questionable rendering of the *Project*.¹⁰³ The primary victim of this misreading, I argue, is Freud's concept of psychic mastery, which gets translated in *Seminar II* into what Lacan calls imaginary identification, which he links elsewhere to his special conception of aggression, aggressivity. Through this chain of equivalences, Lacan is then able to argue that aggressivity and not mastery is the primary motor of psychic development. A critique of Lacan on this particular point proved to be a ripe occasion to address the links between the concepts of death drive, drive to mastery, and aggression, which often get conflated in psychoanalytic theory. I thus attempt in this chapter to reformulate Lacan's theory of imaginary identification, what is more commonly known as "the mirror stage," in light of the conflict between death and mastery that I outline in the first two chapters.

In the last two chapters, I turn to the other major source of inspiration for this project: the critical theory of the so-called Frankfurt school. Largely under the influence of early friend and later foe Erich Fromm, the Frankfurt School famously turned to psychoanalytic developmental theory to supplement Marxism with a psychological analysis of the motivations behind ideological subjectification. While generally faithful to Freud in his early years, Fromm repeatedly and insistently rejected his theory of the death drive, preferring instead the instinctual dualism of sexual and self-preserved drives. The integration of psychoanalysis with critical theory that took place under his watch thus self-consciously neglected the drive theory that Freud defended from the 1920s to his death.

¹⁰³ I found this particularly disturbing since Lacan was really introducing the *Project* for the first time to a French audience and strongly misreading it in order to make Freud seem like a proto-Gestaltist.

Though Fromm's influence on the inner circle of the Frankfurt School was to be short-lived, his bias against the death drive remained at the core of critical theory. Indeed, even Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, two of Fromm's staunchest critics, always defended what they thought of as "orthodox Freudianism" against even the later Freud himself.¹⁰⁴ In the second part of the dissertation, I argue that Freud's mature drive theory, once redeemed in the developmental terms articulated in the first part, can serve to strengthen the psychological foundation of critical theory in such a way as to rejuvenate it as a whole. The integration of the theory of the death drive with critical theory is, to my mind, one of the great missed opportunities of twentieth-century philosophy; its rectification, in turn, allows the formulation of a more coherent philosophical program for critical theory.

My entry point for this analysis, in Chapter 4, is provided by what Jessica Benjamin calls the critical theorists' "end of internalization" thesis. Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse all believed that they were witnessing a certain fundamental change in the human psyche having to do primarily with the diminishing powers of the superego. Unfortunately their thoughts on the matter suffer from a generally poor grasp on what is known as the structural theory in psychoanalysis (of id, ego, and superego) and a non-existent grasp on the dual drive theory that undergirded the structural model. Like the psychoanalytic revisionists whom they despised, they too rejected Freud's theory of the death drive, thus neglecting the drive theory that Freud himself would most

¹⁰⁴ Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, 91.

certainly have thought of as his most important contribution to the analysis that they were conducting. Given Freud's own claim that the death drive finds its greatest expression in the superego, I believe that it is of great benefit to the end of internalization thesis to attempt to integrate the theory of the death drive into their work.

In Chapter 5, I look at this same process of psychic change through a different lens. Throughout his work, Herbert Marcuse flirted with the idea that technological progress has provided us with the capacity for a sublimation of our aggressive and destructive tendencies towards social ends. Though Marcuse ultimately rejects the hypothesis, I attempt to salvage and reaffirm the idea of "aggressive sublimation" with the help of Bernard Stiegler and the drive theory articulated here. I thus offer a theory of the effect of technological development on the drive economy, and my conclusion is that it unsurprisingly has a great deal to do with the "end of internalization" thesis that Adorno and Horkheimer postulate. At a time when technological fascination has become a culture sub-industry, it is necessary to understand the nature of the desire and satisfaction promised by technological innovation, to break the spell of the array of gadgets and curious manipulations of nature that are constantly being paraded in front of us by coming to a greater understanding of the psychic fulfillment provided therein.

CHAPTER ONE

Death, Mastery, and the Origins of Life: Sigmund Freud's Metapsychological Narrative

*Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life.
The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.*
- Friedrich Nietzsche¹

In this first chapter I will be teasing out the basics of a metapsychological narrative first outlined by Sigmund Freud in 1920. This narrative might be opposed to the static metapsychology that Freud attempted to work out in the 1910s: whereas this earlier metapsychological venture² sought to lay out a set of categories that analysts could apply schematically, in Kantian fashion, to the empirical content of their analytic encounters, the later “meta-narrative” provides more of a Hegelian schema-in-motion, a set of ideas that can only be properly grasped in the story in which they unfold. The various concepts that emerge from this meta-narrative (id, ego and superego) are not simple additions to the pre-1920 analytic toolbelt but rather *characters* in a fundamentally *new story*, the central personage of which is undoubtedly *the death drive*.

Before turning to the narrative itself, however, I will offer, in Section §1, a brief conceptual history of the death drive and its unfortunately undertheorized vicissitude, *the drive to mastery*. Despite its recurrence throughout Freud's work, this latter concept has

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 168.

² I refer here to his metapsychology papers mostly collected in Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV.

failed to receive due treatment; where it has been addressed, it is more often than not assimilated to more familiar concepts like aggression. It is my aim here to demonstrate that the drive to mastery is not a footnote in the history of psychoanalytic theory but a key to understanding the “second dual drive theory”³ and by extension the structural model of id, ego and superego. The death drive, on the other hand, though widely rejected by the professional analytic community, has been fruitfully developed in a number of directions. Unfortunately, this development has taken place *outside* of the meta-narrative of which it is the critical part. As Jean Laplanche notes, “the ‘death drive’... is a concept which can only be correctly situated at a specific moment in the drama of the Freudian discovery. Outside of that context, it becomes an empty formula.”⁴

In the effort to re-embed the death drive in its natural habitat and unveil the importance of the drive to mastery to post-1920 Freudian theory, Section §2 attempts a cohesive presentation of Sections IV and V of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the place where Freud first outlines his metapsychological narrative. Given the fragmented and wild nature of his endeavor, this task will require some intensive textual work. To take another cue from Laplanche, the aim of this section will be not so much to criticize Freud nor to simply recapitulate his views but rather to think *alongside* of him, to retrace his steps and, if necessary, to veer slightly from his own path to inspect the conceptual surroundings.⁵

³ By “second dual drive theory,” I mean the opposition of Eros and the death drive (in contrast to his “first” dual drive theory, i.e. self-preservative v. sexual drives).

⁴ Laplanche, “The So-Called ‘Death Drive,’” 49. He continues, “however, the more empty it is, the more appeal it has!” (Ibid., 49).

⁵ Scarfone, *Jean Laplanche*, 56.

Section §3 focuses on an important follow up paper to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* titled “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” where Freud recognizes that his newly invented death drive bears an uncanny resemblance to the pleasure principle that it is supposed to transcend. Here Freud comes to realize that his new meta-narrative has gutted the idea that guided his work for some thirty years. It is a fascinating document of mourning and a crucial addition to the narrative outlined in Section §2.

Finally, Section §4 will synthesize from the previous sections preliminary descriptions of the death drive and the drive to mastery, which together form the tension of the psychoanalytic meta-narrative that will occupy the attention of the remaining chapters of this dissertation. Like eerily similar personalities whose opposition comprises a plot’s intrigue, the death drive and the drive to mastery, I argue, are the antithetical counterpoles of Freud’s metapsychology in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. By the end of this chapter, I hope to have illuminated the basic natures of these two drives and situated them in the origins of life narrative in which they originally appeared.

§1 A Brief History of Mastery and Death in Psychoanalytic Theory

In 1920 Freud shocked the burgeoning analytic community with the introduction of the death drive [*Todestrieb*], the unsettling hypothesis that all living things are unconsciously driven to their own demise. This new drive theory was meant to provide a comprehensive solution to a set of conundrums that had hitherto eluded psychoanalytic

explanation, most notably the “compulsion to repeat” traumatic situations and thereby retroactively attempt to gain some degree of mastery over them. New as the speculations of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* were, this concern with psychic mastery had been a mainstay of Freud’s thought throughout his career. Very early on, in a paper from 1894, he suggests the importance of “mastering somatic excitation [*Bewältigung der somatischen Sexualerregung*],”⁶ a phrase that would repeat in a number of his most well-known essays: in “On Narcissism,” when he calls “our mental apparatus” “a device for mastering excitations [*Bewältigung von Erregungen*] which would otherwise be felt as distressing or would have pathogenic effects;”⁷ in the case of the Wolfman, when he discourses on the failure “to master the real problems of life [*Bewältigung der realen Probleme des Lebens*];”⁸ or in “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” when he invents the phrase “mastering stimuli [*Reizbewältigung*].”⁹

A somewhat different concern with mastery is found in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905, where Freud posits a “drive to mastery” [*Bemächtigungstrieb*] associated with “masculine sexual activity” and aggressive, anal behavior.¹⁰ It is also, curiously enough, linked to “the instinct for knowledge,” which is deemed “a sublimated manner of obtaining mastery.”¹¹ Although this phrase appears in his work on Jensen’s *Gradiva* in

⁶ Freud, *Standard Edition* III, 111; Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet I* (London: Imago Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991), 337.

⁷ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV, 85; Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* X, 151.

⁸ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVII, 54; Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* XII, 82.

⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV, 120.

¹⁰ Freud, *Standard Edition* VII, 188.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 194.

1907, it does not resurface again until *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As Kristin White explains, Freud most likely had Alfred Adler's concept of *Machtstreben* [striving for power] in mind every time he used *Bemächtigungstrieb*.¹² It thus makes sense that one finds repeated but fairly inconsequential use of the term in the *Three Essays*, when Adler was still a respected albeit threatening colleague, and then a complete absence all through the 1910s, by which point Adler had been declared an outright enemy of psychoanalysis.

Why, then, would the phrase rather miraculously reappear in 1920? As Jean Laplanche and Jean Bertrand Pontalis explain, Freud came to realize during the war years that the "mastery of the object" characteristic of aggressive behavior "goes hand in hand with the binding together" of distressing stimuli.¹³ In other words, the problematics of *Bewältigung* and *Bemächtigung* slowly began to fuse in Freud's mind, and by *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "no strict distinction is drawn between the two terms."¹⁴ Thus, when he dusts off *Bemächtigungstrieb* to explain his grandson's *Fort/Da* game, it bears an entirely new significance: "these efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery [*Bemächtigungstrieb*] that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not."¹⁵ No longer a simple "component instinct" as it was in the *Three Essays*, *Bemächtigungstrieb* is now put forth as counterevidence to Freud's belief, held for some thirty years, that all life is

¹² Kristin White, "Notes on 'Bemächtigungstrieb' and Strachey's Translation as 'Instinct for Mastery,'" *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 91:4 (May 2010), 813.

¹³ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 218.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁵ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 16.

governed by the pleasure principle.¹⁶ In addition, it is made responsible for the compulsion to repeat in that it is what causes us to return to traumatic scenes and retroactively master or bind its excitations [*die Erregung zu bewältigen oder zu binden*].¹⁷ For all of their supposed translation sins, it seems then that the Stracheys were quite justified in rendering both words as *mastery*¹⁸, to the protests of the many Strachey-bashers.¹⁹

Aside from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the most striking usage of the drive to mastery comes in “The Economic Problem of Masochism,” where the term is further equated with “the destructive instinct [*Destruktionstrieb*]” and “the will to power [*Wille zur Macht*].”²⁰ Freud is clearly struggling with the terminology here, as he even goes so far as to equate the destructive and the death drives [*Todes- oder Destruktionstrieb*].²¹ Should we then, by the transitive property, take *Bemächtigungstrieb* to mean *Todestrieb*? As I intend to show

¹⁶ To my knowledge, Freud never used the phrase *Bewältigungstrieb* (Ives Hendrick incorrectly claims that he does in “The Discussion of the ‘Instinct to Master,’” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 12 [New York: The Psychoanalytic Quarterly Inc., 1943], 563. The passage that he refers to uses the term *Bemächtigungstrieb*). Siegfried Bernfeld appears to be the first person to use the phrase in *Psychologie des Säuglings* (Wien: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1925), 207.

¹⁷ Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* XIII, 36.

¹⁸ This translation is further justified by Freud’s own loose policy of switching back and forth between the two words around the time of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: for instance, in *The Ego and the Id*, when he discusses mastery of the Oedipus complex [“*Bewältigung des eigentlichen Ödipuskomplexes*” and “*das Ich des Ödipuskomplexes bemächtigt*”] (Ibid., 264-265).

¹⁹ White, for instance, argues for the inappropriateness of his translation of *Bemächtigungstrieb* (she suggests “the drive to gain power over”). The mistake, for her, is not simply historical but rather continues to pose problems: “All the confusion brought about by translating the word ‘Bemächtigung’ as ‘mastery’ and not distinguishing clearly enough between ‘Bemächtigung’ and ‘Bewältigung’ has meant that some of the French texts on ‘Bemächtigung’, or ‘emprise’ in French, seem quite unintelligible when translated into English” (White, “Notes on ‘Bemächtigungstrieb’ and Strachey’s Translation as ‘Instinct for Mastery,’” 816). As I argue here, however, it was the French (Laplanche and Pontalis) who proposed the lack of distinction.

²⁰ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIX, 163.

²¹ The uses of the drive to mastery in *Civilization and its Discontents*, “Why War?”, and the *New Introductory Lectures* continue to suffer from a lack of terminological clarity.

in Section §2, reconstructing Freud's metapsychological narrative in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* reveals more terminological distinctness between these concepts than he offers in "The Economic Problem of Masochism." Intimately connected as the two drives in fact are, the relationship is much more complicated than one of identity.

After Freud, not much is made of *Bemächtigungstrieb*²²; but while his thoughts on psychic mastery withered from neglect, the theory of the death drive ironically caused a great disturbance within the psychoanalytic community and was the subject of much, albeit predominantly negative, discussion.²³ At first, Freud himself only ambivalently proposed the idea, but it eventually "acquired such a power" over him that he could "no longer think differently."²⁴ Although generally obsequious toward their philosophical father, Freud's

²² In the 1940's, Ives Hendrick attempted to start a conversation on *Bewältigungstrieb* to no lasting avail. Hendrick thought of the drive to mastery as aiming "to control or alter a piece of the environment, an ego-alien situation, by the skillful use of perceptual, intellectual, and motor techniques in order to control or alter a piece of the environment" (Ives Hendrick, "Work and the Pleasure Principle," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 12 [New York: The Psychoanalytic Quarterly Inc., 1943], 314). This definition is rather unproblematic for the present study. Unfortunately, however, Hendrick took himself to be blazing a new path in psychoanalytic thought; for this reason, his essays on the "instinct to master" suffer from a misguided polemic against by-the-book Freudians. In addition, it leads him to make "new" hypotheses that were already in Freud: for instance, he writes "*that compulsiveness is always associated with an inability to exercise proficiently a function, simple or complex, which gratifies the need to master*" (emphasis in the original). (Ives Hendrick, "Instinct and the Ego During Infancy," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 76 [New York: The Psychoanalytic Quarterly Inc., 2007], 399). It is difficult to see how this statement differs from Freud's claim that the compulsion to repeat is a function of the attempt to master a stimulus with which it was and is difficult to cope. Hendrick's work does contain, nonetheless, many fascinating discussions of tool usage, though he attempts to fit these into his discussion of the unfortunately-named "work principle" (Hendrick, "Work"). Hendrick also correctly distinguishes between aggression, the destructive instinct and the instinct to master (Hendrick, "The Discussion of the 'Instinct to Master,'" 564). Brief mention should also be made here of Roger Dorey, whose "The Relationship of Mastery" will be discussed in Chapter 3.

²³ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 97.

²⁴ Freud, *Standard Edition* XXI, 119.

followers were not charmed in the same way: indeed, as Freud's enthusiasm waxed, their's waned. With the exception of Sándor Ferenczi, whose elaborate extensions of psychoanalytic metapsychology worried even Freud himself, none in Freud's inner circle came to accept the death drive. Despite epistolary pleas for their relevance to psychoanalytic theory, Ernest Jones and Oskar Pfister both sadly reported to Freud in 1930 that they simply could not endorse his views on the matter.²⁵

Many of the continental emigrants felt similarly and did not pass up the opportunity to say so. During Freud's lifetime, Fritz Wittels suggested that the wild speculations in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* followed upon the death of Freud's daughter, Sophie Halberstadt, an accusation that Freud was quick to deny.²⁶ Otto Fenichel contended in typical fashion that the clinical facts simply "do not necessitate the assumption of a genuine self-destructive instinct."²⁷ As *de facto* leader of the school of ego psychology, Heinz Hartmann sought to develop the structural theory while "omitting Freud's other, mainly biologically oriented set of hypotheses of the 'life' and 'death' instincts."²⁸ Wilhelm Reich, one of the earliest opponents of the death drive, claimed simply that "'Death' was right. 'Instinct' was wrong."²⁹ In a suggestive response to

²⁵ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), 552.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 395.

²⁷ Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1946), 60.

²⁸ Heinz Hartmann, "Comments on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Instinctual Drives," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 17 (1948), 370.

²⁹ Wilhelm Reich, *Reich Speaks of Freud*, ed. Mary Higgins and Chester Raphael (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967), 90.

Civilization and its Discontents, Karen Horney felt herself “obliged to reject the thesis of the death instinct and an innate destructive instinct, as well as the thesis of an innate evil in man.”³⁰ Representing the general position of the interpersonalist school towards the death drive, Erich Fromm argued that while the death drive “takes into consideration the full weight of destructive tendencies,” it “fails to take into account sufficiently of the fact that the amount of destructiveness varies enormously among individuals and social groups.”³¹

One could go on like this for quite some time³²: the number of theorists who have entertained the death drive only to curtly dismiss it is rather astounding. Those who, on the other hand, *affirmed* the death drive, at least in some part, may be loosely categorized into one of three groups: first, there are the Kleinians, whose endorsement of the term indicated their lack of scientific status to many other schools, resulting in their initial marginalization from the psychoanalytic mainstream. As many commentators have noted, however, Klein herself never really dealt with the death drive: her interest from the beginning was in aggression and destruction, concepts which she equated with Freud’s *Todestrieb*.³³

³⁰ Karen Horney, “Der Kampf in Der Kultur (Culture and Aggression): Einige Gedanken Und Bedenken Zu Freud’s Todestrieb Und Destruktionstrieb,” trans. Bella S. Van Bark, *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 20 (1960), 136.

³¹ Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 101-102.

³² To name just two other influential theoreticians: Donald Winnicott found “the term ‘death’ instinct unacceptable in describing the root of destructiveness” and Heinz Kohut thought that the “concepts of Eros and Thanatos do not belong to a psychological theory” (Donald Winnicott, “The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 41 (1960), 591; Heinz Kohut, “Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis – An Examination of the Relationship between Mode of Observation and Theory,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 7 (1959), 478).

³³ I am following Hanna Segal here, who argues that Klein was first interested in aggressive impulses in children

Although Freud most certainly gave his adherents ample reason to relate the concepts of death drive, drive to mastery and aggression beginning around 1923, the exact relation between these terms was never made clear, and, as Jean Laplanche argues, “Freud understands his death drive *retrospectively* as an aggressive drive;”³⁴ that is, in its initial formulation in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (and especially the first draft from 1919 without Section VI), the death drive was most certainly not conceived as aggression. Only later did Freud come to associate these terms. Although Klein did a great deal to advance and complicate Freudian theory, in taking this association, in rather uncomplicated fashion, to be equation, I do not believe she did any service to the concept of the death drive.

Indeed, one might argue that her work actually *prevented* any real discussion of the death drive in the English literature. When the Freud/Klein controversies finally passed and the Kleinians began to mingle in the mainstream, analysts confronted the need to make sense of the metapsychology that undergirded the structural model. The solution went something like this: “Freud had *actually* been struggling with the stark fact of aggression for some time, but in order to make himself seem different from Adler, he formulated the problem in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in alien terms. Recognizing as we

and only later came to associate these impulses with Freud’s death drive, which she employed as synonymous with aggression (Hanna Segal, *Melanie Klein* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 57). Todd Dufresne similarly argues that Klein was interested in “not so much the death drive itself, but its representative, the destructive impulse, *Destruktionstrieb*” (Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 69). Michael Eigen also finds the essentials of Klein’s interest in the death drive in her discussion of a “primary anxiety of being annihilated by a destructive force within” (Melanie Klein, “Notes on some schizoid mechanisms,” *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Melanie Klein, Paula Heimann, Susan Isaacs, and Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth, 1952), 297; quoted in Eigen, *Psychic Deadness*, 28).

³⁴ Laplanche, “The So-Called ‘Death Drive’”, 45 (my emphasis).

do the distorting nature of Freud's ambition, we can dispose of his theoretical idiosyncrasies and focus on what we analysts all recognize to be of clinical importance: aggression." The fact that it was the controversial figure of Melanie Klein who most powerfully made the equation death drive = aggression led the psychoanalytic community to feel that it had made great progress in mending an internal conflict when it finally accepted aggressive drives alongside libidinal ones. The self-congratulation that followed virtually buried the concepts of the death drive and the drive to mastery under the weight of good will amidst the English-speaking psychoanalytic world.

The Francophone world, on the other hand, continued (and continues) to make great use of the concept; indeed, "the theme of death really is at the heart of the French reception of Freud," meaning, more specifically, Jacques Lacan's reception of Freud.³⁵ The second group of thinkers who have seriously engaged the death drive are thus those touched by the work of Lacan, who call themselves critics as often as they do followers. Many of the Lacanian and post-Lacanian studies on the death drive that influenced the formation of this dissertation are reviewed in the introduction and will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.³⁶ I am impressed that the death drive continues in France to be a topic of concern, one from which I no doubt directly benefit here. In general, however, the French cult of *Thanatos* bears the centrifugal tendencies to either reconceive the death

³⁵ Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 13.

³⁶ Scarfone, *Laplanche*, 22.

drive in terms of aggressivity, narcissism, violence, sadism, masochism, etc.³⁷ or else to couch it in conceptual spaces only tenuously-psychoanalytic.³⁸ Without taking away from the inevitability of differential play, one wonders, given the theoretical implications of the present topic, about this desire to send the death drive out in ever new directions without first interrogating its source.³⁹

Finally, there are the Frankfurt school philosophers and their descendents. As

³⁷ I review some of these reconceptions in the Introduction, Section §3.

³⁸ I am thinking specifically of Deleuze's death drive *qua* body without organs and Derrida's death drive *qua* *différance vis à vis* the pleasure principle.

³⁹ I am not lamenting "applied" psychoanalytic forays, only the lack of care often evinced in dealing with psychoanalytic terms before sending them out into the world. Freud, for his part, was always extremely cautious in his broader cultural works, making sure his psychoanalytic concepts were well defined before allowing them to contribute to his cultural analysis. What's worse, the post-Lacanian tendency is compounded by claims to be cutting out the fluff and getting down to brass tacks. Let me provide just one example, from Jean Bertrand Pontalis' short essay, "On Death-Work in Freud, in the Self, in Culture." First, we are told why we've got it wrong: "There lies perhaps the error committed by partisans of the idea of the death instinct as well as by those who reject it: to act as though it were a question of a particular form of instinct, and then look for what *represents* it:

- Is it aggressive, destructive behavior (Freud was able to maintain that), especially self-destructive behavior, or else a state of apathy?
- Is it unleashed violence or else the temptation of nirvana (each generation discovering or rediscovering its own)?
- Is it overabundance, an excess of excitation, demanding a devastating acting-out, or else a vacuum of excitation, this lack inducing a feeling of nonexistence, or a void of thought and of affect?
- Is it, for Narcissus, fascinated self-sufficiency or else an omnipotent and raging grip placed on the object?
- Is it zero or infinity?" (Pontalis, "On Death-Work," 92).

Then, in a move that makes it seem like we are returning to the source, like we are separating the wheat from the chaff, an unhelpfully broad but deceptively concise proposition is offered: "So many possible, circumscribable *figures*, but which threaten to make us lose what is essential in the Freudian intuition: it is in its fundamental *process of unbinding*, of fragmentation, or breaking up, of separation, of bursting but also of enclosing – process that has no aim but its own accomplishment and whose repetitive nature brands it as instinctual – it is here that the death instinct operates" (Ibid., 92). Finally, and shortly on the heels of this purported clarification, we receive a collection of clearly related developments (listed with the pithiness of unpublished notes) whose relation is actually not illuminated by the clarification just offered: "the anarchical proliferation of suburban complexes, which in fact create fragmentation; an ever-growing mass on information that cuts off the individual from any sensual reality or social communication, that robs him of his creativity; the increase in 'cultural life'; closed lingos that no longer refer to anything but themselves: there is an exchange, but only with another which is the same as oneself – prevalence of endogamy" (Ibid., 94).

already noted, despite introducing Freud to many of his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research, Erich Fromm clearly and loudly rejected “Freud’s life and death instinct theory, which he dismissed as an injudicious mixture of biology and psychology.”⁴⁰ After Fromm’s departure from the Institute, other members came to criticize him for this revisionist distaste for Freudian drive theory. According to Max Horkheimer, “Freud’s notion of the death instinct had an ‘objective intention’ that was ‘deeply right,’ not because it corresponded to a biological universal, but because it expressed the depth and severity of modern man’s destructive urges.”⁴¹ In short, Freud “had his heart in the right place.”⁴² Theodor Adorno would agree in a spirited defense of drive theory in “Social Science and Sociological Tendencies in Psychoanalysis,” attacking Fromm for misrepresenting Freud as having mechanically divided the human soul into fixed instincts.⁴³ He furthermore felt the pessimism expressed in Freud’s later cultural works, highly influenced by his theory of the death drive, “appeared as a necessary bulwark against the harmonistic illusions of the revisionists.”⁴⁴ Herbert Marcuse, on the other hand, viewed the death drive as a historically-conditioned destructiveness produced by capitalist society, and both Marcuse and his student Norman O. Brown thought that the death drive

⁴⁰ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 92. Fromm’s most concise treatment of the theory of the death drive can be found in the Appendix to *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

⁴¹ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 103.

⁴² Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 103.

⁴³ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 103.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

would be overcome with a revolution in the social structure.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, many of these thinkers' intriguing ideas appear in only fragmentary form, both for philosophical reasons and for reasons stemming from the sheer vastness of the project of "marrying Marx and Freud," in which differences were often blurred and details often elided.⁴⁶

The absent center around which these various forms of reception relate is a serious confrontation with the death drive that does not reduce it to aggression and remains *within* Freud's conceptual space in an attempt to see what this notion undoes and redoes. This project is no different from the one Freud himself undertook after 1920.

§2 Life After Death: Freud's Account of the Origins of Life in Sections IV and V of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

In this section I intend to follow the death drive in the metapsychological narrative of which it is the primary character and without which I do not believe its significance can be fully appreciated. The death drive was a comprehensive solution to a fundamental problem for Freud, a thread that tied together seemingly disparate phenomena into a cohesive theoretical whole.⁴⁷ What were those phenomena? How did it function as a

⁴⁵ Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 112.

⁴⁶ Joel Whitebook, "The marriage of Marx and Freud: Critical Theory and psychoanalysis," *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Fred Rush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). The Frankfurt School appropriation of the death drive will be dealt with further in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴⁷ According to Erich Fromm, "the death instinct became a 'catchall' concept, by use of which one tried without success to resolve incompatible contradictions" (Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 455). Fromm believes that "sadism, aggressiveness, destructiveness, mastery, and will to power are qualitatively entirely different phenomena," though without taking the time to work through Freud's origins of life account (*Ibid.*, 470).

solution?

Before I begin, however, a brief note on method: I do not intend to treat Freud's text as "an ore which must be smelted to extract its precious content," in the words of Pierre Macherey; that is, I do not think the narrative outlined in what follows is in any way hidden beneath the surface of the text.⁴⁸ With the exception of a reference to Klein that is not essential to the coherence of the reading, I merely square certain claims with other claims, thereby offering a clearer view of the narrative, which, though absent from the commentaries on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, is right there in the text. By no means do I wish to "flatten" the oftentimes indecipherable speculations of the text, and I will indicate where Freud's thought trails off into territory foreign to the reading presented here. I believe there is a crucial difference between aporia and difficulty; finding it dangerous to begin with a Derridean deference to the former, I have aimed for coherence.

Without further ado: Sections I-III of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* introduce recently encountered difficulties that challenge the dominance of the pleasure principle, including war neurosis and the repetitive nature of children's play (the *Fort/Da* game). The first appearance of the term "death instinct" comes at the beginning of Section VI. Sections IV and V, which link the straightforward clinical observations of I-III to the introduction of the death drive in VI, are, for lack of better description, quite strange: they are an admittedly speculative attempt to account for the relation between the compulsion to repeat and the pleasure principle in a mythological narration of the genesis of life; or, in

⁴⁸ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 2006), 85; quoted in Warren Montag, *Louis Althusser* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 59.

Freud's terms, the emergence of the organic from the inorganic.⁴⁹ I will begin this reading in Section V and work my way back to Section IV, as Section V contains the most explicit description of the genesis of life.

Freud has no doubt that “inanimate things existed before living ones,” and so the biogonic⁵⁰ problem, for him, is one of the emergence of organic matter from the inorganic.⁵¹ Yet the specifics of its genesis form something like the “navel” of this particular dream: “the attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the action of a force whose nature we can form no conception.”⁵² Although the genesis of life itself is unfathomable, one can speculate that its first attempts were brief, given that the tension which “arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavored to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state. It was still an easy matter at that time for a living substance to die; the course of its life was probably only a brief one, whose direction was determined by the chemical structure of the young life.”⁵³

Though Freud does not call it by its name, this passage is the first introduction of the death drive, which is described here as resulting from the organism's endeavor to

⁴⁹ No doubt biologists will object to the use of “organic” and “inorganic” in this section, by which Freud means roughly “living” and “not-living.”

⁵⁰ Freud's myth is neither cosmogonic (relating to the beginning of the cosmos) nor anthropogonic (relating to the beginning of man), but, halfway between the two, *biogonic* (relating to the beginning of life).

⁵¹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 38.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

cancel out what it sees as a tension that disturbs an inanimate repose. A question immediately arises: given that all factors determining the course of this hapless first organism point to its absorption back into the inorganic, how is it that death could be anything *other* than an “easy matter?” That is, how do we get development? Freud admits that “for a long time, perhaps, living substance was thus being constantly created afresh and easily dying, till *decisive external influences* altered in such a way as to oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *détours* before reaching its aim of death. These circuitous paths to death, faithfully kept to by the conservative instincts, would thus present us today with the picture of the phenomena of life.”⁵⁴

How is one to understand these “decisive external influences?” Are they equally unfathomable as the forces that brought about the organic in the first place? This statement is all the more puzzling given what follows: two possible explanations of the development of life from this primitive state based upon *internal* influences. First, Freud follows an “extreme line of thought” and imagines the self-preservative instincts to be “component instincts whose function is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death.”⁵⁵ In other words, the death drive is already a kind of self-preservative drive insofar as it assures that the organism wards “off any possible ways of returning to

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38-39 (my emphasis).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 39.

inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself.”⁵⁶ Freud summarizes this first hypothesis with the conclusion that the “guardians of life” were originally “the myrmidons of death.”⁵⁷ Although this possibility is immediately rejected, an element of truth is buried in this first “extreme view,” which I will return to shortly.

The second hypothesis, which is promptly affirmed, is that certain “germ-cells” of primitive organisms “retain the original structure of living matter and, after a certain time, with their full complement of inherited and freshly acquired instinctual dispositions, separate themselves from the organism as a whole.”⁵⁸ “The instincts which watch over the destinies of these elementary organisms that survive the whole individual” are deemed “the true life instincts.”⁵⁹ This second hypothesis has the benefit of positing *real countervailing forces* to the death drive, as opposed to the first, which simply blurs the line between them. But the *existence* of these “germ-cells” still cannot be accounted for: in the first stirrings of life, Freud has only posited a drive to return to the inorganic. How is it that there was time for “germ-cells” to develop in such a hostile atmosphere? Even were this second hypothesis acceptable, Freud would still lack an explanation as to how the organism survives long enough for it to have any investment in procreation. Thus, if his genetic story is going to make sense beyond its humble beginnings, he must have recourse to something besides the “germ-cell” to explain the generation of instinctual conflict.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

And in fact, near the beginning of Section IV, he has already explained how *death itself can lead to life*: Freud here worries that a “living organism in its most simplified possible form” “would be killed by the stimulation emanating from” “an external world charged with the most powerful energies” “if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli.”⁶⁰ Note the inverted problematic: whereas in Section V he was concerned with how an organism could survive in the face of the death drive, here he is positing a hostile external world against which the organism defends itself. Why does this organism devote its energy to developing a protective shield, given that its only impulse is to die? In other words, how does Freud get from brief eruptions of life with little interest in remaining alive to a situation where life is actually defending itself from the external world? He explains as follows:

[The organism] acquires its shield in this way: its outermost surface *ceases to have the structure proper to living matter, becomes to some degree inorganic* and thenceforward functions as a special envelope or membrane resistant to stimuli. In consequence, the energies of the external world are able to pass into the next underlying layers, which have remained living, with only a fragment of their original intensity; and these layers can devote themselves, behind the protective shield, to the reception of the amounts of stimulus which have been allowed through it. *By its death [Absterben], the outer layer has saved all the deeper ones from a similar fate – unless, that is to say, stimuli reach it which are so strong that they break through the protective shield [Reizschutz].*⁶¹

A solution as elegant as it is strange: in *partly* attaining the aim of the death drive, the organism inadvertently *protects* itself through the construction of a “dead” psychic

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 27. Monique Schneider notes that “stimuli” in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* are “rencontrés originellement comme agresseurs potentiels” (Monique Schneider, “Pulsion de mort et « refus de la féminité »”, *La pulsion de mort en psychanalyse et philosophie*, 50).

⁶¹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 27 (my emphasis).

Reizschutz.⁶² Without recourse to any other principle than that of the death drive, Freud has found a reason why life might be preserved in an organism that has no intention to live. His statement that the guardians of life were originally the myrmidons of death is thus not unfounded: by fortuitous cosmic accident, the sole instinct manifested in the first organism happened to also be, when only partially gratified in a very particular way, its own opposition. And so there is a genuine conflict between the instinctual impulse back to the inorganic and that same instinct inasmuch as it partly succeeds in its task while nonetheless protecting the organism.⁶³

⁶² Derrida calls this psychic structure a “prosthesis of the inside:” “Taking into account the multiplicity of regions in the psychic apparatus, this model also integrates the necessity, inside the *psyche* itself, of a certain outside, of certain borders between insides and outsides. And with this *domestic outside*, that is to say also with the hypothesis of an *internal* substrate, surface, or space without which there is neither consignment, registration, impression nor suppression, censorship, repression, it prepares the idea of a psychic archive distinct from spontaneous memory, of a *hypomnesis* distinct from *mneme* and from *anamnesis*: the institution, in sum, of a *prosthesis of the inside* (Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 19).

⁶³ Freud's vision of the emergence of dynamism from instinctual monism bears striking similarities to the cosmological narrative recounted by F.W.J. Schelling in his failed project *Ages of the World*, and there is evidence that Schelling's works indirectly influenced Freud through his familiarity with the “voluntarist” tradition in German philosophy (Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 146). Like Freud, Schelling believes that a kind of zero-level repose, which he calls “absolute indifference,” is “first” and “highest,” and that all life emerges from this “nothingness.” Just as the death instinct is the first instinctual response to the disruption of the inorganic for Freud, so too for Schelling the first step away from absolute indifference is the eruption of a destructive will amidst its peace (unlike Freud, however, Schelling does attempt to explain what Freud had deemed unfathomable: see Friedrich Schelling, *Ages of the World*, trans. Judith Norman (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 137). As Slavoj Žižek explains it, the passive indifference of wanting *nothing* transforms into the active will of *wanting* nothing; a mere shift of emphasis gives birth to the first will for Schelling, just as for Freud small cosmic accidents give rise to the first instinct (Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder* (London: Verso, 1996), 23). Finally, and most importantly, both Schelling and Freud posit that an opposing will naturally emerges from the destructive instinct. For Schelling, the “contractive” will cannot negate without an implicit idea of what it is negating, which itself gives rise to an affirming, “expansive” will that, like Freud's life instinct, binds into ever greater totalities. While this comparison might not be particularly illuminating, as Schelling probably only makes more confusing what is already quite alien, it does show precedence for Freud's project in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

In general, Freud's philosophical precedents, specifically Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, are well-known and much discussed (Dufresne, *Tales from the Freudian Crypt*, 80-88). Peter Sloterdijk offers further precedence for his speculations on the death drive in Chapter 3 of *Bubbles*; see in particular his discussion of Friedrich Hufeland's *On Sympathy* (Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Volume I: Bubbles*, 239-251). And since the release of *A Dangerous Method* (dir. David Cronenberg, perf. Michael Fassbinder, Keira Knightley, Viggo Mortensen,

But something is not right about this picture: if the organism seeks a return to the inorganic, what exactly is so threatening about the external world that it needs to build a protective shield? Why would it not welcome death? Freud has described the *mechanism* for the construction of the protective shield but not the *reason* for it. Another question: if the organism's environment is inorganic matter, as Freud says it is, how does he distinguish the inorganic shield from the inorganic external world? In other words, what is the difference between dying and dying to protect oneself? In sum, if the organism is to have reason to construct a protective shield, the external world somehow must become charged with energies in a way that both transforms a longed-for origin into a hostile threat⁶⁴ and that differentiates it from the organism's protective outer layer.

Once again, Freud addresses this precise problem when he turns his attention to a particular way in which the fledgling organism deals with an overabundance of unpleasurable tensions: "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 is the origin of *projection*...."⁶⁵ Is "projection," like the "germ-cell," but another incomprehensible addition to Freud's story? Where does projection come from in an organism made up only of death

DVD, Sony Pictures, 2012), there has been a renewed interest in Sabina Spielrein's influence on the formation of his theory (for an initial treatment of Spielrein's connection with Jung and Freud, see Bruno Bettelheim, "A Secret Asymmetry," *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990]).

⁶⁴ Without making sense of this transition, one is forced to conclude, as Monique Schneider does, that "les puissances de destruction sont donc, du moins dans ce texte, fondamentalement situées en dehors du psychisme" (Schneider, "Pulsion de mort et « refus de la féminité »", 55).

⁶⁵ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 29.

drive?

