

## FREUD ON THE PROBLEM OF ORDER: THE REVIVAL OF HOBBS

In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* Freud addresses the problem of how groups are formed or of how society is possible. The question of the possibility of society presupposes that in some sense human beings are not thoroughly social beings, that they must agree to or be made to participate in a common life in which they submit to general principles regulating their conduct towards one another. The notion that the grounds for social order cannot be taken for granted originates in the beginnings of modern thought, particularly in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, in which the classical idea that human beings are essentially social and political animals is rejected in favor of the view that the individual is in a basic sense independent of society and opposed to it, and that society is merely a conventional unity. For Hobbes, society is primarily a defensive alliance guaranteed by fear of a sovereign who constitutes a legal order. Social order, then, is imposed externally on the individual, who submits to regulation only on the basis of prudence. The history of thought about the problem of order after Hobbes' initial attempt to resolve it is a development of more refined motives for obedience, which culminates in Kant's notion of a self-legislated moral law.

The importance of Kant's solution is that it provides a positive ground for society. Human beings do not merely submit to standards because they are inclined to, either out of fear or out of desire, but because they acknowledge a rational principle to which they give their voluntary assent. For Hobbes, society is at least an imposition and at most an expedient. For Kant, society may, indeed, be both an imposition and an expedient, but it is also an order of life that might be perfected. In Kant's view, human beings are imperfectly rational beings, not organisms entirely ruled by pleasure and pain, as they were for Hobbes.

In post-Kantian philosophy, particularly that of Hegel and Marx, social order itself is not a problem, but only the moral quality of that order, whether it is arbitrary or exploitative, or rational. Hegel and Marx both believed that human beings are intrinsically social and that their antisocial behavior was a result of imperfect institutional development. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, the historical dogmatism of Hegel and Marx came under attack from a new scepticism based on the idea that reason is the slave, not of the passions, as it was for the early moderns, but of the instincts. The new sceptics had to reopen the question of the possibility of society, because they believed that human beings were creatures ruled by instinct, drive, or irrational will, who had to be compelled to submit to general rules. The new scepticism posed the problem of order in a far more radical manner than had the early individualists. Hobbes and his successors believed, at least, that reason can function to limit and harmonize the passions in accordance with the organism's survival and self-interest. The new sceptics doubted the capabilities of reason so deeply that they held reason to be a distorted projection of irrational forces. They could not, then, as did the early moderns, ground the possibility of society in rational self-interest or, as Kant did, in a principle of practical reason. Society itself had to be an achievement of irrational forces, brought about in opposition to the more primary antisocial instincts.

The simplest solution to the problem of order consistent with the new scepticism was the postulation of a social, gregarious, or herd instinct which bound human beings together despite their hostile tendencies towards one another. William James

and Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, adopted this solution, as did Gustave Le Bon, whose work was the occasion for Freud's investigation of the problem of order. Freud posed the question of the possibility of society more radically than any of his forerunners, because he rejected the notion of a social instinct and attempted to derive the group from individual and fundamentally antisocial instincts. In a sense, Freud was a new Hobbes, who reformulated the idea that society is a defensive alliance. Echoes of Hobbes' thought, in fact, resonate in Freudian theory. Freud was aware, for example, that, in a reflection on Hobbes, Diderot had anticipated the Oedipus complex. The occasion for Diderot's observation that the child, if he had the power, would kill his father and sleep with his mother, was Hobbes' remark in *De Cive* that the malefactor is a robust child. The notion that society is a defensive alliance, then, has roots deep in the interpretations of childhood offered by both Hobbes and Freud. Freud differed from Hobbes in that he could not argue that obedience to general rules was based merely on prudence because he acknowledged the fact that human beings had feelings of moral obligation which were necessary to the maintenance of their common life. The key to Freud's analysis, then, would have to be a critique of the idea of voluntary submission to general standards, the idea of free obligation, the conscience. Those who posited a social instinct could argue that obligation was merely a sublimation of this instinct. Freud could not argue in this way and so had to devise an explanation of order which would demonstrate that the appearance of voluntary submission was, at its root, involuntary.

