

# Psychology and Human Behaviour: Is there a limit to psychological explanation?

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## 1. Introduction

Much of the popular attraction of as well as hostility to psychoanalysis, as represented in Freud's ideas, come from its iconoclastic, debunking character. What we regard as the higher things of life are, or seem to be, lowered, much of what passes as the normalities of human life are so represented as to appear under a disturbing aspect. Love is reduced to sex, human freedom is represented as an illusion, the human psyche is pictured as forever divided into warring factions with the poor ego trying to keep peace by appeasements, compromises and, where these fail, by evasions and defensive manoeuvres, but without a will or convictions of its own beyond its own preservation. Moral conscience is said to be the internalized voice of a repressive authority in perpetual conflict with unruly instincts. Freud, who named it the super-ego said that it was 'the representative of all moral restrictions, the advocate of the impulse towards perfection'. He added that it was 'as much as we have been able to apprehend psychologically of what people call the "higher" things in human life'.<sup>[1]</sup>

In these ideas genuine perceptions on Freud's part are carried to an extreme where they destroy themselves. Guided by them a psychoanalyst risks denigrating and explaining away forms of behaviour in people which constitute special chapters in human life. I want to argue that just where these risks exist there is a limit to psycho-analytic interpretation which it is vital for any psycho-analyst to observe.

## 2. A Sketch of the Logic of Psychological Assessment

When I speak of a limit to psychological explanation in general and to psycho-analytic interpretation in particular what I mean is that there are different forms of behaviour which when they are genuine are not susceptible of psycho-analytic interpretation. To interpret them is to assume that they are not genuine, to respond to and to treat them as such. It is to attribute a motive to them which, if it existed, would change their character. Let me try to bring out the logic in question by a very simple example and then go on to extend it to more interesting cases.

If we ask or wonder why someone believes something we usually assume that what he believes is not true - unless what we want to know is what reasons or evidence he has for what he believes. For if we ourselves believed that what he believes is true why should we wonder why he believes it? He believes it because it is true and he is in a position to see that it is. This leaves no logical room for his psychology to come into play. One does normally believe what is true, or what one has good reasons to believe.

Why does he believe that everyone is against him and is out to get him? Here we suspect that he is a paranoiac, that he suffers from a 'persecution complex'. If we found out that everyone was really against him, then this would eliminate the logical room within which the question can be asked and investigated. For the answer, 'he believes that everyone is against him because everyone *is* against him' is a tautology and therefore puts a stop to our question. Our question thus carries the *presumption* that he suffers from paranoia. So when we find out that what he believes is true we have to give up that presumption.

This is equally true with the question, 'why does he *not* believe that people are against him when they visibly are?'. If they visibly are against him, it cannot be that his ignorance is due to insensitivity. So we can conclude, for instance, that he has shut his mind to it, that he is afraid to admit it to himself and face the consequences - that, as Freud would put it, a 'defence mechanism' is at work here. This would open the door to a series of questions starting with:

'Why does he need to defend himself?'

In both cases there is thus logical room for a psychological investigation and so for psychology to have something to say about the person. That is psychology has something to say only where he is imagining something which is not the case or is failing to appreciate something that is accessible to him - accessible to his appreciation, an appreciation he shows in other connections. Both cases are instances of a certain kind of *failure*; not a lack of capacity - of sensitivity or intelligence - but a form of activity (engaging in a phantasy or in defence) which interferes with a person's ability to make and maintain contact with his surroundings, and perhaps keep a sense of proportion. What we have here are *failures in the exercise of capacities which he has*. So it makes sense to ask why he fails to exercise them and hence there is room for a psychological answer - a psychological explanation.