It is possible to follow an avenue of interpretation made possible by later psychoanalytic developments (specifically, Kleinian theory) that provides a very good reason for the introduction of projection at this point in Freud's narrative (though Freud himself does not offer it). Kleinians treat projection as implied in a *position* rather than as a psychic mechanism; projection, in this view, is not simply something that happens but is a concomitant of a certain view of the world. Freud's account can be reasonably reconstructed in light of this understanding of projection as follows: in the beginning stages of its differentiation from the inorganic, the organism is not yet truly an "inside" distinct from an inorganic "outside." The tension constitutive of the death drive is thus (to appropriate terms from Thomas Ogden) both a tension *within* and a tension *between*: from one angle, the organic is a tension *within* a larger inorganic system. From another, the organic is *in tension* with the inorganic. These two views are both technically accurate, though they result in two very different relationships: in the first, the inorganic is the tensionless home of the organic. In the second, the inorganic is a hostile threat. It is tempting to call this situation, where the very same force can be seen as both one of homecoming and one of destruction, *primal ambivalence*.

Projection, in this view, is no simple exteriorizing mechanism; it is rather the assumption of the "tension between" position⁶⁶, which would be of no particular

⁶⁶ This language of "tension between" vs. "tension within" is developed from Thomas Ogden's *Subjects of Analysis* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977). The "tension between" position would be roughly equivalent to what Melanie Klein would call the paranoid-schizoid position; the primordial "tension within" position would then correspond to Ogden's conception of a third, "autistic-continguous" position, which

importance in comparison to the “tension within” position were it not for its effect of making the external world something against which to develop a protective shield.⁶⁷ The “tension between” position thus has *performative* effects: when the questionably exterior is treated as definitively exterior, further differentiation via the development of the protective shield results. In other words, an inorganic/organic “inside” is recognized as an inorganic “outside” in contrast to an organic “inside,” and this act itself leads to the increasing individuation of the organism. Projection is thus not simply the transposition of inside into outside but the simultaneous invention of both inside and outside.⁶⁸

Whether projection is a concomitant of a position or a psychic mechanism, as Freud most probably thought of it, its introduction at this point in the story casts doubt on the nature of the “decisive external influences” which were credited with the death drive’s detours: *how is it possible now to maintain the externality of the external?* In the paragraph that immediately follows the one in which he describes the origin of projection, Freud defines “as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield.”⁶⁹ If this reading has so far been accurate, when the organism turns its energy to the problem of mastering this great amount of stimulus that breaks in as a

he imagines to be “before” yet constitutive of the “experience of bounded surfaces” (Ibid., 36).

⁶⁷ Projection is thus not simply an escape, as is commonly imagined in psychoanalytic theory; it is also a form of protection.

⁶⁸ For the Kleinians, projection is not the exteiorization of something interior but rather the co-constitution of (m)Other and infant subject. As Ogden explains, the mother “is created by the infant [in her “counter-identification”] at the same time as she is creating (giving shape to) him” (Ibid., 46).

⁶⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 29.

result of trauma, it turns the death drive as reinforcer of the protective shield against the death drive “projected” as exterior threat. The death drive in its former capacity as protective shield builder is what “binds” the free-flowing energy that rushes through the traumatic breach by means of “anticathexis” into a dead, cortical layer; in other words, in this role, it operates as the *drive to mastery*.⁷⁰ In turning against itself in this way, the death drive (what might be called a drive to “self”-mastery, i.e. mastery of the tension of organic matter) is redirected outwards into a drive to “other”-mastery (mastery of the tension caused by “external” impingement).⁷¹

One can glimpse here the importance of distinguishing between aggression and the drive to mastery: for Freud, the death drive is not simply sent outwards into the world when it is deflected. Its destructiveness is still pointed at the self when it is exteriorized. In other words, “I want to annihilate myself” does not become “I want to annihilate others,” but rather “Others are trying to annihilate me” and “I want to protect myself against others” (and this dual movement is itself the invention of both “I” and “other” in this formulation). Freud himself admittedly does later speak of the externalization of the death drive into a sadistic drive: “Is it not plausible to suppose that this sadism is in fact a death instinct which, under the influence of the narcissistic libido, has been forced away from the ego and has consequently only emerged in relation to the object.”⁷² This is commonly

⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁷¹ After the introduction of the concept of narcissism in Freud’s work, one can easily see how mastery of the object can turn into mastery of the ego, given that the ego can itself be taken as an object. What I describe here, however, precedes and conditions this development.

⁷² Ibid., 54.

taken to mean that the death drive is simply an inward-pointing sadism, thus paving the way for the general equation of death drive and aggression. What, however, is the “narcissistic libido” in this sentence?⁷³ Just before this passage, Freud writes that “the ego is the true and original reservoir of libido, and that it is only from that reservoir that libido is extended on to objects. The ego now found its position among sexual objects and was at once given the foremost place among them. Libido which was in this way lodged in the ego was described as ‘narcissistic.’”⁷⁴ Freud wavers here between picturing the narcissistic libido to be “primary,” and thus before object libido, and “secondary,” and thus on equal footing with object libido; either way, the psychic structure of the ego must have some degree of existence if it is to be a reservoir for this energy. The very concept of narcissistic libido thus assumes a certain development of the psychic *Reizschutz*,⁷⁵ and thus that the drive to mastery has already been at work before the narcissistic libido manages to convert the death drive into sadism. This difference between aggression and the drive to mastery will be more fully explored in Chapter 3.

Freud’s picture of the beginning of life can now be completed: the protective shield, the external threats, and the drive to mastery that deals with those threats can all in some way be related back to the death drive, the concept that allows him to unite the diverse set

⁷³ See the discussion of libido in the next section.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁷⁵ In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud offers further evidence of the secondary nature of narcissistic libido: “The transformation of object-libido into narcissistic libido which thus takes place obviously implies an abandonment of sexual aims, a desexualization – a kind of sublimation therefore” (Freud, *Standard Edition* XIX, 30).

of phenomena he had introduced in Sections I-III of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, just as the theory of the primal horde had allowed him to explain a diverse set of anthropological data in *Totem and Taboo*. It should now be clear that there was more than a small difference between Freud's death drive and Adler's *Machtstreben* and that the death drive cannot be reduced to aggression.

To recap Freud's story:

- 1) "By the action of a force whose nature we can form no conception," the organic emerges from the inorganic.
- 2) The first instinct (the death drive) arises from the tension inherent in organic matter and the desired return to the "zero-level" of the inanimate.
- 3) By a certain partial and focused gratification of the death drive, the primitive organism is able to form a protective outer layer.
- 4) The organism exists in a state of *primal ambivalence* in relation to the inorganic: on the one hand, it is a tension within a larger inorganic whole. On the other, it is *in tension* with the inorganic. The assumption of the latter position is called *projection*.
- 5) Only with projection is the mechanism for the formation of a protective shield engaged against decisive "external" influences; this causes the organism to devote a great amount of energy to mastering invading stimuli and to further developing its structure of "bound energy," which serves to protect the organism with increasing strength.

This, in short, is the way one gets to a Nietzschean will for ever greater forms life from a

simple living vesicle that has no other wish than that it die.

§3 Primal Repression, or Tying off a Loose End in “The Economic Problem of Masochism”

In this section, I wish briefly to address a not insignificant idea left hanging in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: at one point in Freud’s description of his living vesicle, he writes that excitations “give rise to feelings in the pleasure-unpleasure series:” these feelings are said to “index what is happening in the interior” of the organism (which has hitherto been described solely in terms of death drive).⁷⁶ In an important follow-up paper to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud directly confronts this “economic problem” introduced by his new dual drive theory: if the death drive aims towards a reduction of tensions to a zero level, how is it that it differs from the pleasure principle, which had been previously defined in precisely the same terms? As Laplanche notes, the “principle of neuronc inertia” that Freud had posited in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, which asserted the tendency of neurones “to a complete discharge, to inertia, to a zero level,” went through three stages: “first, at this initial stage, under the name of the principle of neuronc inertia; soon thereafter under the term of “pleasure principle”; finally as the Nirvana principle or the principle of the death instinct.”⁷⁷ Given this conceptual confusion, Freud admits that his first impulse was simply to identify the two: “We have unhesitatingly identified the

⁷⁶ Freud, *Standard Edition* XVIII, 29.

⁷⁷ Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 57.

pleasure-unpleasure principle with this Nirvana principle.... The Nirvana principle (and the pleasure principle which is supposedly identical with it) would be entirely in the service of the death instincts, whose aim is to conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state, and it would have the function of giving warnings against the demands of the life instincts—the libido—which try to disturb the intended course of life. But such a view cannot be correct.”⁷⁸ Such a view cannot be correct because it would mean the principle that Freud had previously posited as governing all life would now be in the service of death; in this case, the pleasure principle would not truly have a “beyond.” He thus revises his conception of the pleasure principle, arguing that it deals not in “quantitative reduction” like the death drive but with some “qualitative factor” the nature and genesis of which he admits no knowledge.⁷⁹ But “however this may be, we must perceive that the Nirvana principle, belonging as it does to the death drive, has undergone a modification in living organisms through which it has become the pleasure principle.”⁸⁰

It is interesting to note that both the pleasure principle and the drive to mastery, the two basic requirements of life, one demanding satisfaction and nourishment, the other building the young organism's strength so as to put it in a better position to provide satisfaction and nourishment for itself, are in this view redirections and modifications of

⁷⁸ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIX, 159-160. Freud had attempted to solve some of these issues in “The Ego and the Id,” though there he still equated the constancy principle with the pleasure principle. “The Economic Problem of Masochism” represents a decisive step forward in the acceptance of his new dual instinct theory insofar as he abandons the conception of the pleasure principle that he had maintained for at least 30 years.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 160.

the death drive. It is tempting to view this process of redirection in terms of *repression*, which Freud had understood, from his earliest writings on the subject, as involving a split between an idea and its corresponding affect, the redirection of that affective force, and a distortion of the original idea. Freud was constantly searching for new ways to name this split (neurone/charge, idea/affect, word/thing), this difference between some kind of structure and its associated force. Since in the beginning stages of life the zero principle of the death drive is transformed into the pleasure principle and its associated entropic force is split up into a hostile exterior force and the drive to mastery, I propose to dub the event that gives rise to the drive to mastery and the pleasure principle *primal repression*. Freud introduces this term in his metapsychological paper “Repression,” though he provides it with very little content, other than to say that it is the primal event upon which all subsequent repression is modeled.⁸¹ Given its foundational role in the development of life, this event is most certainly the first instance of the distortion of an instinctual representative and the redirection of its force. This picture is consistent with Freud's argument that all development takes place as a result of instinctual repression.⁸²

Curiously enough, it is the *libido*, in Freud's mind, that accomplishes this task of

⁸¹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV, 148.

⁸² In the well-known joke about the broken kettle, A. defends himself against B.'s charges with the following defense: “First, I never borrowed a kettle from B. at all; secondly, the kettle had a hole in it already when I got it from him; and thirdly, I gave him back the kettle undamaged” (Freud, *Standard Edition* VIII, 62). Of course, any one of A.'s defenses would have worked on its own, but taken together, they belie their own intent. The pleasure principle and the drive to mastery, along with their cooperation in the service of the libido, might be read in a similar fashion, as asserted over and against an unsettling fact to which the structure of their relations nonetheless attests. There is not self-mastery, there is other-mastery. There is not zero principle, there is pleasure principle. There is not death instinct, there is life instinct.

redirection. What is it that modifies the Nirvana principle of the death drive into the pleasure principle? “It can only be the life instinct, the libido, which has thus, alongside of the death instinct, seized upon a share in the regulation of the processes of life.”⁸³ Later in the same paper, Freud writes that the libido has another task in addition to its modification of the Nirvana principle: that of “making [the death drive] innocuous...; it fulfills this task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards...towards objects in the external world.”⁸⁴ Although in both cases Freud attributes a positive agency to Eros, it is not clear that he is justified in positing a real countervailing force here, just as the proposal of a “germ-cell” did not follow from the narrative he began in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. According to that narrative, the drive to mastery, at least, is the product of the internal contradiction of the death drive and not the work of an external force.

In the case of the pleasure principle, there is reason to assume the same: when Freud says that the pleasure principle is an index of what is happening in the *interior* of the organism, he is already assuming a certain level of differentiation of the organism from its environment. One might speculate, then, based upon the discussion of the “tension within” and “tension between” positions from the previous section, that the pleasure principle aims not so much at some “qualitative factor” but rather the same “quantitative reduction” in a qualitatively different situation (the tension between position).

From this I can only conclude that the term “libido” is simply Freud’s way of

⁸³ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIX, 160.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

indicating any complications in the workings of the death drive that result in something other than death.⁸⁵ Since, again, the genesis of the drive to mastery and the pleasure principle have been explained with recourse only to complications of the death drive, it would furthermore make sense to say that these developments are products of a single force known as libido only *retroactively*, once a life-conducive organization (drive to mastery + pleasure principle) gains enough stability to create a genuine dynamism between the death drive and its derivative counter-force.⁸⁶

§4 Death and Mastery

I have engaged in this half-tiring, half-exhilarating exercise of attempting to make sense of Freud's meta-narrative in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and, for the sake of curiosity, of following its implications to their metapsychological end to arrive finally at the concepts

⁸⁵ Louis Beirmaert correctly notes that contrary to the perception that Eros is given priority in later Freudian metapsychology, one gets the impression that the death drive is "la seule pulsion essentielle et radicale du vivant. Monisme inverse de celui de Jung, pour qui n'existe que la pulsion de vie" (Beirmaert, "La pulsion de mort chez Freud," 401). I thus agree with Jean Bertrand Pontalis when he writes: "In my view, the theme of death is as basic to Freudian psychoanalysis as is the theme of sexuality. I even believe that the latter has been widely put forward so as to cover up the former" (Pontalis, "On Death-Work," 86).

⁸⁶ The topic of the role and function of libido is simply too much to fully explore within the confines of this chapter. The answer provided here is really only a note for further investigation, but this basic idea, that the libido is a dependent entity, a redirection of the energy of the death drive, is not a new one: although not exactly the same conclusion reached here, Laplanche argues in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* that "the term 'destrudo,' once proposed to designate the energy of the death instinct, did not survive a single day" because "the death instinct does not possess its own energy. Its energy is libido. Or, better put, the death instinct is the very soul, the constitutive principle, of libidinal circulation" (Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, 124). This reading is bolstered by his claim that "afterwardsness" (*Nachträglichkeit*) is the distinctive feature of libidinal operation, and thus that it can only be known retroactively. Richard Boothby also argues for the relatedness of the death drive and Eros in *Death and Desire*: "The erotic and destructive instincts are not essentially different organic forces. The 'life instincts' designate the force of somatic energies that have been made manipulable within the psychic system by being attached to instinctual representatives. Correlatively, vital energies that for lack of adequate representation remain foreign to the organisation of the ego constitute, from the standpoint of the psychic system that excludes them, a force of death" (Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 95-96).

of the death drive the drive to mastery that emerge from these speculations. What can now be said of death and mastery from this psychoanalytic point of view?

Regarding the death drive, much more can be said of its vicissitudes than the thing itself: its definition is exhausted by the simple aim of casting off differentiation and returning to the repose of the environment, into which the organism aims to disperse like “water in water,” to use Georges Bataille’s words.⁸⁷ The drive to mastery, on the other hand, is a much more complicated character. For the moment, I will sum up its basic characteristics in five points.

To begin, the drive to mastery provides protection for the organism by reinforcing its stimulus barrier [*Reizschutz*] when it is threatened, by harnessing “free” energy into a “bound” shield. In more familiar terms, one might say that the drive to mastery is responsible for the development of protective psychic structures that allow more skillful negotiation with the world, i.e. the confrontation of problematic situations and the possession of mastery within them, and for our general feeling of “having boundaries” that can be tested.

Second, it is directed against “exterior threats” that, at a more fundamental level, are neither truly exterior nor threats; which is to say a) that the drive to mastery is itself the cause of differentiation, the separation of inside and outside, and b) that these threats are repressed objects of desire. Developmentally, this might mean that living beings must turn their reality into a threat for the purpose of individuation, while at the same time

⁸⁷ Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 19.

maintaining a libidinal attachment. More generally, this is a long-winded way of theoretically codifying the folk wisdom that “we are our own worst enemies.”

Third, although the transition from the “tension within” to the “tension between” position involves something of a misrecognition, it is a necessary one: without turning its reality into a “hostile exterior,” or perhaps simply a *challenge*, the organism has no counterforce against which to mobilize its own forces of development. To the folk adage, we can append the qualifier “...and thank goodness for that!”

Fourth, the protective shield formed by the drive to mastery is a “dead” cortical layer covering over an “organic” kernel, but again, a kind of death that is necessary for the propagation of life. Developmentally this would mean that a certain cultivation of death that mediates the environment is required for survival.

Finally, due to the primal ambivalence of the organism, this protective shield can be neither too “thin” nor too “thick:” on the one hand, the organism cannot survive without a shield. On the other, if it becomes too insulated from the external world, it loses contact with its repressed object of desire. The cultivation of death in life thus easily lapses into death itself. The organism thus must both have constant contact with its environment (else it slide definitively into the “tension between” position, or the “paranoid-schizoid” position) and at the same time be able to ward off engulfment (else it remain too comfortable in the “tension within” position, or the “autistic-contiguous” position).⁸⁸

I am sure that more can be said about the drive to mastery (as much as can be said

⁸⁸ This argument will be more fully developed in the following chapter.

in any character analysis), but this brief list will suffice for now. The chapters that follow attempt to further flush out this concept of mastery in relation to its counter-drive/parent-drive, death.

Conclusion

To invert Nietzsche's concern with being "born posthumously," one might say that Freud explores the ways in which we "die prehumously;" that is, how death functions as an agent *in* life, both as its gravest enemy and its most intimate ally. The most basic urge in all living matter, according to Freud, is to return to the inanimate ooze from which it originally sprang. In this view, death might be seen as the *engine* of life, that which spurs life on to be something other than it is. Yet inasmuch as the satisfaction of this drive would lead to the end of life itself, death is also the ultimate *danger* to life. The situation only grows more complicated, however, for it is a peculiarity of the organism to bear the capacity to harness death towards its own *protection*. But protection against what? Well, continues Freud, protection against its own urges projected into the form of an external *threat*. Finally, as if this all weren't twisted enough, the form of death congealed in the organism's cortical layer can very easily slide back into *death* itself, since connection to the environment towards which it bears an urge towards re-absorption, i.e. its "reason for living," is endangered by an excess of protective structure building.

I have highlighted among the various "destinies" of the death drive one in particular, the drive to mastery, which has unfortunately been overlooked in the history of

psychoanalysis, despite its clearly central position in Freud's *oeuvre*. Mastery is attained, in Freud's view, when the death drive is channeled towards the reinforcement of the *Reizschutz*⁸⁹; it is also, however, threatened by an *overbuilding* of this same protective shield. In the next chapter, I will expand upon this liminal place of mastery in following the transformation of the metapsychological narrative of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* into the developmental theory proposed by the psychoanalyst-philosopher Hans Loewald.

⁸⁹ Paul Ricoeur also hints at the idea of a "nonpathological aspect of the death instinct" in the form of "mastery over the negative" but does not develop the thought (Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970], 286).

CHAPTER TWO

From Whence We Came: Hans Loewald and the Primordial Density

*If you say I am talking here not so much of a death instinct in Freud's sense,
but more of an urge toward the bliss and pain of consuming oneself
in the intensity of being lived by the id, you may be right.*
- Hans Loewald¹

Largely thanks to the influence of Melanie Klein, what is known in psychoanalytic parlance as “early object relations” (that is, the pre-oedipal relation between mother and infant) became of great interest to Freud’s heirs, eager to both extend the psychoanalytic domain as well as distinguish themselves from their master. While Freud’s discovery of the oedipal struggle with the father was a landmark in developmental psychology, he did little to illuminate, they argued, the pre- and neo-natal maternal relations so important to the formation of stable psychic structures (perhaps the reason why “woman” remained for Freud “the dark continent”). Many related psychoanalytic “schools” were born from this blind spot, including, most notably, the object relations² and attachment³ theorists.

¹ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 68.

² See W.R.D. Fairbairn, *An Object-Relations Theory of Personality* (New York: Basic Books, 1962) and Harry Guntrip, *Personality Structure and Human Interaction* (New York: International Universities Press, 1961).

³ See John Bowlby, *Attachment: Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1* (New York: Basic Books, 1969) and Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, eds., *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008).

Some analysts interested in early attachments, including Donald Winnicott⁴, Margaret Mahler⁵, Heinz Kohut⁶, and Béla Grunberger⁷ (all of whom were instrumental in the formation of this chapter), came to associate this early mother-infant relationship with Freud's underdeveloped thoughts on primary narcissism, which, though embryonic, contained important clues to unlocking the mysteries of this foundational psychic relationship. None, however, looked so intensely to Freudian metapsychology to understand the "mother-infant dyad" as the psychoanalyst-philosopher Hans Loewald.⁸ I turn to Loewald in this chapter because I believe his developmental theory is the most devoted attempt in the history of psychoanalysis to make sense of Freud's metapsychology in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and, by extension, the most intensive elaboration of the speculations that led to the introduction of the death drive.

My aim in this chapter, in brief, is to provide a selective introduction to Loewald's

⁴ D.W. Winnicott, "Metapsychological and Clinical Aspects of Regression Within the Psycho-Analytical Set-Up," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 36 (1955), 19.

⁵ Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 42.

⁶ Heinz Kohut, "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14 (1966), 245-246.

⁷ Béla Grunberger, *Narcissism: Psychoanalytic Essays*, trans. Joyce S. Diamanti (New York: International Universities Press, 1979), 107.

⁸ A self-professed ego-psychologist and by-the-book Freudian, Loewald was a clinical professor in psychiatry at Yale. Before emigrating to America in the 40's, he had studied philosophy, his "first love," with Martin Heidegger (and even furnished extensive transcripts for his teacher's Marburg lecture course in 1924-25) (James W. Jones, "Hans Loewald: The Psychoanalyst as Mystic," *The Psychoanalytic Review* 88 [2001], 793; Theodore Kiesel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being & Time* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993], 540). When Loewald began publishing in 1951, his work immediately resounded with the psychoanalytic establishment and yet seemed to point beyond its narrow dogmatism. He was an early supporter of Heinz Kohut's self-psychology "heresy," and in turn was accorded the title of "proto-postmodern" when the self-psychologists turned "relationalists." Although his work has experienced a renaissance within American analytic circles in the last decade or two, it is largely unknown outside of them.

developmental theory using the lens of the metapsychology from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.⁹ Although the view from this lens will look markedly different from that of other introductions to his work¹⁰, I am merely bringing into relief certain less well-known ideas of his to the detriment of other more discussed ones, resulting in a new take on his work as a whole. In Section §1, I present Loewald's postulation of a "primordial density" as an extension of Freud's theory of the death drive¹¹ as it is worked out in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. By providing an ontogenic equivalent to Freud's phylogenic story, Loewald gives us good reason to take Freudian drive theory as more than "biologistic" anachronism. Having laid out the basics of his transformation of Freudian drive theory into a developmental model, I then turn, in Section §2, to his novel theory of the birth of the superego, and in particular its relation to the instinctual dualism of Eros and the death

⁹ In what follows, I will be relying on the entirety of Loewald's work, encapsulated in his collection of essays titled *Papers on Psychoanalysis* and his two books, *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual and Sublimation*. Particular attention will be paid to three of his essays in *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, "Ego and Reality," "Primary Process, Secondary Process, and Language," and "Internalization, Separation, Mourning, and the Superego," the connections between which first inspired the writing of this piece.

¹⁰ Stephen Mitchell, "From Ghosts to Ancestors: The Psychoanalytic Vision of Hans Loewald," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 8 (1998); Jonathan Lear, "The Introduction of Eros: Reflections on the Work of Hans Loewald," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 44 (1996); Nancy Chodorow, "The psychoanalytic vision of Hans Loewald," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84 (2003).

¹¹ To anticipate an objection from those more familiar with Loewald's work: in "On Motivation and Instinct Theory" and other places, Loewald argues that "insofar as the death instinct can be equated with the constancy-inertia-unpleasure principle, the death instinct is nothing startlingly new in Freud's theory.... What is new in Freud's new instinct theory and in the structural theory is the life instinct as an intrinsic motive force of the psyche paired with the death instinct" (Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 124). One might wonder, then, why I am proposing here that Loewald's developmental model, indeed the entire thrust of his work, is an extension of Freud's theory of the death drive. As I will demonstrate in Section §1, Loewald *does* explicitly deal with the later Freudian drive theory to work out his theory of primary undifferentiation, though he strangely does not make reference to the death drive while doing so. One would assume that he did not want to draw the obvious connection between his "urge to union" and the death drive because he was addressing the psychoanalytic establishment of his day, which, by and large, rejected the theoretical relevance of the death drive. In any event, I will not rely on this speculation but rather demonstrate the validity of the connection in Section §1.

drive. Sections §3 and §4 then look at this same developmental accomplishment in terms of language acquisition and religious experience, respectively. In effect, these sections offer three different perspectives on one and the same process: that is, how the death drive, or at least Loewald's particular version of it, is channeled towards aims that are strikingly similar yet fundamentally opposed to its own.

§1 The Primordial Density

It is a great blunder of history that Loewald's work should have first been metabolized by the ego-psychologists and then "liberated" by the psychoanalytic relationalists¹², for its reception by these schools precluded the possibility of interpreting his developmental theory as the good doctor did himself: that is, as an extension of Freudian metapsychology as it appears in Sections IV and V of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. As I demonstrated in Chapter 1, Freud had attempted in these two speculative sections to formulate a comprehensive vision of the origins of life, in which a living vesicle represses its own drive to return to the inorganic environment from which it sprang, i.e. the death drive, and instead redirects this energy to reinforcing its stimulus-barrier against what it perceives as a hostile exterior. In "Ego and Reality," the opening essay of *Papers on Psychoanalysis* and in many ways the keystone to his entire corpus, Loewald takes this "biologistic" model as his point of departure. The ego, in these terms, "is the outer, cortical layer of the id and has as such become different from the inner stratum. The

¹² See, for instance, Judith Guss Teicholz's *Kohut, Loewald, and the Postmoderns: A Comparative Study of the Self and Relationship* (London: Routledge, 1999).

influence of external reality, which has brought forth the ego, is seen as essentially threatening and hostile. Correspondingly, the predominant function of the ego is a defensive one, not only against reality but also against the inner world of the id, which disregards reality.”¹³ In this standard psychoanalytic picture, the infant’s psyche, under the duress of an unforgiving reality, develops a protective cortical layer (the ego) that mediates between outer and inner world (external reality and id). Running with a passage from *Civilization and its Discontents*, where Freud claims that “the neonate does not distinguish an ego from an outer world,” Loewald challenges this standard view: it is not, he argues, that the ego develops as protection against an already existent, objective reality but rather that ego and reality co-emerge from a more primary psychic undifferentiation. “In other words, the psychological constitution of ego and outer world go hand in hand.”¹⁴

If, however, reality is not the external menace that Freud makes it out to be, what prompts psychic development? For Loewald, it is the “infant’s repeated experience that something, in his original feeling a part of him, is not always available, this repeated experience of separateness” that first fractures the “primordial density”¹⁵ from which id,

¹³ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ Loewald also thinks of this “primordial density” as the ego in its original form: “Originally the ego contains everything. Our adult ego feeling, Freud says, is only a shrunken vestige of an all-embracing feeling of intimate connection, or, we might say, unity with the environment” (*Ibid.*, 5). For this reason, he equates this density of id, ego, and reality with Freud’s primary narcissism, much in the manner of Winnicott, Mahler, Kohut, and Grunberger. I have chosen here to avoid this term (primary narcissism) simply because I do not believe a state of psychic undifferentiation deserves the label “narcissism” (or “ego”). The myth of Narcissus concerns the perils of identification with a specular other, which assumes at least a minimum of psychic differentiation (see Chapter 3). While Freud’s ambiguous speculations on primary narcissism have proven irresistible to many authors, I think it is a theoretical mistake to use the term to describe a psychic state lacking in clear self/other distinction.

ego, and external world eventually blossom.

There is, biologically and psychologically, an increasing emancipation from the mother that leads to an ever-growing tension. The less mother and child are one, the more they become separate entities, the more will there be a dynamic interplay of forces between these two 'systems.' As the mother becomes outside, and hand in hand with this, the child an inside, there arises a tension system between the two. Expressed in different terms, libidinal forces arise between infant and mother. As infant (mouth) and mother (breast) are not identical, or better, not one whole, any longer, a libidinal flow between infant and mother originates, in an urge towards re-establishing the original unity.¹⁶

Just as in Freud's account of the genesis of life, a tension arises within an undifferentiated "system" that leads to an urge back to a tensionless state. Loewald equates this urge (what Freud would call the death drive) with the infant's desire to rid herself of her separateness and to return to an original unity, where "there are no boundaries and therefore there is no distinction between [infant and her environment]."¹⁷ This undifferentiated "oneness" is not, Loewald thinks, some mystical fantasy but rather the original state of being from which we all emerge. The child's *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*, in this view, do "not develop from an originally unrelated co-existence of two separate entities which come into contact with each other, but on the contrary from a unitary whole which differentiates into distinct parts. Mother and baby do not get together and develop a relationship, but the baby is born, becomes detached from the mother, and thus a relatedness between two parts which originally were one becomes possible."¹⁸ Since the child's first "reality" is but one part of a

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

more “global situation” that has resulted from the fracture of the primordial density, Freud was wrong, Loewald continues, to have portrayed reality as fundamentally threatening; in his own words, “reality, understood genetically, is not primarily outside and hostile, alien to the ego, but intimately connected with and originally not even distinguished from it.”¹⁹ Far from wishing to defend herself from a hostile environment, the infant wants nothing more, at this developmental stage, than to be rid of the burden of separateness and to dissolve herself once more in the tension-less repose of the “mother-child dyad.”

How do we get from this first developmental stage, in which “inner” and “outer” are separate but still components of a larger whole that the child wishes to reintegrate, to the next stage, where the id, ego, and reality are clearly distinct entities? Here Loewald invokes Karen Horney’s thesis of a “dread of the vulva” to move his story along: at the same time that the infant wishes to reintegrate the lost wholeness from she has emerged, she is also, he quizzically asserts, terrified of that same possibility, of returning from whence she came. More concisely, “the positive libidinal relation to the mother is understood as consisting of the two components: need for union with her and dread of this union.”²⁰

Although this move perfectly parallels Freud’s (one and the same “environment” signifies both a longed-for origin and a dreaded threat), it is not immediately clear what Loewald is proposing here. One might guess that he is offering something like Melanie Klein’s theory of the “paranoid-schizoid” position, where one and the same object is split

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

into “good” and “bad” parts. However, unlike Klein, who posits something like an inherent tendency within the psyche toward splitting, Loewald thinks the infant has very good reason for her dual mindset. At the same time that she experiences her situation as one of wholeness, he argues, the infant is also presented with the stark fact of separateness, one that she is forced to deal with in moments of absence.

In fear and trembling, the infant manages this fragmentation of her world through a process that Loewald calls *internalization*, which he describes in terms taken from *Mourning and Melancholia*: the global situation in which the infant exists is momentarily shattered, but by taking in part of her absent reality (that is, by mourning it), she is able to build and further reinforce the psychic structures of her own “internal world” and thereby come to experience the separation “not as deprivation or loss but as liberation and a sign of mastery.”²¹ In short, “the road leads from depression through mourning to elation.”²² It is this process, and not conflict with an objectively hostile reality, that leads to the genesis of the ego. Where, then, does “dread of union” come in? The infant is, as Loewald says, elated at her newly acquired mastery and eager to maintain and further the ego boundaries she has so doggedly worked to construct.²³ From this new vantage point, the possibility of

²¹ Ibid., 263. According to Freud, mourning is a way of reinforcing one's psychic structure in the face of deprivation, and in this sense, it may be conceived as the basic mechanism with which the child protects herself from an unmanageable reality. All the better for the infant that as this process is “carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy,... in the meantime the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged” (Freud, *Standard Edition* XIV, 245).

²² Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 263.

²³ As Joel Whitebook notes, “Loewald introduces a distinction between ‘mastery’ as domination,’ that is, domination of inner nature by the imperious subject (cf. Freud’s image of the draining of the Zuider Zee), and mastery as ‘coming to grips with.’ One assumes that, in ‘coming to grips with,’ the imperious subject is itself civilized, which is to say, simultaneously decentered and naturalized” (Whitebook, *Perversion and*

psychic undifferentiation appears as a threat “to engulf the emerging ego into the original unity,” and thereby reverse the painstaking accomplishments of internalization.²⁴

However, although the infant gains mastery over her environment through this painful separation process, Loewald is not the kind of moralist who encourages training to the harsh realities of disappointment and loss: the parents’ absence, their inability to properly respond to their child’s needs and all of the other ingredients that go into the mourning process are inevitabilities, givens of our finite and flawed existence. The parents’ task is less to facilitate structure building than to prevent what might be called an “overbuilding” of structure in the face of a hostile and lacking reality. The kind of intervention that minimizes the “discrepancy between the individual [child]’s needs and the support of the environment” preserves the “wholeness” in the child’s world reminiscent of the lost intimacy from which she has been severed.²⁵ Without this support, which grows with the child, responding and adapting to her emergent autonomy, the infant loses the fluid relationship with reality characteristic of what I have called the “tension-within” position and comes to see reality as exclusively external and hostile.

We thus have here not only an alternative to the standard psychoanalytic account of the genesis of the ego but also an explanation of Freud’s understanding of reality.

Though it is tempting to engage in a bit of psychobiography here, attributing Freud’s

Utopia, 253). In this chapter, I am using “mastery” in this second sense of “coming to grips with,” which I have identified in the previous chapter with *Bewältigung*.

²⁴ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

perception of a hostile reality to a lack of parental mutuality, Loewald rightly looks to the cultural environment in which psychoanalysis was born:

Freud as well as many others before and after him have been profoundly influenced in their way of experiencing life, and therefore in their thinking, by the overwhelming and increasing impact of social, political, economical, and cultural changes on the individual. The high degree of differentiation and complexity of our civilization, which seems to have run away from its human sources and foundations and to have taken a course all its own, seldom mastered and understood, has led to the view that culture and reality as a whole is basically and by definition inimical to the individual. The estrangement of man from his culture (from moral and religious norms that nevertheless continue to determine his conduct and thus are experienced as hostile impositions) and the fear and suppression of controlled but nondefensive regression is the emotional and intellectual climate in which Freud conceived his ideas of the psychological structure of the individual and the individual's relationship to reality. It is also the climate in which neurosis grows – and here we hark back to our exposition of the neurotogenic conflict situation. The hostile, submissive-rebellious manipulation of the environment and the repressive-reactive manipulation of inner needs, so characteristic and necessary for man who cannot keep pace with the complexity of his culture and for a culture that loses contact with its human origins, is the domain of neurotic development. It is the above-described discrepancy situation repeated and re-enacted on a different level.²⁶

For this reason, “psychoanalytic theory has unwittingly taken over much of the obsessive neurotic's experience and conception of reality and has taken it for granted as ‘the objective reality.’”²⁷ In other words, in positing a fundamentally hostile and disappointing reality, Freud universalized an “overbuilt” defensive psychic structure, one that suffers from a discrepancy between individual need and environmental support.²⁸ Loewald's criticism is

²⁶ Ibid., 29.

²⁷ Ibid., 30.

²⁸ In *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown turns to Sigmund and Anna Freud's respective theories of defense to explain what “psychic reassurances or palliatives walls provide amid” “the loss of horizons, order, and identity attending the decline of state sovereignty” (Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* [Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2010], 107). One might object, with Loewald, that “walling” is not a

all the more devastating in saddling psychoanalytic theory with the same diagnosis that Freud had made of the religious believer.

One final note before moving on to Loewald's innovative additions to the Freudian meta-narrative: one might wonder if the old "mother-child undifferentiation" thesis is still worth taking seriously, especially after Daniel Stern's *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, which, for many, laid this belief in undifferentiation to rest. For Stern, "infants begin to experience a sense of an emergent self from birth. They are pre-designed to be aware of self-organizing processes. They never experience a period of total self/other undifferentiation."²⁹ He argues further that "undifferentiation" is in fact an adult projection on the child's universe: "Only an observer who has enough perspective to know the future course of things can even imagine an undifferentiated state.... The traditional notions of clinical theorists have taken the observer's knowledge of infants - that is, the relative undifferentiation compared to the differentiated view of older children - reified it, and given it back, or attributed it, to infants as their own dominant subjective sense of things."³⁰ Although I am convinced by much of Stern's evidence for the neonate's sense of

defensive reaction to the supposed weakness of a sublimated father figure but a more primordial form of psychic structure building that results from a discrepancy between individual need and environmental support.

²⁹ Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (London: Karnac Books, 1998), 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 46. I am especially weary of this latter projection claim: when dealing with the world of the infant, most every description could be accused of the same (and attributing a sense of "self" to the neonate seems particularly ripe for this kind of criticism).

differentiation, one would have to go back to the moment of conception to fully refute the claim that the infant's psychic world begins in an undifferentiated state. I am thus more in agreement with Stern's point of departure than his conclusion: "Posing these questions [about the subjective life of young infants] is something like wondering what the universe might have been like the first few hours after the big bang [or, for that matter, what life might have been like the first few hours after its emergence from the primordial ooze!] The universe was created only once, way out there, while interpersonal worlds are created, in here, every day in each new infant's mind. *Yet both events, at almost opposite frontiers, remain remote and inaccessible to our direct experience.*"³¹

In any event, what matters more than the *actual existence* of this undifferentiation is the fact that human beings acquire motivational forces in relation to a perceived undifferentiation. As C. Fred Alford aptly states, the existence and intensity of a longing for a primitive state of undifferentiation, "as well as its effect on history and culture, does not depend on whether such a state ever actually existed. Indeed, the influence of this so-called memory may be all the greater for evoking a state that never was."³² On this issue, Stern admits that "merger- or fusion-like experiences" are powerfully attractive secondary constructions. Admittedly, Loewald does assert, without much nuance, an initial undifferentiation of mother and infant, one that I am not prepared to defend (or deny); but what interests me more in his developmental model, however, is the conflict between

³¹ Ibid., 3-4 (my emphasis).