*Group Psychology* is one of the two earliest works in Freud's series of metapsychological writings and, therefore, it does not contain all of the concepts present in his final statements of his theory, such as *Civilization and its Discontents* and *The Ego and the Id*. *Group Psychology* was written simultaneously with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in which Freud first discussed the death instinct in detail. The death instinct, however, does not play a part in the analysis in *Group Psychology* and, so, this work suffers from imprecisions and internal tensions which would probably not have been present had Freud been able to draw

upon his later stock of concepts. Our discussion of *Group Psychology*, then, will not only be directed towards clarifying Freud's solution to the problem of order and critiquing its inadequacies and contradictions, but will also point out its limitations in terms of Freud's later work. *Group Psychology*, then, is doubly contradictory. Firstly, it contains the contradiction characteristic of all of Freud's metapsychology between the reduction of reason to a projection of instinct and the use of reason to elucidate instinct. Secondly, it contains contradictions that have been remedied by the introduction of the death instinct into the analysis. Our purpose will be to show that even if Freud's response to the problem of order is improved by concepts from his own later theory, he still cannot solve the problem and that, as Kant understood, society must have positive as well as negative grounds.

#### THE BASIS OF THE PROBLEM: NARCISSISM

In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud presented three separate discussions of the root tension or dilemma characterizing civilized life. In his first discussion he posed the problem of the antithesis between the individual's drive for self-gratification and the need for general principles of justice to which each member of society had to submit. In his second discussion he posited the dualism between Eros, the life instinct, which is directed towards combining human beings into ever larger unities, and Thanatos, the death instinct, which tends towards the dispersion and dissolution of such unities. Finally, in his third discussion he identified a tension within Eros between the individual's development and the development of society as a whole. In *Group Psychology* only the first dilemma, that between self-interest and justice, is addressed. From the viewpoint of this earlier work the problem of order is formulated only in terms of the internal dynamics of the libido, which means that hostile or antisocial tendencies cannot be derived from the death instinct, but must, instead, be derived from the life energy itself. The absence of the death instinct in *Group Psychology* creates a serious problem in Freud's analysis. Freud observes early in

*Group Psychology* that “a group is clearly held together by a power of some kind: and to what power could this feat be better ascribed than to Eros, which holds together everything in the world?”<sup>1</sup> Yet, if Eros is the only great formation of the instincts, there should be no problem of the possibility of society. Society should merely be the natural result of the life instinct’s tendency to combine and unify. However, Freud believes that the constitution of the group is radically problematic, so problematic that it demands a detailed explanation. Antisocial tendencies, then, must arise within Eros itself, which must in some way contain internally contradictory dynamics. Eros, in short, must not only stand for the tendencies towards unification but also for those towards dispersion. In the light of this contradiction it is clear why Freud later introduced the notion of Thanatos. If Eros was to be purely a life-enhancing force it would have to have a foe independent of itself or Freud would have to claim, in a metaphysical fashion, that antisocial behavior was merely apparent and not real. In *Group Psychology* Freud moves towards the concept of Thanatos by appealing to the phenomenon of narcissism, which belongs to the libido, but which also tends to separate the individual from society. He does not, then, resolve the contradiction, but merely avoids confronting it. Of course, Freud’s evasion creates its own problems. Either narcissism is more basic and stronger than the other manifestations of Eros, in which case Eros is not a combining instinct at all, or the unifying tendencies of Eros are more powerful than narcissism, in which case there is no genuine problem of order. In *Group Psychology* Freud takes the first alternative, thereby paving the way for his later belief in the supremacy of Thanatos.

Narcissism functions in *Group Psychology* as the ground for the problem of order, the reason why the question of the possibility of society is genuine. Freud initiates his discussion of narcissism by noting that “almost every intimate emotional relation between two people which lasts for some time—marriage, friendship, the relations between parents and children—leaves

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*; James Strachey, transl. New York, Bantam Books, 1965, p. 31.

a sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility, which only escape perception as a result of repression.”<sup>2</sup> If such aversion and hostility are present even in intimate relations, then how much more so are they manifest in relations where primary libidinal ties are absent. Freud observes that “(in) the undisguised antipathies and aversions which people feel toward strangers with whom they have to do we may recognize the expression of self-love—of narcissism.”<sup>3</sup> Narcissism, which Freud claims “works for the preservation of the individual,” is, in fact, so powerful a tendency that individuals behave “as though the occurrence of any divergence” from their own particular lines of development involves “a criticism of them and a demand for their alteration.” It should be observed that by building the notion of hostility into narcissism, Freud eliminates the possibility that human beings might be indifferent towards one another. Freud notes here that the source of the universal hostility towards difference is unknown and that he is tempted to ascribe to it an “elementary character.” He further observes in a footnote that in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* he has constructed a “hypothetical opposition between instincts of life and death,” to which the polarity of love and hatred can be related. However, he does not elaborate upon this hint any further. Had he done so, he would not have been able consistently to argue that narcissism works for the preservation of the individual, a claim which is at the heart of his analysis of group formation.

The question of the possibility of society arises, then, for Freud because of the universal narcissistic tendency of human beings to hate everyone who is different from themselves. Since Freud believes that no individual is the same as any other, by logical extension the primal human situation is one

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42. Contrast Freud’s view that conflict arises from differences with Georg Simmel’s corrective: “On the contrary, the break can result from so great a similarity of characteristics, leanings, and convictions that the divergence over a very insignificant point makes itself felt in its sharp contrast as something utterly unbearable.” Simmel, of course, may be interpreted to be saying the same thing as Freud; that we are so narcissistic that the slightest difference actuates aversion. However, differences are imbedded in similarities for Simmel while they are not for Freud. See: Georg Simmel *On Individuality and Social Forms*; Donald N. Levine, ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 91.

in which each one hates all of the others. The only case in which this rule does not apply is “the relation of a mother to her son,” which is also narcissistic, but in which the son is a perfect extension of the mother. In a sense, then, the mother of a son is a particularly privileged human being, because in her case self-love is coincident with love for another. For everyone else and even for the mother in her other relations, self-love results in hatred of others.<sup>4</sup> In such a condition of universal hatred, the possibility of society is, indeed, problematic. Yet, as Freud notes, when a group is formed primal intolerance vanishes within the group: “So long as a group formation persists or so far as it extends, individuals in the group behave as though they were uniform, tolerate the peculiarities of its other members, equate themselves with them, and have no feeling of aversion toward them.”<sup>5</sup> The problem of order is, then, for Freud, the question of how what Durkheim called solidarity is produced from an essential condition of hostility. How do human beings, who spontaneously rebel against censure and who perceive censure even where it is not present, come to submit, in an apparently voluntary way, to common moral constraints?

#### IDENTIFICATION

Freud’s general solution to the problem of order in *Group Psychology* is that the libido, which is originally oriented towards sexual attachments, undergoes a modification through the operation of the psychological “mechanism” of identification. Although the discussion of how identification itself is possible is tortuous and involves the adaptation of the child to the basic

<sup>4</sup> It is not the purpose of this discussion to psychoanalyze Freud, but we may note in passing that Freud’s privileging of the mother-son relation may reveal his deification of the mother, who, far from being merely a sex object for the male child is, for the unconscious Freud, the source of authority. The notion that the mother has it better than anyone else may also disclose *ressentiment* against women on Freud’s part. Perhaps, then, Freud’s entire descriptive psychiatry is an elaborate rationalization for his being rejected by his mother. Were this the case, his subsequent deification of the father would merely be a justification of the object choice that was forced upon him by his mother’s rejection.

<sup>5</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, p. 43.



family situation, the function of the concept in Freud's analysis of group formation is simple. Identification is the mechanism by which the individual comes to believe that human beings are the same, that they are like one another, which is, for Freud, a false belief. Society, then, in the most general sense, is made possible by virtue of a vital lie, which, of course, is always in danger of being unmasked. No other solution would have been possible for Freud because of the terms in which he formulated the problem of order. If human beings are, indeed, fundamentally narcissistic in the sense that they naturally respond to the perception of difference as a challenge to their integrity and, therefore, resent it, then they can achieve solidarity only by believing that they are the same. Freud's formulation of the problem, then, excludes the possibility that social bonds are possible just by virtue of the acknowledgment of the "otherness" of the other person. In Durkheim's terms, all solidarity for Freud is "mechanical." He has no notion of "organic" solidarity, because such a notion presupposes that human beings relate to one another positively not only on the basis of their sameness, but also by virtue of their differences. Freud's discussion of group formation, then, is dualistic. On the one side there are unique and narcissistic individuals who resent the independence of others, while on the other side there is the lie that all individuals are fundamentally the same. Belief in this lie is the foundation of social life, which means that social life is grounded in a falsification or alienation of the self.