If he were to succeed in the face of obstacles and handicaps, then there would be room for wonder. But our question then would be a different one: how does he *manage* to succeed where most others fail? Here we would refer to his psychological *strengths*; and these account for his success in a logically different way from the way a psychological explanation accounts for his failures. For his strengths *enable* him to succeed where normally others do not have them, whereas his weaknesses *prevent* him from succeeding where others normally fail. What *he* finds problematic present others with no difficulty

In the one case it is *he* who succeeds, thanks to the psychological strengths he owns. In the other case *something* in his psychology prevents him from mustering personal qualities needed for succeeding. So where his successes are attributable to him, his failures are attributable to his psychology - a psychology that stands in his way and forces him to take measures for which he would otherwise have no need. Hence in the first case I speak of an 'enabling psychology' and in the latter of a 'determining psychology'.

### 3. A Determining and an Enabling Psychology

I have given no more than an outline of the logic of psychological assessment. Psycho-analysis, as we know, is primarily a form of psychological *therapy*. Its aim is to increase and deepen the analysand's self-knowledge through psychological interpretation, so as to enable him to face and deal with his psychological problems *himself* - in the light of his own values and the requirements of his own life. Interpretation here means drawing attention to aspects of his psychology which he is afraid to recognise and actively needs recognising. It also seeks to make it intelligible to him: to make him see what he is up to and why. But what guides the analyst in his interpretations? And is everything which the analysand reveals about himself grist to the mill of psychological interpretation?

There may, of course, always be more to what the analysand gives expression to, for there is no end to the richness and complexity of the human personality. As any great novelist knows, what we can find in a person is endless. But still not everything in human life, not every aspect of human behaviour, is interpretable or has a psychological explanation. To claim otherwise is to engage in a 'psychologism' which fails to make certain distinctions that are crucial to understanding human behaviour.

The point I tried to make in connection with beliefs can thus be extended to other dimensions of human behaviour. In connection with beliefs I distinguished between true and false beliefs and I pointed out that only false beliefs call for and are susceptible of psychological explanation - and only where the falsity of any such belief is accessible to the person in his capacity for its assessment. In the case of moral behaviour, the important distinction is between genuine moral behaviour and its false or corrupt varieties - 'false' as in 'false pearls'. To offer a *psychological* explanation of a person's moral behaviour is to suggest that in such

behaviour he is moved by extra-moral considerations and that his behaviour is, therefore, other than what it appears to be. It is to suggest that he is not genuine in his moral behaviour.

Perhaps he is motivated by anxiety about what others will think of him if he does not respond with a show of concern. Or perhaps he is concerned to avoid or keep at bay feelings of guilt. The constant admonishments he has received in his childhood may have left him with the feeling that he is naughty and a truant from morality. Now he acts so as to avoid feeling as he was made to feel then and still does. His behaviour thus does stand in relation to the morality his parents tried to teach him in the past, but it stands in a *corrupt* relation to it. He tries to do what morality requires him to do, but mainly so as to avoid re-activating those admonishments from the past ready to pounce on him in his affective memory, given the slightest chance. These are just a few examples. But they show that where there is logical room for psychological explanations of this sort a person's moral behaviour is false, that is, not genuine, or corrupt.

To claim that *all* moral behaviour has such psychological explanations, as Freud seems to have done, is to suggest that moral behaviour is never what it appears to be: never genuine, always corrupt. This is paradoxical if the claim is that it can never be, in contrast with such a claim as, for instance, that such-and-such a people have lost or are losing their morality and that all they are left with is its veneer. Here there is no paradox, for the suggestion is that things were otherwise than what they have now become.

If there were no such thing as genuine pearls, however we may describe what we call 'false pearls' now, we could not describe them as 'false'. To be able to say today that there are no 'genuine pearls' to be found anywhere, we must have a *conception* of what a genuine pearl is. Hence we need to ask ourselves from where we have got this conception. The most likely answer here is: from people who once found pearls in oysters before the pollution of the oceans. Jewellers simply continue to make imitations of them. In the case where a whole society's morality has become a mere veneer the conception of 'the real' and 'the genuine' is, of course, to be found in that society's past, in its history.