³² Alford, *Narcissism*, 9.

what he calls “urge to union” and “dread of union,” a conflict that could exist regardless of an actual state of original undifferentiation.

To be even more precise, I believe that the heart of Loewald’s work, unlike Mahler’s, for instance, lies less with the distinction between undifferentiation and differentiation than with the two conflicting psychic states that I have called the tension-within and the tension-between positions. In one, “inner” and “outer” are components of a larger situation still experienced by the child to be relatively whole (note that one could concede to Stern that the neonate bears a limited sense of differentiation in this state). In the other, that situation has been fractured by an overwhelming experience of separateness, and in this fragile state, the child works to develop a protective psychic structure that clearly delimits id and reality. It is the conflict between these two positions, and not in psychic undifferentiation *per se*, that interests me here.

§2 The Birth of the Superego

When Loewald uses the term “internalization,” he is usually referring to “the processes involved in the creation of... an internal world and its structural resultants.”³³ In its standard psychoanalytic usage, by contrast, internalization involves the transposition of “objects and their inherent qualities from the ‘outside’ to the ‘inside,’” a procedure that requires the previous existence of clearly demarcated inner and outer worlds.³⁴

³³ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 73.

³⁴ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 226.

Recognizing the discrepancy, Loewald distinguishes between primary and secondary internalization: in its primary form, internality is *constituted* through the “mourning” process just described. Since we are dealing here with “boundary-creating processes” and “processes of differentiation of an undifferentiated state,” primary internalization is really the primary *differentiation* of inner and outer (and thus, one might say, the accomplishment of the drive to mastery).³⁵ Only thanks to the prior work of this differentiation can secondary internalization, in which “something that was external becomes internal,” proceed.³⁶

Corresponding to these two types of internalization are two modes of relating to the primordial density: in the first, ego boundaries are still under construction, and thus the infant does not yet feel totally separate from the “global experience of the mother-child field.” Still lacking the knowledge that the reintegration of her world has become an impossibility, her urge to restore psychic undifferentiation is direct and immediate. In the second stage, a basic psychic boundary delimiting “inside” and “outside” has been established, and the child is forced to grapple with irreversible differentiation. However, though removed definitively from her lost paradise, she does not give up on attaining its “wholeness:” from the pieces of her fragmented world, she now seeks to synthesize a totality resembling the primordial density from which she has departed. Unable to be satisfied directly, the child’s “urge to union” is thus transformed into a secondary

³⁵ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 266.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 266.

“synthetic” activity that aims to restore, “on more and more complex levels of differentiation and objectivation of reality, the original unity.”³⁷ To repack the epigraph to the *Interpretation of Dreams*: If I cannot return to heaven, I shall recreate it elsewhere.

In this way, the child rids herself of her overwhelming desire for reimmersion in the mother-child dyad (the maternal *arche*) and instead sets herself the goal of reassembling its wholeness on a higher level (the *arche* become *telos*).³⁸ It should not go unmentioned that Loewald has here completely reconceptualized the relation between Eros and the death drive: according to Freud, “the aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus – in short, to bind together; the aim of the second is, on the contrary, to undo connections and so to destroy things.”³⁹ For Loewald, by contrast, Eros and the death drive have the same aim but function at different levels of psychic maturation: whereas Eros aims to “establish ever greater unities” at the secondary-process level (that is, after the severance of “inner” and “outer”), the death drive seeks a return to a lost unity at the primary-process (undifferentiated) level. The instinctual “dualism” that leaves the human psyche rent is thus not between two opposing drives but between two manifestations of one and the same drive.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁸ Phyllis and Robert Tyson describe this process as follows: “The subject’s narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to [a] new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value... What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal” (Phyllis and Robert Tyson, “Narcissism and Superego Development,” *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 32 [1984], 94).

³⁹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XXIII, 148.

From the transformation of a past oneness into an ideal achievement, Loewald continues, a new psychic agency is born, whose task is to oversee the ego's progression toward this goal (what Loewald calls its "ego-ideal"). This new agency, which "functions from the viewpoint of a future ego, from the standpoint of the ego's future which is to be reached, is being reached, is being failed or abandoned by the ego," is, of course, the superego, the ego's guide on its path to secondary unity.⁴⁰ In transferring the energy of the death drive toward the synthetic activity of Eros, the superego, in effect, hijacks the past-oriented force of the death drive and directs it to new, future-oriented aims. Like the Greeks for Kierkegaard, infants approach "wholeness" as "the past that can only be entered backwards;"⁴¹ but with the redirection of the death drive and the birth of the superego, they come to experience this same wholeness as something to be achieved in the future, thereby acquiring the "fullness of time."⁴²

This "rewriting" of the death drive is characterized by what Freud called *Nachträglichkeit*, or "afterwardsness," in Jean Laplanche's translation. Freud had introduced this term in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* in discussion of the case of

⁴⁰ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 45.

⁴¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 90. Mark C. Taylor draws the parallel between Kierkegaard's stages and the psychoanalytic developmental model in *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 73-74.

⁴² One could also see Loewald's conception of the birth of the superego in terms of the Hegelian dialectic, as Joel Whitebook does (*Perversion and Utopia*, 246-257). Hegel could be seen as offering the closest approximation of this developmental story in "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate," where the Greeks are conceived of as a primordial unity, Judaism as represented in the figure of Abraham as alienation, and Christianity as reconciliation (Friedrich Hegel, *On Christianity: Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961]).

Emma, who, at eight years of age, is sexually assaulted by a shopkeeper (about whom she can only remember his laugh).⁴³ On a shopping trip at eighteen years, someone happens to laugh at her clothes, and this seemingly benign gesture sets off hysterical symptoms. The temporality of this episode is what interests Freud most: it is not simply that her encounter at age eight *becomes* sexual at eighteen, but rather that it becomes *retroactively* sexual at eight. She is guilty *après-coup*. To put it in the awkward tense of the future perfect, her episode at eight *will have been* traumatic. In a similar way, it is not that the *arche* of psychic undifferentiation becomes the ego-ideal *telos* after a certain developmental accomplishment, but that *the arche will have been the telos*, that the primordial density towards which the child feels an urge to union is “rewritten” as the ideal future towards which the ego strives. Although it is never totally erased by this action, the urge to union (again, the death drive) for the most part disappears in this way beneath the ego’s new desire to achieve its ego-ideal.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud had connected the superego and the death drive, saying that the latter’s “destructive component” can entrench itself in the superego and turn against the ego. In this scenario, what is “holding sway in the superego is, as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct, and in fact it often enough succeeds in driving the ego into death.”⁴⁴ Loewald also believes the death drive finds an outlet in the superego, but finds this sublimation to be a great benefit to the ego: the infant, fearful of losing her dearly

⁴³ Freud, *Standard Edition* I, 353.

⁴⁴ Freud, *Standard Edition* XIX, 53.

bought mastery, is now able to channel the very same force that pulls her back to an origin she is desperately trying to avoid towards a progressive rather than regressive aim. In this way, she reaches something of a dialectical resolution to the opposition of the “tension-within” and “tension-between” positions: guided by the superego, she is able to strive for unity without conceding her hard-won mastery. This, in short, is Loewald’s conception of psychic health.

§3 Mourning and Language Acquisition

One of the primary characteristics of the “tension-within” position, for Loewald, is a fluid relationship between “word” and “thing” [*Sache*], taken to mean not merely a thing but a “state of affairs, event, circumscribed action, etc.:”

Thing, in this wide sense, and words, in the early stages of mentation, in primary process – insofar as words come into play – are not separate. Words here are, on the contrary, indistinguishable ingredients of global states of affairs. The mother’s flow of words does not convey meaning to or symbolize “things” for the infant – “meaning” as something differentiated from “fact” – but the sounds, tone of voice, and rhythm of speech are fused within the apprehended global event. One might say that, while the mother utters words, the infant does not perceive words but is bathed in sound, rhythm, etc., as accentuating ingredients of a uniform experience.⁴⁵

A thing, event, act, or experience given a word or words by the mother is one buzzing blooming confusion (William James) for the infant, and ‘the word’ is part of that confusion.... The words of which her speaking is composed form undifferentiated ingredients of the total situation or event experienced by the infant. He does not apprehend separate words – words separate from the other and separate from the total experience – but he is immersed, embedded in a flow of speech that is part and parcel of a global experience within the mother-child field.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 187.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

Like Walter Benjamin, Loewald thus posits a primordial “language as such” in which there is “an absolute relation between name and thing.”⁴⁷ How do we proceed from this “global state of affairs,” where word and thing seamlessly flow together, to one where words are clearly separate from and designate “things” in the child’s external reality? Earlier I described how reality in this secondary form emerges from the “mourning” process, i.e. the

⁴⁷ Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2005), 320. For Benjamin, beneath the conventional and instrumental understanding of language, which he calls “bourgeois,” lies this more primordial, magical language that harkens back to a kind of Adamic unity. In “A Child’s View of Color” and elsewhere, Benjamin explicitly ties this magical quality of language back to the “bliss” of infancy, though he always preferred a more theological description: “the absolutely unlimited and creative infinity of the divine word” (Walter Benjamin, “A Child’s View of Color,” *Selected Writings, Vol 1*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2004]; Walter Benjamin, “On Language as Such and the Language of Man,” *Selected Writings, Vol 1*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings [Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2004], 68). The task of his “coming philosophy” was to rehabilitate the “absolute experience” that follows from the perception of “God’s original hand” (Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 326). Benjamin’s desire to return to the “primordial density” of name and thing was met with harsh criticism by Theodor Adorno, who thought his friend’s wish “to create the social conditions in which name and thing might be legitimately united” was a strange “combination of magic and positivism:” “inasmuch as subject and object, word and thing, cannot be integrated under present conditions, we are driven by the principle of negation to attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates” (Quoted in Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, 263). Benjamin’s “language as such” seemed a perfect example of the kind of “false ultimate” excoriated by Critical Theory. A generation later, Giorgio Agamben would note the “difficulty of looking in language for precisely what can only precede it” (Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 342). For Agamben, “the enigma which infancy ushered in for man can be dissolved only in history;” that is, chasing Benjamin’s “language as such” is a misguided search for absolutes (Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron [London: Verso, 1993], 53). As Martin Jay has concisely demonstrated, however, Benjamin was no nostalgic: he was extremely weary of certain *Lebensphilosophen* who sought a return to a “momentary intensity without any narrative resonance,” where distinctions are collapsed in a pre-linguistic experience (Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 334). “Moving beyond mere nostalgia for the decayed aura into a new way of dealing with the temporal gap between then and now,” Benjamin contrasts this impoverished notion of experience (*Erlebnis*) with his own *Erfahrung*, a kind of experience that bears narrative durability. *Erfahrung*, for Benjamin, emerges neither from the mystical reabsorption in a divine unity nor from the “anamnesic totalization” characteristic of Hegelian *Erinnerung* but rather from the plodding work of “remembrance” (*Eingedenken*) (ibid., 339). To employ Jay’s words (which could well be a description of the goal of psychoanalysis), remembrance involves “the ability to translate the traces of past events into present memories but also to register the temporal distance between now and then, acknowledge the inevitable belatedness of memory rather than smooth it over, and preserve an allegorical rather than symbolic relationship between past and present (and thus between present and potential future)” (ibid., 340). Like Loewald, then, Benjamin did not advocate a wholesale return to infantile bliss, but rather a “recollection” of the past, in which it is reconciled with but not subsumed by the present.

“internalization” of part of the child’s absent, primary reality towards the construction of her own budding psyche. Here Loewald becomes more specific about what precisely is internalized: in his view, the

parental voice and speech take on a special significance for the child insofar as they come to convey the parents’ closeness at a distance, their presence in absence. When the child is alone, cannot see or touch and smell the parents, hearing their voice tends to render them present in a somewhat remote and less global fashion. The parental voice, responding to the child’s crying or other vocal utterance, for example in the dark, gives him a sense of their presence. Thus the child’s utterances may conjure up parental presence, even if the parent does not visibly or tangibly appear.⁴⁸

The parents’ voices, Loewald asserts, signify for the infant (from *in-fans*, or “without language”) a presence in absence. By using her own voice, she is able to provide the comfort of parental presence without relying on their actual presence, thus gaining increased independence and mastery over her environment. What the infant internalizes in the previously-described mourning process is thus her parents’ *words*, which, in this initial form, are what she uses not to name objects in her reality but rather to survive painful fragmentation. “Mama” is less a designation for the infant’s mother, the most important part and support of her first reality, than a call to right all that has become wrong. Like Robert Pogue Harrison, Loewald thus posits an “underlying nexus between grief and human vocalization.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 180.

⁴⁹ Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead*, 62. According to Harrison, “it is through that shared, objective language of grief that the work of separation begins to take place” (*Ibid.*, 58).

In Chapter 1, I described Freud's understanding of the way in which the living vesicle comes to protect itself from a hostile "external" reality by "deadening" part of itself into a protective layer that mediates "outside" and "inside." In similar fashion, Loewald believes that language, when isolated from the global experience of the mother-child field (what he calls its "poetic-unconscious origin"), becomes "lifeless:" removed from their continuity with things, words become "void of or deficient in experiential meaning," "deteriorated to more or less hollow echoes."⁵⁰ Inasmuch as this linguistic "deadening" aids the child in her slow individuation, it serves a protective function and thus constitutes an act of mastery; but in addition to insulating the child from the lows of fragmentation of her global experience, it also shuts out the highs of the tension-within position. For this reason, Loewald's internalized cluster of "deficient word-presentations," like Freud's *Reizschutz*, must strike a "viable compromise between too intimate and intense closeness to the unconscious, with its threatening creative-destructive potentialities, and deadening insulation from the unconscious where human life and language are no longer vibrant and warmed by its fire."⁵¹ The linguistic protective barrier must thus be neither so weak and unformed as to be overtaken by the unconscious nor so rigid and fortified as to completely deaden psychic life.

Inasmuch as words are *just* a deficient means of conjuring up a lost unity, there is an inherent limit to language acquisition: unwilling to stray too far from the unconscious

⁵⁰ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 188.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 189.

fire, the infant only achieves the bare minimum of linguistic skill. To advance along the developmental path and invest language with more than a protective function, the aim of reuniting word and thing in the primordial density must be abandoned for a properly libidinal one. Thus, instead of resigning herself to the “deficiency” of her internalized “word-presentations,” the child instead uses them to pick out and name objects in her external reality, thus reuniting word and thing at the secondary-process level and enlivening them with the spirit of her urge to union (the investment of language with this reuniting capacity and the birth of the superego, it should be noted, are for Loewald one and the same process).

The cause of neurosis, to put it in disarmingly simple terms, is failure at this secondary-process level to either find words for the things that appear in one’s inner or outer reality or to find things that correspond to and enliven words. The procedure of analysis, in Loewald’s view, has two steps: in the first, through free association, the analysand’s words are “reabsorbed into that old memorial formation where thing and words are not yet distinguished as different.”⁵² In the second, interpretive phase, the analyst aims to reestablish differentiation “in such a way that renewed linking can be achieved;⁵³ that is, in such a way that words are found for the previously-unprocessed “things” in the analysand’s world and things are found for “deficient word-presentations”

⁵² *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 188.

so that they become more than “mere sounds without meaning.”⁵⁴ This dual movement of reabsorption and rearticulation aims to break down the analysand’s protective barrier of isolated words and to redifferentiate the primordial density in such a way that this barrier is more pliable, less rigid; in this way, “primary and secondary process are reconciled.”⁵⁵

§4 Religious Experience

In the opening chapter of *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud addresses his friend Romain Rolland’s objection that he “had not [in *The Future of an Illusion*] properly appreciated the true source of religious sentiments,” i.e. the “sensation of eternity.”⁵⁶ Although Freud discovers no such “oceanic feeling” in himself, he speculates that the “idea of men’s receiving an intimation of their connection with the world around them through an immediate feeling” can be explained in reference to a state in which “originally the ego includes everything, [and only] later it separates off an external world from itself” (Loewald *in nuce*).⁵⁷ Compelling as Freud’s explanation is, he immediately redirects himself away

⁵⁴ Hans Loewald, *Sublimation: Inquiries into Theoretical Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 60.

⁵⁵ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 204. If, however, one takes Loewald’s cultural considerations (mentioned in Section §1) into account, the modern predicament of estrangement poses a significant obstacle to the psychoanalytic goal: if our words (our moral and religious norms), having outlived their connections to things, no longer find referents in the world, then analysis can only proceed to the point of realizing that there will inevitably be “deficient word-presentations” in our current socio-economic world order. All analyses, in this view, end either in partial failure; or perhaps, as Freud says, by creating revolutionaries (Herbert Marcuse, *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber [Boston: Beacon Press, 1970], 77).

⁵⁶ Freud, *Standard Edition* XXI, 64.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

from what he sees as a tangential concern (mystical “oneness with the universe”) to an investigation of the true source and function of religion: “the infant’s helplessness and the longing for the father.”⁵⁸

Loewald finds this section ripe for analysis: after offering a convincing genetic explanation of the oceanic feeling, Freud suddenly draws back in conclusion, surprisingly content to leave the matter “wrapped in obscurity.”⁵⁹ Loewald astutely observes that “much in contrast to the proud and rebellious motto of *The Interpretation of Dreams* – ‘*Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*’ – here he exclaims ‘Let him rejoice who breathes in the rosy light of day.’”⁶⁰ What is neglected here, in the elderly Freud’s polite refusal to dive head first (as he had done in his younger years) into the subterranean regions of the human psyche, is the pre-oedipal relation to the mother: “the idea that religious feelings may contain elements having to do with the primary narcissistic position in which ‘reality’ is comprised in the primary ego, and therefore with the mother – this idea is, if not rejected, declared to be obscure, at best of secondary importance, and objectionable.”⁶¹

In a nutshell, then, Freud’s error in theorizing religion was to have focused too much attention on oedipal tensions to the neglect of the pre-oedipal, maternal relation. Honing in on this early state, Loewald traces the purportedly ineffable and immediate

⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

⁶⁰ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 9.

⁶¹ Ibid., 9. One is reminded of Georges Bataille’s encounter with Madame Edwarda, whose exposure of “God” is met with equal parts need and dread (Georges Bataille, *My Mother, Madame Edwarda and the Dead Man*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse [London: Marion Boyars, 1989], 150).

experiences of union characteristic of mystical states back to an original state of primary undifferentiation, where id, ego, and reality are all fused in the “mother-child matrix.”⁶² In short, the child’s urge to union is the origin of the religious quest. In contrast to the Freud of *Civilization and its Discontents*, he believes that proper cultivation of the “oceanic feeling” leads to less rigid psychic boundaries and greater openness to one’s environment. It is for this reason that he has been dubbed “the psychoanalyst as mystic.”⁶³

There is a danger, however, of interpreting Loewald as a kind of poor man’s William James: i.e., as an unabashed perennialist who defends the idea of a “common core” to “experiences deemed religious”⁶⁴ without giving up on their natural explanation. No doubt there is reason to worry that he has little to offer beyond a rehashed version of the old liberal Protestant endorsement of a universal “spiritual feeling,”⁶⁵ but a close reading of his work reveals that the primordial density is no simple wellspring of the ineffable.

⁶² Many authors make this connection between early mother-infant relations and religious experience: Béla Grunberger, for instance, succinctly states that “if God formed man in his image, man created God in his own prenatal image” (Grunberger, *Narcissism*, 38). More recently, Lee Kirkpatrick has employed attachment theory to formulate a new theory of religious belief (Lee Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* [New York: Guilford Press, 2005]) and Peter Sloterdijk has penned a treatise in “negative gynecology” (Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Volume 1: Bubbles*).

⁶³ Jones, “Hans Loewald,” 793.

⁶⁴ Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8.

⁶⁵ For instance, when he says that it is “timely to question the assumption that the scientific approach to the world and to the self represents a higher and more mature evolutionary stage of man than the religious way of life” (Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 228).

His understanding of how religious experience is incorporated in the psychoanalytic process is nicely summed up in his review of the Freud/Jung letters:

What Jung labeled Freud's concretistic terminology and personalistic view of the unconscious manifests in Freud's awareness that authentic transcendental experiences and insights ("spirituality") are anchored in the individual's personal life history and its instinctual roots. Psychoanalysis, I believe, shares with modern existentialism the tenet that superpersonal and transcendental aspects of human existence and of unconscious and instinctual life (so much stressed by Jung) can be experienced and integrated convincingly – without escapist embellishments, otherworldly consolations and going off into the clouds – only in the concreteness of one's own personal life, including the ugliness, trivialities, and sham that go with it. It would seem that Jungian psychology and psychotherapy jump all too readily from the here-and-now of individual life, from concrete personal experience, to the collective unconscious, myth, archetypes, religiosity, and "spirituality" – as refuge and healing visions to cling to, leading easily to evasions and hypocrisy instead of genuine transcendence or, in psychoanalytic terminology, to sublimation and true ego expansion.⁶⁶

Despite his own critique of *Civilization and its Discontents*, Loewald praises Freud for "profoundly distrusting the undisciplined mystical-visionary inclinations that led Jung into nebulous regions of alchemy, astrology, and the occult."⁶⁷ How, then, is one to properly cultivate the oceanic feeling? How is it possible to integrate religious experiences into one's life without "going off into the clouds?"

To be clear, when Loewald refers to religious experiences, he means less the full-blown hallucinations of the divine than the very everyday irruptions of what he calls the *nunc stans*, the so-called "abiding now, the instant that knows no temporal articulation."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 416.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁶⁸ Hans Loewald, *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 65.

“All of us know,” he claims, “poignant moments that have this timeless quality.”⁶⁹ “We get lost in the contemplation of a beautiful scene, or face, or painting, in listening to music, or poetry, or the music of a human voice. We are carried away in the vortex of sexual passion. We become absorbed in the proportions of a building, the plastic force or harmony of a sculpture, in a deeply stirring play or film, in the beauty of a scientific theory or experiment, or of an animal in the intimate closeness of a personal encounter.”⁷⁰ Loewald argues that these “‘intimations of eternity’ bring us in touch with levels of our being, forms of experiencing and of reality that themselves may be deeply disturbing, anxiety provoking to the common-sense rationality of everyday life.”⁷¹ The temptation to be avoided here, however, is to privilege these moments, these “things without words,” in themselves and flee to what Freud once called, in a letter to Jung, “your religious-libidinal cloud.”⁷²

As I touched upon in the previous section, Loewald posits a dual movement to analysis: regression to the primordial density and rearticulation of the links between words and things. The Jungian move, to his mind, seeks only to take this first step. In order to genuinely integrate what are called religious experiences, it is necessary to bring them down from their eternity to the “ugliness, trivialities, and sham” that go with them. It is not just that this second move is sometimes avoided, however: it is unavoidable. Inasmuch as one employs secondary-process mentation to describe or even to avoid describing these

⁶⁹ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 67. Notably absent here are dreams.

⁷¹ Ibid., 68-69.

⁷² Quoted in Ibid., 72.

experiences, they are always already sundered from the primordial density. It is impossible, in other words, to have a “pure” primary process experience.⁷³ The “rewriting” of these experiences, that is, the “concrete” incorporation of them into everyday life, happens regardless of our will. What Loewald believes to be possible in analysis is the illumination of this rewriting in consciousness, which provides an understanding of the links between the eternity of the *nunc stans* and the temporality of our everyday lives.⁷⁴

⁷³ In the US, the philosophical discourse on religious experience has been dominated by the so-called perennialist/constructivist debate, kicked off in the 80's by the publication of Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience*. Proudfoot argues, in short, that there is no such thing as an inner feeling or experience completely removed from concepts and beliefs, and thus that all experiences, including those claimed to be immediate, anomalous or ineffable, are conditioned by the language and culture of their subjects, and as such are open to natural explanation. It is no surprise that Proudfoot's work sparked a “neo-perennialist” backlash, the thrust of which was to defend the possibility that “there were certain mystical experiences that shared underlying commonalities across time periods and traditions,” i.e. that were not conditioned by culture and language and thus to a certain degree “unmediated” in a way that Proudfoot would not allow (Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered*, 56). Although there is still some interest in the debate between these perennialists and their opponents the constructivists, scholars on both sides seem to think that it has reached a “dead end” (Ibid., 56).

Loewald allows one to navigate this impasse as follows: if religious experience is one that reactivates mnemonic traces from an original state of unbounded undifferentiatedness, where id, ego, and reality are all fused in mother-child union, then it is possible to say, *contra* Proudfoot, that the experience is indeed ineffable, anomalous and immediate in the kind of extra-linguistic way that the religious subject claims it is, and furthermore that this experience can be explained in natural terms. Although Proudfoot is right to argue that experience is inevitably conditioned by language and culture, it does not follow that there is no pre-linguistic feeling or state of mind at the heart of what people call religious experience. For Loewald, there is indeed no transcending language and culture once they “have their hooks in us,” but language's dominion is one that is “total” only when a certain degree of ego structure is in place, one that imposes itself awkwardly on a pre-linguistic space, and one that erects definitive horizons for the linguistic subject only in repressing a dimension that is not amenable to its grasp.

In sum, the question for Loewald is not “Is there such a thing as an immediate religious experience?” or, on the other hand, “Is all experience conditioned by language?” but rather “How are our pre-linguistic experiences later given meaning and thereby retroactively conditioned, and furthermore how does the closing of that temporal gap affect us for better and worse?” To perennialists, then, Loewald would say that what are called “religious experiences” might indeed have a common core that is the same across time and place, but that that core would have more to do with the womb and with infantile urges than with the divine. To constructivists, on the other hand, he would admit that all experience is determined by language and culture, but that this linguistic immanence nevertheless imposes itself “afterwards” on a domain of past experiences that is indeed pre-linguistic, which, if we follow Loewald, could be said to be the so-called “common core” of “experiences deemed religious” (Ibid., 8).

⁷⁴ The concept of religious experience has been marginalized as of late in the academic study of religion, thanks to a general move away from the secular humanist framework and its reliance on the “definitional vagaries of such terms as ‘ultimate vision,’ ‘ultimate meaning,’ ‘inner experiences,’ ‘the human spirit,’

Loewald frames this process in terms reminiscent of Heidegger: “Psychoanalysis acknowledges the impersonal or nonpersonal beginnings and levels of psychic life; to own up to this, to make them one’s own, is man’s evolutionary task – to create oneself as a person by taking these beginnings over and into an individual life-continuum.”⁷⁵ To make conscious the “rewriting” of the primary process by the secondary is to make the impersonal (the id) relevant to me (the ego), to see that which was before unrelated to my existence as now related. Loewald thus interprets Freud’s famous dictum, *Wo es war, soll Ich werden*, to suggest a claiming of one’s history: “where id was, there ego shall come into being.”⁷⁶ Thus understood, the process can also be described in reverse: “where ego is, there id shall come into being again to renew the life of the ego and of reason.”⁷⁷ To be conscious of the transference between id and ego “means that the living interpenetration

‘mystery,’ ‘deepest perceptions and convictions,’ and ‘deep structures’” (Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion; The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 106). That the invocation of these terms served to bolster the authority of self-appointed hermeneuts, to fit the beliefs and practices of other cultures into the constrictive paradigm of religion, and to justify imperial and colonial ventures is beyond dispute. This does not mean, however, that all inquiries into what Eliade called “the stranger within,” or “that which is foreign, exotic, archaic in ourselves,” are misguided at best and ideological at worst (Quoted in *Ibid.*, 161-162). Indeed, I find the social constructionist rejection of the category of “mystery” to have ushered in a false transparency in the study of religion, to have led us to believe that our job is done once we have adequately situated religious phenomena in their socio-political contexts. In my view, any perspective that denies the existence of mysterious irruptions and their impact on our lives has given into what Jonathan Lear calls a “complacency” in understanding the human condition (Lear, *Freud*, 1-2). The question, I believe, is not whether or not there *are* mysteries but rather how we approach them. It is possible, like Jung and Eliade, to pursue mystery “in itself,” to take mystery on its own terms without “reducing” it and eliding its “*sui generis*” nature. But one could also, like Loewald, bring mystery down from the “transhistorical” realm (or up from the unconscious realm, depending on how you look at it) and relate it to the “ugliness, trivialities, and sham” that attend the less-mysterious and everyday occurrences that would otherwise be safely sequestered from the unconscious.

⁷⁵ Loewald, *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual*, 47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

of inner past and present can be resumed,” thus “adding a new dimension and a new tension and purposefulness to our historicity.”⁷⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented Loewald’s developmental model as a translation and extension of Freud’s metapsychological narrative from Sections IV and V of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Like the “organism” in Freud’s story, the infant, for Loewald, emerges from a primordial undifferentiation towards which she has both an urge to and dread of union. Similarly, by appropriating and “deadening” part of this “original oneness,” the infant is able to better cope with increasing individuation, and thereby gain mastery from loss. Better than Freud himself, Loewald draws out the *liminality* of mastery: true mastery is, in his words, “a viable compromise” between need and dread. At the same time that the infant needs to maintain an attachment to her mother, she must also be able to stand the separation.

Loewald also adds a new chapter to the narrative with a novel theory of the birth of the superego: as the “cortical layer of the id” further and further separates the infant from the primordial density, her urge to union is “rewritten” and channeled into the synthetic activity of the secondary-process. From this transformation is born a new psychic agency that oversees the ego’s quest to re-link word and thing, thus completing a transformation of the maternal *arche* into an ego-ideal *telos*; or, in Freud’s metapsychological language, of the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 49 & 51.

death drive into Eros. Ideally, the superego, by directing the psyche toward unity without impinging upon evolving autonomy, offers a balance between the tension-within and tension-between positions.

I have worked against the scholarship on Loewald in two ways: first, I ground his own developmental theory in Freudian metapsychology, a point that seems to have simply been ignored by his commentators. This move affords a new perspective on his theories of superego development and language acquisition, which I have argued are the same process. Second, I counter the “perennialist” interpretation of his views on religious experience. Loewald’s work has undeniable significance for a reassessment of the psychoanalytic view of religion. Against Freud, he argues that religion has less to do with the desire for a strong father figure than with the primary undifferentiation characteristic of early mother-child union. This primordial state, however, while present at moments throughout life, is “rewritten” in secondary-process mentation and thus never accessible in itself. Rather than following atemporal experiences to a “religious-libidinal cloud,” Loewald believes that one must relate these experiences to the concrete particulars of one’s personal life.

In sum, Loewald presents a novel version of the psychoanalytic ego, which, in his view, is both a necessity and a danger: as is clear from his transposition of Freud’s metapsychological narrative into developmental terms, the ego is akin to the “dead” outer layer of Freud’s living vesicle. It is but an “inorganic” shell protecting an “organic” inner core. While certainly a crucial developmental accomplishment, in that the process of its erection goes hand in hand with the child’s *mastery* over its environment, the “stimulus

barrier” known as the ego can be as much of a poison as it is a gift, as too much structure building leads to the entombment of life. Loewald’s understanding of psychoanalytic health is thus “between two deaths,” to take a phrase from Lacan: on the one side, there is death by ego-fragility, where one’s “boundedness” is swept away in a sea of undifferentiation, a state that both desired and feared; on the other, death by ego-rigidity, where boundedness itself becomes a form of suffocation, where one loses contact with the environment from which springs vitality; and in between somewhere, in that delicate and liminal space as elusive as it is fleeting, mastery.

CHAPTER THREE

Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis (Reprised):
Jacques Lacan and the Problem of Mastery

Man creates himself in his own image.

- Jacques Lacan¹

The visibility of brutality in the twentieth century was cause for much post-World War II theorizing about what Erich Fromm called the “anatomy of human destructiveness.”² The ethologist Konrad Lorenz, for instance, famously explained aggression in evolutionary terms, asserting its supposed “life-promoting” function.³ Damning Lorenz’s “biology as ideology” alongside Jean-Paul Sartre’s valorization of “creative violence,” Hannah Arendt strove to keep the analysis of human violence squarely in the political realm.⁴ And weaving his way between these two views, Fromm sought to develop his own characterological analysis that transcended the dichotomy: “aggression as instinct” – “aggression as social product.”⁵

Different though they were, these authors are united in having taken the time to recognize and dismiss Freud’s theory of the death drive on their way to their own respective

¹ Lacan, *Écrits*, 120.

² Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 1973.

³ Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, trans. Marjorie Kerr Wilson (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁴ Arendt, *On Violence*, 69.

⁵ Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 81.

theories of aggression.⁶ Less willing to curtly reject the instinctual foundation of Freud's later work was the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who saw the death drive at work in his own theory of the mirror stage. For Lacan, mimetic identification in childhood unleashes a powerful aggressivity [*agressivité*] that must be curbed with further socialization. As opposed to aggression [*aggression*], which "originates in the frustration of a [biological] impulse," aggressivity has its origin in psychic conflict.⁷ Although I admittedly find this term to be rather awkward, I have also been convinced by Arendt and Foucault that it is necessary to avoid the biological connotations of the term "aggression" when analyzing human violence.⁸ Furthermore, and like Lacan, I will argue in what follows that destructive psychic forces emerge in the developmental stage called imaginary identification though for very different reasons; thus my reprise of "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis."

More than any other psychoanalytic theorist, Lacan understood that the first identifications inevitably unleash powerfully aggressive feelings. His well-known theory of the mirror stage nonetheless suffers, in my view, from two primary flaws, which I address with help from Roger Dorey in Section §1 and Jessica Benjamin in Section §2. I then develop a new theory of aggressivity in Section §3 and offer an account of where Lacan went wrong in Section §4. Section §5, finally, explains Lacan's understanding of the transcendence of aggressivity. This section differs from the others in defending, rather

⁶ Lorenz, *On Aggression*, 235; Arendt, *On Violence*, 5; Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Appendix.

⁷ Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (London: Routledge, 1991), 38.

⁸ See Introduction, fn. 37.

than critiquing, Lacan: for all the changes proposed for his theory of the mirror stage, I will not significantly work over his conception of the transition from imaginary to symbolic identification, which provides something of a foil for the following chapter.

To work through the theory of the mirror stage in this way is also to confront the common understanding of the death drive as a destructive and violent force. As I argued in Chapter 1, Freud himself gives us good reason to think of the death drive as a strange appellation for aggression in the works of the later 20s and 30s. If, however, one takes *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a point of departure, the death drive is clearly no aggressive drive. Furthermore, when it is first “externalized,” it is not sent out into the world as a raging will to seize and dominate. At what point, then, does a destructive psychic force rear its ugly head?

§1 The Mirror Stage Revisited

According to Lacan, at six months of age, infants become particularly fascinated with the sight of their own image in the mirror. Surprisingly empirical in this regard, Lacan asks us to think of the “striking spectacle of a nursling in front of a mirror who has not yet mastered walking, or even standing, but who – though held tightly by some prop, human or artificial – overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the constraints of his prop in order to adopt a slightly leaning-forward position and take in an instantaneous view of the image in order to fix it in his mind.”⁹ The infant is drawn to her own image because

⁹ Lacan, *Écrits*, 75-76.

the sight of this bound sack of flesh gives unity to the chaos of her real bodily situation. In Lacan's words, "the sight alone of the whole form of the human body gives the subject an imaginary mastery of his body, one which is premature in relation to a real mastery."¹⁰

This specular other, dubbed the ideal-ego [*moi idéal*] (because the infant aspires towards this ideal unity), is the child's first object of identification. This narcissistic investment then fuels the formation of the *ego*, the template for which is provided by the image towards which the infant strives (Lacan jokes that, in this sense, "man creates himself in his own image").¹¹

Undoubtedly the mirror stage is a positive development in that the ego, constructed "out there" and yet representing what is "in here," forms a bridge between "the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*," between the child and its reality.¹² This very same narcissistic development is also, however, one of *alienation*, in that the child's *I* is an *other* for *it*. In other words, there is a radical disjunction between the ego's ideal organization and the fragmented, disorganized state of the child's actual body, a disjunction that gives rise to aggressivity.¹³ Threatened as she is by the image of wholeness (or perhaps threatened by

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 79.

¹¹ Lacan, *Écrits*, 120.

¹² *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³ Since it is both molded on the actions of an other and defined over and against an other that it seeks to master, aggressivity is inherently *reactive* in the manner of Nietzsche's slave: as Béla Grunberger puts it, the aggressive person "exists only as a function of the other, against whom he applies his anality, and in relation to whom he lives and abreacts his anality" (Grunberger, *Narcissism*, 161). Aggressivity is thus contradictory by nature: it needs the other to express a relationship of dominance, but the drive to assimilate strips the other of its otherness (the *impasse* of Hegel's master).

the inevitable failure of ever measuring up to the ideal-ego), the child grows increasingly hostile towards her specular other in proportion with the development of the ego itself. The more ego development, the more alienation, the more aggressivity towards one's specular image (which Lacan thinks of, because it is directed at the "I," as the expression of the *death drive* on the *imaginary plane*).¹⁴

While generally convinced that a new form of psychic conflict develops in the initial stages of identification, I find that Lacan's theory of the mirror stage suffers from two primary flaws. The first has to do with Lacan's own personal interest in the "triumphant jubilation and the playful self-discovery that characterize the child's encounter with his mirror image," one which all too casually implies a *marked difference* between this particular form of "playful self-discovery" and the "jubilation" that accompanies the sight of all other "images" that might capture the child's attention (of animals, of other children, of her parents, etc.).¹⁵ The mirror stage is meant to account for Charlotte Bühler's discovery of *transitivism*, the confusion of self and other in the early stages of infancy (a child sees another fall and begins crying, she hits another child and claims to have been hit, etc.), and yet Lacan's focus on the mirror image makes the process uniquely "*intrapsychic*."¹⁶ In

¹⁴ I am aware that Lacan's understanding of the death drive evolved, but he does state explicitly in "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" that his theory of imaginary identification is supposed to make some sense of "the enigmatic signification Freud expressed with the term 'death instinct'" (Lacan, *Écrits*, 82).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91. As Freud emphasized throughout his work, the infant's own image ought to be thought of as only one among *many* specular others, her first identifications being easy and numerous. In his view, animals, other children, adults, toys, etc. are all sources of Bühler's "transitivism."