In Freud's view, the other person is, indeed, "hell," because each individual needs others for the gratification of desires, but hates the others because they are independent. The ambivalence built into this primordial condition generates a drive to resolve the tension which will somehow synthesize the opposites which compose it. Identification is just this synthesis and it is, of course, inherently unstable. Identification originates as an attachment of the individual to another person, in which the individual wishes to *be* like that other person. For Freud, identification is "the original form of emotional tie with an object" and, therefore, cannot be explained further in terms of any other psychological mechanisms. Yet although it is primordial, identification "is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an



expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal." The male child's ambivalence towards his father is the paradigm case of the unstable dynamics of identification. He wishes to be like his father and, therefore, worships him, but at the same time he wants to have what his father has (his mother as a sex object) and, therefore, he resents him. The dialectic of "being" and "having," which depends upon whether the individual identifies with the other or seeks the other as a gratifying object, is the dynamic which determines the origin of the group. In the normal development of the male the child identifies with the father, renounces the mother as a sex object, and later seeks out another woman as a sex object. Society, however, demands an identification which is generalized beyond the father and, therefore, presupposes a second resolution of the tension between being and having.

The bridge between identification with the father and identification with the group is provided by Freud through the concepts of ego ideal and object identification. The ego ideal, which in Freud's later work was to become the superego, is a product of "the demands which (the) environment makes upon the ego and which the ego cannot always rise to." As the "heir to the original narcissism in which the childish ego enjoyed self-sufficiency," the ego ideal is split off from and opposed to the rest of the self, and, so, is the Freudian equivalent of the "moral conscience." Conscience, then, for Freud, is an imposition, primarily of the father's demands upon the son. Identification does not, in principle, require the formation of an ego ideal, but in the society with which Freud was familiar he thought that it did. However, the ego ideal itself was not sufficient to ground society, because, according to Freud, the group is made possible by the identification of its members with one another and not only by their identification with a common mediator. Freud finds the basis for mutual identification in the substitution of the ego's object for the ego ideal. This substitution is most clearly evident in the relation of love where "a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows on to the object." People in love surrender themselves to the object of their love by surrendering or alienating their conscience: "Conscience has no application to anything that is done for the sake of the object; in

the blindness of love remorselessness is carried to the pitch of crime. The whole situation can be completely summarized in a formula: *The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal.*<sup>6</sup> Thus, the stage for the formation of the group has been set by a series of three alienations of the original narcissistic self. Firstly, the individual identifies with another. Secondly, the demands of the other are in some cases opposed to instinctual gratification and, therefore, are split off from the ego to form a conscience. Thirdly, the conscience itself is alienated to a new object of love, who can do no wrong. Extending the Freudian symbolism in a way in which Freud, perhaps, did not intend, the individual finds union with the mother again in the object of love.

Freud, of course, did not close the circle of object identification with sexual love, which would have been consistent with his theory of psychodynamics, but which would not have allowed him to explain group formation. During the first two-thirds of *Group Psychology* Freud painstakingly lays the groundwork for his theory of society only to find that it is inadequate when he must account for group formation. Had he followed his line of reasoning consistently he would either have admitted that a psychiatry based on the sexual aspects of interpersonal relations could not explain collective life or have attempted to ground society in sublimated homosexual love. What he did do was to ground society in a nonsexual motive, which would still allow for the application of the forms of being and having.

In Chapter Nine of *Group Psychology* Freud presents his theory of the possibility of society in a critique of Trotter's notion of a primordial herd instinct. Freud's major criticism of the herd instinct is simply that the manifestations of such an instinct are not, for the most part, observed in children.<sup>7</sup> The appearance of "something like" the herd instinct occurs "in a nursery containing many children, out of the children's relation to their parents, and it does so as a reaction to the initial envy with which the elder child receives the younger one."<sup>8</sup> Freud

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> We may note that, at least from a biological viewpoint, instincts need not manifest themselves in an animal's infancy, but may appear later in the course of development. Hence, Freud's argument is biologically inconclusive.