What I have been saying is that it is not a person's psychology that determines and so explains his moral behaviour when it is genuine. It is *he* who determines it in the autonomy he has acquired in coming to own his morality in the course of his personal development. For when it is genuine a person's morality comes from him, and not from a psychology which determines his behaviour. In such a case what explains his moral behaviour are his moral beliefs and the judgments he makes in their light on particular occasions. As for the general question, 'what makes a person moral?', it calls for reflection and clarity on what is meant by morality. When such clarity is attained it becomes plain that this is not a psychological question like 'what makes a person delinquent?'. That latter question is to be answered in terms of what has interfered with, thwarted or arrested his *normal* development, in terms of what has *gone wrong* with it. Our question here is normative.

A person comes to be moral in the course of his personal, affective development through a form of learning in which he changes, indeed 'grows'. It is this notion of 'growing' or 'development' that is normative. What one needs to reflect on here, therefore, is (i) the perspective from which changes in question are seen as constituting 'growing' or 'development', (ii) the sense in which what is in question is a form of learning, and the way in which what one learns is *a form of being* - one which Plato called 'virtue' and characterized as 'knowledge': at once 'moral knowledge' and 'self-knowledge'. One needs to get clear about the character of the person's *active participation* in such learning. The question, 'what makes a person moral?', invites us to reflect on just these issues. For it asks: 'what sort of learning is moral learning?'. In asking it we are not seeking a psychological explanation of anybody's moral behaviour - as we do when we ask 'what makes a person delinquent?'. That is why a 'thoughtful psychology' can make a contribution here - a psychology that has something to learn from philosophy.

Unless one has engaged in the kind of reflection I have indicated one cannot answer the question, 'what makes a person delinquent?'. For that question is to be answered in terms of what has gone wrong in the development of the person, why it has not taken its normal course, and what sparked off 'adverse' reactions in him, limiting his participation and even preventing it. This is the form which the psychological

explanation which our question calls for takes. I hope that it is clear now how this fits in with my earlier sketch of the logic of psychological assessment.

Here it is important to recognize that the delinquent patterns of behaviour which a person thus comes to be *stuck with* through his arrested development is a form of repetition: he goes round and round the same ground. Paradoxically, however, while he cannot avoid doing so, it is *he* who maintains the pattern of behaviour in question. In doing what he does he stands in his own way. He thus lacks autonomy; his behaviour is in the service of a psychology which rules him - a 'determining psychology'. But this determination can be *undone* by working through the problems behind his reactions, which make him vulnerable to such a psychology. The modification of those reactions which such 'working through' brings about *opens him up* to the kind of learning he has resisted and rejected. Consequently his development once more can begin to move. His psychology is modified as he begins to change in himself, and as he finds oneness with his modified psychology he comes to himself. His transformed psychology can now no longer be said to 'determine' his behaviour. Rather it *enables* him to own it and do what *he* wills by providing him with the psychological space in which he can be himself. That is why I now characterize his psychology as an 'enabling psychology'.

It is as such that the pattern of behaviour with which a person comes to be stuck in the arrest of his development is *reversible* through his assuming responsibility for it and consenting to engage in the inner work which this calls for. I should like to emphasize here that what such a person thus comes to is what, other things being equal, others come to in their normal moral development. They too have to work through what in everyone offers resistance to moral learning. Moral learning thus always involves *inner work* - purification of the self<sup>7</sup> of what is selfish, self-regarding and reactively self-assertive in us, as Socrates points out in the *Phaedo*.

We see that it is in his *mode of being* that a person is moral; it is that which gives his behaviour its moral character. Without a change in his mode of being a person cannot find morality; he cannot come to moral knowledge, nor of course to virtue. His behaviour is *at best* an *imitation* of morality: he gives us an imitation by doing the done thing without putting his heart in it, without finding a heart to put in it. He is a slave to convention or to appearances. If his behaviour is to be genuinely moral, if he is to be genuine in his moral behaviour, he must be an autonomous person, that is his behaviour must come from him. It must not be determined by anything external to him - not even by unowned psychological needs, such as the need for solidarity or for the approval of others.