¹⁶ Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 45.

distinguishing his own theory of aggressivity from that of Hegel, Lacan is more or less explicit on this point: whereas Hegel understands the aggressive tension as *intersubjective*, emerging out of the “struggle for recognition” between two individuals, Lacan sees aggressivity as a “subjective” tension internal to the child that is then “projected” onto others, who are “clothed” with the “same capacities for destruction as those of which he feels himself the bearer.”¹⁷

Relatedly, the emergence of this aggressivity from narcissistic *cathexis* is sorely lacking in explanation. The Kojévian-Hegelian connection between identification and aggressivity so permeated the ether of Lacan’s world as to make it a point of obviousness. Today, however, one has to wonder: what precisely about the “wholeness” of the other generates psychic conflict? Is it simply the disjunction between the infant’s real body and her imaginary other? If so, why would disjunction imply aggressive tension? Is the child aware of the impossibility of reaching her ideal? If so, why would she then choose the path of aggressivity, rather than, say, despair? What precisely about the other’s promised “wholeness” is both attractive and repellant?

One can guess what Loewald’s answer might be. Before getting there, however, and to start us on the path to a new theory of imaginary identification, I will first turn to the French psychoanalyst Roger Dorey’s suggestive treatment of aggressivity, which he calls, relevantly, a “perverse relationship of mastery.” In his view, the appeal of the image lies in its evocation of a “state of bliss,” a “primitive state of the psyche in which the subject is not

¹⁷ Lacan, *Seminar I*, 81-82.

distinguished from its image.”¹⁸ The subject identifies with her specular other in an attempt to reimmerse herself in this psychic undifferentiation. The “wholeness” that is the attraction of the image is thus, for Dorey, not an attribute of the image itself but rather of the undifferentiation from which it and the subject have separated themselves.

Relieving the image of its responsibility to embody the “wholeness” that so frustrates the subject, Dorey is free to treat the specular other as a real *other*, an other that refuses its role as the “other half” in the subject’s Aristophanean quest. As he explains, the enjoyment gained from imaginary identification is “extremely flimsy and liable to be shattered at any time by the irruption of the other, who, by imposing his own wish, at once drags the subject to the brink of an abyss of dereliction.”¹⁹ In the brief moments before the other displays its difference, the subject enjoys something like this primitive union; but as soon as the other inevitably asserts itself, she is thrown into a struggle for dominance, into a struggle to erase the otherness of the other in pursuit of the repose of subject/image undifferentiation.

Aggressivity is thus, for Dorey, not a product of the subject’s frustration to achieve an ideal coherence as represented by the specular other but rather of the other’s imposition of its otherness, of the other’s refusal to be reabsorbed along with the subject into a primitive union. Much as Georges Bataille argues in *A Theory of Religion*, Dorey contends

¹⁸ Dorey, “The Relationship of Mastery,” 325. Dorey admittedly thinks this “primitive unity” is hypothetical, a fiction of the aggressive pervert’s creation, but its phantastical status does not change its function (see Chapter 2, Section §1).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

that destructive psychic forces emerge from the failure of the subject to reach the “lost intimacy” from which she came.²⁰ The intensity of these forces seems to depend on the level of care provided in the infant’s environment. If an infant suffers under a domineering parental presence (what Erikson would call failed mutuality), she will attempt in her adult life to display the kind of violent behavior to which she had been subjected. As Dorey presents this pathological form of aggressivity, employing Anna Freud’s concept of “identification with the aggressor” (which she herself developed from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*): “Having been the victim of a tyrannical domination undergone passively, he becomes active by a mechanism no doubt similar to that described as identification with the aggressor.”²¹ Although the frustration of falling short of one’s “state of bliss” seems to be universal, only in cases of failed mutuality does aggressivity become pathological.

§2 Recognition

Against Lacan, the source of aggressivity cannot be found in the intrapsychic realm; we must thus turn back to the “intersubjective” (or rather, as will become clear in a moment, the non-intrapsychic). More than any other contemporary psychoanalyst, Jessica Benjamin has attempted to make good on this insight through an analysis of relationships of domination. According to Benjamin, mainstream psychoanalytic theory, in focusing on

²⁰ Bataille, *A Theory of Religion*, Ch. I. Sacha Nacht offers a similar idea in “Les manifestations cliniques de l’agressivité et leur rôle dans le traitement psychanalytique” (see Introduction fn. 50), as do Rechartd and Ikonen in their contribution to the first symposium of the *Fédération Européenne de Psychanalyse* (Eero Rechartd and Pentti Ikonen, “À propos de l’interprétation de la pulsion de mort,” *La Pulsion de Mort* [Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1997]).

²¹ Dorey, “The Relationship of Mastery,” 326.

intrapsychic structures, drives, and “object” appropriations, has elided the intersubjective realm, referring to “what happens in the field of self and other.”²² “The intersubjective view maintains that the individual grows in and through the relationship to other subjects. Most important, this perspective observes that the other whom the self meets is also a self, a subject in his or her own right. It assumes that we are able and need to recognize that other subject as different and yet alike, as an other who is capable of sharing similar mental experience. Thus the idea of intersubjectivity reorients the conception of the psychic world from a subject’s relations to its object toward a subject meeting another subject.”²³

The conceptual anchor of the intersubjective view of self development is that of recognition. The infant (no less than the adult) acts in the world and seeks some kind of direct response to her own acts. Many toys (“the mobile that moves when baby jerks the cord tied to her wrist, the bells that ring when she kicks her feet”) are designed to provide a “contingent responsiveness,” but none can provide the kind of recognition that other subjects do: “The nine-month-old already looks to the parent’s face for the shared delight in a sound. The two-year-old says, ‘I did it!’ showing the peg she has hammered and waiting for the affirmation that she has learned something new, that she has exercised her agency.”²⁴ This need for recognition leads inevitably to paradox: “the self is trying to establish himself as an absolute, an independent entity, yet he must recognize the other as

²² Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 20.

²³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

like himself in order to *be* recognized by him. He must be able to find himself in the other.”²⁵ For Benjamin, this “tension *between interacting individuals* rather than that *within the individual*” is the place where one finds the seeds of domination.²⁶

My qualms with intersubjective theory, hinted at in the previous chapter, are two-fold: first, from evidence attesting to the existence of primitive “self”-differentiation in the early stages of infancy, the intersubjectivists have projected adult subject-subject relations back onto to the neonate, seeing psychic development less as the emergence of a “self” than the continuous progression of an “emergent” to a “verbal” self. This approach obscures the preconditions for the meeting of two “subjects” (even in Hegel, the struggle for recognition is not baseline: before two subjects come to meet each other as *subjects*, the whole dialectic of “consciousness” must have passed). Second, and relatedly, the “need for recognition” (in Benjamin’s view, the unifying principle of intersubjective theory) is posited *a priori*, functioning in much the same manner as “survival” in evolutionary theory. Where, one might wonder, does this drive for recognition come from? And is it a constant throughout life, or does it, like the “subject” of intersubjective theory, evolve?

Following out the logic of the tension-within and tension-between positions, I will distinguish, for the moment, between two kinds of recognition: in the first, the infant interacts with the “other” elements in her global experience as components of a recently-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29. More specifically, Benjamin thinks that the recognition process goes awry when the tension between self and other breaks down and one of the two partners in mutual recognition asserts her omnipotence (*Ibid.*, 49).

lost wholeness. She does not recognize them as other subjects nor does she seek recognition of her “subjectivity” from them. She rather recognizes herself *in them* and them *in herself*.²⁷ In this stage of recognition, confirmation is desired not of the infant’s autonomy but of the oneness from which she and the “other” have emerged and of their participation in the still relatively whole situation of the tension-within position.

In the second, the “other” is recognized as an *other*, as *outside* of the infant’s “wholeness” and thus, as Dorey emphasizes, something to be *erased* in her rabid quest for primordial union. But the other, in its very otherness, also signifies that the infant has been through a painful separation process and has come out the other side with a new mastery over her environment and an independence from her first, maternal “reality.” The imposition of otherness is thus met with a certain “elation” in the infant, against which she is able to test her independence and gain further mastery.²⁸ If, in the first kind of recognition, the infant is looking for confirmation of sameness, in the second, she is looking to have her individuality affirmed.²⁹

²⁷ This stage corresponds to what Donald Winnicott calls “relating to objects” (D.W. Winnicott, “The Use of an Object,” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 50 [1969]), as well as to the kind of early “self-other equivalence” that precedes but nonetheless makes possible mimetic rivalry, as described by Andrew N. Meltzoff in “Out of the Mouths of Babes; Imitation, Gaze, and Intentions in Infant Research – the ‘Like Me’ Framework,” *Mimesis and Science*, ed. Scott R. Garrels (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2011), 69-70.

²⁸ Mutual recognition, the ideal of intersubjective theory, would then be a third kind of recognition, a mature recognition that transcends both the tension-within and tension-between positions in allowing the simultaneous existence of sameness and difference (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*, 47). To repeat, I do not have any qualms with the basic ethics of intersubjective theory, only the positing of recognition in this third form as baseline. The supposed pleasure that infants take in interpersonal connection and their “curiosity and responsiveness to the outside world” are both, I believe, accomplishments and not givens (*ibid.*, 174).

²⁹ In *The Struggle for Recognition*, Axel Honneth also distinguishes between three kinds of recognition: “the emotional concern familiar from relationships of love and friendship (1) is distinguished from legal recognition (2) and approval associated with solidarity (3) as particular ways of granting recognition”

The co-existence of a desire to elide the other alongside a need of the other characteristic of the intersubjective paradox is not, however, the only thing that the conceptual framework of the “tension” positions allows us to explain. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel explains that in the struggle unto death, to actually *kill* one’s other would only be to submit him to “abstract negation, not the negation coming from consciousness, which supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently survives its own supersession.”³⁰ It is on account of self-consciousness’s realization that the continued existence of *life* is necessary for the recognition it desires that it accepts the position of “independent consciousness,” or *master*, in contrast to the *slave*’s “dependent consciousness.”³¹

As the story goes, the master quickly realizes that he has accepted the worst of both worlds: the other neither serves as a vehicle for recognition nor has he been fully negated. Hegel has given us reason why the master would first accept the existence of the other as a

(Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 94). In Honneth’s view, the first is psychological and the last two are political, though he admits connection between these two spheres. For instance, he sees legal recognition as a sublimated expression of maternal recognition: “Just as, in the case of love, children acquire, via the continuous experience of ‘maternal’ care, the basic self-confidence to assert their needs in an unforced manner, adult subjects acquire, via the experience of legal recognition, the possibility of seeing their own actions as the universally respected expression of their own autonomy” (Ibid., 118). The emphasis here is on autonomy, but Honneth makes it clear elsewhere that legal recognition provides only the kind of “self-respect” that issues from being recognized as an equal; in this sense, one might say that legal recognition provides recognition that one is the *same* as everyone else. As Hegel first articulated, however, this kind of recognition only forms part of “ethical life:” in addition to being recognized as the *same* as everyone else, individuals also seek to have “social esteem” directed “at the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal differences” (Ibid., 122). To complete the connection, “legal recognition” and “social esteem” can be understood as sublimated expressions of what I have called here “tension-within” and “tension-between” recognition.

³⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 114-115.

³¹ Ibid., 115.

“dependent consciousness,” but why, upon realizing that he is at an impasse, would he *continue* in this relationship? What about the master’s position entices him into remaining in a completely unfulfilling role? The master, as is well-known, reaches a dialectical dead-end and is left behind in the larger movement of *Geist*, an unwitting victim of the cunning of reason. And perhaps it is for this reason that his motivations generally go unquestioned.

§3 Towards a New Theory of Aggressivity

As I explained in the previous chapter, when the infant has made her way through the separation process, acquiring mastery from loss, she comes to see the very same “reality” towards which she bears an urge to union as a dreaded source of engulfment, as a threat to her emergent autonomy. The thesis that I am entertaining here, taken from Freud and further developed with Loewald, is that all *others* in the external reality created in the tension-between position never shake the dread that is co-existent with that reality. Against Lacan, others are not simply screens upon which the subject projects the “capacities for destruction...of which he feels himself the bearer.” And against Dorey, others are not simply unwilling partners in the descent into bliss. Others are rather, in their very *otherness*, always already feared as agents of engulfment.

Both Lacan and Dorey claim that the object of imaginary identification is simultaneously “in here” and “out there” in an effort to indicate its straddling of two realms. In the terms I have developed here, one might say that the transitive relation characteristic of the tension-within position spills over into the tension-between position,

as one can imagine how the infant's "reality-testing" in the first stage of recognition easily stumbles upon "others" that are not "others," but *others*, objects of identification that refuse tension-within recognition. As Dorey says, the child, looking for confirmation of the continued existence of the intimacy from which she has emerged, is quickly disappointed by the independent will of the *other*.

When this happens, that is, when the infant, in a seemingly mistaken fashion, *identifies* with the very outside that for her is a source of engulfment, *curiously recognizing herself in the very element that disrupts the tension-within position*, she acquires a new motivational force (a new drive, if one wishes), distinct from both the death drive and the drive to mastery: not to re-immense herself in the primordial density nor to protect herself from loss through protective structure building but to *engulf others* in the same way that she feels herself threatened. Parroting the other's seemingly aggressive behavior, she becomes, for the first time, aggressive. It is in this way that a more basic drive to master external threats ("Others are trying to harm/engulf me" and "I want to protect myself against others") is perverted into a drive to aggress ("I want to harm/engulf others"). What Anna Freud called "identification with the aggressor" is here not just *a* manifestation of aggressivity, or rather, with Dorey, the mechanism of pathological aggressivity, but rather *the* initial appearance of a genuinely aggressive energy.³²

³² In theorizing this "mechanism of defense," wherein the infant "assimilates" or "identifies" itself with the "dreaded external object," Freud explicitly invokes passages from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where her father describes the transformation of the passive reception of a threat into an active mastery over it (Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, trans. Cecil Baines [London: Karnac Books, 1993], 110).

If the master accepts his doomed position in the dialectic of spirit, it is because he is able to *engulf* the slave in his own will, to strip him of his autonomy in the same way that he feels that his own autonomy might be stripped. In other words, from the struggle for recognition, the master acquires a new objective that was not there before the struggle, and without taking on this drive to engulf, he would not continue in his role as *Geist's* patsy.³³

Aggressivity, in this view, a drive to erase the independence of the other, to bear *omnipotence* over the world³⁴, is produced by imitation of this same dreaded other.³⁵ Not all

³³ As I argue here, Hegel never really investigates the motivational structure of the master because it is ultimately the slave that is the bearer of history. He does, nevertheless, theorize in the figure of Abraham the obsessive organization that I have called "ego-rigidity" in Chapter 2: "The same spirit which had carried Abraham away from his kin led him through his encounters with foreign peoples during the rest of his life; this was the spirit of self-maintenance in strict opposition to everything – the product of his thought raised to be the unity dominant over the nature which he regarded as infinite and hostile (for the only relationship possible between hostile entities is mastery of one by the other)" (Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, 186). Abraham's masochistic deference to an "objective God" is complemented here with an aggressive mastery of the world; one might say then that the slave, in seeking mastery not just over another consciousness but over the whole world, is much more of a master than the master himself is. Still, my claim here is that we can learn more about the slave *qua* master by studying the *master* himself.

³⁴ It must be noted that Freud, in *Totem and Taboo*, links this "omnipotence of thought" to the animistic appropriation of all things as "like me;" the animist, in other words, does not recognize an *other* separate from the herself (*Standard Edition* XIII, Section 3). In his view, the "starting point" of this aggressive elimination of difference "must have been the problem of death. What primitive man regarded as the natural thing was the indefinite prolongation of life – immortality. The idea of death was only accepted late, and with hesitancy" (*Ibid.*, 76). Thus, Freud was already in 1912 theorizing aggressivity as a confused reaction to the problem of death.

³⁵ This omnipotent desire to engulf the other (aggressivity) must be distinguished from both the more primitive drive to erase self/other distinction (the death drive) as well as the sublimation of this drive in the synthetic activity of the ego (Eros, or sublimated death drive). I confront the relation between aggressivity and the death drive in Chapter 5, Section §2. Aggressivity and the kind of death drive sublimation in which Loewald believes lies psychic health can be distinguished in roughly the same way that Erik Erikson separates "totality" from "wholeness:" "Wholeness seems to connote an assembly of parts, even quite diversified parts, that enter into a fruitful association and organization. This concept is most strikingly expressed in such terms as wholeheartedness, wholemindedness, wholesomeness, and the like. As a *Gestalt*, then, wholeness emphasizes a sound, organic, progressive mutuality between diversified functions and parts within an entirety, the boundaries of which are open and fluent. Totality, on the contrary, evokes a *Gestalt* in which an absolute boundary is emphasized; given a certain degree of arbitrary delineation, nothing that belongs inside must be left outside, nothing that must be outside can be tolerated inside" (Erik Erikson, "Wholeness and Totality: A Psychiatric Contribution," *Totalitarianism*, ed.

imitation leads to aggressivity, as Lacan seems to think, as the kind of imitative play in which the tension-within position is not broken only reinforces the child's sense of wholeness, her sense that the "objects" in her environment are only recently-excised parts of herself. But all aggressivity, being the product of aping the *other's* drive to engulf, is imitative.³⁶

To return to the mirror stage, with these new insights in tow: first, Lacan's idea that aggressivity develops "internally" and is then projected "externally" can be scrapped once and for all. Dorey got us part of the way in explaining the genesis of aggressivity from the imposition of real *otherness* but his view can ultimately only explain *frustration* at the other, and not the kind of aggressive drive to dominate the other. By developing a new theory of recognition, I argued instead that aggressivity is the consequence of the embodiment of an

Carl J., Friedrich [New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1954], 161-162). While Erikson believe that "wholeness" is the more primitive state than totality (in my view, both are secondary revisions of the primordial density), I agree with Erikson's basic picture of the psychopathology of "totalism" (in the terms developed here, aggressivity: "When the human being, because of accidental or developmental shifts, loses an essential wholeness, he restructures himself and the world by taking recourse to what we may call *totalism*" (Ibid., 163).

³⁶ It is here, I believe, that we should situate the psychoanalytic terms "narcissism" and "omnipotence," both referring to the child's belief that her will is the only will and that all others should bend before it. Lacan was essentially correct, then, to "assume that aggressivity is consubstantial with narcissism" (Bokanovski, "Le concept de pulsion de mort"). Many authors, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, tend to associate what Loewald calls the primordial density with a primary state of narcissism where the infant only has concern for herself (I'm thinking here primarily of Grunberger). I do not think this state deserves the label "narcissistic," nor do I think that it is primarily "monadic," concerned only with "itself." Narcissistic omnipotence is rather a later development, emerging in the initial stages of imaginary identification. Benjamin, for instance, equates narcissistic omnipotence with a tension-less psychic state in her attempt to reconcile the intersubjective view and Freudian drive theory. In her view, the self's omnipotent refusal to allow "the outside world (the other) to limit his absoluteness" "is a manifestation of Freud's death instinct" (Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*, 67): "Omnipotence and loss of tension actually refer to the same phenomenon. Omnipotence, whether in the form of merging or aggression, means the complete assimilation of the other and self. It corresponds to the zero point of tension between self and other" (Ibid., 67). If the preceding arguments hold, omnipotence (aggressivity) and loss of tension (the death drive) most certainly do not refer to the same phenomenon, though the narcissistic-aggressive drive to engulf others in one's own omnipotence is nonetheless made possible by the interplay of the death drive and the drive to mastery.

external reality taken in the tension-between position to be threatening. We need not be left guessing with Lacan as to where precisely the hostile coloring of the identification is located if a) that hostility already exists “out there” and b) the infant’s mirrored relationship is with that same “out there” and not simply its own image.³⁷

§4 Mastery and Aggressivity: Lacan on the *Project*

In the previous chapter, I described the drive to mastery as what helps the infant through her painful separation process: overwhelmed and without the tools to cope with absence, she “deadens” part of her “global situation” into a protective barrier that provides her with mastery over her environment. Having reconceptualized the mirror stage, I can now turn to a preliminary articulation of the relation between mastery and aggressivity. In the simplest terms, whereas the drive to mastery is the more fundamental drive to construct a psychic stimulus barrier to protect against external threats, aggressivity emerges from the imaginary embodiment of those threats.

Aggressivity is thus related to but clearly distinct from the drive to mastery. No doubt one can imagine situations in which aggressivity can lead to mastery: the bully on the playground, around whom other children maintain a wide berth, is not just fronting a “simulacrum” of mastery. Through his aggressive bouts, he *has* warded off external dangers

³⁷ Identification is, of course, not a solely negative act: with identification comes the first steps into the intersubjective world. From the moment of its first identification, a child is no longer fundamentally experiencing “direct” satisfaction or mastery but is rather attaining these ends *as others do*. It is thus a developmental necessity to take on identifications, for we would not enter the social world without them, though our first identifications must inevitably lead to aggressive behavior (One is reminded of the perilous transition from *amour-de-soi-même* to *amour-propre* in Rousseau’s *Second Discourse*).

in such a way as to prevent future trauma. The problem with aggressivity, one might say, is not that it does not contribute to the construction of the *Reizschutz* but that it contributes *too much*, thus leading to a loss of mastery by what Loewald calls “ego-rigidity.” The psychic stability achieved through aggressivity is bought at the cost of real engagement with the environment. In other words, someone perpetually on the offensive leaves no room for the experiences of self-dispersal that satisfy the death drive. Aggressivity, in this sense, might be thought of as a drive to mastery that itself imperils true mastery, thought of not simply as defense but as a balance between “ego-rigidity” and “ego-fragility.”

Lacan himself, it should be noted, went out of his way to dismiss Freud’s concern with mastery for his own theory of aggressivity. In his reading of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* in *Seminar II*, he decides that Freud’s account of the construction of the ego as a process of “binding” the energy produced in coping with external threats “proves to be inadequate.”³⁸ This initial theorization of the defensive and regulatory “barrier-pathway system” that would later be called the ego fails, in his opinion, to entitle “one to think that the facilitations [*Bahnungen*, the “pathways” constitutive of the regulatory system in the *Project*] will ever have a *functional utility*.”³⁹ It is only when one identifies the barrier-pathway system with the function of the imaginary, that is, as working according to the “gestalt principle” (that visual perception is self-organizing and form-generating), that one

³⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), 107.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

can understand how the *Reizschutz* gives rise to this “functional utility” “serviceable for the guidance of behavior.”⁴⁰ What Freud is missing, in other words, is the image: “Indeed, so that a living being doesn’t perish every time it turns round, it must possess some adequate reflection of the external world.”⁴¹

In a nutshell, here is the essence of Lacan’s misreading of the *Project*: Freud concerns himself there with how the psychic apparatus is a means for *dealing with, coping with* [*bewältigen*] the deluge of excitations that threaten to overwhelm it, and Lacan takes this to mean that the psychic apparatus bears a structuring capacity that provides it with an adequate reflection of the world. Mirroring could most certainly be thought of as a form of coping: being able to perceptually organize the world is a part of dealing with one’s place in it. But Lacan is less interested in making sense of Freud’s concerns than he is in reading Gestalt theory into the *Project*. Exclusively focused as he is with the “reflected relations of the living being with its environment,” Lacan turns homeostasis into reflection and coping into mirroring while disingenuously portraying his project as an exercise in translation rather than transformation. What’s worse, he does so with a clean conscience: as he fathomed himself to be rescuing Freudian drive theory from a bad biologism, no appropriation was a bad one.⁴²

⁴⁰ Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 54.

⁴¹ Lacan, *Seminar II*, 107.

⁴² In Chapter 1, I attempted to do justice to the metapsychological narrative that Freud offers in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a narrative that reintroduces the *Project’s* concerns into Freud’s work nearly 25 years after its initial conception. Although the details of my reading might be challenged, it has the virtue, at least, of working immanently rather than transcendently.

In this equation of mirroring with coping, the problem of mastery that is really at the center of Freud's *Project* is elided and replaced with a picture of psychic development that relies exclusively on aggressivity.⁴³ If Freud can be accused of universalizing an obsessive neurotic view of reality, one might thus say that Lacan universalized the mirror stage at the expense of the dialectic of death and mastery. In one of his more arrogant passages, Lacan claims that "Freud isn't a Gestaltist – one cannot give him credit for everything – but he does sense the theoretical demands which gave rise to the Gestaltist construction."⁴⁴ About this, at least, he is correct: one *shouldn't* give credit to Freud for imposing an alien theory upon his own.

To sum up: after a bit of retooling, the "mirror stage" was reimagined here to be one of genuinely *transitive* interaction between infant and reality that results in aggressivity because the infant's "outside" has already been given a hostile coloring in the tension-between position. Aggressivity in this view appears *after* the drive to mastery and threatens to dangerously extend its project. Furthermore, one ought not to think of the ego itself as modeled on an image, as Lacan does. The "cortical layer of the id" produced by the drive to mastery, as well as that particular perversion of the drive to mastery called aggressivity, is neither the "specular other" nor is it "*der Kern unseres Wesens* [the core of our being]" but, as Freud says in both the "Project" and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a defensive structure that

⁴³ One could argue that this aggressive conception of development is a function of the Lacanian exaggeration of the trauma of birth: the infant's aggressive struggle is justified in light of the fact that she is overwhelmed with the "unspeakable pain of existing" and thus "permanently inhabited by the idea of her death," as one Lacanian puts it (Henri Rey-Flaud, "Visages de la pulsion de mort," *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*, 14).

⁴⁴ Lacan, *Seminar II*, 107.

separates the two, and in this sense a *liminal* entity, bordering both *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*.⁴⁵

If there is something “alienating” about the ego, it is that the infant is increasingly separated from the reality towards which she bears “an urge to union” in proportion with its erection.

§5 From Imaginary to Symbolic Identification

According to the psychoanalytic narrative outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, there is a *primal ambivalence* at the heart of psychic life: on the one hand, to unite with and “lose oneself” *in* the world, and thereby to concede to death by re-immersion, and, on the other, to protect oneself *from* the world by building psychic structures with which to gain an ever increased mastery. In this chapter, I have offered an account of how aggressivity emerges from this ambivalence: namely, by an imitative identification with an external reality taken in its very externality to be powerful and threatening. Instead of building a simple sailboat designed to both weather storms and enjoy life at sea, the infant sets her sights on the construction of a warship, with which she will be able to control and possess all she desires, as she imagines the *other* to do. The outcome of this *imaginary* identification is all too well-known: the child realizes that she cannot *be* powerful in this ideal way, and that the fulfillment of her imperial fantasies would only introduce an ultimate threat to her being.

At this point, “what *I* would like to be” (what Lacan calls *imaginary* identification) is abandoned for “what *the Other* would like *me* to be” (*symbolic* identification). The child

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

realizes, to some extent, that “I don’t know what’s good for myself,” that the numerous “transitive” identifications taken on and synthesized in infancy only offer an imagined mastery and illusions of grandeur that, if fulfilled, would be ruinous for her life. In other words, the “dream of absolute self-adequacy” is abandoned and the child submits “to an original being-at-a-loss.”⁴⁶ This transition, the culmination of the Oedipus complex, is typically imagined to be a full retreat, a recognition of the superior power of the father and a self-subjugation that ends in a repression of the family drama. What this reading obscures is how the “dissolution of the Oedipus complex” itself is a new kind of solution to the problem of primal ambivalence.

As is well-known, Lacan renders this solution as *Nom-du-Père*: on the one hand, the prohibition (the *Non*) of the father, and later of the symbolic order itself, protects the child from *jouissance*, the point at which ultimate desires turn into ultimate fears. The prototype of *jouissance* is maternal engulfment, against which the father’s authority protects, thus alleviating the “dread of union” through acceptance of a prohibitory authority. On the other hand, the *name* (the *Nom*) of the father provides a reason why the urge to union remains unsatisfied, thus explaining with a single *noun* (the *Nom*) the diversion of the mother’s desire from the infant. With this inaugural nomination tying the question of desire to language, the child embarks on a new path: instead of attaining the mother, she seeks instead all of “the reasons why I can’t attain mother” (one is reminded of Freud’s “drive to knowledge,” a “sublimated manner of obtaining mastery”). Faced with the

⁴⁶ Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 149.

impossibility of an immediate gratification of the urge to union in competition with an *ideal-ego*, she chooses the path of infinite deferral: to improve herself in line with the demands of an *ego-ideal*, in the hopes that one day she will be molded into the kind of being worthy of maternal union.

And of course, in addition to both having her dread of union relieved and the impossibility of her urge to union explained, the child's aggressivity is also curbed.⁴⁷ Instead of molding her ego in imaginary identification, she takes on a much more modest project: to be what *someone else* wants rather than what *she* wants. The child thereby accepts "her place" in the symbolic order. In this place, the world comes to make a great deal of sense: there is a reason why I cannot have everything I want, there is protection against what I fear, and there is something to strive for. Here, Lacan explains, we have finally arrived at Kant's world: only in strictly prohibiting access to what we really want above all, in going over the reasons why that thing is off limits, and finally in laying out a project of how one strives to be worthy of getting what we want without again in any way *knowing* that we will get it, can we make the world, and our place within it, fully intelligible and affirmable.

⁴⁷ Slavoj Žižek has recently questioned this connection between language and aggressivity: "The entry into language and the renunciation of violence are often understood as two aspects of one and the same gesture: 'Speaking is the foundation and structure of socialization, and happens to be characterized by the renunciation of violence,' as a text by Jean-Marie Muller written for UNESCO tells us.... What if, however, humans exceed animals in their capacity for violence precisely because they *speak*? As Hegel was already well aware, there is something violent in the very symbolization of the thing, which equals its mortification" (Slavoj Žižek, *On Violence* [New York: Picador, 2008], 60-61). Žižek is most certainly right to point to a misguided innocence in the equation of socialization and the renunciation of violence, but I would argue that language is more "often understood" as an act of conceptual violence within the humanities. In any event, I believe his understanding of the link between language and violence follows from his opposition of the death drive and the symbolic, one that I will be questioning in what follows.

What is the role of the death drive in this transformation? As Slavoj Žižek informs us, Lacan's understanding of the relation between the symbolic order and the death drive went through three phases:

In the first period (the first Seminar, *The Function and the Field of Speech and Language...*), it is the Hegelian phenomenological idea that the word is a death, a murder of the thing: as soon as the reality is symbolized, caught in a symbolic network, the thing itself is more present in a word, in its concept, than in immediate physical reality.... In the second period (the Lacanian reading of Poe's 'Purloined Letter'), the accent is shifted from the word, speech, to language as a synchronic structure, a senseless autonomous mechanism which produces meaning as its effect.... The death drive is now identified with the symbolic order itself: in Lacan's own words, it is 'nothing but the mask of the symbolic order'.... In the third period, in which the main accent of Lacan's teaching is put on the Real as impossible, the death drive again radically changes its signification. [In this final period, one that has come to be recognized as his 'mature' position], the symbolic order is a striving for homeostatic balance, but there is in its kernel, at its very centre, some strange, traumatic element which cannot be symbolized, integrated into the symbolic order.... And what, at this level, is the death drive? *Exactly the opposite of the symbolic order: the possibility of the 'second death,' the radical annihilation of the symbolic texture through which the so-called reality is constituted.*⁴⁸

The death drive, in this last view, is the drive to undo Kantian order and to return to the very thing prohibited.⁴⁹ We can only relate to our pre-linguistic origin as a form of dying to

⁴⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 131-132 (my emphasis). Bernard Sichère offers a different history of the death drive in "'l'élaboration progressive, discontinue, de la célèbre triade transcendentale réel-imaginaire-symbolique (RIS) entre le premier et le septième séminaire" that nonetheless arrives at the same conclusion:

- centrément sur l'agressivité comme essentiellement imaginaire dans la suite de la communication de Marienbad sur le « stade du miroir »;
- appréhension de la pulsion de mort comme inertie de la machine signifiante (dès livre II du *Séminaire*: « Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse »);
- repérage de la pulsion de mort comme relevant de la dimension du réel. Définition du « réel » comme autre que la symbolique et autre que l'imaginaire" (Bernard Sichère, "Nous sommes déjà très suffisamment une civilisation de la haine," *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*, 135).

⁴⁹ Hints of this third position can nonetheless be found as early as *The Function and Field of Speech and Language*: "When we want to get at what was before the serial games of speech in the subject and what is prior to the birth of symbols, we find it in death, from which existence derives all the meaning it has" (Lacan, *Écrits*, 263).

the world we know, and so death is a sign of what lies outside of and before symbolization. To seek this form of death, in short, is to attempt a transgression of the symbolic order.

Žižek's view of the death drive as a "pure negativity" that grounds "the gesture of breaking out of the constraints of Being" is, whether coincidentally or due to his influence, the standard neo-Lacanian understanding of the concept.⁵⁰ To provide just two examples: in his curious validation of toxicomania, Rik Loose contends that alcoholics and drug addicts, in contrast to the majority of us who have adopted the unconscious fantasies that constitute social reality, do not share in symbolic castration and thus "function" as agents of the death drive, of a "traumatic real which threatens to disrupt and derange the symbolic structure of society."⁵¹ In a frighteningly similar vein, Lee Edelman argues that there is a "perverse refusal" at the heart of queer theory, the refusal to be normalized

⁵⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 160.

⁵¹ Rik Loose, "Toxicomania and the Death Drive in Lacan," *The Death Drive: New Life for a Dead Subject*, ed. Rob Weatherill (London: Rebus, 1999), 75. Framing toxicomania in this way leads Loose to some difficult conclusions: "Moral judgment and insistence on conformity – in response to the problem of toxicomania – are, therefore, reactions against an anxiety-provoking *jouissance* which threatens the common good and disturbs the fabric of our society. Society is constantly up in arms about toxicomania because, at that level, toxicomania functions as a traumatic real which threatens to disrupt and derange the symbolic structure of society" (Ibid., 75). Toxicomania thus "functions" as an upsetting threat to the unconscious fantasies that govern our notion of the "common good." It is not clear that Loose means to validate toxicomania in this way, but his conclusions nonetheless support the idea that toxicomaniacs, in their very existence, are simply calling out society on its lies. This is especially so when he switches from the ambiguous statement that toxicomaniacs "function" as an embodiment of the death drive in society to the stronger statement that toxicomania simply *is* a form of the death drive. As if to ward off this interpretation, Loose makes clear that "to say that toxicomaniacs have found a direct route to *jouissance* does not mean that they have come to terms with the death-drive. This entails only that they have found a way of dealing with the death-drive which is different from unconscious fantasy" (Ibid., 77). Since, however, toxicomaniacs actually *satisfy* the death drive instead of subduing it by the acceptance of symbolic castration, shouldn't we say they *have* dealt with the death drive in a more authentic fashion? Citing for his cause William S. Burroughs, the popularly beloved heroin addict, only adds to the appeal of toxicomania in Loose's presentation.

within the symbolic and the acceptance of a “negativity opposed to every form of social viability,” i.e. the death drive.⁵²

Although I agree that Lacan, especially in *Seminar VII*, seems to oppose the death drive and the symbolic order, this reading, while not incorrect, is at best incomplete. As Richard Boothby points out, “in Lacanian terms, the death drive has its origin in the tension between the imaginary ego and the real of the body that is only partly encompassed by the ego.”⁵³ In terms of the drive theory developed here, the death drive takes its aim at the psychic *Reizschutz* that separates the child from the primordial density. Or again in Boothby’s words, “the death drive designates the pressure of unbound energies against the limitations of the bound structure of the ego. What is subject to ‘death’ is not the biological organism but the imaginary ego.”⁵⁴

In short, the death drive is already in operation in the tension between the imaginary and real registers. This is one of the basic conclusions of these first three

⁵² Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4 & 9. He opposes “politics,” or “the struggle to effect a fantasmatic order of reality,” to its “other side,” which opposes “the governing fantasy of achieving Symbolic closure through the marriage of identity to futurity in order to realize the social subject” (Ibid., 8 & 14). “The efficacy of queerness,” he clearly states, “its real strategic value, lies in its resistance to a Symbolic reality that only ever invests us as subjects insofar as we invest ourselves in it, clinging to its governing fictions, its persistent sublimations, as reality itself” (Ibid., 18). While I am sympathetic to the idea that the obviousnesses of “political” discourse are the real objects of properly *political* struggle, Edelman’s portrayal of the symbolic order is one-sided, leading him to invest the category with all the characteristics of a regime to be toppled. When, for instance, he writes that we ought to refuse “the consequences of grounding reality in denial of the drive,” it becomes clear that the whole of culture is one overwhelming “No!” (all the better to contrast to his own “Yes!” in the form of a “No!”). One is left to wonder: if our most basic drives are *denied* expression in the symbolic order, and if its “other side” is so cleanly excised, why do we continue to invest ourselves in these ever more contorted fictions?

⁵³ Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 71.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 84.

chapters. So where does the symbolic fit in? As I have argued in this chapter, the project of gaining mastery in the world transforms in the stage of imaginary identification into a narcissistic struggle that leads to an “overbuilding” of the psychic *Reizschutz* that severs the infant further and further from the undifferentiation she seeks. What the symbolic accomplishes at this impasse is “a certain negation of the imaginary, insofar as it severs the specular relation to the object.”⁵⁵ In other words, the internalization of the symbolic order represents a victory for the death drive inasmuch as it puts a limit on the narcissistic aggressivity unleashed in the imaginary. As Bruce Fink explains, “the overwriting of the imaginary by the symbolic (the ‘normal’ or ‘ordinary neurotic’ path) leads to the suppression or at least the subordination of imaginary relations characterized by rivalry and aggressivity... to symbolic relations dominated by concerns with ideals, authority figures, the law, performance, achievement, guilt, and so on.”⁵⁶ To only slightly repackage a conclusion from Chapter 2: symbolic identification accomplishes on the secondary process level what the death drive does on the primary process level.

In its pure, unsublimated form, the death drive aims at a complete annihilation of all subject-object boundaries, and in this sense it is opposed to the symbolic order. Symbolic identification is, however, also a form of gratification of the death drive inasmuch as it subdues the child’s narcissistic rage. What’s more, as I explained in Chapter 2, it is the *only* form of real gratification of the death drive, as it is impossible to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵⁶ Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 89.

ever reach a “pure” primary process experience. Seen pessimistically, this conclusion implies that human beings are driven toward something that is inaccessible in this life. Positively, however, it means that we are able to re-create this lost oneness on the secondary process level, to make “the real” emerge at the level of “the symbolic.” As Lacan explains in *Seminar I*: “On the one hand, the unconscious is, as I have just defined it, something negative, something ideally inaccessible. On the other hand, it is something quasi-real. Finally, it is something which will be realized in the symbolic, or, more precisely, something which, thanks to the symbolic progress which takes place in analysis, *will have been*.”⁵⁷

According to Paul Ricoeur, this is why psychoanalysis bears a double foundation in energetics and hermeneutics (or, alternatively, in the primary and secondary process).⁵⁸ In Boothby’s very precise formulation, “the energy of the real emerges in the very heart of psychoanalytic hermeneutics insofar as that hermeneutics involves a realignment of imaginary forms under the influence of the symbolic.”⁵⁹

What then would Lacan have to say to those (his heirs) who uphold the death drive as a transgressive force, as a force that undoes the symbolic order? First, the death drive is not opposed to the symbolic but is rather its energetic foundation. This, I believe, is what Freud meant when he said that the death drive finds manifestation in the superego. Second, the desire for a regression to a “before” or “outside” of language and culture is at

⁵⁷ Lacan, *Seminar I*, 158.