<sup>8</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp. 65-66.

notes that the elder child would like to restore a former condition of supremacy by robbing the younger ones of their privileges, but is blocked from doing this because the younger ones are also loved by the parents. Envy, then, cannot be expressed directly, so the elder child is “forced into identifying himself with the other children”: “So there grows up in the troop of children a communal or group feeling which is then further developed at school.”<sup>9</sup> This group spirit, however, is different from either the male child’s ambivalent identification with the father which leads to the formation of the ego ideal or from the later deliverance of the ego ideal to a loved object, because it is entirely lacking in positive affect. Identification with the group is a defense mechanism, in this case a “reaction-formation,” which is expressed as a demand for “justice, for equal treatment for all.” This demand results from the impossibility of obtaining exclusive love from the parents or other loved object and, so, is at best a partial compensation for renunciation.

Freud argues that all “group spirit” or solidarity originates in envy. The essence of solidarity in Freud’s view is the “demand for equality,” which is the “root of social conscience and the sense of duty,” and which implies that “we deny ourselves many things so that others may have to do without them as well, or, what is the same thing, may not be able to ask for them.”<sup>10</sup> In terms of the history of thought, Freud’s theory of the origins of social conscience is directed at Kant’s notion that the principle of justice is a rational law which is sustained by a good will. Freud’s initial assumption that human beings are by nature narcissistic precludes him from identifying any positive ground for society and, thus, he must demonstrate that the appearance of moral obligation masks a selfish and reactive motive, in this case envy. Freud’s social philosophy, then, marks a return to Hobbesian scepticism, with the difference that while Hobbes attacked the institutionalized conscience of the Church, Freud must attack the individualized conscience of Protestantism and its offspring, rationalism. Freud’s account of the possibility of society, then, does not have any direct bearing on his psychiatry,

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

but is part of the revolt against Protestant moralism, of which Nietzsche was the greatest representative. In fact, when Freud finally accounts for the formation of the group he can do no better than to resort to what Nietzsche termed *ressentiment*. In Freud's view, the essence of justice is the will to deny others privileges in compensation for one's forced renunciation of them. Freud's interpretation differs from Nietzsche's in only one important respect: it is more thoroughly pessimistic, because there is not even any possibility for individuals to overcome themselves by overcoming *ressentiment*. Nietzsche believed that *ressentiment* arose from the failure of the will to power, while Freud believed that the reaction-formation concealing envy had its roots in the necessary failure to achieve the narcissistic ideal of radical self-love.

Freud's derivation of solidarity from repressed envy was not entirely satisfactory to him because it presupposed an authority "outside the group" to whom the members of the group directed their underlying demands for love and special treatment, which claims had to be repressed and then overtly expressed as the demand for justice. Freud, then, had to push his account of the possibility of society one step back so that he could determine the origin of a social authority similar to the parental authority which rules the nursery. Freud's solution to the problem of authority is his "scientific myth" of the primal horde ruled by a father, who is slain by his sons.

The "scientific myth" of the primal horde is not a gratuitous addition to Freud's theory, but performs the same function in it as the "state of nature" concept does in Hobbes' derivation of order. For Hobbes, of course, the problem is how competitive individuals, who relate to one another laterally, set up a vertical relation to a sovereign who regulates their relations to one another. Freud, in contrast, must presuppose the primordial existence of authority, because he is concerned with how lateral relations among equals are possible. The difference between Hobbes and Freud, then, is that for the former sovereignty is conventional while for the latter it is natural. The father of the primal horde is, in fact, the replica of Hobbes' sovereign: "The members of the group were subject to ties just as we see them today, but the father of the primal horde was free. His