Such a person's psychology is no longer a determining psychology. His moral behaviour is not the product of his psychology. He does what he wills and not what he feels forced to do. The determinants of his moral behaviour are not psychological, but moral. It comes from a morality he owns, a morality that is at one with his psychology. He is thus *enabled* to be himself in his morality by growing out of his narcissism, egocentricity and losing his need for defensiveness. This leaves him the psychological space needed to develop such positive capacities as trust, forgiveness, concern for others, self-respect and courage, which are at once moral and psychological capacities. It is precisely in the exercise of these capacities that a person comes to himself so that he is the author of his actions, instead of a slave to requirements to which he yields or the plaything of impulses he cannot control. Here a person's psychology and his morality are at one with one another in the way that where a person has the courage of his convictions, his courage is an expression of the strength and genuineness of his convictions, and his convictions are the source of his courage.

#### 4. **Morality and Psychology**

I have argued that where a person is himself in his actions and behaviour, the courage and moral integrity he shows do not have a psychological explanation. Thus it is significant that we can ask what makes a person a coward: why, for instance, can he not be trusted to defend his family in the face of danger? The answer would have to be in terms of something in him that prevents him from doing so or something that he lacks. By contrast, what would it mean to ask: what makes him courageous?

Someone may say: it is the gun in his pocket or his superior strength that makes him courageous. But in such a case his courage would not be real courage - any more than a person who bullies those who are weaker than him has real courage. Real courage involves the ability to face danger and master one's fear. As for a person who seeks danger to show others that he is brave or one who is afraid to run away from danger so as to avoid being branded a coward, neither of them have real courage. In both cases we have a psychological explanation; but the logical space in which there is room for such explanations leaves no room for the reality of what is thus explained.

We could, of course, ask: where does he find the courage he shows in facing dangerous situations? How does he manage to stand up to someone twice his size? But that would be to ask a different question: not 'why does he fail when he has the capacities needed for success?', but 'how does he *manage* to succeed when others in that situation have failed?'. Here, we have seen, we would refer to the person's psychological *strengths* and these are what *enable* him to succeed - the strength not to be daunted before a situation where the balance of forces is not in one's favour. Andre Gide said that in order to be free one must 'follow one's bent ... but upwards' - il faut suivre sa pente...mais en montant' (quoted by Leon Pierre-Quint[2]). That is one must do what one wills while acting in the teeth of what Simone Weil calls the force of 'moral gravity'. Sartre made the same point when he wrote:

We were never more free than during the German occupation.... Everyday we were insulted to our faces and had to take it in silence ... And, because of this, we were free ... The circumstances, atrocious as they often were, finally made it possible for us to live, without pretence or false shame, the hectic and impossible existence that is known as the lot of man.[3]

This is true of all psychological or moral strengths: it takes life's difficulties to develop and to exercise them, and in their exercise a person is himself. Therefore it is *he* who finds courage in the strengths that enable him to face danger with courage. In his weaknesses, on the other hand, a person fails to be himself. Hence his psychological weaknesses *explain* his failures in reference to the manner in which they stand in his way.

A person's psychological strengths, we have seen, enable him to be himself so that his successes are attributable to *him*. Therefore where we ask, 'where did he find the courage to jump into the rapids to save a child from certain death?', what we are asked to do is *not* to give a psychological explanation. We are asked to articulate the strengths which enabled him to face danger and master his fears. We may thus try to bring out how, in the light of what he cares for, his own security or even survival faded into relative insignificance, how he found strength in his love and convictions. We may try to elucidate how his conviction that he *had* to jump is an expression of his own will and not of a psychological compulsion to which he yielded. Clearly here we are not giving a psychological explanation of his behaviour; we are elucidating the moral basis of his strengths and how in this instance they enabled him to face danger to his very life. It is such strengths that enable people to overcome the obstacles, meet the challenges, deal with the difficulties with which life presents them in the significance they attribute to things.