⁵⁸ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, Book II, Part 1.

⁵⁹ Boothby, *Death and Desire*, 136.

best misguided: there is no attaining *jouissance* in its “pure” form. Finally, and perhaps most damningly, attempts at this transgression do not uncover the “traumatic real” disavowed and repressed by culture but rather regress towards narcissistic aggressivity. From a slightly different angle, those who advocate a “radical refusal” of the strictures of the symbolic order do not realize that what lies “beyond the symbolic” is not a Bataillan liberation but the horror of the struggle between the real and the imaginary, between glimpses of nothing and dreams of omnipotence.

Conclusion: *Bewältigung und Gewalt*

At first glance, Genesis 9:6 reads fairly straightforwardly: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.”⁶⁰ Humans are made in the divine image, and so violence upon them is an affront to God himself. But if God is the one offended, why shouldn’t God do the blood shedding? Having just flooded the world, he has certainly shown no unwillingness to unleash his destructive fury when he so pleases. Furthermore, wasn’t it human on human violence that had caused the flood in the first place? Why now is he encouraging that which had previously incited his wrath?

There are other ways to read this sentence, which would make much greater sense of God’s generally bipolar tendencies: if the “image” clause is read not to indicate

⁶⁰ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, Marc Zvi Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, PHEME PERKINS. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Genesis 9:6.

justification but cause, humans are condemned to violence precisely in being made in God's image, i.e. human violence is the projected contradiction of God's inner violence. If we read this passage in light of the theory of the mirror stage proposed here, on the other hand, God is neither commanding nor condemning: he simply proclaims finally what he perceives in this "hostile exterior." Note that in distinction from most of God's creations, human beings are never declared "good."⁶¹ Fancying himself to be his specular other (and what presence does God have in the Bible other than through human beings⁶²), God himself turns aggressive: human violence is not simply what God sees in the mirror, but what he actively desires for his own image. As Hegel recognized, because God initially does not display the self-consciousness to see that he is making *himself* in the mirror, he must be alienated completely in his other in order to regain himself as Spirit. Like a reckless older sibling whose travails we live through vicariously, God has shown us the devastating effects of walking this path. And we need not follow.

Holding apart the death drive and aggression in Chapter 1, I revealed sandwiched between them the severely neglected concept of mastery [*Bewältigung*], which, in its interplay with the death drive, is at the heart of Freudian drive theory. *Bewältigen* means literally "to bring in one's violence" [*in seine Gewalt bringen*], which itself bears some of the ambiguity of the term "mastery" discussed in Chapter 1.⁶³ To bring in one's violence could

⁶¹ Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 30.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶³ Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 106. Both *Bewältigung* and *Gewalt* harken back to the Indo-German root "val" meaning "to be strong."

mean to subject to power, to mastery in the sense of *Bemächtigung*, but it could also mean to bring violence *in*, to tame the chaos of trauma, to exercise control. In line with its more common translation as “to cope,” I have argued that *bewältigen* ought to be understood in this latter sense.

In revisiting the mirror stage, I attempted to show how this process unfolds. In seeking to master “external” threats, “free” energy is “bound” into a protective cortical layer of the id. At a certain developmental stage, in which identifications seeking tension-within recognition fail, this more basic drive to master is perverted into a drive to *be* the external threat itself, which Anna Freud gave the title “identification with the aggressor.” The identification is easily made in the early stages of individuation because the psychic *Reizschutz* is still under construction. Lacan uncovers an important developmental accomplishment in his theory of the mirror stage: infants do indeed take on a “mirrored” relationship with reality, which itself results in aggressivity. This relationship is, however, one of genuine transitivity that is at odds with the drive of mastery.

Despite the fact that I have been generally critical of Lacan in this chapter, I have affirmed the basic framework of his “mirror stage:” I agree that a struggle for dominance characteristic of what he calls aggressivity emerges in the initial stages of identification and that this struggle cannot simply be conceived in “intersubjective” terms. I also defend, with Richard Boothby, his understanding of the transition from this stage of imaginary identification to symbolic subjectivation against his neo-Lacanian heirs. My primary point

of disagreement concerns Lacan's reading of the "Project" in *Seminar II*, where he is intent on making Freud seem like a proto-Gestaltist. The primary victim of this misreading, on my view, is Freud's concept of psychic mastery, which gets translated into imaginary identification, and which is itself linked elsewhere to his particular conception of aggressivity. Through this chain of equivalences, Lacan is able to argue that aggressivity and not mastery is the primary motor of psychic development. Against Lacan, I have attempted to highlight the interplay of death and mastery operating behind his mirror stage. This move is not simply a rejection of the pessimistic worldview that follows from Lacan's understanding of psychic development: there are serious theoretical drawbacks to the assertion of aggressivity as baseline, drawbacks that I believe are remedied in a more comprehensive narrative that takes aggressivity to be a derivative phenomenon and a perversion of more basic human drives.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Domestication of the Death Drive: Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and the Crisis of Internalization

*It must be demonstrated exactly why the current lack of repression
is even more worrying than the old repression.*

- Theodor Adorno¹

Since Freud's "Group Psychology" paper, the superego has been generally seen as a conservative agency, that part of ourselves that keeps our anti-social/revolutionary tendencies at bay towards the end of social cohesiveness. Jacques Lacan is typically taken to have reinforced this conception, especially as his symbolic realm came to be opposed to the death drive. I am not sure that either Freud's superego or Lacan's symbolic (isomorphic concepts in their respective works) can be understood as *essentially* conservative, though it is true that both the establishment of the superego and the entrance into the symbolic are more often than not portrayed as processes of subjectification.²

Unlike the authors examined in the previous two chapters, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have very little to say about Freud's mature dual drive theory (though what they *do* say is very suggestive); but they do spend a good amount of time discoursing on the superego, and in particular on a certain structural transformation in the psyche

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie," *Briefe und Briefwechsel*, Vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994), 454 (my translation).

² As I attempted to show in the previous chapter, however, it is not clear that Lacan would have seen in the attempt to subvert the symbolic (for instance, in the neo-Lacanian "radical act") anything but potential disaster. And Freud, for his part, left it to future generations to determine the exact "nature of the superego" (Freud, *Standard Edition* XXI, 166).

having to do primarily with the superego. While they are most certainly not blind to its function as “severe master,” they also find something in the superego that has been eroded in late capitalism, the recovery of which is necessary to any kind of resistance to what they call “direct domination.” Thus, whereas the superego is a maintainer of the status quo in Freud and Lacan, it becomes, in their work, the locus of what remains of revolutionary energy in the present world.

Unfortunately, Adorno and Horkheimer’s appropriation of psychoanalytic theory was anything but systematic, due to innumerable factors: the heavy reliance on Freud’s 1915 “Introductory Lectures,” the influence of Erich Fromm, the subsequent attack on the psychoanalytic “revisionists,” their hatred of therapeutic culture, etc. As a result, and like so many psychoanalysts, they willingly took on the structural model of id, ego, and superego without trying to make sense of the drive theory that undergirded it. My hypothesis in this chapter is that integrating Freud’s mature drive theory into their work might strengthen their now shaky theses about the travails of the superego and, more generally, that some of the grays of first generation critical theory might appear green through a slightly different psychological lens than they themselves employed.

I also believe that the developmental model I have been formulating in previous chapters finds historical weight within Adorno and Horkheimer’s narrative. Loewald and Lacan describe the developmental process in something of a vacuum. How do the kinds of changes in family structure that so concern Adorno and Horkheimer affect the dialectic of death and mastery? Does our particular historical moment allow for the kind of

conception of psychic health that Loewald offers? Can we still say, with Lacan, that aggressivity is curbed with the subject's entrance into the symbolic? These are a few of the questions I hope to address in this chapter.

In Section §1, I attempt to reassert what Jessica Benjamin calls the critical theorists' "end of internalization" thesis. On Benjamin's telling, Adorno and Horkheimer were both convinced that they were witnessing an end of the developmental process that results in the capacity for self-criticality. By more precisely articulating the nature of this transformation, I believe it is possible to affirm a version of the "end of internalization" thesis that eludes Benjamin's critique. In Section §2, I then offer an interpretation of the culture industry's particular mode of interpellation as it is presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a means to better understand how the culture industry enacts this crisis of internalization. With this conception of the nature of subjectification in mind, I then turn, in Section §3, to Adorno and Horkheimer's individual responses to the crisis of internalization. Whereas Horkheimer can only place his hope in the social critique of a few "admirable men," Adorno offers a program not only for resisting the lure of the culture industry but also for reconstituting individuality.

§1 The End of Internalization Revisited

In "The End of Internalization" and "Authority and the Family Revisited," a pair of influential articles published in the late 70s declaring the author's separation from the Frankfurt school, Jessica Benjamin attributes to Adorno and Horkheimer what she calls

the “end of internalization” thesis. It goes something like this: in Freud’s times, the bourgeois individual’s psyche was primarily formed through struggles within the family. When the child finally concedes oedipal defeat, she internalizes within herself the “moral-paternal law” to which she has submitted in the form of her superego. This ego double then acts throughout the subject’s life as an executor of repression, but also as the seat of self-reflection: only by internalizing an external perspective does the subject gain the capacity for real psychic conflict, and thus for critical self-evaluation.³

With the “rational” dissolution of the authority of the family and the “objective administration” of the individual within a variety of educational and marketing apparatuses, this process of internalization is curbed. Failing to reach the proper oedipal pitch, the child no longer internalizes the father’s authority; while thus happily free from the repressive mechanisms of the superego, the subject also now lacks the capacity for self-reflective reason.⁴ It thus becomes difficult to say that the child becomes an individual at all⁵, lacking as she is in any mediating authority between herself and the long tentacles of the culture industry, which has made it possible to avoid oedipal defeat but only by submitting to a more direct domination: “As a result, the possibility for the formation of a

³ As Adorno says, “while psychology always denotes some bondage of the individual, it also presupposes freedom in the sense of a certain self-sufficiency and autonomy of the individual” (Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein [London: Routledge, 1991], 151).

⁴ “Middle-class requirements bound up with internalization – such as concentration, intellectual effort, and erudition – have to be continuously lowered” (Ibid., 162).

⁵ “Die Repräsentanten des neuen Typus sind keine Individuen mehr” (Adorno, “Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie,” 453). “The psychology of the individual has lost what Hegel would have called substance” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 152).

revolutionary subject is foreclosed. In the face of this situation the critical theorists look backward to the form of instinctual control which was the basis for ego development and reason in the past – individual internalization – and argued that only it contained a potential for the formation of a critique of domination. This is the impasse which I refer to as the ‘end of internalization.’”⁶

Before getting to Benjamin’s refutation of the end of internalization thesis, I would like first to correct one aspect of her presentation, which I otherwise find unobjectionable.⁷ As Gillian Rose has persuasively argued, Adorno’s claim that society and consciousness have become “completely reified,” taken literally, would imply that “no critical consciousness or theory is possible.”⁸ The trick, as she points out, is that this thesis is

⁶ Jessica Benjamin, “The End of Internalization: Adorno’s Social Psychology,” *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977), 44.

⁷ Deborah Cook finds Benjamin’s thesis extremely objectionable, arguing that she provides little evidence for her claims, misreads what she does offer, and ignores the parts of the “liberally cited” articles that do not fit her thesis (it’s quite a lot for the three paragraphs in *The Culture Industry Revisited* devoted to Benjamin). Relying herself on rather shaky evidence, Cook counters that “Adorno maintained that the culture industry exercises indirect domination via the superego,” and that it is an absurdity to think that the culture industry could play “the role of surrogate parent with the failure of internalization” (Deborah Cook, *The Culture Industry Revisited* [Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996], 54-55). To anticipate a bit, I agree with Cook’s conclusion about “indirect domination” but find the path leading there a bit more treacherous than she would like to believe. For one, Benjamin did not seem to be aware of the still untranslated “Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie,” an unpublished meditation written by Adorno in 1942 and introduced to the English-speaking world by Susan Buck-Morss in the same year (1977) Benjamin published her “End of Internalization” article (Adorno, “Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie”; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* [New York: The Free Press, 1977], 179). In this piece, Adorno argued that “the particular historical stage of bourgeois society” in which Freud formulated his psychology “no longer existed. The ‘subject’ of Freud’s times had been replaced by a new anthropological type. Characteristic of its psychological formation was not repression, but the immediate substitute gratification provided by mass culture” (Ibid., 179). Whatever evidence Benjamin might have been missing, Adorno’s “Notizen” seem to provide it. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it is an evasion of the thought-exercise demanded by the “end of internalization” thesis to simply claim it false. In this section, I will thus attempt to enumerate the reasons why it cannot be true and reformulate it with these considerations in mind.

⁸ Gillian Rose, “How is Critical Theory Possible? Theodor W. Adorno and Concept Formation in Sociology,” *Political Studies* 24:1 (March 1976), 74.

inexpressible, for if it were true, there would be no vantage point from which to understand it as true. Adorno's statement must thus be read as intending to "induce in his reader the development of the latent capacity for non-identity thought," and thus as an "attempt to prevent the complete reification which is imminent."⁹

The end of internalization thesis is of a similarly paradoxical nature: if it were true that the process of internalization that leads to the capacity for critical self-reflection had been decisively and definitively interrupted by the imposition of the culture industry on the family, it would not be possible to state it. The supposed "end" of internalization can thus really only be a dangerous *diminution* of internalization. Much as I am taken in by the rhetoric of finality, I think it is important to formulate the thesis in these, more straightforward and admittedly more boring terms (especially as Benjamin most certainly does not understand the "end of internalization" thesis in the same way that Rose understands Adorno's claim of "complete reification").¹⁰

I am not, however, out simply to tidy up: for in addition to a) inviting the all-too-common charge of philosophical nihilism¹¹ and b) generating the kind of confusion that naturally attends hyperbole, declaring an "end" forecloses lines of inquiry that should be

⁹ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰ The literal reception of Benjamin's thesis has unfortunately been quite influential: Axel Honneth cites Benjamin to support his claim that Adorno heralded an "end of mediation" (Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, Ch. 5), and Paul Piccone claims Benjamin's article to be nothing less than "a systematic critique of the Frankfurt School's reception of psychoanalysis" (Paul Piccone, "General Introduction," *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato & Eike Gebhardt [New York: Continuum, 2005], xxi).

¹¹ Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 274.

relevant to critical theory. Take, for instance, the claim that the family has been *totally* divested of authority. No doubt mass media and state institutions have penetrated the family structure in such a way as to change its dynamics, but this does not mean, to state the obvious, that father and mother have become helpless patsies in child-rearing. Indeed, it seems important to critical theory to make sense of this altered mediation. I believe this is precisely what Horkheimer attempts to do in “Authoritarianism and the Family Today” through his analysis of the “modern model mother” and “socially conditioned weakness of the father.”¹² Benjamin sees Horkheimer there spelling out the demise of the traditional family, but he is crystal clear about the continued importance of the family to structures of authority: “The only dictatorship in recent times, the Third Reich, which tried to dispense systematically with any mediation between the individual and the state and to push Jacobinism to the extreme, has failed.”¹³

It also seems necessary to explain how the “liberation” of the subject from superego repression can be seen as liberation at all. The perception of increased direct domination as liberation from old forms of psychic constraint appears to be a testament to the persistence of the “old” anthropological type (Freud’s bourgeois individuation), at least in the public imaginary. Without the conflict between these two types, constantly elicited in advertising (the repressed old fogey v. the carefree youth), direct domination might not

¹² Max Horkheimer, “Authoritarianism and the Family Today,” *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 365-366.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 362.

appear to be such an enticing option, evidence again that the more interesting questions lie in a theory of transition rather than conclusion.

Finally, and perhaps most devastatingly, the assertion of an end of internalization precludes the possibility of any theory of subjectification. In his 1936 essay on “Authority and the Family,” which appeared first in *Studies on Authority and the Family*, Horkheimer had argued, on Benjamin’s reading, that instrumental reason is *internalized* in the form of “subjective reason.” In this early view, the obviousness of reality under late capitalism and the acceptance of its “facts” are internalized by the subject in the form of a degenerated superego, which forms the psychic foundation of a limited form of reason. Revisiting the themes of *Studies on Authority and the Family* in 1949, Horkheimer no longer finds internalization at work: in this later view, domination works through a direct manipulation of the subject without any need for her own agency.

Rhetorical considerations aside, this transformation is most certainly a theoretical regression, inviting the second most-common charge against their project (after the accusation of nihilism): that they portray the culture industry’s consumers as inert and helpless victims of institutions superior in power to them in every way.¹⁴ What’s worse, it provides fodder for the affirmation of the opposite position, that consumers are “avid participants” in the culture industry.¹⁵ Both options, to my mind, are false: it is the great

¹⁴ In fact, as Miriam Hansen argues, “Horkheimer and Adorno ascribe the effectivity of mass-cultural scripts of identity not simply to the viewer’s manipulation as passive consumer, but rather to their very solicitation as experts, as active readers” (Miriam Hansen, “Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer,” *New German Critique* 56 [Spring-Summer 1992], 51).

¹⁵ Jarvis, *Adorno*, 75.

virtue of the concept of internalization that it allows us to surpass the agency/passivity divide and conceive of subjectification in terms of an unconscious participation. Claiming an end of internalization unintentionally turns back the clock on Freud's great discovery.

Once again, however, I do not find Adorno and Horkheimer guilty on this count. Nowhere in "Authoritarianism and the Family Today" does Horkheimer renounce his earlier claim that "naked coercion" cannot by itself explain power dynamics.¹⁶ He is just as interested in the nature of family mediation, but more concerned with the nostalgic return to "family values" as a compensatory public fantasy: "The more the family as an essential economic unit loses ground in Western civilization, the more society emphasizes its conventional forms."¹⁷ Adorno, by contrast, was more willing to entertain the possibility of an all-out "replacement of father- and mother-*imago* by immediate social power," but statements of this nature must, as I have just argued, be understood in the same sense as his claim of "complete reification."¹⁸ In any event, he was consistent in his many confrontations with the culture industry that "it is not enough to consider how mass-media institutions betoken alienation and reification; one must also consider how they preserve the subject, if only through its destruction."¹⁹

¹⁶ Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell and Others (New York: Continuum, 1999), 57.

¹⁷ Horkheimer, "Authoritarianism and the Family Today," 362-363.

¹⁸ "Ersetzung der Vater- und Mutterimago durch die unmittelbare gesellschaftliche Macht" (Adorno, "Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie," 454).

¹⁹ David Jenemann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xxix.

In short, the end of internalization thesis precludes investigation into the three most important components of the transition that the critical theorists want to make sense of: the parental roles, the strategies of interpellation, and the process of subjectification. For this reason, I think Benjamin's narrative can only be a parody of Adorno and Horkheimer's real position. It is a simple procedure, however, to reframe her thesis as one of diminution: while internalization has not ceased to be an important process of psychic formation, the drama of the family romance has abated with its penetration by the culture industry, resulting in a stunted form of superego development. This, perhaps, is the best way in which to interpret the claim in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that "in late-industrial society there is a regression to judgment without judging:"²⁰ the superego still functions, it still enforces judgment, but its strength and capacities have been diminished.²¹

Of course, this is just a line of entry, a long-winded way of cracking the shell of a petrified theory. What precisely is involved in this transformation will be the focus of most of what follows in this chapter and the next. For the moment, however, I would like to try to illustrate preliminarily the meaning of this claim about a crisis of internalization by comparing what Adorno calls the "old" and "new" anthropological types.

The "old" anthropological character, in Adorno and Horkheimer's telling, is true devotee of the individualistic ethos: she has learned, "under pressure from the father, not

²⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 167.

²¹ As Seyla Benhabib explains, "Adorno, like Horkheimer, evaluates 'reflexivity' as a positive moment of the autonomous ego and contrasts it to 'reflex-like' regression" (Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1986], 209).

to trace every failure back to its social causes but to remain at the level of the individual and to hypostatize the failure in religious terms as sin or in naturalistic terms as deficient natural endowment.”²² Her faith in this ideology is strong: not only does she castigate sinners and thank God for her own natural endowments, but she also judges herself and finds herself wanting. In short, she is not content simply to accept the categories of the Protestant ethic; she *applies* them as well, and in their zealous application lies the possibility of discovering not only the gaps between ideals and actualities but also contradictions in the ideals themselves.

By our standards, she is unbearable: the active use that she makes of her own value system seems imposing, naïve, and hubristic. Her judgments appear both anachronistic and dangerous, uncomfortably reminiscent of the moralistic pronouncements of our immediate past. Her willingness to judge the goodness and worth of others contrasts markedly with our own reticence to do the same. We may still trace most failures back to individual causes and be just as incapable of formulating social critique, but we are at least less likely to burden others with our opinions. As a result, our judgments remain, for the most part, implicit (and thus unperturbed), and confrontation, including the kind of self-confrontation that formed the core of bourgeois neurosis, is minimized.

The “we” in the previous paragraph identifies what Adorno calls the “new” anthropological type. The primary difference between these two types is not the content of their beliefs but their manner of acting on them. The “new” type is less invested in her

²² Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, 109.

judgments²³, less willing to hold others to their implicit standards, and, most importantly for my present purposes, less likely to judge herself. She is unanchored by anything approximating Kant's moral law and happily so, drifting amidst²⁴ the ever-changing set of opinions she picks up from the media and her social circles without ever feeling arrested by them (in Kierkegaard's language, the intensity (the inner tension) of the individual has been "leveled" by "the public"²⁵). What I am highlighting here is not Adorno and Horkheimer's questioning of the possibility of ethical orientation in a disenchanting world but rather their worry about the slackening of psychic conflict. Most certainly, they have a great deal to say about the bourgeois ideology and its successor; but more important than

²³ "The less the message is really believed...., the more categorically it is maintained in modern culture" (Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 164).

²⁴ Adorno characterizes the new anthropological type as "Vor-Sich-Hinleben" (Adorno, "Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie," 468). The expression is related to "vor sich hinschauen," which means to "look straight ahead" without looking about. Someone who "lebt vor sich hin" thus lives in an unexamined way; she lives "straight ahead." Adorno argues that this disposition is ingrained from an early age in children, who are instructed to "ceaselessly follow goals, stubbornly live for them, their eyes consumed by the gain one is always trying to snatch up, without looking left or right" ("unablässig Zwecke zu verfolgen, stur auf sie hin zu leben, die Augen von dem Vorteil aufgezehrt, nach dem man schnappt, ohne nach rechts und links zu blicken" [Ibid., 471]). The expression also means something like "living aimlessly," and I believe Adorno finds this stubborn "living straight ahead" to be, paradoxically, a form of being adrift: without taking the time to "look left and right," the subject is unoriented by self-reflection and thus a more pliable "participant" in the culture industry. Thanks to Lisa Cerami for walking through the intricacies of this phrase.

²⁵ In *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review*, Kierkegaard argues, in terms that directly influenced Adorno and Horkheimer's conception of the culture industry, that the present age is devoid of passion, of inwardness, of decisiveness. In place of the strong individual of the age of revolution, the present age has produced "reflective" and empty people who are ultimately only representatives of a generic "public" and whom Heidegger would later call "das Man." Kierkegaard tends to use the word "reflection" negatively in reference to Hegelian reflection, though he admits that "reflection is not the evil, but the state of reflection, stagnation in reflection" (Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978], 96). This kind of stunted form of reflection does not produce the enthusiasm of the individual but rather only the envy of the properly subjectified crowd member, who is "leveled" into a "deathly stillness in which a person can hear himself breathe, a deathly stillness in which nothing can rise up but everything sinks down into it, impotent" (Ibid., 84).

the content of their systems of judgment is the way in which judgments are applied. This absence of internal conflict at the secondary process level, and by extension, the inability of the subject to engage in the kind of self-reflection that leads to self-transcendence, is the distinguishing mark of the new anthropological type.

Having reframed the end of internalization thesis as one of diminution, I can now turn to Benjamin's refutation. In brief, Adorno and Horkheimer's narrative represents, in her view, a "nostalgic romanticization of paternal authority:" if the problem is a failure to reach the proper oedipal conflict that ushers in internalization, then what we need again, to put it bluntly, are strong fathers.²⁶ By linking "the identification with the *father*, internalization, and the independent conscience," Adorno and Horkheimer imply "that the child has no spontaneous desire to individuate, to become independent, nor the mother to encourage independence – therefore the father's intervention is required to save civilization from regression."²⁷ She opts for an alternate psychoanalytic framework (the intersubjective) that obviates the need for such a drastic conclusion in according more weight to the child's need to individuate and the mother's role in encouraging independence.²⁸

²⁶ Jessica Benjamin, "Authority and the Family Revisited: Or, a World without Fathers?," *New German Critique* 13 (Winter 1978), 48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁸ Benjamin develops this critique further in *The Bonds of Love*, 147-148 and 190-191.

Benjamin also accuses Adorno and Horkheimer of failing to distinguish between pre-oedipal and oedipal processes of self-formation. As a result, they “use the concept of internalization confusingly to signify two different but related phenomena, the development of the ego and the super-ego. The identification with parental *authority* as super-ego is collapsed into the identification with parental *competence* or the reality of childhood *autonomy* as ego formation,” when “in fact, the claims of the ego and super-ego are more likely to be opposed to one another.”²⁹ Benjamin is right, of course, but it does not seem like it would take too much work to correct this theoretical mistake; and my suspicion is that, in doing so, we might also address the charge of patrocenrism.

In Chapter 2, I distinguished, with Loewald, between two types of internalization, primary and secondary: the first corresponds to pre-oedipal psychic structure building, where internality is constituted, and the second to the post-oedipal process that results in the emergence of the superego. All indicators, including their concern for a regression in the capacity of judgment and their general lack of knowledge concerning pre-oedipal relations, point to the conclusion that it is the strength of the *superego* and not the ego that Adorno and Horkheimer see diminished. The end of internalization thesis can thus be recast, in seemingly watered-down but more theoretically coherent terms, as a diminution of *secondary* internalization thesis. Some of the narrative drama reappears, however, when we equate, as Adorno and Horkheimer do, healthy superego functioning (in this view, the

²⁹ Benjamin, “The End of Internalization,” 55.

capacity for secondary internalization) and the ability to reason dialectically, in which lies the hope of preventing instrumental reason from guiding Enlightenment into irrationality.

As suspected, in addition to providing more theoretical precision, reframing the end of internalization thesis in Loewaldian terms also allows us to mitigate their patrocentrism. It will be recalled from Chapter 2 that the tendency associated with the father's influence, that of individuation from the primordial density, is precisely what is *weakened* by secondary internalization. The superego, for Loewald, is not so much a reflection of the strong father as the product of the impossible demand to continue seeking the primordial density and simultaneously retain one's autonomy. Its establishment constitutes not the internalization of the father's authority but a viable compromise between imperatives associated traditionally with mother (union) and father (differentiation).

The diminution of secondary internalization thus means not an erosion of paternal authority but a weakening of the capacity to curb the primary process of individuation and raise the "urge to union" to the secondary process. I do not think Adorno was so far away from this conclusion: passages where he speaks of a "hardening within the individual,"³⁰ a "spiritual death by freezing,"³¹ and an absence of reflexivity in "reflex-like" thinking³² are very similar in concern and tone to those where Loewald laments a "brittle rigidity" within

³⁰ Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," 80.

³¹ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 121.

³² See Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, Utopia*, 209.

the ego³³, a function, for Loewald, of an impoverished secondary process (or, for Lacan, of an uncurbed aggressivity). It thus does not seem so radical a reinterpretation to say that the culture industry, by weakening not the primary process of individuation but the secondary process of internalization, leads not to “ego-weakness,” as Adorno often claimed, but to *ego-rigidity*. The problem, in this reformulation, is not how to strengthen the ego but how to remedy the “loss of inner tension” between ego and superego.³⁴

§2 *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

To comprehend how this tension might be cultivated anew, we need to take a closer look at Adorno and Horkheimer’s understanding of the culture industry’s specific mode of interpellation and formulate a theory of its effect on the drive economy. In what follows, I am going to attempt the unthinkable, as some before me³⁵, and offer a summary of the primary narrative of Adorno and Horkheimer’s great masterwork, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. No doubt other, equally invalid descriptions could be produced for this, by nature, unsummarizable book, but this particular one, quite obviously framed for my own purposes, at least has the benefit of making its intentions explicit. It is an imposition on their work, of course, but hopefully one that bears interesting fruits.

³³ Loewald, *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, 47.

³⁴ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 118.

³⁵ See, for instance, Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 173; Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Things Beyond Resemblance: on Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 160.

As exemplified in Odysseus' escape from Polyphemus, the subject emerges, in their view, through an act of cunning: self-renunciation in the service of self-preservation, self-domination in the service of mastery.³⁶ As with Freud's organism, then, the subject is able to survive as more than a temporary blip in the chaos of existence by paradoxically submitting herself to a form of death in order to live. But the subject's survival through the use of her cunning, her reason, receives only brief celebration: having duped the more powerful with a weapon as light as the word, she "is driven objectively by the fear that, if [s]he does not constantly uphold the fragile advantage the word has over violence, this advantage will be withdrawn by violence."³⁷

Mastery, in short, becomes *pre-emptive* mastery. No longer content with simply getting by, Enlightenment, the capitalized subject of their work, for whom "the mere idea of the 'outside' is a real source of fear," seeks to eliminate unexpected surprises by making of nature something manipulable, organizable, navigable.³⁸ The cunning through which the subject emerged is made extraneous. She has left adventure for routine. She has "matured": "Everything - including the individual human being, not to mention the animal - becomes a repeatable, replaceable process, a mere example of the conceptual models of the system."³⁹

³⁶ Hullot-Kentor, *Things Beyond Resemblance*, 38-39.

³⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 54.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

The modern culture industry carries forward this project of eliminating the “outside” but under a new, terrifying guise: by deploying its own domesticated version of difference: “Something is provided for everyone so no one can escape; differences are hammered home and propagated. The hierarchy of serial qualities purveyed to the public serves only to quantify it more completely. Everyone is supposed to behave spontaneously according to a ‘level’ determined by indices and to select the category of mass product manufactured for their type.”⁴⁰ Inassimilable difference is foreclosed: yes, variety and distinction are produced, so as to convince the ailing subject that she is *still* an adventurer, but only within the industry’s own “classification, organization, and identification of consumers.”⁴¹ In short, difference within sameness rather than *real* difference⁴², and with material consequences: “The more all-embracing the culture industry has become, the more pitilessly it has forced the outsider into either bankruptcy or a syndicate.”⁴³

In other words, what distinguishes Adorno and Horkheimer’s present, in which I admittedly recognize my own⁴⁴, from other eras of Enlightenment is its cultivation of a

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴² According to Simon Jarvis, “the culture industry thus generates a world of false specificity in which the advertised uniqueness of an individual product – the distinctive individual voice of a new poet, the inimitable style of a star conductor, or the sheer personality of a chat-show host – needs to be foregrounded by the relentless sameness of a whole range of the product’s other qualities, from diction to typeface” (Jarvis, *Adorno*, 74). The elimination of difference lies not, however, primarily with the “relentless sameness” imprinted on the product itself but rather in the nature of its production.

⁴³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 107.

⁴⁴ In *Uncommon Cultures*, Jim Collins rejects out of hand Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of the culture industry, which he calls a “a unitary master system,” denying the supposed central cohesiveness of cultural production (Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism* [New York: Routledge, 1989], 8). By arguing that the concept of the culture industry is more applicable to the principles of

domesticated “outside” as inoculation against the threat of a real outside. Enlightenment thus comes to recognize that it must reintroduce, in innocuous form, that which it means to eliminate if it is not to exhaust itself. It cannot do with routine alone; risk, the founding gesture of subjectivity, must be taken, albeit in a way that the status quo is not endangered.

In the last section, I was forced to work, in highly un-Adornian fashion, extrinsically, importing Loewald’s developmental model to make sense of the “end of internalization” thesis. Here, thankfully, Adorno and Horkheimer provide an intriguing point of entry in the “Notes and Sketches” section of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

The strength to stand out as an individual against one’s environment and, at the same time, to make contact with it through approved forms of intercourse and thereby to assert oneself in it – in criminals this strength was eroded. They represented a tendency deeply inherent in living things, the overcoming of which is the mark of all development: the tendency to lose oneself in one’s surroundings instead of actively engaging with them, the inclination to let oneself go, to lapse back into nature. Freud called this the death impulse [sic], Caillois *le mimétisme*. Addiction of this kind permeates anything which runs counter to unswerving progress, from crime, which cannot take the detour through the current forms of labor, to the sublime work of art. The yielding attitude to things without which art

Fordist capitalism, with its central planning and rigid organization, than it is to the post-Fordism that emerged in the 1970s, Peter Uwe Hohendahl historicizes but ultimately confirms Collins’ take. He thus concludes that “Adorno’s definition of mass culture... [has] lost its general plausibility” (Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995], 145). While I agree that some of Adorno and Horkheimer’s analyses are dated by their specific relation to Fordism, I do not find the concept of the culture industry to be essentially concerned with hierarchical organization. What I find more emphasized in their work on the culture industry, as I argue here, is its “infection” of everything with sameness under the guise of difference (Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 94). In their view, real culture reintroduces the individual to the “outside.” The culture industry, by contrast, offers no real difference: everything that the subject might find to break her out of her monadic shell is already pre-diversified. In this sense, I believe the culture industry is still a useful and relevant concept: not as a kind of central planning agency but as a symbol of the domestication of difference.

The question, to my mind, is simply: Are consumers still categorized according to data collected by (and still catered to according to marketing schemes formulated by) mass media institutions? If so, then statements about the outmodedness of the concept of the culture industry say more about those who utter them than they do about the culture industry, as Robert Hullot-Kentor has argued along different lines (“The Exact Sense in Which the Culture Industry No Longer Exists,” *Cultural Critique* 70 [Fall 2008], 137-157).

cannot exist is not so far removed from the clenched violence of the criminal. The inability to say No which causes the young girl to succumb to prostitution also tends to determine the career of the criminal. He is characterized by a negation which lacks the power of resistance.⁴⁵

Bracketing the mysteries and offenses here (the prostitution claim, in particular, sticks out uncomfortably), what is most of interest for my present purposes is obviously their invocation of the death drive, and not only that but its presentation in terms remarkably similar to the ones I offer in Chapter 1. By the 1940s, the death drive had long become synonymous with aggression; here, however, they choose to present it in its original “biologistic” packaging, and to some interesting theoretical ends.

By the time *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was composed, Adorno and Horkheimer had already metabolized Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” recasting their project as a “jumping out of progress.”⁴⁶ Thus, despite the fact that they see criminality as a kind of regression, they also find in it an obstacle to the forward march of instrumental reason. Indeed, they even go so far as to link it to the sublime work of art through the concept of mimesis, a term to which I will return shortly. The problem, however, is that criminality is no real subversion of a system that is itself criminal: it is “characterized by a negation which lacks the power of resistance.” The death drive is supposed to be that which explodes the boundaries of subjectivity, and yet here it is

⁴⁵ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 188-189.

⁴⁶ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 168.

presented as a false resistance, a domesticated form of negation that is ultimately only evidence of an “enfeebled being.”⁴⁷

What criminality does seem to provide, however, is some relief from routine, from the stifling ego-rigidity wrought by the progress of Enlightenment. If I am correct that the distinguishing feature of the culture industry is its re-incorporation of Enlightenment’s other in domesticated form, then criminality could be said to characterize all activities made possible by it, all activities that provide access to a domesticated “outside” and in which the subject is allowed to “lose herself” temporarily, from the “medicinal bath” of “fun” and the “light art” of entertainment to “the bliss induced by narcotics.”⁴⁸ Through the absorption of “that which is spontaneous and not planned into planning,” the individual is provided an administered vacation from an administered world; her capacity to actually transcend her condition is thereby “degraded to a costume of itself.”⁴⁹

For all its faults, the bourgeois socialization process at least provided the individual with the capacity for the kind of self-transcendence that I have associated in Chapters 2 and 3 with sublimated gratification of the death drive. For the “new” anthropological type, by contrast, this capacity for sublimation is weakened and the subject is instead corralled into a variety of “criminal” activities. To repeat my conclusion from the previous section: the diminution of secondary internalization means not an erosion of paternal authority but

⁴⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 188.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 112, 107, 49. Adorno writes that the kind of happiness attained in these activities “is to actual happiness what unemployment is to the abolition of work” (“verhält sich zum eigentlichen wie die Arbeitslosigkeit zur Abschaffung der Arbeit” (Adorno, “Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie,” 459).

⁴⁹ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 127.

a weakening of the capacity to curb the primary process of individuation by raising the “urge to union” to the secondary process. If what I have said in the present section holds, the need for sublimation of the death drive/urge to union is lessened by the provision of direct forms of death drive gratification. In turn, the mitigation of ego-rigidity becomes less a function of superego repression and more an interminable process of management by the culture industry.⁵⁰

In the previous chapter, I described aggressivity as a narcissistic drive to omnipotence that engulfs otherness and thereby rigidifies ego boundaries. Generated during the developmental stage that Lacan calls imaginary identification through the imitation of the dreaded other of the tension-between position, it is then curbed in the subsequent stage of symbolic identification, when the death drive finds sublimated expression. What I am claiming here is that the culture industry differs from previous regimes of Enlightenment in its management of direct forms of death drive gratification, which do not allow this kind of definitive vanquishing of aggressivity. The subject’s omnipotent striving, her desire to control everything and everyone around her, is never really overcome, only relieved in administered “breaks” from this suffocating condition of ego-rigidity.⁵¹ In one of their pithier quotables, Adorno and Horkheimer claim that “the

⁵⁰ “Actually, it is as if that which were once the concern of superego taboos is transferred to open social power” (“Eigentlich ist es so, als würden die bis jetzt vom Überich besetzten Tabus an die offene gesellschaftliche Macht transferiert” (Adorno, “Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie,” 458).