intellectual acts were strong and independent even in isolation, and his will needed no reinforcement from others. Consistency leads us to assume that his ego had few libidinal ties; he loved no one but himself, or other people only in so far as they served his needs.”<sup>11</sup> Following the Hobbesian line of argument, Freud further observes that “all of the sons knew that they were equally *persecuted* by the primal father and *feared* him equally.” Yet at the same time, the sons identified with the father: “He was the ideal of each one of them, at once feared and honored.”<sup>12</sup> The ambivalence towards the primal father was resolved by patricide, which, however, only threw the sons into the Hobbesian state of nature: “None of the group of victors could take his place, or, if one of them did, the battles began afresh, until they understood that they must all renounce their father’s heritage.”<sup>13</sup> The renunciation of the father’s heritage is, of course, no different from the renunciation by Hobbes’ individuals of their natural liberty in the state of nature, and we must presume that it was based on a rational judgment. Only for Freud the renunciation does not immediately result in the institution of a sovereign, but is first expressed as a “totemic community of brothers, all with equal rights and united by the totem prohibitions which were to preserve and to expiate the memory of the murder.”<sup>14</sup> In a later phase of historical development the primal father is reinstated as the “Father God” and, hence, civilization is made possible by the equal renunciation of instinctual gratifications before a symbolic authority figure. These renunciations, however, are grounded in envy and are the result of the alienation of the ego ideal to the symbolized deity, who can do no wrong.

#### FREUD’S ROOT MISTAKE

The significance of Freud’s attempted solution of the problem of order does not lie in its details, but in its radical failure, a failure which demonstrates that the issue of how society is

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

possible is itself a false one. For Freud, as for Hobbes, all lateral relations between equals must flow from hatred and envy, because the individual is fundamentally narcissistic. Hence, any relations which are not those of war must be based on the repression of hatred and envy, which is only made possible by identification with a superior being who realizes the narcissistic ideal and with whom all of the equals identify. For Freud, then, it is not the sovereign who makes the civil society of equals possible, but God, the sublimated sovereign. The implication of this view is that society is maintained only by the vital lie that all are equal before a God who similarly persecutes them and who forces them to renounce their demands for special privileges. Just as the children in the nursery are forced to abandon their aggression against one another in order to avoid punishment and to achieve a portion of their parent's love, so all human beings must renounce their hostility towards one another in order to avoid God's wrath and to win eternal satisfaction. Yet for Freud, of course, God is dead. The implications of the death of God plague him in his later writings on religion, particularly *The Future of an Illusion*, in which he attempts to deny the conclusion of *Group Psychology* that God is necessary to civilization, and to substitute for God reason. In *Group Psychology*, however, the implication is clear that in the absence of God there can be no solidarity.

Freud's treatment of the problem of order perfects the Hobbesian paradigm. For Hobbes, human beings are restrained from harming one another only through fear of a political sovereign whom they obey only because they fear even more the state of nature. From the Hobbesian perspective, then, all obligation to one's equal is prudential and is only sustained by common obedience to the sovereign. For Freud, the Hobbesian sovereign exists in the state of nature, but is then deposed and eventually replaced by a symbolic sovereign who is worshipped and feared by all. The Hobbesian sovereign is temporal and is continually judged by his subjects. The sovereign God of Freud is eternal and, therefore, beyond temporal judgment. The Hobbesian sovereign is merely feared, but the Freudian sovereign is also revered by the transfer of the ego ideal to object identification. Hence, for Freud, obligations towards equals can be maintained without a temporal mediator, because there is a symbolic mediator. If,

however, the symbolic mediator does not command belief, any relations among equals other than war are impossible.

Freud's view of society implies that human beings never grow out of childhood, that maturation adds nothing essential to the personality. The best that adults can do is to express their infantile desires in more sophisticated ways which allow them to live in a false and uneasy peace, and to survive longer than they might have had they not fabricated illusory compensations for the renunciation of instinct. Here Freud is no different in any essential respect from Hobbes: society is a defensive alliance which exists only to secure survival. Just as for Hobbes this alliance is not natural, but conventional, and it makes no difference that it is sustained by religious belief rather than by positive law administered by a political sovereign. Society itself, then, is not possible for either Hobbes or Freud, because the mutual acknowledgment of equals is not possible except by virtue of an authority "outside the group" to which all of the equals refer before they refer to one another. Franz Alexander remarks that Freud's choice of the Church and the Army to illustrate his theory in *Group Psychology* were "unfortunate."<sup>15</sup> Unfortunate or not, they are the only choices consistent with his analysis. Even the family, for Freud, is modelled on the barracks or the militant religious order. It appears, in fact, that for Freud all relations among supposed equals are relations among "authoritarian personalities," whose greatest pleasure is to deny others privileges in the name of a higher authority.