The question, 'what makes him courageous?' may thus be taken as a question which has reference to his development as an individual: 'how did he come to have the courage he shows in the way he stands up to those stronger than him' - like: 'what made him play such a difficult piece with such ease and so beautifully?', to which the answer may be: 'he had very good teachers, he is very talented musically, and he worked very hard to get to where he now is. Someone may say: 'Surely, answering this question about his courage is providing a *psychological* explanation of his courage.' My response is: you can call it that if you wish, but it is radically different from the answer to the question, 'what makes him a coward?' - a question which equally refers us to his development as an individual. What it asks may be expressed as follows: 'how did he come to be so devoid of courage in standing up to what threatens the people or things he cares for?'

There is an asymmetry between the ways in which these two questions are to be answered. In the case of the second question what we referred to is an *arrest* in the person's development measured against the norms in terms of which we assess psychological and moral development in individual human beings in a

culture familiar to us. The arrest, articulated in psychological terms, is what *confines* and constrains the person, thus *disabling* him to do what the man who has courage is able to do. In contrast, in the case of the courageous person the moral basis of his strength explains, if this is the right word, what he is able to do by articulating the basis of his *abilities*. It is he who exercises the capacities that give him those abilities, whereas the coward is someone who is unable to overcome his psychological disabilities.

The following objection may be and has been levelled at what I am arguing: 'We know that children who are raised by uncaring and selfish parents generally turn out to be uncaring and selfish, whereas children who are raised by caring parents turn out to be caring and unselfish persons. In both cases the early treatment of the person in his childhood *explains* how he turns out in his adulthood, and the explanation in both cases is a *psychological* explanation.'

My response to this objection is as follows. To begin with, children who have been raised by uncaring and selfish parents *do not have to* turn out to be uncaring and selfish, even if they may generally turn out to be so. What is in question is not simply a matter of learning to behave a certain way by imitation, by the child copying his parents. What we have here primarily is the deprivation of a child of the love which children need to develop and to be able to establish positive, giving relationships in later life, capable of contributing to the life of others. The analogy of a child who is deprived of the opportunity to learn to read and write may throw some light on what is the case here. For in both cases a severe limitation is imposed on the life of the child in his adulthood unless the deficiency in question is remedied.

More than this, depriving a child of the love he needs frustrates him and builds up resentment and ill feeling which *interferes* with the child's development and *poisons* his relationships with others. It thus prevents him from establishing relationships of co-operation, reciprocity and give-and-take. In the vicious circle which this sets up he comes to be more and more rooted in a mode of being in which the psychological obstacles he had to overcome are added to his share of life's difficulties, dealt to each individual by the hand of fate, augmenting them. Not only does he thus have greater obstacles to overcome than many others, but it is also with a handicap that he has to face them.

The person who has had a 'good' childhood is able to develop an attitude towards life and towards others in which the response he finds sets up a benign circle for him in which he finds confidence in facing and dealing with the problems and difficulties of life which are his share in the hand which fate deals him. The important point here is that from where he has got to in his development, partly as a result of his good luck, it is *he* who deals with his problems and difficulties. In contrast, the other person, from where his development has come to a standstill, does not, in the same way, face the difficulties that confront him as a free agent or autonomous person. He is like someone who faces an enemy with one hand tied behind his back, or like someone who has not developed the muscles needed to wrestle with him successfully. In short the first person's responses to the difficulties and problems of life are *his* and he has a *benign* psychology which enables him to be himself and use his resources in the way he meets and deals with them. The other person's responses, on the other hand, are a *product* of his psychology.