⁵¹ In Adorno’s words, “instead of paying tribute to the unconscious by elevating it to consciousness so as to fulfill its urge and simultaneously pacify its destructive force, the culture industry, with television at the vanguard, reduces people to unconscious modes of behavior even more so than do the conditions of an existence that promise suffering to those who see through it and rewards to those who idolize it. The rigidity is not dissolved but hardened even more” (Theodor W. Adorno, “Prologue to Television,” *Critical*

culture industry does not sublimate; it suppresses.”⁵² While this is not exactly inaccurate, it might be more precise to say: “the culture industry does not sublimate; it manages gratification.”

One might object that I have ruled out the possibility of “direct” death drive gratification in previous chapters. In Chapter 2, for instance, I claimed, with Loewald that it is impossible to have a “pure” primary process experience; and in Chapter 3, I argued, with Lacan, that the real is inaccessible in itself. My point, however, was not that *jouissance* experiences are themselves false or illusory but rather that their *reality* cannot be understood apart from the structures of social mediation that produce the kinds of subjects that have self-transcending experiences. When one goes to the movies, the experience of “giving oneself to the time of the other,” as Bernard Stiegler says, is a real one; anyone with the bare minimum of directorial skill can make a viewer forget about herself for an hour and a half.⁵³ It is an analytical mistake to deny the effectiveness of the culture industry’s technical skill.

Models: Interventions and Catchwords, trans. Henry W. Pickford [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 55).

⁵² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 111.

⁵³ Bernard Stiegler, “The Time of Cinema: On the ‘New World’ and ‘Cultural Exception,’” trans. George Collins, *Tekhnema: Journal of Philosophy and Technology* 4 (Spring 1998). For a more in-depth history of the way in which “the experience of temporality itself is made susceptible to a range of external technical manipulations,” see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 107. Crary convincingly argues against Foucault’s distinction between spectacle and surveillance, pointing to an array of “techniques for the management of attention, for imposing homogeneity, anti-nomadic procedures that fixed and isolated the observer using ‘partitioning and cellularity... in which the individual is reduced as a political force’” (*Ibid.*, 18).

The experience is not “pure,” however, it is not a “timeless” one, because it is manufactured to serve a particular purpose within a particular system of power. My argument is that these direct forms of death drive gratification serve the purpose of providing goal-oriented, controlling subjects with administered breaks from themselves. As Adorno writes, “people are not only, as the saying goes, falling for the swindle; if it guarantees them even the most fleeting gratification they desire a deception which is nonetheless transparent to them.... Without admitting it they sense that their lives would be completely intolerable as soon as they no longer clung to satisfactions which are none at all.”⁵⁴ As Adorno makes clear here, the problem with the culture industry is not *simply* that it manufactures gratification. The larger issue (and really the point of departure for a critique of the culture industry) is that its gratifications are inherently ungratifying because they only provide temporary relief and, more importantly, because they inhibit the creation of a tension between ego and superego that I have argued would provide *real* satisfaction for the death drive.

§3 Resisting the Culture Industry: Adorno *contra* Horkheimer

According to Loewald, healthy psychic functioning is a product of a successful sublimation of the urge to union, of the subject’s ability to take a fundamentally anti-social drive to erase self/other distinction and redirect it towards a “binding into every greater unities.” In short, the healthy individual transforms her death drive into Eros. As I have

⁵⁴ Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 103.

just argued, the primary danger from a psychological point of view of the culture industry's imposition on the family structure is its weakening of this process of death drive sublimation through a provision of managed direct gratification of the death drive.

For Horkheimer, the hope in this bleak situation lay with "small groups of admirable men"⁵⁵ who have managed to escape the fate of being stunted by the culture industry, who still have enough of their wits about them to perceive and combat the irrationalities of modern life. He calls these privileged few "resistant individuals."

The resistant individual will oppose any pragmatic attempt to reconcile the demands of truth and the irrationalities of existence. Rather than to sacrifice truth by conforming to prevailing standards, he will insist on expressing in his life as much truth as he can, both in theory and in practice. His will be a life of conflict; he must be ready to run the risk of utter loneliness. The irrational hostility that would incline him to project his inner difficulties upon the world is overcome by a passion to realize what his father represented in his childish imagination, namely, truth. This type of youth – if it is a type – takes seriously what he has been taught. He at least is successful in the process of internalization to the extent of turning against outside authority and the blind cult of so-called reality. He does not shrink from persistently confronting reality with truth, from unveiling the antagonism between ideals and actualities. His criticism itself, theoretical and practical, is a negative reassertion of the positive faith he had as a child.⁵⁶

Unlike the "submissive" individual, the resistant individual neither represses the world of her "childish imagination," nor does she simply carry immaturity into her adult life. She instead *sublimates* her infantile desires and cultivates the "positive faith" of childhood in the secondary process. Loewald hints at the effects of the division and fragmentation of

⁵⁵ Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 209.

⁵⁶ Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 112-113. Compare with the twenty-year-old Horkheimer's longing for a different existence: "By my craving for truth will I live, and search into what I desire to know; the afflicted will I aid, satisfy my hatred against injustice, and vanquish the Pharisees, but above all search for love, love and understanding..." (Quoted in Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 9).

the modern world on psychic health but does not come all of the way around to Horkheimer's conclusion: that the culture industry forces the healthy into an isolated unhealth, and thus that "resistant individuals" must relentlessly fight against and expose the untruth of prevailing standards from a place of utter loneliness.

Benjamin argues that in addition to placing his hope in surviving the present winter squarely on the capacity of these resistant individuals to bear their isolation and continue speaking truth to power, Horkheimer also thought it might be possible to add to their ranks through a restrengthening of the family unit. On this view, Horkheimer advocates a re-sublimation to counter the de-sublimation of mass culture. He is clear, however, that any return to the strong bourgeois family has been definitively eclipsed by economic developments that have led to a decline in the "free vocational activity of the male."⁵⁷ While he no doubt bore an embarrassing affinity for the patrocetric bourgeois family, he thus had no illusions about the fact that its time had come and gone. He furthermore argues that our age's nostalgic return to family values is a sham, a fantasy designed to cover over the lack of real familial coherence (an argument that one could easily imagine Benjamin offering in order to condemn him).

Thus, Horkheimer thought there was even less to do about the crisis of internalization than his critics say. He offers no real program for how to combat the diminution of internalization and only hopes that the efforts of resistant individuals to unveil the destructive mechanisms of the culture industry do not fall on deaf ears. I believe

⁵⁷ Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, 128.

that Adorno, by contrast, did propose something like a solution to this crisis, but only first by painting an even more disheartening picture than Horkheimer. Like Horkheimer, Adorno did not believe there was any way to turn back the clock and restrengthen the bourgeois family. Unlike Horkheimer, however, he also found it delusory to think that a “privileged few” could somehow escape the culture industry’s long reach: nobody, in Adorno’s view, can claim to see through the haze of the present any more than a theory can claim to be free of the marketplace.⁵⁸

Thus, whereas Horkheimer clung to the special privilege of membership in his vaunted group of “admirable men,” Adorno took seriously their claim in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that “the whole world is passed through the filter of the culture industry.”⁵⁹ Just as it would be impossible, for Kant, to throw off the categories of understanding, so too is it impossible, for Adorno, to step outside the culture industry today. It has reshaped the world and consciousness both (though not “completely,” as I argued in Section §1), engendering the very process that gives rise to the resistant individual’s “truth.” To be even more precise, if the process of internalization has been compromised in late capitalism, it is more likely that the “truth” of the resistant individual is not the product of successful sublimation but rather the omnipotent dream of the regressed narcissist.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), 4.

⁵⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 99.

⁶⁰ “Even when sophistication is understood in the theoretically acceptable sense of that which widens horizons, passes beyond the isolated phenomenon, considers the whole, there is still a cloud in the sky. It is just this passing-on and being able to linger, this tacit assent to the primacy of the general over the particular, which constitutes not only the deception of idealism in hypostasizing concepts, but also its inhumanity, that has no sooner grasped the particular than it reduces it to a through-station, and finally

In the last section, I argued that the superego is weakened not by the diminished power of the father within the family but rather by a siphoning of the death drive energy that would otherwise be directed to the secondary process. Unlike Horkheimer, Adorno does not believe anyone escapes this desublimation: for this reason, the kind of psychic health envisioned by someone like Loewald can only be a desperate clinging to an ideal whose real basis has been eroded. What, then, is there left to do about the crisis of internalization?

Adorno explicitly framed his negative dialectic as an anti-Hegelian solution to the problem of Kantian subjectivity. For both Hegel and Adorno, the neurotic Kantian subject, imprisoned within the bounds of her own subjectivity and thus forever separated from things in themselves, is in desperate need of help. Both thinkers conceive of their aim in helping this poor soul in terms of a “reconciliation” of subject and object, and both, finally, turn to the dialectic to be the engine of this transformation. But whereas Hegel sweeps the subject up in a storm of *Geist*, pushing her outside of herself and into the unfolding of the absolute, Adorno recommends only slow, painful time on the couch (and

comes all too quickly to terms with suffering and death for the sake of a reconciliation occurring merely in reflection – in the last analysis, the bourgeois coldness that is only too willing to underwrite the inevitable” (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 74). This is obviously written with Hegel in mind, but it applies equally to Horkheimer, in whose vision of the resistant individual Adorno finds elements of what I defined as “narcissistic aggressivity” in Chapter 3. In Erik Erikson’s terms, the resistant individual has mistaken “totality” for “wholeness” (see Chapter 3, fn. 35). Adorno’s worry, in essence, is that anyone in rabid pursuit of a future oneness as Horkheimer imagined himself to be will find himself irritated with the particulars along the way. No doubt the present configuration of particulars deserves a certain degree of irritation, but the answer, for Adorno, is not simply to submit them to the “demands of truth.” Adorno thus does not, like Horkheimer, want to pit the particular (the resistant individual) against a false universal for the sake of a true universal but rather aims to turn the particular against itself for the sake of reconciliation with other particulars.

certainly the avoidance of any such spiritual journey). Hegel finds reconciliation for subject and object in a differentiated whole; Adorno in peeling back the layers of subjectivity so that the object can be freed of the subject's projections and finally experienced as object.⁶¹ This kind of experience, the endpoint of Adorno's dialectic, what Gerhard Schweppenhäuser calls his "concrete conceptual utopia," is *mimetic*: no longer absorbing the object into her own categories, "Adorno's subject lets the object take the lead."⁶²

In the concept of mimesis, Adorno wanted to signify an alternative way of approaching the world: rather than violently forcing particulars to conform to the categories of instrumental reason, he believed it was possible to maintain a non-projective relationship to the object, in which the object is experienced and encountered as more than the subject's appropriation of it.⁶³ Jürgen Habermas famously characterized mimesis as an irrational and quasi-mystical "mindfulness" of nature in which there is no place for

⁶¹ Adorno is sometimes portrayed as retaining Hegel's goal but renouncing his way of getting there. For instance, Jarvis writes: "'Negative' dialectic was deeply indebted to Hegel's dialectic, but differed from it in not claiming already to have gained successful access to absolute truth. For Adorno, the possibility of such access was dependent upon the possibility of a change in our social experience. Negative dialectic was thus an attempt to criticize the obstacles – real and conceptual – impeding our possible access to the absolute, rather than a claim to have achieved such access" (Jarvis, *Adorno*, 16). While I agree that negative dialectics is an attempt to criticize impeding obstacles, it is important to state that Adorno's utopia is not Hegel's.

⁶² Gerhard Schweppenhäuser, *Theodor W. Adorno: An Introduction*, trans. James Rolleston (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 48; Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 88.

⁶³ It is true, however, that Adorno thought that mimesis was also active in the most projective relationships: "Mimesis explains the enigmatically empty ecstasy of the fans in mass culture" (Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, 95). He nonetheless thought that mimesis under the culture industry was perverted, and perhaps not even true mimesis, a mimesis that has devolved into mimicry: as Miriam Hansen explains, "in the context of the culture industry, the concept of mimesis is obviously dominated by the negative conditions of both an unreflected mimicry onto reified and alienated conditions and the misguided aesthetic investment in imitation" (Hansen, "Mass Culture," 54).

the exercise of human reason and its supposed conceptual “violence.”⁶⁴ Following Joel Whitebook, I believe it is possible to offer a more viable conception of Adorno’s “nonviolent togetherness of the manifold” with the help of Loewald.⁶⁵ In this view, Habermas’ characterization of mimesis only holds if one thinks that one has to regress to the primordial density in order to achieve a non-projective relationship to the object. In Loewald’s view, however, Adorno’s kind of non-projective relationship is best achieved through the cultivation of tension between ego and superego: only someone whose aggressive narcissism has been definitely curbed with the emergence of a strong superego can hope to approach objects themselves without lapsing back into self/other undifferentiation.⁶⁶

In a world where everything is passed through the filter of the culture industry, this kind of non-dominating relationship can only be an ideal, and most certainly cannot be practiced: “we are *not yet* able to think the priority of the object.”⁶⁷ Thus, what is for

⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol 1: Reason and the rationalization of society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), Ch. 4, Section 2.

⁶⁵ Albrecht Wellmer, “Truth, Semblance and Reconciliation: Adorno’s Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity,” *Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 14.

⁶⁶ “In authentic sublimation, the ‘alienating differentiation’ that was created with the rupture of the original unity of the mother-infant dyad ‘is being reversed in such a way that a fresh unity is created by an act of uniting.’ Genuine sublimation ‘involves an internal re-creative return toward that matrix.’ As opposed to the undifferentiated original unity, however, this restored unity now comprises a “*differentiated unity* (a manifold) that captures separateness in the act of uniting, and unity in the act of separating” (Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, 252).

⁶⁷ Jarvis, *Adorno*, 202. What’s more, anyone who promises to get us “to the things themselves” in this way can only, in the present world, be hawking ideology. In essence, we have here Adorno’s critique of Heidegger (in his mind, the quintessential sick subject): while his impulse to break out of Kantian subjectivity is also Adorno’s, by denying mediation and desperately grasping for the things themselves, Heidegger ends up enthroning “the being-thus-and-not-otherwise of whatever may, as culture, claim to

Loewald a conception of psychic health is for Adorno a regulative ideal. The question, then, is how we begin to reestablish the kind of psychic tension that holds at bay narcissistic aggressivity. While Adorno did not provide any comprehensive program here, he did forcefully assert what the necessary first step must be: a relentless critique of the “schema of mass culture” with the aim of unveiling the source of appeal of pop phenomena and thereby loosening one’s entanglement in the tight circuit of interpellation and projection that is the filter of the culture industry.⁶⁸ By understanding the nature of interpellation in this critical way, Adorno believed it possible to exercise what little freedom there was left in the modern world and resist the allure of subjectification.⁶⁹ In the terms that I have been developing here, this practice of negation disrupts the kinds of interpellation that rely on direct, managed forms of death drive gratification. By resisting

make sense” (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 86). If one were to frame Adorno’s project between the poles of instinctual opposition Eros v. death drive, Heidegger, with his desire to answer the “ontological need,” with his affirmation of the “purity” of being, with his immediate, visual categories, with his doctrine of “the *ens realissimum* under the name of Being” (Ibid., 79), and with his glance cast longingly back at Greece, most certainly embodies the latter drive. As I argued in Section I, the satisfaction of the death drive does not actually lead to an overcoming of subjectivity because the outside towards which the death drive aims has been domesticated by the culture industry. This is why Adorno believes Heidegger’s philosophy to be little more than a new form of criminality, a new form of domesticated risk, and thus already primed for success on the market.

⁶⁸ Thus, the form of the phonograph record becomes the “dull repetitions” of our “domestic existence” (Theodor W. Adorno, “The Form of the Phonograph Record,” trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 [Winter 1990], 58); the “whimpering vibrato” of the jazz instrumentalist becomes the “bourgeois subject’s helplessness”; the “theater-space” becomes a microcosm of social stratification (Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 103-104); the hobbyist’s curiosity becomes “positivism at play”; sports become a new form of “closely supervised and controlled physical labour” (Jarvis, *Adorno*, 75-76).

⁶⁹ As Marcuse describes this process, seeing through the “indoctrinating media of information and entertainment would plunge the individual into a traumatic void where he would have the chance to wonder and to think, to know himself (or rather the negative of himself) and his society. Deprived of his false fathers, leaders, friends, and representatives, he would have to learn his ABC’s again” (Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* [London: Routledge, 2002], 250).

the manipulation of her drive energy, the individual at the very least opens herself to the possibility of finding a different way of mitigating ego-rigidity.⁷⁰

My suspicion, given Adorno's attribution of a messianic importance to the power of negativity, is that he imagined it to be possible to do even more than this, that he thought that negativity itself might serve as a counterforce to aggressivity, and thus as the means by which to recreate the kind of psychic conflict anchored by the superego without the individualistic trappings of development within the bourgeois family. This reading would make sense of Adorno's "wish that, as its ultimate act, the dialectic would cancel itself out altogether"⁷¹: if "unswerving negation" could not recreate the kind of psychic tension that allows a non-projective, mimetic relationship to the world, then there would be no "ultimate act" of negative dialectics.⁷² Negation thus must be a form of psychic training that reestablishes internal conflict in the secondary process, i.e. that culminates in a mimetic capacity. Unlike Horkheimer, who longs for the bourgeois family structure even while recognizing there is no returning to it, Adorno was concerned, on this reading, with

⁷⁰ Alain Badiou proposes a similar practice in the 14th thesis of his "Manifesto of Affirmationism:" "Convinced of controlling the entire extent of the visible and of the audible through commercial laws of marketing and the democratic laws of communication, contemporary power no longer needs censorship. It says, 'Everything is possible.' Which also might mean that nothing is. Abandoning itself to this authorization to *jouir* is the ruin of all art, as well as all thought. We should be our own pitiless censors" (Alain Badiou, "Third Draft of a Manifesto of Affirmationism," trans. Barbara P. Fulks, *lacanian ink* 24/25 [Spring 2005], 109).

⁷¹ Jameson, *Late Marxism*, 120.

⁷² Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 159.

inventing a new way of curbing aggressivity in the absence of a developmental process of repression.⁷³

Adorno's project "of negation, of resistance to that which is forced upon [thought]" thus might be said to have both a deconstructive and a constructive aim: to both disrupt the culture industry's interpellation and also to reconstitute the psychic tension diminished by the intrusion of the culture industry on the family.⁷⁴ Breaking "through the fallacy of constitutive subjectivity" thus also bears the promise of reassembling individuality.⁷⁵ In the place of a conception of psychic health modeled on the "old" anthropological type, Adorno thus offers a critical practice that at the very least cracks the filter of the culture industry and perhaps even allows one to begin to reconstitute the psychic tension between ego and superego, the kind of tension that might allow the individual to encounter the world as more than a sum of her projections.

⁷³ Despite the fact that it was his intention to work collaboratively on an "open-ended" version of the dialectic with Adorno (which the latter eventually wrote on his own), it is clear that Horkheimer never fully understood or accepted Adorno's emphasis on negation (See Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, 68). Concepts like reason, truth, and the whole were generally less problematic for Horkheimer, and ethical anchors in a fragmented world: "Harmony and significant existence, which metaphysics wrongly designates as true reality against the contradictions of the phenomenal world, are not meaningless" (Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*, 178). It is thus very difficult to see Horkheimer, who much preferred the straightforward march of ideology critique, following Adorno down the rabbit hole. Simon Jarvis recounts an occasion when Horkheimer, in conversation with Adorno about the possibility of a materialist dialectic, was "driven to an exasperated outburst: 'So all we can do is just say 'no' to everything!'" (Jarvis, *Adorno*, 211).

⁷⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 19.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xx.

Conclusion

Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason was never simply that it did "violence" to the world, both literally and conceptually. On my reading, the point of the pre-history of the western subject that they offer in the story of Odysseus is to show that there is a motivational force that is repressed with the progress of Enlightenment, and then, in a dialectical turn, elicited and gratified in domesticated form. I have called this force the death drive. Through its management of death drive gratification, the culture industry weakens the process of death drive sublimation that Hans Loewald imagines to be the key to healthy psychic functioning. While Horkheimer desperately clings to the remains of the bourgeois individual, Adorno offers a program of resistance intent on the re-creation of psychic tension.

My attempt to reinvigorate the psychoanalytic component of Adorno and Horkheimer's work has led to three primary conclusions: first, when the terms of what Benjamin calls their "end of internalization" thesis are clarified, I believe it offers a convincing account of the changes wrought on the psyche under late capitalism. Second, the interpretation of the culture industry's specific mode of interpellation from the perspective of its effect on the drive economy allows further clarification of the "end of internalization" thesis and provides a new lease on the nature of the culture industry's function in general. At a time when the contemporary relevance of the concept "culture industry" is generally questioned, I believe this move allows the reassertion of its continuing importance to an analysis of modern power dynamics.

Finally, by framing Adorno's negative dialectic as a response to the crisis of internalization, it is possible to see his devotion to "unfruitful negativity" not just as an abandonment to philosophical and political nihilism, but rather as a form of resistance aimed at disrupting the filter of the culture industry and recultivating the kind of psychic conflict that would allow for a non-coercive mimesis.⁷⁶ Adorno was insistent that resistance to the culture industry is the precondition for any non-projective relationship to others and to the world. If he was therefore "hostile" to the "dialogic, communicative function of language," it was because he understood, in good psychoanalytic fashion, that destruction precedes communication (and, indeed, the kind of destruction that may require the renunciation of communication as an aim).⁷⁷ The problem with the communicative intersubjectivity that second generation critical theorists suggest ought to replace Adorno's utopian thinking, in short, is that it eliminates from the sphere of "social action" the act of self-effacement. We see in Habermas' subsumption of the emancipatory interest he associates with psychoanalytic illumination in *Knowledge and Human Interest* to practical interest in his "mature" work the characteristic gesture of the communicative turn.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," trans. Benjamin Snow, *Telos* 31 (March 1977), 130.

⁷⁷ Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, 272.

⁷⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Ch. 9. Benhabib attempts to reintroduce something like emancipatory interest with her concept of "moral-transformative experience." "It is ultimately the *process* of discourse, what I have named the moral-transformative experience, that establishes the truth and falsehood of our needs. But even then, we must admit that a genuinely fluid and unrepressed relation to inner nature consists in the capacity for constant critical reevaluation and reconsideration of our most cherished needs" (Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, Utopia*, 338).

More generally, viewing the end of internalization thesis with the developmental model formulated in the first three chapters in tow allows both a strengthening of the psychological “foundation stone” of critical theory as well as a historical situation of the dialectic of the drives to death and mastery. Loewald’s conception of psychic health is bound to a particular era, but this does not mean that we cannot use the drive model he conceived to understand the psychic transformations of the twentieth century and formulate a new conception of psychic health. Through a reinterpretation and reassertion of the end of internalization thesis, I have tried to do just this. In the next chapter, I will attempt to provide more of the social context for the emergence of the “new” anthropological type.

CHAPTER FIVE

Aggressivity Sublimated: Herbert Marcuse and the Lure of Technical Mastery

The more powerful and 'technological' aggression becomes, the less it is apt to satisfy and pacify the primary impulse, and the more it tends toward repetition and escalation.
- Herbert Marcuse¹

Much of this dissertation would have not been conceived without the influence of Herbert Marcuse: the seed of the connection between Chapters 1 and 2 lay in his underdeveloped claims that “the mother is the goal of Eros and of the death instinct,” and that “there are two kinds of mastery: a repressive and a liberating one”²; and Chapter 4’s reinterpretation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* proceeded with his conception of “controlled desublimation” in mind.³ The ideas that “socially sanctioned transgression” provides the primary obstacle to actual transgression, that “gratification remains a by-product of ungratifying labor,” and that “the power of negation” contains the potential “to build and protect a personal, private realm with its own individual needs and faculties” also all shine through in the previous chapter.⁴ This being said, I am wary, like so many today, of the overall framework of his thought, from his casual equation of material scarcity with Freud’s *Ananke* to his conception of liberation as an anamnestic return to an “original” libidinal

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London: Penguin Press, 1968), 199.

² Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 25; Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 240.

³ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 59, 22 & 51.

state. As Joel Whitebook argues, Marcuse has been the least successful of the critical theorists “at weathering the storms of time.”⁵

To his credit, Marcuse predicted this reaction to his own work: the kind of compliant subject produced in late capitalism bears a conditioned incapacity for the utopian thinking that he champions.⁶ Utopia, of course, takes different forms, and his own “pursuit of ‘integral satisfaction’ that disavows the incomplete and conflictual nature of human existence brings us into the register of omnipotence and therewith raises the specter of totalitarianism.”⁷ To my mind, Adorno’s aim of re-establishing the kind of psychic tension that allows a mimetic relationship without the individualistic ethos of the bourgeois subject more self-consciously avoids the omnipotent trappings of most utopian visions.

Thus, instead of looking to Marcuse’s thought as a whole, I will focus in this chapter on another of his intriguing and only partially-developed clusters of insights, one that gravitates around the topic of technology and technical control. Perhaps more than

⁵ Whitebook, “The marriage of Marx and Freud,” 87.

⁶ Marcuse claims that his conception of the end of alienation and instinctual return is not truly utopian but that it appears so: “From the standpoint of the interest of the status quo, the real abolition of affirmative culture must appear utopian” (Marcuse, *Negations*, 96). It is important to frame it in these terms, Marcuse thinks, because the annihilation of existing conditions is no pipe dream: “in my opinion there is one valid criterion for possible realization, namely, when the material and intellectual forces for the transformation are technically at hand although their rational application is prevented by the existing organization of the forces of production. And in this sense, I believe, we can today actually speak of an end of utopia” (Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 64). While I understand Marcuse’s desire to avoid the negative connotations of the term “utopia,” it is not incorrect to use the term to designate a qualitative break with the present in which the drive economy of the human being is fundamentally reorganized. In any event, I will be questioning Marcuse’s belief about the “one valid criterion” for social transformation in what follows, thus, perhaps, relegating his project back to utopianism.

⁷ Whitebook, “The marriage of Marx and Freud,” 89.

any of his colleagues, Marcuse was highly sensitive to the ways in which technology works not only on the world but also on the psyche. At a time when technological fascination has spurred the *New York Times* to devote an entire section to the matter, when struggles over inequality are increasingly reduced to technical problems of resource allocation, when political campaigns and marketing departments alike let themselves be guided by data alone, when financial speculation has been left to the automatic functioning of algorithms, when inventions like Google Glass bring us a step closer to technological implants, and when biogenetics researchers proudly herald the imminent possibility of constructing the human being from scratch, it seems more important than ever to make sense of the relation between the drive economy and technological innovation. Why precisely are human beings so invested in technical progress, despite a painful awareness that that same progress endangers our very existence? Without a doubt, this question is too large to answer within the space of this chapter. My hope here is simply to offer a theory of what kind of gratification is provided at the level of psychic drives by ever increasing technical skill and technological power.

Marcuse, it must be noted, made a strict separation between technology and technics: "Technology is taken as a social process in which technics proper (that is, the technical apparatus of industry, transportation, communication) is but a partial factor.... Technology as a mode of production, as the totality of instruments, device, and contrivances which characterize the machine age is thus at the same time a mode of organizing and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships, a manifestation of prevalent

thought and behavior patterns, an instrument for control and domination. Technics by itself can promote authoritarianism as well as liberty, scarcity as well as abundance, the extension as well as the abolition of toil.”⁸ Technics seems to be the neutral term here, whereas technology signifies the logic of the current oppressive order.⁹ In his view, the goal of this chapter would be impossible if we focus on technology: “we do not ask for the influence or effect of technology on human individuals... for they are themselves an integral part or factor of technology.”¹⁰ While I agree that the term “technology” can be applied to a totality of relationships, I aim to show that technics cannot be conceived in innocent form, that it is not possible to cleanly separate technical control from

⁸ Herbert Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. 1: Technology, War, and Fascism*, ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 1998), 41.

⁹ In “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society,” Marcuse explicitly questions this “neutral” view of technics, claiming that the “technical apparatus of production and distribution functions, not as a sum total of mere instruments which can be isolated from the social and political context without losing their identity, but rather as an apparatus which determines *a priori* the product as well as the individual and social operations of servicing and extending it, that is to say, determines the socially needed demands, occupations, skills, attitudes – and thus the forms of social control and social cohesion” (Herbert Marcuse, “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society,” *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 2: Towards a Critical Theory of Society*, ed. Douglas Kellner [London: Routledge, 2001], 42). What he describes here seems to apply, however, to technological domination and not to technics, at least as he defines these terms in “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology.” The truth is that Marcuse was far from consistent in his use of these terms: even in the very same paper in which he distinguishes the two, he claims that “technological progress would make it possible to decrease the time and energy spent in the production of the necessities of life, and a gradual reduction of scarcity and abolition of competitive pursuits could permit the self to develop from its natural roots” (Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” 64). According to his own definitions, technological progress can only mean increased domination. In addition, Marcuse also questions the suitability of technical inventions under capitalism to be put to *any* use: “can one really distinguish between the mass media as technical instruments and as instruments of manipulation, and as instruments of information and entertainment? between the automobile as nuisance and as convenience? between the horrors and the comforts of functional architecture? between industries working for national defense and for corporate gain? between the private pleasure and the commercial and political utility involved in increasing the birthrate? We are again confronted with one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization: the rational character of its irrationality” (Marcuse, “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society,” 53).

¹⁰ Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” 41.

technological aspirations. Both terms will thus be used in what follows (an inevitability, really, given Marcuse's own vacillation between the two), though I will try to indicate where a confusion between them might spoil the argument.

In Section §1, I introduce Marcuse's hypothesis of "technological aggression:" from the seed of Marcuse's speculations, I will develop the idea that aggressive drives find sublimated expression in technical mastery and technological development. With this idea in mind, I then return, in Section §2, to the connection between the death drive and aggressivity in an attempt to spell out the exact nature of their similarities. In brief, I argue that the death drive might be thought of as sharing with aggressivity an urge to complete mastery of *Ananke*, to correcting once and for all the "primordial discord" at the heart of life. In Section §3, I turn to Bernard Stiegler for help in strengthening the claim that the autogenetic longing at the heart of both the death drive and aggressivity finds fulfillment in and through the development and use of technology. Having developed Marcuse's thoughts into a theory of aggressive sublimation, I will then, in Sections §4 and §5, examine his more general understanding of the relation between technical mastery, capitalism, subjectivation, language, and liberation. By criticizing its faults and highlighting its strengths, I aim to offer a clearer understanding of the relation between technological and psychic development.

§1 Aggressivity Sublimated

In “Aggressiveness in Advanced Industrial Societies,” Marcuse proposes a theory of “technological aggression and satisfaction” in which “the act of aggression is physically carried out by a mechanism with a high degree of automatism, of far greater power than the individual human being who sets it in motion.”¹¹ In being transferred from subject to object in this fashion, human aggression finds sublimated expression: it has been transformed to serve “socially-useful” ends. The problem, for Marcuse, is that this sublimation is actually a “supersublimation,” a sublimation that does not actually gratify the original impulse, and thus which leads to the subject’s frustration. Unsatisfied with this manifestation of her aggressive energy, the subject only tries harder to unleash destruction:

frustration makes for repetition and escalation: increasing violence, speed, enlarged scope, etc. At the same time, personal responsibility, conscience, and the sense of guilt is weakened, or rather diffused, displaced from the actual context in which the aggression was committed (i.e. bombing raids), and relocated in a more or less innocuous context (impoliteness, sexual inadequacy, etc.). In this reaction too, the effect is a considerable weakening of the sense of guilt, and the defense (hatred, resentment) is also redirected from the real responsible subject (the commanding officer, the government) to a substitute person: not I as a (morally and physically) acting person did it, but the thing, the machine.¹²

I do not want to minimize the continued relevance of these reflections, agreeing that the higher degree of automatism in modern violence (drone strikes, for instance) allows a diffusion of responsibility. However, all of the preceding thoughts on the relation between

¹¹ Marcuse, *Negations*, 198.

¹² *Ibid.*, 198.

technology and aggression circle around the inadmissibility of the idea that *technology itself* provides a *real* outlet for aggressive energy.¹³ At the end of the day, in Marcuse's view, technological aggression is not really aggression: it is a false gratification that only pushes the subject to find other destructive channels. Similarly, it does not really provide relief for the subject from the inwardly directed aggression characteristic of superego repression: Marcuse quickly corrects himself when he claims that "the sense of guilt is weakened" to say instead that it is simply "diffused." Thus, technology only pushes aggressive energy around, finding new ways to redirect and diffuse it; it does not itself provide occasion for any real satisfaction.¹⁴

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse similarly flirts with the idea that "technics and technological rationality" are a socially-valued display of the "destructive instincts," that instrumental control is a manifestation of aggression in the same way that art is a one of

¹³ Marcuse is thinking about the technologization of war, in particular, but there is no reason to think that these thoughts do not hold for the entire "technology of domination," in which technical mastery serves the ends of technological control.

¹⁴ There is a notable exception to this conclusion: in *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse writes: "Assuming that the Destruction Instinct (in the last analysis: the Death Instinct) is a large component of the energy which feeds the technical conquest of man and nature, it seems that society's growing capacity to manipulate technical progress also increases its *capacity to manipulate and control this instinct*, i.e. to satisfy it 'productively.' Then social cohesion would be strengthened at its deepest instinctual roots. The supreme risk, and even the fact of war would meet, not only with helpless acceptance, but also with instinctual approval on the part of the victims. Here too, we would have controlled desublimation" (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 82). This is the only occasion I have found where Marcuse seriously considers the possibility that aggression actually finds sublimated expression in "technical conquest." It also contradicts his claims both before ("Some Social Implications of Modern Technology") and after ("Aggressiveness in Advanced Industrial Societies," in *Negations*) the composition of *One-Dimensional Man* that technological aggression does not actually satisfy the individual's aggression. I can only take this claim to mean that the lure of technical development for the aggressive drive allows for greater mobilization of libidinal energy during times of war; the kind of social cohesion he describes here thus follows less from technical mastery than from the dynamics analyzed by Freud in his "Group Psychology" essay. It is less a statement about technical development than it is about the use of technical development in group psychology.

love, only to immediately reject it: “The development of technics and technological rationality absorbs to a great extent the ‘modified’ destructive instincts... Is the destructiveness sublimated in these activities sufficiently subdued and diverted to assure the work of Eros? ...To be sure, the diversion of destructiveness from the ego to the external world secured the growth of civilization. However, extroverted destruction remains destruction.”¹⁵ Recoiling from the notion of “destructiveness sublimated” as quickly as he proposes it, Marcuse again finds no psychic transformation, only new avenues for different expressions of one and the same drive.

In this, at least, he was in agreement with the mainstream psychoanalytic treatment of aggression and the possibility of its sublimation¹⁶: Freud himself, for instance, thought that sublimation was an exclusively libidinal operation.¹⁷ Aggression, on the other hand, is completely resistant to any form of real socialization, like a hardened inmate in the eyes of an unforgiving warden. The “main representative” of the death drive threatens the fabric of society, and a strong superego is necessary for its repression, plain and simple. Indeed, by *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud is almost thankful for the superego and the guilt it

¹⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 78-79.

¹⁶ Marcuse wrongly attributed to Freud the idea of aggressive sublimation: “Now the (more or less sublimated) transformation of destructive into socially useful aggressive (and thereby constructive) energy is, according to Freud (on whose instinct-theory I base my interpretation) a normal and indispensable process” (Marcuse, *Negations*, 194). While Freud theorized the deflection of destructive energy towards socially useful ends, he never used the term “sublimation” in conjunction with the death drive.

¹⁷ More specifically, “only pregenital sexual impulses were thought to provide motive and material for sublimation” (F.J. Hacker, “Sublimation Revisited,” *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 53 [1972], 220).

administers.¹⁸

This picture admittedly began to change once out of Freud's hands. The concept of sublimation broadened and “came to be used as a designation for every successful defence effort not producing symptoms or necessitating counter-cathetic energy expense,” including efforts against the aggressive instincts.¹⁹ Ernest Jones speculated that “a child ... who has conquered a sadistic love of cruelty may, when he grows up, be a successful butcher or a distinguished surgeon, according to his capacities and opportunities.”²⁰ The model is simple-minded, but the idea acceptable enough: when channeled in the proper manner, aggression could indeed be used to the service of society. Nonetheless, there soon developed a marked resistance to speaking of sublimation proper when it came to the aggressive drives and the death drive. F.J. Hacker succinctly summarizes this opinion, predominant in the psychoanalytic community: while the aggressive drives “can be expressed in very different ways and forms, directly and symbolically, internally and externally, destructively and productively,” they unfortunately “cannot be sublimated.”²¹ Why? Because even in the cases where it is put to productive use (butcher, surgeon, etc.), where it is directed internally (masochism, asceticism, etc.) or where it is symbolic (derision,

¹⁸ As Paul Ricoeur explains, “Seen from the point of view of the ego and in the framework of its “dependent relations” (The Ego and the Id, Ch. 5), the severity of the superego appeared excessive and dangerous; this remains true and the task of psychoanalysis stays unchanged in this regard: it always consists in attenuating that severity. But seen from the point of view of culture and what might be called the general interests of humanity, that severity is irreplaceable” (Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 306-07).

¹⁹ Hacker, “Sublimation Revisited,” 219.

²⁰ Ernest Jones, *Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1913), 426.

²¹ Hacker, “Sublimation Revisited,” 220.

humiliation, etc.), it is still a form of violence (hacking at a dead animal, cutting open a human being, self-torture, “symbolic violence,” etc.).

Hacker nonetheless arrives, by way of stipulating what does *not* count as aggressive sublimation, at a pretty clear picture of what *would* be required in order to justifiably speak of it: in short, aggression would have to find socially productive expression for its given aim in a form other than aggression, domination and/or destruction, just as, for instance, sexual urges find de-sexualized, “civilized” outlets. As I have argued in the Introduction with Foucault and Arendt, the term “aggression” has taken on an immutable quality thanks to its “biologization,” through its link to the concept of “survival.” In this way, aggression has come to appear not simply as a natural drive of the human animal but as a necessary fact of our continued existence on earth. Sexual urges are, of course, also biological in this view, but in this hostile world, they are not in constant demand as is aggression. It should thus come as no surprise that there is some resistance to the idea of sublimated aggression.