Freud's notion of society, then, contains no concept whatever of a positive bond between human beings. Concern for or appreciation of one person by another, a possible ground for relations which is not based on abstract equality or on "having" the other for one's own is impossible in Freud's system. Freud, indeed, may ground the possibility of order, but not of solidarity. Solidary relations presuppose bonds among human beings based on their *differences* or what Josiah Royce called their "contrast effects," and not on their *sameness*. In solidary relations people seek one another out just because they are different, because they can share or exchange things with one another, or because

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiv.



they can learn from one another. For Freud, instrumental exchange relations are possible on the basis of self-interest, but their ground in a differentiated economy, in which each contributor is partial, is unaccounted for. The possibility that human beings seek one another out to enhance their experience or to share it is not considered. When solidary relations fail, perhaps because of exploitation and envy, then the trust and risk which sustain them is replaced by suspicion and fear. It is only then that force and the imposed obligation of abstract equals are the primary supports of society. Force, indeed, can maintain a larger minimal community (for example, a classical empire) than can its polar opposite, appreciation, which at best sustains the maximal community of the primary group. However, mere extension, with disregard of intension, is not sufficient as a criterion for the fundamental social bond.

A thorough critique of Freud's theory cannot merely reveal its logic and its implications, but must also challenge its ontology. For Freud, society is possible by virtue of the displacement of infantile narcissism onto an object. Human beings acknowledge one another as equals *negatively*, by virtue of their common renunciation of narcissism. It is narcissism which causes people to hate any differences between themselves and others, because each one wishes to be self-sufficient. It is this wish for self-sufficiency which also causes envy and the resultant need to repress it and to falsify it as the demand for equal justice. Even were Freud to have replaced narcissism with the death instinct as he did in his later work, his account of the possibility of society would have been fundamentally the same, because he would have had to ground this possibility in the repression of Thanatos, as he did in *Civilization and its Discontents*. A thorough critique of Freud's theory, then, demands an alternative to the proposition that society is grounded in repression. Such an alternative need not exclude the dynamics of *ressentiment*, which, indeed, are probably present in all human relations, but which need not be their basis. In fact, the unity which springs from *ressentiment* is a sign of the failure of society, and that failure is always a possibility.

The key to an alternative and positive ground for society is provided by Freud himself in his concept of identification.

It is at least an anomaly that Freud should have introduced the dialectic of being and having and then should have proceeded to ignore being altogether. Identification, which for Freud is a primordial mental process, does not presuppose a narcissistic individual who wants to *have* someone else as an exclusive object, but an incomplete individual who wants to *be* like someone different. Far from exemplifying a hatred for difference, identification presupposes an appreciation of otherness and a desire to incorporate diversity into one's own personality. If, as Freud states, "identification is known to psychoanalysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person," then human beings are not primordially narcissistic beings, but incomplete beings seeking personalities, or, put another way, seeking the means to express their desires and judgments, which they can only do by learning from others. The ground of society, then, is not repression but the spontaneous effort to appreciate, recreate, and express the other to oneself, an effort which is neither selfish nor unselfish but merely social. The dynamics of *resentment* are not original, but enter into play after there has been a failure to appreciate the other, perhaps because the other has done the child harm. Resentment, then, would originate in injury of some kind, not primarily in the frustration of narcissism. Once, however, the child has experienced resentment, the rest of life is a struggle between the will to appreciate others and express them to oneself, and the will to control them for one's own advantage. This, at least, would be a genuine dialectic of being and having, in which being is the positive foundation of society and having its negative or privative basis.

Freud's theory, which is based upon identification, but denies its presuppositions, is, of course, unintelligible without those presuppositions. Were human beings thoroughly narcissistic they would be incapable of introjecting the standards of others, which, after all, is only one way in which we express one another to ourselves. A positive ground for society also eliminates the necessity of a jealous God as the guarantor of human groups. If society is grounded in the need to express others to oneself, then the jealous God is merely a symbol of the other whom we cannot appreciate, the other who is more powerful than we are, who harms us, but to whom we must submit. Far from guar-

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anteceding society, the jealous God destroys the genuine society which arises out of the acknowledgement of concrete otherness and the will to express it.