It is in this sense that a person's moral weakness can be explained by features of his psychology, features which exist independently of his moral convictions - for instance his vulnerability to temptations, his impulsiveness, his impatience, his lack of resoluteness, his lack of tenacity, his lack of courage. But this is not true of the qualities someone may have - his self-restraint, patience, resoluteness, tenacity, courage. To try to explain them in psychological terms is to explain them away. For those features which constitute his moral strengths are character traits in which he is *himself*; they are not products of his psychology.

Where his weaknesses are concerned, however, he has failed to come together in himself. He has to compromise with the conflicting demands and requirements of unowned parts of himself. In extreme cases he has no self he can call his own. What he is like are the compromises between conflicting parts of himself imposed on him by his psychology. Consequently it is in terms of these conflicting demands and requirements which he cannot own, in terms of his reactions to them, his compromises in the face of these conflicting demands, his search for compensations, his attempts to evade the cost of these entanglements, that his actions and behaviour are to be explained.

This is exactly what a psycho-analyst does in his interpretations and Freud has portrayed quite accurately the very general framework of such interpretations in his tri-partite divisions of the self. Here *all aspects* of a person's life and behaviour are represented as *subject* to his psychology and so are *explainable in terms of it*. For as portrayed by Freud a person has no centre from which he acts: the Freudian ego, identified with a dissociated form of reason, is incapable of constituting such a centre.

My whole argument, however, is that this is *not* an inevitable state of affairs for human beings. For human life is multi-dimensional and even when such forms of dissociation and disunity characterize the life of a great many people they admit of degrees. They engulf the whole of a person's life only in extreme cases. Hence the sphere of psychoanalytic interpretation is not unlimited. Very few of us may be totally authentic; but equally very few of us are totally inauthentic.

## 5. Morality, Moral Education and Freud's Divided Self

The source of a person's morality, I said, is *not* to be found in his psychology, but in his moral beliefs. Freud, however, located it in the person's conscience in its driving mode. He 'psychologized it' by identifying it with the super-ego as the internalized voice of his father, reflected in the distorting mirror of his childhood phantasies and preserved in his affective memory. What Freud calls 'internalization' or 'introjection' is not the same thing as what I call 'owning' or 'making one's own'. One shoulders responsibility for what one owns, in the sense I use this expression, whereas one is owned by what one internalises and, when the opportunity arises, one is driven by it.

Freud's picture of the tripartite divisions of the personality is the portrait of a divided self, a self which lacks inner unity. The superego is thus divided from the Freudian ego and in conflict with the Freudian id. If it speaks with a moral voice, in terms of moral concepts, it still is not the person's own voice, and it remains in conflict with what the person is inclined to do in particular situations. Those inclinations themselves are not owned by the person; they do not form part of any stable motivation. So Freud attributes them to an unowned 'id'. The person identified with the ego, reacts to these conflicting pulls; he obeys, disobeys, yields, resists. In no case does he do what he wills; he has no will of his own. Thus the ego, as portrayed by Freud, has neither a voice nor a will of its own. Freud likens it to a rider having to rely on the mobility of his horse. It has constantly to please or appease its three taskmasters - as Freud calls them - the ego's third task-master being 'the outer world', the social world of other people. In his relations with them, the person, identified with the ego, has to try to win their approval, to avoid incurring their hostility, to keep them sweet, etc. ... He is not himself with them either, and is divided from them too.

For the person to come to or find himself these divisions need to be healed. He has to find his own voice in his judgments and decisions, in what he thinks, says and does. And he can only have his own voice in losing his ego, its anxiety before its task-masters and its natural as well as reactive assertiveness; he has to take interest in something other than himself. It is in this way that the person divided in himself, as portrayed by Freud, will move towards inner unity, authenticity and autonomy. The ego will thus be transformed into a self he owns, a self in which he is himself. On the other side of the coin, and at the same time, his relations with other people will change: as he can be himself more and more with them these relations will become more genuine and consequently more fulfilling.