Here, I believe, it is useful to turn to Lacan’s notion of aggressivity as a drive toward omnipotent control as the source of external aggression. By separating these two terms, it becomes possible to see how technical and technological development provides gratification for urges for total dominance at a “socially-useful” level. Freud himself concentrated on this exact problem when he wrote: “Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent.”²² The

²² Freud, *Standard Edition* XXI, 91-92. Focusing exclusively on the destructive aspect of the death drive,

aim of donning our “auxiliary organs,” he tells us, is to be as “magnificent” as our father and thus to occupy his place. The kind of power he describes here seems to qualify as a form of aggressive sublimation according to the definition negatively offered by Hacker: a socially productive gratification of the drive acquired without necessary aggression or violence.

Marcuse comes perilously close to arguing that technology itself provides just such an aggressive sublimation but ultimately withdraws this hypothesis. It is important to remember, of course, that “technology” signified for Marcuse, above all, *the bomb*: the variety of networked personal computing devices that is the natural referent of the word today was still a distant possibility. But when one thinks of the practices enabled by the various technological innovations of the last fifty or so years (playing a song on one's iPod, walking down the street and making plans on one's cell phone, hurtling down the highway at eighty miles per hour, accessing information from around the world on the Internet, etc.), it is possible to say that technology does indeed allow for an increased control and potency²³ that does not lead *of necessity* to the negative consequences about which Marcuse

Marcuse's colleague Erich Fromm rejects this Freudian line of thought: “[According to Freud,] the aim of the instinct is not weakened, but it is directed toward other socially valuable aims, in this case the ‘domination over nature.’ This sounds, indeed, like a perfect solution. Man is freed from the tragic choice between destroying either others or himself, because the energy of the destructive instinct is used for the control over nature. But, we must ask, can this really be so? Can it be true that destructiveness becomes transformed into constructiveness? What can “control over nature” mean? Taming and breeding animals, gathering and cultivating plants, weaving cloth, building huts, manufacturing pottery, and many more activities including the construction of machines, railroads, airplanes, skyscrapers. All these are acts of constructing, building, unifying, synthesizing, and indeed, if one wanted to attribute them to one of the two basic instincts, they might be considered as being motivated by Eros rather than by the death instinct” (Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, 465-466).

²³ Indeed, advertisements readily exploit this feeling: “convenience at your fingertips”, “fit for a king,” and, perhaps the most telling phrase, “with the touch of a button.”

is concerned. This thesis is, admittedly, a difficult one to maintain: if one wants to find violence in something, one will find it. It nonetheless seems like a stretch to say that the above-mentioned activities are “violent” in the same way that butchering an animal, torturing oneself, humiliating others, or dropping the bomb are violent.

§2 Death and Aggressivity

In brief, then, my argument is that the advance of technical mastery and technological domination, i.e. the proliferation of “prosthetic” devices and organizational forms both in and out of the workplace and the ever greater role those devices and forms play in mediating and structuring the environment, allows increasingly for an expression of aggressivity that may be considered “sublimated.” Why, however, should we not think of technical advance (as opposed to technological domination) as a sublimation of the drive to mastery rather than of aggressivity? Don’t technical know-how and gadgetry actually provide a stabilizing mastery? Why must our investment in technical mastery be seen as stemming from a drive not just to control but to *omnipotent* control? Isn’t this the perfect occasion for the assertion of a distinction between (technical) mastery and (technological) aggressivity? Despite my objections to Marcuse’s thesis of technological aggression, I believe that he was on to something in relating technical mastery to aggressive drives through the idea of technological control. To explain why, however, I must first return to the connection between the death drive and aggressivity.

In Chapter 1, in attempting to make sense of the metapsychological narrative Freud offers in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, I argued that the drive to mastery ought to be understood as emerging out of the death drive. In developmental terms, by partially “deadening” herself to the highs and lows of the primordial density, the infant is able to better cope with individuation and to assert her own mastery. In Chapter 3, I then examined the appearance of aggressivity as a perversion of the drive to mastery: by trying to control the other, to submit the other to her will, the subject attempts to possess a mastery that far exceeds the more humble project of building psychic structures with which to weather one’s environment.

My argument there was that aggressivity emerges in imitation of the “dreaded other” of the tension-between position. Since the other’s drive to engulf is a projection of the subject’s own urge to *be* engulfed, it would be unsurprising if aggressivity shared many features with the death drive. And indeed, in seeking total control over the other, to quiet the other’s otherness in the assertion of the subject’s dominance, aggressivity, like the death drive, seeks an erasure of tension between self and other. The difference between the two should nonetheless be maintained: with the death drive, self/other distinction is imperiled, whereas, with aggressivity, the other is the primary target of annihilation.

It is cause for further meditation, however, that Freud finds a very close link between an originally conservative drive that has no other manifestation than the slow physical demise of a being and a raging will to mastery and domination over others. We have already seen how the aim of the death drive (“reduction to zero”) finds expression in

aggressivity, in the reduction of otherness to zero. It is also important, however, to conceive of the death drive as already bearing an aggressive intention, to see *the desire for power directly operative in the striving toward “inorganic” existence that results in biological demise.*

How could this be?

It will be remembered from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that in the case of the little boy and his *Fort/Da* game, as well as that of the soldiers suffering from “war neuroses,” that the subject was forced to re-enact a traumatic scene in order to become powerful where she was before weak, to fill in what was at first lacking. In psychoanalysis, this basic situation of lack, *Ananke*, is the fundamental characteristic of all life. This is why Freud turns directly from this consideration of traumatic repetition to the origins of life. As Lacan explains, there is “a certain dehiscence at the very heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of malaise and motor uncoordination of the neonatal months.”²⁴ In his view, human desire is structured by an attempt to make up for the incompleteness that defines the subject.

If life itself can be said to be a traumatic event, akin to the disappearance of one's mother or the utter denigration of life experienced in war, then the subject desires, by virtue of being alive, to right that moment where she was made weak and dependent; to go back to the moment of creation and re-make herself, this time powerful and fully self-present.²⁵ In this view, death is simply a secondary effect of a drive toward an impossible

²⁴ Lacan, *Écrits*, 78.

²⁵ It would not be incorrect to say that we are speaking of a kind of *autogenetic drive*. It should come as no surprise that destruction, aggression and death are connected by this striving toward an impossible self-

origin. The subject runs towards her own death in pursuit of a power that would make unnecessary any future orthopedics. Aggressivity, it should be noted, is a very poor substitute indeed; compared with re-inventing oneself, even the most brutal of sadistic activity, the most complete domination of the other, falls short of attaining for its subject true fulfillment.

§3 Who and What

According to Marx's "falling rate of profit" narrative, the technological advance driven by the pursuit of relative surplus value would eventually come to so diminish the real basis of accumulation (labor power) that capitalism would topple. In short, the means of production "naturally" come to make obsolescent the relations of production, ushering in a new mode of production. In this view, the development of technical skill and technological power outruns and comes to revolutionize human relations. As Marcuse writes, there is technical progress and there is humanitarian progress, and we should not confuse the two.²⁶

In an important footnote in *Capital*, however, Marx offers a very different

invention, which, as Susan Buck-Morss argues, is "surely one of the most persistent myths in the whole history of modernity (and of Western political thought before then, one might add)" (Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 [1992], 7). Buck-Morss continues: "What seems to fascinate modern "man" about this myth is the narcissistic illusion of total control. The fact that one can imagine something that is not, is extrapolated in the fantasy that one can (re)create the world according to plan (a degree of control impossible, for example, in the creation of a living, breathing child). It is the fairy-tale promise that wishes are granted-without the fairy tale's wisdom that the consequences can be disastrous" (Ibid., 8).

²⁶ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 28.

conception of the relation between technological development and the human condition: “Darwin has directed attention to the history of natural technology, i.e., the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which serve as the instruments of production for sustaining their life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man in society, of organs that are the material basis of every particular organization of society, deserve equal attention?”²⁷ If we came to grow a third hand, surely this adaptation would affect our self-conception; why, Marx might ask, would it be any different in the case of the printing press? Or the assembly line? Or the personal computer? These inventions are so many additions to the human being’s “external” organs, and as such constitute changes not only in *what is*, but in *who we are*.

In this sense, technical and technological developments are not simply external changes to the human being’s environment but rather co-extensive with changes in the human being itself. Running with this basic insight in the first installation of his multi-volume work, *Technics and Time*, Bernard Stiegler argues that cortical and technical evolution are inseparable: building upon the work of André Leroi-Gourhan, he contends that the long process of human corticalization begins with the first uses of flint, or the “first reflective memory,” in Stiegler’s words.²⁸ From this founding moment, where “human and tool invent each other,” inside and outside, “who” and “what,” the cerebral

²⁷ Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume One*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), 493.

²⁸ Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, Vol 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. George Collins and Richard Beardsworth (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 142.

cortex and its technical prosthesis, are locked together in a co-emerging complex.²⁹

Technical and technological mastery are thus not external to the subject, nor are they simply our products, our own “stored-up and projected power”³⁰: the array of gadgets that we use, the networks of administration in which we live, and the division of labor in which we work are not simply constitutive of the *world*; they are much more importantly constitutive of *us*. According to Stiegler, the study of “the I” in the history of philosophy from Descartes to Hegel to Freud has left “unthought” this material condition of possibility. As Rodolphe Gasché explains, glossing on Derrida, this repression makes impossible a complete study of the self, as the human being’s “originary prosthesis” “‘opens up the position of the I, which is itself the condition for performativity.’ It is the condition of possibility, or the ‘minimal proposition,’ ‘implied in every cogito as thought, self-positing, and will to self-positing.’”³¹ In this view, the technological “supplement” is the condition of the possibility of the human subject (as there is no “who” without a “what,” in Stiegler’s language), and thus that which stands in the way of the subject’s self-presence (as the who is inextricably bound to a what that limits it).

In exhibiting this logic of the condition of possibility, which entails the impossibility of the autonomous subject, technological mastery both provides occasion for fantasies of complete control and radical reinvention at the same time that it is itself what

²⁹ Ibid., 175.

³⁰ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 6.

³¹ Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 244.

makes those fantasies impossible. The more technological mediation, the more powerful we become; the more powerful we become, the more we are dependent on technology. It is no surprise, then, that at the same time that we technophilic beings take ourselves to possess a kind of power only dreamed of by previous generations, we also find ourselves at the peak of our *powerlessness*, unable to control social, political and economic forces that seem to be spelling out the end of our existence.³² The more we reach back to the point of origin at which we might correct the primordial discord, the more real mastery is imperiled: “God-like” power and powerlessness naturally co-exist.

Stiegler's work helps cement the connections I have attempted to make thus far. If the aim of the death drive is the reinvention of the human being, technological innovation promises its direct satisfaction.³³ In the last section, I argued for the possibility of aggressive sublimation in technical mastery because it seems to allow a socially-valued display of power that need not be aggressive. I will now strengthen this claim: technical control does not offer *just* power. It rather promises *true* power, the power to remake oneself, and thereby to correct the “primordial Discord” at the heart of life. Why? Because it is the “inorganic” that “precedes” the “organic.” Because *it* was and is there at *our*

³² Reflecting on the relation between technological power and powerlessness, Susan Buck-Morss writes: “Technology as a tool and a weapon extends human power - at the same time intensifying the vulnerability of what Benjamin called “the tiny, fragile human body” - and thereby produces a counter-need, to use technology as a protective shield against the “colder order” that it creates” (Buck-Morss, “Aesthetics and Anesthetics,” 33).

³³ Making the connection with Heidegger, Bernard Sichère argues that the death drive is “le nom freudien de cette subjectivité anonyme de la volonté de puissance, oeuvrant au coeur de ce que Heidegger a nommé *Gestell*, le *Dispositif*” (Sichère, “Nous sommes déjà très suffisamment une civilisation de la haine,” *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*, 145).

beginning(s).

§4 Technics, Capitalism, Subjectivation

Undoubtedly, technical mastery is indeed mastery; but inherent in the evolution of technical skills is the fantasy of returning to the moment of one's creation and mastering *Ananke* once and for all; technical control thus always already bears technological aspirations, in Marcuse's terms. In this sense, it is a natural outlet for aggressivity, which shares with the death drive this aim of annihilating lack.³⁴ A proper theory of technical and technological development thus cannot focus only on the mastery of nature to the exclusion of its effect on the drive economy. It must also, furthermore, be tailored to the present: if, as Marx argues, the demands of capitalist competition spur rapid technological development, how, if at all, does this change affect the co-emerging evolution of who and what? In other words, is there a way in which technical mastery appeals to the autogenetic drive that is particular to capitalism?

In his well-known theory of commodity fetishism, Marx argues that in exchange value, "a definite social relation between men... assumes... the fantastic form of a relation between things."³⁵ In this way, commodities take on a kind of spiritual quality, invested as they are with the social life that produces them. Borrowing from his analysis of religion, Marx writes: "to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of

³⁴ Stiegler writes that "technics is the pursuit of life by means other than life" (Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, 17). I would only add that it is the pursuit of *fixing* life, of correcting the primordial discord.

³⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 165.

the religious. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is with commodities...”³⁶

In late capitalism, Marcuse argues, as technical devices become increasingly available in the sphere of public consumption and as technological domination becomes the rule of social organization, machines become the primary bearers of this fantastic quality: “The relationships among men are increasingly mediated by the machine process. But the mechanical contrivances which facilitate intercourse among individuals also intercept and absorb their libido, by diverting it from the all too dangerous realm in which the individual is free of society. The average man hardly cares for any living being with the intensity and persistence he shows for his automobile. The machine that is adored is no longer dead matter but becomes something like a human being. *And it gives back to man what it possesses: the life of the social apparatus to which it belongs.*”³⁷ Though Marcuse has consistently denied the possibility of aggressive sublimation, here he proposes that machines can become libidinal objects: through the “projection” of human qualities onto machines, they “appear as independent beings endowed with life.” Marcuse adds, importantly, that the machine also has something to contribute to the relationship: bearing the spiritual quality of social production, it returns to its adorer the relations alienated from him in the production process.

³⁶ Ibid., 72; Quoted in Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, 31.

³⁷ Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology,” 47 (my emphasis).

If, however, technical objects always already point to the erasure of the primordial discord, and thus are natural objects of human autogenetic longing, the libidinal cathexis is, at least, motivated. Machines are never *simply* “dead matter;” they are “dead matter” locked in co-evolution with “living matter.” The subject for whom they are “something like a human being” is mistaken, but her investment is not misplaced. Nonetheless, we can see here, thanks to Marcuse, what is specific about the technical promise of renewal under capitalism: due to the fetishism that follows from commodity exchange, “mechanical contrivances” possess the capacity not just to renew the individual’s life but also to return to her the “life of the social apparatus to which it [the machine] belongs” and from which she has been alienated. They thus naturally elicit two fantasies of fullness: of the self and of the social whole.

Like the direct form of death drive gratification examined in the previous chapter, I believe this dual investment in technical renewal also contributes to the diminution of secondary internalization. By seeking to prosthetically master both *Ananke* and social alienation, the subject is diverted from the task of acquiring the only true form of mastery available to human beings: a healthy tension between ego and superego. In admittedly non-structural terms, Marcuse describes this process as follows: “The idea of ‘inner freedom’... designates a private space in which man may remain ‘himself’ as against the others, with himself in his being with and for others. Now precisely this private space has been invaded and whittled down in the technological reality.... The manifold processes of

introjection³⁸ seem to be ossified in almost mechanical reactions.... In this process, the 'inner' dimension of the mind is whittled down: the dimension in which protest and opposition to the status quo can take roots, in which the power of negative thinking is at home."³⁹ Marcuse does not think about the effect of technological development on the psyche as one of unraveling tension, but he does see in it an impediment to the maintenance of strong individuality: "Technological rationality and efficiency promote affirmation, positive thinking, and they spread it among the public at large. Advanced industrial society literally sells itself with the goods and services it produces, that is to say, it sells the comforts and conveniences which help to keep the people in line, to repress the real alternatives."⁴⁰

He nonetheless holds to the Marxist belief that technical progress makes possible (but by no means makes inevitable⁴¹) a kind of liberation: "Technical progress is life-

³⁸ Marcuse describes introjection in terms similar to the way Loewald describes secondary internalization: " 'Introjection' suggests a variety of relatively spontaneous processes by which a Self (Ego) transposes the 'outer' into the 'inner'; thus 'introjection' implies the existence of an inner dimension distinguished from and even antagonistic to the external exigencies – an individual consciousness and an individual unconscious apart from public opinion and behavior" (Marcuse, "The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society," 53).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 49. As a result, "individuals get from outside what they would want by themselves" (Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 52).

⁴¹ As Marcuse explains, "For the vast majority of the population, [the competitive struggle for existence] means life-long labor in the process of material production, and on this necessity rests not only the material reproduction of this society but also its moral and political structure: the institutions of domination and their mental counterpart, the repressive work-ethics of scarcity and of earning a living. And it is precisely this necessity which technical progress threatens to render unnecessary, irrational by the double power to mechanize human labor and to conquer scarcity. The result would be the tendentious abolition of business and industrial labor, and the pacification of existence. This end is by no means inherent in technical progress. Technology can be used, and is largely used for sustaining and even increasing the quantity of socially required labor and for denying gratification and pacification" (Marcuse, "The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society," 46).

protecting and life-enlarging to the degree to which the destructive energy here at work is 'contained' and guided by libidinal energy. This ascendancy of Eros in technical progress would become manifest in the progressive alleviation and pacification of the struggle for existence, in the growth of refined erotic needs and satisfaction. In other words, technical progress would be accompanied by a lasting *desublimation* which, far from reverting mankind to anarchic and primitive stages, would bring about a less repressive and yet higher stage of civilization."⁴² Technical progress here is still only a channel for unsublimated destructive energy; but when guided by Eros, when harnessed for its own purposes, it can alleviate the human being's struggle for existence, the very thing that forces her to sublimate her anti-social desires in the first place.⁴³ As this struggle wanes, so does the need for sublimation, which leads to a desublimation in which instinctual energy returns to its source. Marcuse claims that this is not a regressive movement, however, that the return of the energy invested in alienated labor is not a "romantic regression behind technology."⁴⁴ When libidinal energy returns to the psyche, the subject finds herself in a

⁴² Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 56.

⁴³ Marcuse contends that "the individual must adapt himself to a world which does not seem to demand the denial of his innermost needs - a world which is not essentially hostile" (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 77). It is questionable, of course, just how much of the hostility of "hostile life" comes from the struggle for existence and how much from social organization. In addition, given my conclusion from the first chapter that the hostility generated in the tension-between position is a necessary developmental step, I do not believe that "a world which is not essentially hostile" comes about so easily.

⁴⁴ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 68. This is a good example of Marcuse's confusion of his own terms: technology as the system of relations in which domination is perpetuated would indeed be abolished in the "qualitative break" he envisions, though *technical* mastery would not.

developed world with the means of producing for herself without struggle⁴⁵; from this rebirth, new needs emerge, qualitatively different needs oriented toward the kind of contentment that can only be formulated in a world without alienated labor.

Curiously, we need not wait, in Marcuse's view, for this desublimation. It has already happened, albeit in repressive form: "Now there is, in advanced technological societies of the West, *indeed a large desublimation* (compared with the preceding stages) in sexual mores and behavior.... But does this mode of desublimation signify the ascendancy of the life-preserving and life-enhancing Eros over its fatal adversary?"⁴⁶ In short, no: Eros is supposed to represent the individual's autonomy from society, but "in the technological desublimation today, the all but opposite tendency seems to prevail. The conflict between pleasure and the reality principle is managed by a controlled liberalization which increases satisfaction with the offerings of society.... With the integration of [pleasure] into the realm of business and entertainment, the repression is itself repressed: society has enlarged, not individual freedom, but its control over the individual."⁴⁷ Thus, in Marcuse's view, both freedom and bondage can be conceived in terms of desublimation; but whereas one returns the subject's drives, the other seeks further control over them. Technical development, furthermore, has provided the conditions for both possibilities, despite itself

⁴⁵ Following Gilbert Simondon, Marcuse thus thinks of liberation as a kind of *completion* of technics: "in constituting themselves *methodically* as political enterprise, science and technology would *pass beyond* the stage at which they were, because of their neutrality, *subjected* to politics and against their intent functioning as political instrumentalities" (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 238).

⁴⁶ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 57.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

providing no direct form of drive expression.⁴⁸

I am suspicious of Marcuse's claim that instinctual energy can return to its "original form," a form free of the influence of society; like Freud, Marcuse imagined drives to have a somatic basis, and for this reason fell prey to a misguided instinctual naturalism. As I argued in Chapter 4, there is a better way in which to distinguish the culture industry's form of drive gratification from the kind that would lead to genuine autonomy: whereas the culture industry provides direct death drive "gratification" that traps the subject in a cycle of perpetual dissatisfaction⁴⁹, the practice of negativity that Adorno recommends bears the promise of restoring the psychic tension characteristic of autonomous individuality by reinvesting the death drive in the superego.

My major reservation with Marcuse's conception of the relation between technics and subjectivation, however, concerns his clean separation of technical and psychic development. In his view, the evolution of material forces accomplished by technical innovation is the objective condition of liberation. As he says, "there is one valid criterion for possible realization [of revolution], namely, when the material and intellectual forces for the transformation are technically at hand although their rational application is

⁴⁸ Marcuse offers a truly awful example of how mechanization contributes to this desublimation: "compare love-making in a meadow and in an automobile, on a lovers' walk outside the town walls and on a Manhattan street. In the former cases, the environment partakes of and invites libidinal cathexis and tends to be eroticized. Libido transcends beyond the immediate erotogenic zones – a process of nonrepressive sublimation. In contrast, a mechanized environment seems to block such self-transcendence of libido" (Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 76-77).

⁴⁹ As Marcuse says, "To be sure, there is a pervasive unhappiness, and the happy consciousness is shaky enough – a thin surface over fear, frustration, and disgust" (*Ibid.*, 79-80).

prevented by the existing organization of the forces of production.”⁵⁰ If this objective condition does not hold, then neither does his claim that it is possible today for “an ever larger part of the instinctual energy that had to be withdrawn for alienated labor to return to its original form, in other words, to be changed back into energy of the life instincts.”⁵¹ In this view, his rejection of the possibility of aggressive sublimation is really a theoretical requirement of his political hopes: he cannot consider that technical innovation (as opposed to technological development, in his terms) might also be a psychic condition of bondage, that technical control does not just provide the kind of mastery of nature that would lead to the dissolution of alienated labor but also a drive gratification that only binds the subject further to the current system of domination, because this would jeopardize the real possibility he finds in the present.

This unwillingness to view technics as more than a neutral development is furthermore combined, in a strange return of the repressed, with exaggerated claims about the “automatization” of the superego, “the strengthening of controls not over id impulses but over consciousness and desire.”⁵² Straining Adorno and Horkheimer’s end of internalization thesis, Marcuse claims that the superego is not simply diminished but that it becomes machinic, that the superego, raised amidst “depersonalized images,” becomes a mechanized reinforcement of the status quo. Marcuse overestimates the degree to which

⁵⁰ Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵² Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 85.

technical innovation under capitalism can replace personal relationships with impersonal images: no doubt the television in particular introduced a powerful new way to inculcate capitalist values and ideals without the mediation of the family, but to say that it “automatizes” the superego is to misunderstand the nature of its insidious effects.

As I hinted at in the previous chapter, many of the innovations of the last half-century have created ways for the subject to “lose herself” temporarily, to escape ego-rigidity and lapse back into a self-other undifferentiation.⁵³ As Stiegler argues, this is the essential appeal of television and film: not the story or the effects but the act of “giving oneself over to the other,” of letting oneself be carried off in the current. I believe the same argument can be made for devices in which the user is accorded a more “active” role: the “agency” enacted by the user is really only a way of evading the agency of the subject who has made herself an efficient executor of instrumental reason. Thus, I believe that much more important than technical development’s impact on the superego is its direct gratification of the death drive.

Where it does have an influence on superego development, however, it is a mistake to say that it leads to “automatization.” The superego is not simply a mechanism, but the internalization of an identification from which the ego looks upon itself, from which it

⁵³ These leisure activities are not simply “distractions:” they fulfill a certain psychic need, albeit in a way that does not provide lasting gratification. Framing the culture industry’s lure in this way staves off the temptation to think that political struggle is simply a matter of waiving off the sirens and getting back to “doing something.” From an instrumental perspective, the kind of critical thinking advocated by Adorno, which I have argued is generative of a state of psychic tension in which the death drive can find real satisfaction, is unproductive, a waste of time, a *distraction* in much the same way that the culture industry’s leisure activities are. It is one of the great insights of the critical theorists to have seen a close connection between resistance (in my terms, death drive sublimation) and subjectivation (direct death drive gratification).

directs death drive energy, and from which it establishes an ego ideal. In other words, its medium is one of *human perspective*. It is thus not the television itself but the characters and roles presented on its screen that siphon the energy of the family romance.⁵⁴ In truth, Marcuse is more of “topographic” than a “structural” thinker⁵⁵: in his quasi-apocalyptic vision of an “objective administration,” there is no drama of conflicting internalized objects, only the elicitation of unconscious impulses and the increasing control and direction of consciousness. His belief, along with Stiegler’s, that “hyperindustrial capitalism hijacks infantile libido, which is normally invested in parents, directing it toward commodities, thus destroying the processes of primary and secondary identification, i.e., the psyche itself” is thus both exaggerated and theoretically regressive.⁵⁶

Marcuse thus argues for both of the opposing positions that I believe must be avoided today: on the one hand, that technical development is a process separate from subject formation, that the human being is not altered by changes to its “external” organs; and on the other, that technical development has “mechanized” psychic processes, that our minds are being “automatized.” Although it bears a tendency to stubborn repetition, the

⁵⁴ Marcuse does, however, offer the insight that “the ego-ideal is... brought to bear on the ego directly and ‘from outside,’ *before* the ego is actually formed as the personal and (relatively) autonomous subject of mediation between him-self and others” (Marcuse, *Five Lectures*, 47). Inherent in this statement is the recognition that the superego does indeed function as a psychic agency and not simply an automaton, but Marcuse is limited here in his ascription to autonomy to the ego alone and not the so-called “total ego,” which includes both ego and superego.

⁵⁵ Joel Whitebook similarly notes Marcuse’s reliance on the early Freud: “Like most sexual liberationists who make use of psychoanalysis, Marcuse relied on early Freud and the concept of repression” (Whitebook, “The marriage of Marx and Freud,” 85).

⁵⁶ Bernard Stiegler, “Spirit, Capitalism and Superego,” Conference Presentation, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, May 2006, 10 Mar. 2010 <<http://arsindustrialis.org/node/2928>>.

human psyche is not, and will never be, mechanized in the way Marcuse worried. This is not to say, however, that technological development does not alter the instinctual economy. With the concept of aggressive sublimation proposed here, I am trying to take seriously the idea that technological development changes the psyche in addition to the world without then going so far as to say that the superego is itself being “automated.”⁵⁷

§5 Technics, Language, Liberation

In Chapter 2, I juxtaposed Hans Loewald’s discussions of language and religious experience because language acquisition is ultimately, for Loewald, an attempt to find mature expression for the essentially ineffable experiences that are deemed religious. By transitioning from using words to attempt to conjure the primordial density to attempting to unite words with the things they designate, the infant is able to find sublimated expression for her urge to union. Without the investment of drive energy, language

⁵⁷ Slavoj Žižek offers a convincing alternative theory of superego transformation: he argues that the “superego injunction” today “is replacing more and more the old symbolic law of prohibition” and turning the “permissive ‘You May!’ into the prescriptive ‘You Must!’, the point in which permitted enjoyment turns into ordained enjoyment.” This superego overcomes “the external opposition between pleasure and duty...in two opposite ways:” “On the one hand, we have the paradox of the extremely oppressive, so-called totalitarian post-traditional power which goes further than the traditional authoritarian power. It does not only tell you “Do your duty, I don’t care if you like it or not.” It tells you not only “You must obey my orders and do your duty” but “You must do it with pleasure. You must enjoy it”.... On the other hand, we have the opposite paradox of the pleasure itself whose pursuit turns into duty, [where] subjects experience the need to have a good time, to really enjoy themselves, as a kind of duty, and consequently feel guilty for failing to be happy” (Slavoj Žižek, “The Superego and the Act,” Lecture, The European Graduate School, Canton Wallis, Switzerland, 1999, 14 Mar. 2010, <<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/the-superego-and-the-act/>>). Žižek’s reconception of the superego, unlike Marcuse’s, has the benefit of taking seriously changes in the psychic apparatus that result from the expansion of capitalism without going so far as to assert that the psyche itself is being dismantled. Unfortunately, Žižek never explains *how* exactly the transition from Freudian superego to what might be called the “capitalist” superego takes place. Further work would have to be done to explain how the superego, weakened by death drive sublimation, adapts to a culture of narcissism, how it constrains the ego not by turning its narcissistic energy towards an ego ideal but by demanding a constant narcissistic expenditure.

becomes “hollow,” “empty,” functional but nonetheless meaningless.

For Marcuse, technological rationality makes impossible this linguistic cathexis: language is reduced to its instrumental function, to its “concrete” usage. This reduction is characterized by a number of developments: the contradictions that were once inimical to logical thought are reified in constructions like “clean bomb” and “harmless fall-out”⁵⁸; words are given a false familiarity through personalization (“It is ‘your’ congressman, ‘your’ highway, ‘your’ favorite drugstore, ‘your’ newspaper, it is brought to ‘you,’ it invites ‘you,’ etc.”⁵⁹); phrases are abbreviated so as to “repress undesired questions.”⁶⁰ In this “language of total administration” – a “functionalized, abridged, and unified language” that is “the language of one-dimensional thought”⁶¹ – there is no distinction between naming and judging. Things are “pre-judged,” already processed for consumption, requiring no superego to be metastasized by the subject. What is eliminated in this transformation is the space between the “is” and the “ought” designated by concepts, i.e. their dialectical nature. The history of concepts, their being more than their current, functional uses, is elided; the structure of technological rationality “leaves no space for distinction, development, differentiation of meaning: it moves and lives only as a whole.”⁶² And

⁵⁸ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 92.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 97. For instance, “NATO does not suggest what North Atlantic Treaty Organization says, namely, a treaty among the nations of the North-Atlantic – in which case one might ask questions about the membership of Greece and Turkey” (*Ibid.*, 97).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 96.

“technology has become the great vehicle of this *reification*,” of this “closure of discourse.”⁶³

Analytic philosophy, as exemplified in Austin and Wittgenstein, colludes with this reification: in Wittgenstein’s assurance that philosophy “leaves everything as it is,” one finds the essentially conservative nature of the “self-styled poverty of philosophy” that masochistically reduces speech to the “humble and common.”⁶⁴ For Marcuse, “these affirmations of modesty and dependence seem to recapture Hume’s mood of righteous contentment with the limitations of reason.”⁶⁵ This conservatism is exacerbated by the “therapeutic character” with which these philosophers conceive their project: “to cure from illusions, deceptions, obscurities, unsolvable riddles, unanswerable questions, from ghosts and spectres.”⁶⁶

Against this contemporary effort to reduce the scope of philosophy (and to thereby “cure” it), Marcuse upholds the difference between everyday and philosophical thinking.⁶⁷ The latter is preoccupied with the “question of universals” – a “pseudo-concrete question of language,” Wittgenstein might say – abstract nouns like “justice,” “beauty,” and “freedom,” all of which are not just components of everyday language games but rather “ideas which transcend their particular realizations as something that is to be surpassed,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.

overcome.”⁶⁸ The persistence of these “untranslatable universals” in the face of the linguistic instrumentalization attests to the continuing “unhappy consciousness of a divided world in which ‘that which is’ falls short of, and even denies, ‘that which can be.’”⁶⁹

In a biting assessment of the analytic project, Marcuse writes: “The protest against the vague, obscure, metaphysical character of such universals, the insistence on familiar concreteness and protective security of common and scientific sense still reveal something of that primordial anxiety which guided the recorded origins of philosophic thought in its evolution from religion to mythology, and from mythology to logic; defense and security still are large items in the intellectual as well as the national budget.”⁷⁰ In the terms I have been developing here, the transcendence inherent in universal concepts is taken by the rigid ego to be a threat to its integrity; without a strong superego, the subject is bound to reject philosophical thinking as both inconsequential (for instrumental control) and dangerous (to ego coherence).

Marcuse places his hopes in a “Great Refusal” of the false gratifications “of all the indoctrinating media of information and entertainment.”⁷¹ This non-gratification “would plunge the individual into a traumatic void;” it would be an “unbearable nightmare.”⁷²

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 250.

But without this gratification, the individual would realize anew that language bears an outlet for her drives, and not only that but a better, more satisfying outlet. Like Walter Benjamin, then, Marcuse ultimately advocates a reinvestment in the “primordial roots” of language, one that breaks through the reifications of “bourgeois” language. In his hypothesized “traumatic void,” the subject is forced to confront the incompleteness of her language, to examine the word “freedom” and wonder about its existence in the world; in short, to realize that there are things in her reality without names and words in her vocabulary without referents. In Loewald’s view, it is the aim of psychoanalysis.

Conclusion

As Martin Heidegger recognized, the real “question concerning technology” does not pertain to new conditions of exploitation and possibilities for resistance but to how our way of being has been altered; not to how we can use technology to change our mode of production but to how our mode of production has used technology to change us. In tying together technological development and instinctual life, I believe the concept of aggressive sublimation helps expand upon this Heideggerian insight.

Despite my reservations about Marcuse’s project, I believe he was nonetheless on the right path in linking technical progress and desublimation. In summary of his argument about “technological aggression” in “Aggressiveness in Advanced Industrial Societies,” he writes: “the more powerful and ‘technological’ aggression becomes, the less it

is apt to satisfy and pacify the primary impulse, and the more it tends toward repetition and escalation.”⁷³ In my view, the more the omnipotent strivings of aggressivity are invested in technical innovation, the less the death drive is able to find sublimated expression in the superego, and the more the subject desires the culture industry’s false forms of gratification.

In tying technical development to aggressivity in this manner, one that Marcuse doggedly avoids, I am not, however, advocating a Luddite “regression beyond technology.” I thus agree with Marcuse that “the critique of technology aims neither at a romantic regression nor a spiritual restoration of ‘values.’”⁷⁴ I disagree, however, when he continues: “The oppressive features of technological society are *not* due to excessive materialism and technicism. On the contrary, it seems that the causes of the trouble are rather in the *arrest* of materialism and technological rationality, that is to say, in the restraints imposed on the *materialization* of values.”⁷⁵ In this view, the problem is not technical development but its restriction in an industrial society that exhibits two contradictory features: “a trend toward consummation of technological rationality, and intensive efforts to contain this trend within the established institutions.”⁷⁶

I have argued in this chapter that technical development cannot be seen simply as creating the conditions for a non-alienated society. Marcuse’s proposal to demolish the

⁷³ Marcuse, *Negations*, 199.

⁷⁴ Marcuse, “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society,” 57.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁶ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 19.

social constraints on technical progress would not, in my view, lead to a “qualitative break” with the status quo, but only further constraint within institutions that promise death drive gratification. Technical progress is thus less important to liberation than the acquisition of what Heidegger calls a “free relation” to technology⁷⁷: an understanding of the way in which our investment in technology is a relation of bondage in addition to being one of use. Marcuse also calls for an awakening to the constraints of technological rationality but himself is not aware of its full implications.

In addition, the kind of awakening he advocates is only two-dimensional. As I said in the fourth section, Marcuse is ultimately a *topographic* thinker: the tension that he sees constitutive of the bourgeois individual is one between affirmation and negation, individual and society, consciousness and the unconscious. Finding psychic life to be more than a struggle between opposing forces, Freud posited *three* dimensions: one of irrational drives, one of instrumental control, and one that oversees the relation between the two, that attempts to find a compromise for these two countervailing movements. It is this third dimension that is ultimately erased in late capitalism: the agency that maintains psychic tension is weakened, allowing the culture industry to play directly on the tension between death and mastery.

It is important to frame the psychic transformation I have been investigating in these terms, to say that psychic life is *two-dimensional* today and not *one-dimensional*, to highlight the continued existence of a tension that can be exploited to liberatory ends. If

⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger, “The Question concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 307-342.

the human being were truly one-dimensional, there would be no conflict: if we were animals, we would simply be animals. And if we were embodiments of instrumental reason with no objecting parties, we would simply be machines. We are neither, however, and the inability to translate human life into either pre-human or post-human forms attests to the continuing possibility of resistance.

CONCLUSION

And Afterword

It is not true that the human mind has undergone no development since the earliest times and that, in contrast to the advances of science and technology, it is the same today as it was at the beginning of history.
- Sigmund Freud¹

The first part of this dissertation was primarily concerned with an opposition between two drives, what Freud calls the death drive and the drive to mastery. The latter drive seeks independence, autonomy, mastery, the kinds of psychic structures that allow one to more skillfully navigate the world. The former, by contrast, is a drive to erase one's independence, to reunite with one's parents in "oneness," to be once again cared for as if in the prenatal state. In Chapter 1, I examined the emergence of this instinctual antagonism in Freud's late "biologistic" speculation in the middle sections of his enigmatic *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In Chapter 2, I then traced Hans Loewald's very faithful translation of this Freudian metapsychology into developmental terms. Finally, in Chapter 3, I attempted to articulate a particularly prevalent perversion of the drive to mastery that Jacques Lacan calls aggressivity, which I take to be the most psychically dangerous outcome of the dialectical interplay of the drives to death and mastery.

I hope to have been successful in demonstrating both the relation and distinction between the death drive (or urge to union), the drive to mastery, aggressivity (or the drive

¹ Freud, *Standard Edition* XXI, 11.

to engulf), and Eros (or sublimated death drive). The death drive is fundamentally a drive toward the erasure of self/other distinction characteristic of early mother-infant relations. The drive to mastery is a vicissitude of the death drive, inasmuch as the “protective shield” that it builds may be considered a partial “deadening” of the psyche as a whole, but it is also a counter-force to the death drive, the first counter-force, one that reinforces self/other distinction where the death drive aims to tear it down. Aggressivity, like the death drive, seeks a quieting of self/other tension; but whereas the death drive points toward the repose of an undifferentiated state, aggressivity aims at an absolute dominance over the other, to “quiet” tension through omnipotence. Like the drive to mastery, aggressivity reinforces the psychic *Reizschutz*; but whereas the drive to mastery seeks a liminal mastery, between ego-rigidity and ego-fragility, aggressivity leads to an overbuilding of the protective barrier characteristic of ego-rigidity. Eros, finally, shares with the death drive the aim of a restoration of “oneness”; but while the death drive points backward toward psychic undifferentiation, Eros, as sublimated death drive, aims toward the creation of a differentiated whole.

Over the course of working on this project, I have become convinced of the value of this drive theory for thinking about motivational contradictions in psychic life. While Freud thought the struggle between Eros and the death drive applied to all living things, Lacan was right, I believe, to point to the human infant’s prolonged state of dependence in comparison to other animals as a crucial source of the psyche’s particularity. No other animals seek annihilation, mastery or transcendence like human beings do, and this fact, as

Loewald so forcefully demonstrates, must be seen as a result of our extended exposure to what he calls the “primordial density.” In my own interactions with infants, including my own, I find the struggle for and against this undifferentiated state to be a useful framework for making sense of the rapid, schizoid transition between states of desire for independence and dependence, between “No, papa, *I’m* doing this” and “You simply *must* do this for me,” as well as the perils that attend the process of traversing incompatible demands.

The drive theory presented in this dissertation is a decisive rejection of the idea that one must vanquish this infantile drive towards the elimination of self/other distinction. Developmental models typically begin with immature dependence and culminate in mature autonomy; in this manner, psychology has largely reified the Enlightenment ideal of freedom as self-mastery. With his theory of the death drive, Freud argued for the existence of a counterforce to the progress of Enlightenment, one that could not easily be conquered and one that only became destructive with attempts to repress it. According to Loewald, this drive towards the erasure of selfhood can thankfully find sublimated expression in our adult lives: instead of seeking an undifferentiated “oneness” in the “mother-child dyad,” he believed it possible to channel this drive into the synthetic activity of the ego, where it becomes a force for self-transcendence and erotic union. The tension between the death drive and the drive to mastery cannot be relieved, but it *can* be recognized and maintained in healthy ways. Indeed, the positive maintenance of this tension as the *only* form of psychic health is a way of refuting linear models of development that conclude with its dissolution.

This is not to say that this drive opposition encompasses all aspects of human behavior. One could, like Freud, skillfully manipulate manifold phenomena into a binary, and there is often great value in these kinds of theoretical contortions. Theory has this dual character: it can always be proven to violate the “data” in illegitimate ways, but it also, for this very reason, forces us to look at that same data from different perspectives and thus to resist treating the “facts” simply as facts. It is a fiction with the force of truth, as Foucault says. This being said, I am not convinced that everything can be explained within this instinctual opposition. Children’s play, for instance, strikes me as having elements that lie outside the struggle between independence and dependence. Freud, of course, treated the infamous “*Fort-Da*” game as a manifestation of the drive to mastery, and I do not doubt that play is often an outlet for this developmental conflict. But I also think there is a logic of exchange with one’s environment evinced in play (which has very little to do with adult forms of play, which are more often than not simply “stress relief”) that speaks to other kinds of human desire, having to do with a flow of materials in the world regardless of one’s position of relative independence within it. I cannot develop these thoughts further here, but simply want to indicate that I do not believe that human life is exhausted by the dialectic of death and mastery.

In the second part of the dissertation, my hope was to demonstrate the value of psychoanalytic drive theory to an analysis of modern social ills as well as the value of critical social theory for psychoanalysis. Without a theory of the particular ways in which the culture industry manipulates the psyche, it is impossible, in my view, to formulate strategies

of resistance to subjectification. Similarly, without looking to the broader cultural movements in which psyches are formed (as psychoanalysts have generally done in their retreat to the micro-issues of clinical practice), it is impossible to articulate a historically situated model of psychic health. Thus, in an attempt to provide historical weight to the drive theory formulated in the first part of the dissertation, I turned to the Frankfurt school's analysis of the intrusion of mass media and state institutions on the developmental process.

I believe that the first generation critical theorists were right to think both that the psychology formulated by Freud was bound to a particular era and, much more importantly, that we should conceive of the new anthropological type formed under late capitalism as having emerged out of a dissolution of the tensions that held together the bourgeois subject. In Chapter 4, I offered a theory of the way in which the culture industry offers immediate forms of death drive gratification as a means of stunting the process of sublimation that curbs aggressivity. And in Chapter 5, I looked into the role of technological innovation in this transformation in the drive economy.

The Frankfurt school's concern for the dissolution of family coherence had a great influence on a number of works, including David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, Alexander Mitscherlich's *Society without the Father*, and Christopher Lasch's *Haven in a Heartless World*. The latter's popularization of what is generally known as the "narcissism" thesis has fallen on hard times, thanks to the nostalgic tinge with which these authors lament the family's decline. To worry about a surge of narcissism, it is argued, is to long for a restoration of

the patrocetric family. I have argued, however, that what Jessica Benjamin calls the critical theorists' "end of internalization" thesis should be thought of as having to do less with the altered role of the father and more with the de-sublimation of forces that emerge within the mother-infant field. If we are attempting to make sense of a transformation in the psyche under late capitalism, it seems less important to look at the economic position of the male than it is to analyze the basic structures of care provision, their failures, and how society mitigates and manipulates these failures.

The novelty of the Frankfurt school in the history of Marxism was their insistence that the current social order was not only unjust but also *dissatisfying*, at odds with the gratification of basic human drives. In returning to the psychological component of critical theory, I have argued that it is possible to better articulate what precisely is dissatisfying about late capitalism in terms that were laid out, but not satisfactorily developed, by the Frankfurt school. The culture industry, I claimed, continues the project of Enlightenment by finding domesticated expression for its "other," the death drive, so that it does not inhibit its quest for mastery. Thus, the variety of activities described in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in which the subject is allowed to "lose herself" temporarily, from the "medicinal bath" of "fun" and the "light art" of entertainment to "the bliss induced by narcotics," are direct forms of death drive gratification intent on "managing" the psychic tension between death and mastery. From this psychological point of view, any project of resistance must both dismantle the "filter of the culture industry" as well as re-establish psychic tension within the individual. I argued that Adorno's proposed practice of

“unswerving negation,” so often dismissed as evidence of his capitulation to philosophical nihilism, is best interpreted as a means to do just this.

I have retained a psychological focus throughout this dissertation: though the last two chapters move into broader social issues, I attempted to remain honed in on how the cultural and technological changes of the twentieth-century altered the *psyche*. One area of investigation limited by this focus was the topic of *religion*, the field from which I approached the topic of the dissertation. Drive theory was really Freud’s answer to the problem of religion: he thought it explained the genesis of religious beliefs and practices, and at the same time believed that knowledge of it could replace religious doctrines. A renewal of drive theory was thus, in my view, necessary for a rearticulation of a psychoanalytic theory of religion. In Chapter 2, I offer a brief glimpse of what this theory might look like: according to Loewald, those anomalous and ineffable experiences “deemed religious,” in Ann Taves’ language, have a great deal to do with the early mother-infant relationship in which self/other boundaries are still fluid. I believe that in Loewald’s theory of religious *experience* lie the rudiments of a full-fledged psychosocial theory of *religion*, but to formulate this theory would require a shift from the psychological to the sociological, to an investigation into the ways in which social organizations arise from attempts to sublimate, manipulate, and repress what Georges Bataille calls this “lost intimacy.” Though the implications of this dissertation for a theory of religion were always in the background, I felt that it was more important to properly lay the foundations for this

kind of work rather than overextend the current project, especially given the marginalization of the category of religious experience within the discipline of religious studies, as well as a general reticence, motivated by a fear of essentializing, to formulate theories of religion. To address these issues would require too much work outside the confines of the present study, and thus I have postponed a formulation of a psychoanalytic theory of religion for a future project.

Afterword

Much of this dissertation was written in the Burke Library of Union Theological Seminary, where, during my tenure as a Ph.D. student and candidate in the Religion department, I have had a spectacular, kitty-corner view of the construction and unveiling of the Northwest Corner Building, Columbia's new "tough but tenderhearted" interdisciplinary science building.² Although the 14-story high steel and aluminum tower was designed to complement the brick and limestone gothic tower of Union, its dominating presence on the corner of Broadway and 120th serves as a heavy-handed reminder of where the future is heading. Walking from Union towards the main campus through its doors, I have often felt, passing through the overwhelmingly aseptic marble lobby, as if the building is meant to cleanse intruders from the northwest who have not been intimidated away by the façade.

² Nicolai Ouroussoff, "A Building Forms a Bridge Between a University's Past and Future," *The New York Times*, 8 Feb. 2011, 3 Apr. 2013, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/09/arts/design/09moneo.html>>.

The ninth floor of this building houses a laboratory of Rafael Yuste, lead author of “The Brain Activity Map Project and the Challenge of Functional Connectomics,” which appeared in *Neuron*, a leading neuroscience journal, in June 2012. The paper proposed the need for the “Brain Activity Map Project, aimed at reconstructing the full record of neural activity across complete neural circuits.”³ In his 2013 State of the Union, President Obama mentioned the need to fund scientists who “are mapping the brain to unlock the answer to Alzheimer’s,” and on April 2, 2013, with Yuste in attendance, the Brain Activity Map Project received official endorsement from the Obama administration in the form of \$100 million in 2014 alone (and more going forward).⁴

The project has been compared by the administration to the Human Genome Project, which was also directed at a problem (the sequencing of the human genome) as seemingly insoluble as the recording and mapping of brain circuits in action. The success of the Human Genome Project was both scientific and financial (the \$3.8 billion invested in it returned \$800 billion by 2010⁵), a fact that George Church, the face of the Personal Genome Project⁶, has not failed to cite in justification of the Brain Activity Map Project

³ A. Paul Alivisatos, Miyoung Chun, George M. Church, Ralph J. Greenspan, Michael L. Roukes, and Rafael Yuste, “The Brain Activity Map Project and the Challenge of Functional Connectomics,” *Neuron* 74:6 (June 2012), 970.

⁴ Yuste’s laboratory has already been at work on developing imaging techniques to detect neuron firings, with the hope of viewing multiple firings at once in order to extrapolate connections. The ability to view this brain behavior would be a key in the advancement of the Brain Activity Map Project.

⁵ John Markoff, “Obama Seeking to Boost Study of Human Brain,” *The New York Times*, 17 Feb. 2013, 3 Apr. 2013, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/18/science/project-seeks-to-build-map-of-human-brain.html?pagewanted=all>>.

⁶ Church is also a key member in the “Origins of Life” initiative at Harvard, headed by Dimitar Sasselov. Sasselov was the key to bringing together Church, who has produced a functional synthetic ribosome,

(Church is also an author on the *Neuron* paper).⁷ The critics of the Human Genome Project have voiced many concerns about genomic sequencing (what happens when health insurance companies get a hold of this information, isn't this an invasion of privacy⁸, etc.), the most fundamental of which is perhaps that these scientists are, once again, playing God.

The justification for both projects in the face of such claims is quite simple: "The living organism is a complex machine. To understand it, one must take it apart and put it back together again, as one would the engine of a car. Opposing this research but encouraging medical advance is like asking your mechanic to fix your car without popping open the hood."⁹ We're not playing God. We simply want the allowance, both financial and legal, to advance down the road to a *true knowledge*, a *true mastery*, of life. As this mastery grows, both physiological and psychological diseases will slowly be rooted out, and the ethical questions that so worry us today will fade to the background."

with Jack Szostak, the less public but no less illustrious director of the lab that bears his own name, who has created spontaneously self-assembling spheres of fat that looked and acted like cell membranes. Sasselov's expressed aim is to construct a fully synthetic living cell, to essentially create life anew (John Bohannon, "Building a Parallel Universe," *Wired* [Dec. 2010], 212). What was the object of Freud's most wild speculations is now, unfortunately, lab-tested.

⁷ The guiding lights of the Brain Activity Map Project are keenly aware of how much it is going to cost to accomplish their goals, and thus their scientific presentations often seem more like sales pitches than scholarly work. Church, for one, is extremely open about his many corporate sponsors and prides himself on an openness to accepting help from anyone who will help push forward his scientific aspirations.

⁸ Church has implied that only perverts and violent offenders want privacy and that anyone with a clean conscience should welcome having their lives on public display (George Church, "Genomic Data Privacy and Risk," *Youtube*, Youtube, 22 Mar. 2013, 3 Apr. 2013, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wAmQvoFdBo>>.)

⁹ Marilyn Ness, "GENOME: The Future is Now, WEBISODE 1," *Youtube*, 29 Jul. 2009, 3 Apr. 2013, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVZI7NBgcWM>>.

Church and his colleagues are wildly naïve about the corporate wolves with whom they run (Church describes his sponsors as institutions that are “very pragmatic and practical about helping our world get better”¹⁰), and this fact is even more disturbing in the case of the Brain Activity Map Project, which promises a very fine control over the seat of consciousness. With the help of this research, the neuro-marketing of today may soon look like a daguerreotype in comparison to a digital camera (that is, provided we retain the capacity to *look* in this way at all). It is not enough, however, to point to this indissoluble marriage of science and industry: just as Marx, in an attempt to silence the defenders of capitalism that blamed corrupters of an otherwise pure system for any woes of the free market, analyzed political economy and not actually existing capitalism in *Capital*, so too is it necessary to confront the pristine fantasy that guides this research without too-hastily following the money.

What, in the end, is wrong with the technician’s fantasy of complete control over the human body, and in particular the human brain? In short, the *instrumental* approach to the treatment of physiological and psychological “diseases” tends to detract from the traditional way in which human beings have solved their problems: that is, by talking with one another toward the end of greater personal self-realization and social harmony. In *Biology as Ideology*, Richard Lewontin offers the following penetrating example:

It is certainly true that one cannot get tuberculosis without a tubercle bacillus, and the evidence is quite compelling that one cannot get the cancer mesothelioma without having ingested asbestos or related compounds. But that is not the same as

¹⁰ Church, “Genomic Data Privacy and Risk.”

saying that the cause of tuberculosis is the tubercle bacillus and the cause of mesothelioma is asbestos. What are the consequences for our health of thinking in this way? Suppose we note that tuberculosis was a disease extremely common in the sweatshops and miserable factories of the nineteenth century, whereas tuberculosis rates were much lower among country people and in the upper classes. Then we might be justified in claiming that the cause of tuberculosis is unregulated industrial capitalism, and if we did away with that system of social organization, we would not need to worry about the tubercle bacillus.¹¹

Instead of asking about the social practices and institutions that contribute to problems of neural and mental health and our ways of changing them, the proponents of the Brain Activity Map Project are chasing “tubercle bacilli,” having narrowed their view of “cause” so as to eliminate any focus on communicative solutions before greater instrumental mastery is attained.

It is in this context that one must understand claims like those of Antonio Damasio that “the distinction between diseases of ‘brain’ and ‘mind,’ between ‘neurological’ problems and ‘psychological’ or ‘psychiatric ones,’ is an unfortunate cultural inheritance that permeates society and medicine,”¹² or of Catherine Malabou that “there is absolutely no justification for separating mind and brain.”¹³ Neuroscience does not

¹¹ Richard Lewontin, *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 42.

¹² Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 40.

¹³ Catherine Malabou, *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage*, trans. Steven Miller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), xiii. Despite her unjustified attachment to this “new materialism,” Malabou’s engagement with psychoanalysis and neuroscience is an otherwise fascinating, if frustrating, venture that is extremely relevant to the present project. Malabou argues that death, for Freud, is conceived as a “separation,” a “cut” that is naturally related symbolically to castration anxiety (Ibid., 123). This “threat of a cut” is indeed the founding gesture of the psyche, “the signature of finitude and the form of anticipating death – a structure that Lacan will call *the horizon of the encounter*” (Ibid., 133). The brain lesional identity change that characterizes “the new wounded” lies, Malabou argues, outside this horizon: it is for this reason that “certain subjects with brain lesions are deprived precisely of the possibility of seeing or feeling themselves die” (Ibid., 133). She thus adds to the Lacanian triad real-symbolic-imaginary a

present itself as a *complement* to traditional psychology, as offering better information about the material substrate of consciousness to enlighten the dynamics of interpersonal communication. It is rather, and very self-consciously, a usurper, aimed at sweeping away alchemical treatments like the “talking cure” and focusing on the observable reality of the active brain. It has abandoned the forms of private and public conversation that promise self-transformation for instrumental dissections of the brain that promise self-manipulation. Their future is not one that is worked towards in concert with other human beings but one that is physiologically shaped by a vanguard of synthetic biologists.

I do not doubt that my body will be the beneficiary of the many new technologies that the Human Genome Project, the Brain Activity Map Project, and other such cutting

fourth term, the *material*, which indicates the possibility of a psychic change that does not result from the interplay of past and present but rather from the erasure of a past, from a change in the material substrate for the tension between real, symbolic, and imaginary (Ibid., 140).

While I appreciate Malabou's turn to the theory of the death drive to stage an encounter between psychoanalysis and neuroscience on the question of trauma, I find her focus on Freud's connection of death and castration anxiety to distract from her discussion of the death drive. As I have argued in Chapter 1, separation is not a quality of death but of *life*. It is the basic characterization of our emergence from utterly dependent creatures to semi-independent adults. Death, in this drive theory, is not separation but reimmersion, a return to the moment that gives birth to the psyche. Of course, just as we never fully achieve separation, so too is every return only partial: the tension between death and mastery cannot be eliminated. In this view, one might see Malabou's “new wounded” as having *actually reached* the silence that is the aim of the death drive; in which case, her proposed difference “between the Freudian hypothesis of a death drive... and the contemporary neurological hypothesis of a death of the drive” might not hold (Ibid., 20).

Her assertion of the insufficiency of psychoanalysis on the issue of traumatic injury revolves around the claim that there is no real beyond of the pleasure principle in Freud, that the death drive, in its “fusion” with Eros, is ultimately derived from sexual etiology (Ibid., 214). I have argued here that there is indeed a “beyond” in Freud, and that it is articulated in the dialectic of death and mastery. Malabou claims that “in order for Freud positively to conclude that there is a beyond of the pleasure principle, he would have had to admit, or demonstrate, that a wholly other psyche than the one regulated by the pleasure principle is liable to emerge in the aftermath of trauma or catastrophe,” a indifferent, affect-less, “cool” psyche that is incapable of regression because the past has been materially erased for her (Ibid., 197). And yet in *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, this is precisely what Freud admits: that psychoanalysis can, and often does, fail, precisely because the operation of the death drive breaks the psychic continuity necessary for regression.

edge ventures produce. I nonetheless believe, like the critical theorists, that instrumental reason, even in its successes, ultimately undermines the possibility of human satisfaction. In the terms I have been developing here, human beings use language not just to master their environment but also to seek unity through communication with other linguistic subjects. This is why a discipline like psychoanalysis continues to be relevant despite the leaps and bounds in neuroscience: no matter how precisely we can manipulate the brain with drugs, electrodes, or other such material contrivances, the emerging insights of neuroscience will never provide any help with the project of how we talk to one another in order to better ourselves and our world.¹⁴ And despite Damasio and Malbou's claims, the human mind will continue developing alongside the advances in science and technology.

This is all to say that this dissertation was not, despite appearances, written in a vacuum, but with full knowledge of the terrifying developments that have supposedly made psychoanalysis obsolete. In response to their challengers, Church et al. have a stock response that marshals a violent obviousness: "She wants to obstruct the path that has the best chance of leading to medical advance? Some kind of religious nut, evidently." Whatever else the word "religious" might mean, when utilized by these "visionary" scientists, it invariably refers to anything that might stand in their way. It has long been noted that psychoanalysis shares an intimate bond with religion. Part of that bond today is

¹⁴ Church admits that the genome can only be understood in the environment in which the organism lives, and thus that understanding the genome is only a way of understanding what the ideal environment for the organism should be. He stops short, however, of recognizing that the creation of this ideal environment is a political project that requires not instrumental manipulation but human communication. Even Church's instrumentalism has its limits (that is, unless he would then propose that we rewire the human brain so that it automatically assents to the creation of an ideal environment).

to have both been designated “outmoded” by those who are pushing forward the technological mastery of human life. This is one of the reasons, I believe, that it is an opportune time to reforge the links between psychoanalysis and religion (which I have planned for my next project), and most certainly the reason, in any event, why I felt especially cold in the shadow of the Northwest Corner Building.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, Theodor W. "The Actuality of Philosophy." Translated by Benjamin Snow. *Telos* 31 (March 1977): 120-133.
- . *The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. Edited by J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge, 1991.
- . "The Form of the Phonograph Record." Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 56-61.
- . *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Translated by E.F.N. Jephcott. London: Verso, 2005.
- . *Negative Dialectics*. Translated by E.B. Ashton. London: Routledge, 1973.
- . "Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie." *Briefe und Briefwechsel*, Volume 4. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994.
- . "Prologue to Television." *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. Translated by Henry W. Pickford. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- . "Sociology and Psychology, Part 1." *New Left Review* 1/46 (November-December 1967): 67-80.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*. Translated by Liz Heron. London: Verso, 1993.
- Alford, C. Fred. *Narcissism: Socrates, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalytic Theory*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Alivisatos, A. Paul and Miyoung Chun, George M. Church, Ralph J. Greenspan, Michael L. Roukes, Rafael Yuste. "The Brain Activity Map Project and the Challenge of Functional Connectomics." *Neuron* 74:6 (June 2012): 970-976.
- Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970.
- Aristotle. *De Anima: Books II and III (with passages from Book I)*. Translated by D.W. Hamlyn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

- Aulagnier, Piera. *The Violence of Interpretation: From Pictogram to Statement*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Hove: Brunner-Routledge, 2001.
- Badiou, Alain. "Third Draft of a Manifesto of Affirmationism." Translated by Barbara P. Fulks. *lacanian ink* 24/25 (Spring 2005): 93-109.
- Bataille, Georges. *My Mother, Madame Edwarda and the Dead Man*. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. London: Marion Boyars, 1989.
- . *Theory of Religion*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Zone Books, 1989.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Iain Hamilton Grant. London: Sage Publications, 1993.
- Beirnaert, Louis. "La pulsion de mort chez Freud." *Études* (Mars 1975): 397-406.
- Benhabib, Seyla. *Critique, Norm, Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Benjamin, Jessica. "Authority and the Family Revisited: Or, a World without Fathers?" *New German Critique* 13 (Winter 1978): 35-57.
- . *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
- . "The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology." *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977): 42-64.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings, Volume 1*. Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2004.
- . *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. Translated by Edmund F.N. Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter. London: Verso, 1979.
- Bergeret, Jean. "La violence fondamentale (l'étayage instinctuel de la pulsion libidinale)." *Revue française de Psychanalyse* XLV 6 (Novembre-Décembre 1981): 1335-1350.
- Bernfeld, Siegfried. *Psychologie des Säuglings*. Wien: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1925.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. "A Secret Asymmetry." *Freud's Vienna and Other Essays*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

- Bohannon, John. "Building a Parallel Universe." *Wired* (Dec. 2010): 211-216.
- Bokanovski, Thierry. "Le concept de pulsion de mort." *Psychanalyse.lu*. 10 January 2013. <http://www.psychanalyse.lu/articles/BokanowskiPulsionMort.htm#fn13>.
- Boothby, Richard. *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Bowlby, John. *Attachment: Attachment and Loss, Volume 1*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Brooks, Peter. "Fictions of the Wolfman: Freud and Narrative Understanding." *Diacritics* 9:1 (Spring 1979): 71-81.
- Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2010.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. "Aesthetics and Anesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered." *October* 62 (Autumn 1992): 3-41.
- . *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute*. New York: The Free Press, 1977.
- Cassidy, Jude and Phillip R. Shaver, eds. *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research and Clinical Applications*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2008.
- Chodorow, Nancy. "The psychoanalytic vision of Hans Loewald." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 84 (2003): 897-913.
- Church, George. "Genomic Data Privacy and Risk." *Youtube*. Published 22 March 2013. Accessed 3 April 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wAmQvoFdBo>.
- Collins, Jim. *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Cook, Deborah. *The Culture Industry Revisited*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.
- Culler, Jonathan. *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, literature, deconstruction*. London: Routledge, 1981.
- Damasio, Antonio. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. New York:

- HarperCollins, 2005.
- A Dangerous Method*. Directed by David Cronenberg. Performed by Michael Fassbinder, Keira Knightley, Viggo Mortensen. DVD. Sony Pictures, 2012.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- . *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Dorey, Roger. "The Relationship of Mastery." Translated by Philip Slotkin. *The International Review of Psychoanalysis* 13 (1986): 323-332.
- Dufresne, Todd. *Tales from the Freudian Crypt: The Death Drive in Text and Context*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Eigen, Michael. *Eigen in Seoul: Madness and Murder*. London: Karnac, 2010.
- . *Psychic Deadness*. London: Karnac, 2004.
- Erikson, Erik. "Wholeness and Totality: A Psychiatric Contribution." *Totalitarianism*. Edited by Carl J., Friedrich. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1954.
- Fain, Michel. "Une Conquête de la Psychanalyse: Les mouvements individuels de vie et de mort par Pierre Marty." *Revue française de psychanalyse* XL 4 (Juillet-Aout 1976): 741-755.
- Fairbairn, W.R.D. *An Object-Relations Theory of Personality*. New York: Basic Books, 1962.
- Fenichel, Otto. *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1946.
- Fink, Bruce. *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Flanagan, Caitlin. "Hysteria and the Teenage Girl." *The New York Times*. Published 28 January 2012. Accessed 13 May 2012.
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/29/opinion/sunday/adolescent-girl-hysteria.html?_r=0.

- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Freud, Anna. *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. Translated by Cecil Baines. London: Karnac Books, 1993.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet*. London: Imago Publishing Co., Ltd., 1991.
- . *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated and Edited by James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1966.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.
- Gasché, Rodolphe. *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Gay, Peter. *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1988.
- Green, André. *Life Narcissism, Death Narcissism*. Translated by Andrew Weller. London: Free Association Books, 2001.
- . “Narcissisme négatif, fonction désobjectalisante.” *La Pulsion de Mort*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
- . *Pourquoi des pulsions de destruction ou de mort?* Paris: Éditions du Panama, 2007.
- Grunberger, Béla. *Narcissism: Psychoanalytic Essays*. Translated by Joyce S. Diamanti. New York: International Universities Press, 1979.
- Guntrip, Harry. *Personality Structure and Human Interaction*. New York: International Universities Press, 1961.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.
- . *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol 1: Reason and the rationalization of society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

- Hacker, F.J. "Sublimation Revisited." *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 53 (1972): 219-223.
- Hansen, Miriam. "Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer." *New German Critique* 56 (Spring-Summer 1992): 43-73.
- Harrison, Robert Pogue. *The Dominion of the Dead*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Hartmann, Heinz. "Comments on the Psychoanalytic Theory of Instinctual Drives." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 17 (1948): 368-388.
- Hegel, G.W.F. *On Christianity: Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T.M. Knox. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961.
- . *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Heidegger, Martin. "The Question concerning Technology." *Basic Writings*. Edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Hendrick, Ives. "The Discussion of the 'Instinct to Master.'" *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 12 (1943): 561-565.
- . "Instinct and the Ego During Infancy." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 11 (1942): 33-58.
- . "Work and the Pleasure Principle." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 12 (1943): 311-329.
- Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. *Prismatic Thought: Theodor W. Adorno*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- Honneth, Axel. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.
- . *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Translated by Joel Anderson. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.
- Horkheimer, Max. "Authoritarianism and the Family Today." *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*. Edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949.

———. *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. Translated by Matthew J. O'Connell and Others. New York: Continuum, 1999.

———. *The Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Horney, Karen. "Der Kampf in Der Kultur (Culture and Aggression): Einige Gedanken Und Bedenken Zu Freud's Todestrieb Und Destruktionstrieb." Translated by Bella S. Van Bark. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 20 (1960): 130-138.

Hullot-Kentor, Robert. "The Exact Sense in Which the Culture Industry No Longer Exists." *Cultural Critique* 70 (Fall 2008): 137-157.

———. *Things Beyond Resemblance: on Theodor W. Adorno*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Jameson, Fredric. *Late Marxism: Adorno, or The Persistence of the Dialectic*. New York: Verso, 1990.

Jarvis, Simon. *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Jay, Martin. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1996.

———. *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

———. *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*. Berkeley: UC Press, 2005.

Jenemann, David. *Adorno in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Jones, Ernest. *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*. London: Baillière, Tindall and Cox, 1913.

Jones, James W. "Hans Loewald: The Psychoanalyst as Mystic." *The Psychoanalytic Review* 88 (2001): 793-809.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Dread*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

- . *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review*. Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Kirkpatrick, Lee. *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion*. New York: Guilford Press, 2005.
- Kisiel, Theodore. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being & Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Klein, Melanie. "Notes on some schizoid mechanisms." *Developments in Psycho-Analysis*. Edited by Melanie Klein, Paula Heimann, Susan Isaacs, and Joan Riviere. London: Hogarth, 1952.
- Kluge, Friedrich. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002.
- Kofman, Sarah. *Freud and Fiction*. Translated by Sarah Wykes. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.
- Kohut, Heinz. "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14 (1966): 243-272.
- . "Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis - An Examination of the Relationship between Mode of Observation and Theory." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 7 (1959): 459-483.
- Kojève, Alexander. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Edited by Allan Bloom. Translated by James H. Nichols. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits*. Translated by Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by John Forrester. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Sylvana Tomaselli. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.
- Laplanche, Jean. *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman. Baltimore:

- The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- . “La pulsion de mort dans la théorie de la pulsion sexuelle.” *La Pulsion de Mort*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986.
- . “The So-Called ‘Death Drive’: a Sexual Drive.” “*The Death Drive*” *New Life for a Dead Subject?* Edited by Rob Weatherill. London: Rebus Press, 1999.
- Laplanche, Jean and Jean Bertrand Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973.
- Lear, Jonathan. *Freud*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- . “The Introduction of Eros: Reflections on the Work of Hans Loewald.” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 44 (1996): 673-698.
- Leclaire, Serge. *A Child is Being Killed: On Primary Narcissism and the Death Drive*. Translated by Marie-Claude Hays. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Critique of Everyday Life*. Translated by John Moore. London: Verso, 1991.
- Lewontin, Richard. *Biology as Ideology: The Doctrine of DNA*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Loewald, Hans. *Papers on Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- . *Psychoanalysis and the History of the Individual*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.
- . *Sublimation: Inquiries into Theoretical Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Loose, Rik. “Toxicomania and the Death Drive in Lacan.” “*The Death Drive*”: *New Life for a Dead Subject?* Edited by Rob Weatherill. London: Rebus, 1999.
- Lorenz, Konrad. *On Aggression*. Translated by Marjorie Kerr Wilson. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. Translated by Anna Bostock. London: The Merlin Press, 1971.

- Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Translated by Geoffrey Wall. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Mahler, Margaret S., Fred Pine and Anni Bergman. *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation*. New York: Basic Books, 1975.
- Malabou, Catherine. *The New Wounded: From Neurosis to Brain Damage*. Translated by Steven Miller. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and Civilization*. New York: Vintage Books, 1961.
- . *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro and Shierry M. Weber. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.
- . *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro. London: Penguin Press, 1968.
- . *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- . “The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society.” *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 2: Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Edited by Douglas Kellner. London: Routledge, 2001.
- . “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology.” *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. 1: Technology, War, and Fascism*. Edited by Douglas Kellner. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Markoff, John. “Obama Seeking to Boost Study of Human Brain.” *The New York Times*. Published 17 February 2013. Accessed 3 April 2013.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/18/science/project-seeks-to-build-map-of-human-brain.html?pagewanted=all>.
- Marty, Pierre. *Les mouvements individuels de vie et de mort: Essai d'économie psychosomatique*. Paris: Payot, 1976.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin, 1976.
- McCutcheon, Russell. *Manufacturing Religion; The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Meltzoff, Andrew N. "Out of the Mouths of Babes; Imitation, Gaze, and Intentions in Infant Research – the 'Like Me' Framework." *Mimesis and Science*. Edited by Scott R. Garrels. East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2011.
- Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Mitchell, Stephen. "From Ghosts to Ancestors: The Psychoanalytic Vision of Hans Loewald." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 8 (1998): 825-855.
- Montag, Warren. *Louis Althusser*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- de M'Uzan, Michel. *De l'art à la mort*. Paris: Gallimard, 1977.
- Nacht, Sacha. "Les manifestations cliniques de l'agressivité et leur rôle dans le traitement psychanalytique." *Revue française de Psychanalyse* XII 3 (1948): 311-365.
- Ness, Marilyn. "GENOME: The Future is Now, WEBISODE 1." *Youtube*. Published 29 July 2009. Accessed 3 April 2013.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVZI7NBgcWM>.
- Neuhouser, Frederick. *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Recognition, and the Drive for Recognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Edited by Michael D. Coogan, Marc Zvi Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, Pheme Perkins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- Ogden, Thomas. *Subjects of Analysis*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977.
- Ouroussoff, Nicolai. "A Building Forms a Bridge Between a University's Past and Future." *The New York Times*. Published 8 February 2011. Accessed 3 April 2013.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/09/arts/design/09moneo.html>.
- Pasche, Francis. "L'antinarcissisme." *À partir de Freud*. Paris: Payot, 1969.
- Piccone, Paul. "General Introduction." *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. Edited by Andrew Arato & Eike Gebhardt. New York: Continuum, 2005.
- Pontalis, J. B. "On Death-Work in Freud, in the Self, in Culture." *Psychoanalysis, Creativity,*

- and Literature: A French-American Inquiry*. Edited by Alan Roland. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Rechardt, Eero and Pentti Ikonen. "À propos de l'Interprétation de la pulsion de mort." *La Pulsion de Mort*. Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1997.
- Reich, Wilhelm. *Reich Speaks of Freud*. Edited by Mary Higgins and Chester Raphael. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967.
- Rey-Flaud, Henri. "Visages de la pulsion de mort." *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*. Edited by Michel Plon and Henri Rey-Flaud. Ramonville-Saint-Agne: érès, 2004.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Translated by Denis Savage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.
- Rose, Gillian. "How is Critical Theory Possible? Theodor W. Adorno and Concept Formation in Sociology." *Political Studies* 24:1 (March 1976): 69-85.
- . *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Rosenberg, Benno. "Masochisme mortifère et masochisme gardien de la vie." *Masochisme mortifère et masochisme gardien de la vie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003.
- Rosolato, Guy. "L'ombilic et la relation d'inconnu." *La relation d'inconnu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.
- Smith, Robert Rowland. *Death-Drive: Freudian Hauntings in Literature and Art*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.
- Royle, Nicholas. *The Uncanny*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Sandler, Joseph and Bernard Rosenblatt. "The Concept of the Representational World." *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 17 (1962): 128-145.
- Santoni, Ronald E. *Sartre on Violence: Curiously Ambivalent*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.
- Scarfone, Dominique. *Jean Laplanche*. Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1997.
- Schelling, Friedrich. *Ages of the World*. Translated by Judith Norman. Ann Arbor:

- University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Schmidt-Hellerau, Cordelia. *Life Drive and Death Drive, Libido and Lethe: A Formalized Consistent Model of Psychoanalytic Drive and Structure Theory*. Translated by Philip Slotkin. New York: Other Press, 2001.
- Schneider, Monique. "Pulsion de mort et « refus de la féminité »." *La pulsion de mort en psychanalyse et philosophie*. Edited by Michel Plon and Henri Rey-Flaud. Ramonville-Saint-Agne: érès, 2004.
- Schweppenhäuser, Gerhard. *Theodor W. Adorno: An Introduction*. Translated by James Rolleston. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Segal, Hanna. *Melanie Klein*. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Sichère, Bernard. "Nous sommes déjà très suffisamment une civilisation de la haine." *La pulsion de mort entre psychanalyse et philosophie*. Edited by Michel Plon and Henri Rey-Flaud. Ramonville-Saint-Agne: érès, 2004.
- Simmel, Ernst. "Self-Preservation and the Death Instinct." *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 13 (1944): 160-185.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *Spheres, Volume 1: Bubbles*. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011.
- Stern, Daniel. *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology*. London: Karnac Books, 1998.
- Stiegler, Bernard. "Spirit, Capitalism and Superego." Conference Presentation. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. Presented May 2006. Accessed 10 March 2010. <http://arsindustrialis.org/node/2928>.
- . *Technics and Time, Volume 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. Translated by George Collins and Richard Beardsworth. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- . "The Time of Cinema: On the 'New World' and 'Cultural Exception.'" Translated by George Collins. *Tekhnema: Journal of Philosophy and Technology* 4 (Spring 1998): 62-114.
- Sulloway, Frank. *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. New York: Basic Books, 1979.

- Taves, Ann. *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Taylor, Mark C. *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.
- Teicholz, Judith Guss. *Kohut, Loewald, and the Postmoderns: A Comparative Study of the Self and Relationship*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Thacker, Eugene. *After Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Tillich, Paul. "The Eternal Now." *The Meaning of Death*. Edited by Herman Feifel. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959.
- . *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*. Edited by Carl E. Braaten. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- . *The Protestant Era*. Translated by James Luther Adams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.
- Tyson, Phyllis and Robert. "Narcissism and Superego Development." *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 32 (1984): 75-98.
- Wellmer, Albrecht. "Truth, Semblance and Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity." *Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993.
- White, Kristin. "Notes on 'Bemächtigungstrieb' and Strachey's Translation as 'Instinct for Mastery.'" *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 91:4 (May 2010): 811-820.
- Whitebook, Joel. "The marriage of Marx and Freud: Critical Theory and psychoanalysis." *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Edited by Fred Rush. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- . *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.
- Winnicott, D.W. "The Use of an Object." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 50 (1969): 711-716.
- . "Metapsychological and Clinical Aspects of Regression Within the Psycho-Analytical Set-Up." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 36 (1955): 16-26.

———. “The Theory of the Parent-Infant Relationship.” *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 41 (1960): 585-595.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Indivisible Remainder*. London: Verso, 1996.

———. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

———. “The Superego and the Act.” Lecture. The European Graduate School, Canton Wallis, Switzerland. Presented 1999. Accessed 14 March 2010.
<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-Žižek/articles/the-superego-and-the-act/>.

———. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso, 1999.

———. *On Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008.