This is a sketch of the kind of self-transformation aimed at in an ideal psycho-analysis. Paradoxically Freud cannot accommodate it in his theoretical outlook. Thus on Freud's view a person cannot own his morality - his moral values - and his moral beliefs cannot be genuine. He thinks of morality as a force of repression preventing people from being themselves. Its benefits, in terms of social cohesion, are external to it and one who can voluntarily submit to its discipline for the sake of these benefits would, in Freud's view, be acting out of rational self-enlightenment. He would be choosing the discipline of morality as *a means* to his own ultimate enlightened self-interest.

Freud, thus, in his psychology, fails to see how moral concerns are expressions of caring for something outside the self and as such something positive - promoting the individual's growth instead of arresting it.

He fails to appreciate how, in such caring, morality is an end in itself: that is how human beings can act from genuine moral motives, how they can be moved by moral considerations. He fails to see, that is, that such considerations are not rooted in anything more fundamental. In short he fails to see that human actions which have their source in the moral perceptions of the individual agent are intelligible without any psychological explanation.

In its subordination of morality to psychology thus Freud's view of morality lacks a recognition of the integral way in which morality belongs to human life and is not the deceptive appearance of something else. It lacks a recognition of its *positive* role in the life of the individual who makes it his own and in the process comes to himself. It fails to appreciate that human beings can give their hearts to moral values for what they see in them - genuinely and without self-deception. What Freud's psychologism prevents him from seeing is that a person's morality *can* be something he *lives* in his concerns, convictions and commitments, instead of something that restricts his life. As such morality is not, as Ernest Jones thought, opposed to love.<sup>[4]</sup> It is on the same side as a person's genuine loves - in his compassion, for instance, in the courage with which he opposes injustice.

Indeed, there can be no autonomy without genuine moral convictions and so commitment to something outside oneself. The antithesis of such convictions and commitment is either inner anarchy or an inner straight-jacket instituted to avoid the debilitating anxiety at the prospect of such inner anarchy. A person comes to have moral convictions through moral learning. Such learning involves concern for others, developing responses to injustice, learning to put oneself aside in certain situations, etc. The morality he thus learns works through his psychology to transform it. So transformed into an *enabling* psychology, his psychology makes it possible for him to own his morality in the way he comes to feel towards things outside him and to find autonomy in thus owning it. Such a person's psychology and his morality thus become two sides of the same coin.

Moral learning, as opposed to moral indoctrination, thus involves the growth of the self towards greater autonomy and contact with the 'outer world' - the person's social, human environment in which he lives his life. This means turning outward, away from a self-centred orientation, away from a vision fixed by patterns from the past impermeable to the present ('repetition compulsion'). It thus involves overcoming affective obstacles to a genuine consideration of others and openness to them. Moral learning, therefore, is largely an education of the emotions. In the mode of being which a person acquires through the transformation of his emotions he comes to be integrated with his values. The terms in which his psychology, transformed through such integration, is to be characterized are inevitably and at the same time moral terms.

What, by contrast, I called a 'determining psychology' is the kind of psychology at the root of Freud's determinism in which the individual is subject to 'unconscious determination' and 'repetition compulsion'. It is the slavery of the Freudian ego, in his picture of the tri-partite division of the personality, to one or other of the parties from which it stands divided and which, as Freud put it, are its 'task-masters'. Thus we have the impulsive person acting in slavery to 'the id', in slavery to the moment, as Kierkegaard puts it, we have the moralistic person acting in slavery to 'the super-ego', and we have the defensive character trying to keep psychological dangers at bay and paying a heavy price for it.

These divisions, as I said, are not immutable. They can be healed. Since the person is *ultimately* responsible for maintaining and perpetuating them he can be liberated from the mode of being in which he lacks a centre from which to act by accepting responsibility for his inner divisions. The Freudian ego, I said, can never be such a centre. It will, however, be transformed in the process of integration with the parts of the self from which it is divided, along with those parts. In the mode of being the person thus acquires he comes to be integrated with his values: as the super-ego is transformed to a genuine conscience he acquires a moral voice of his own.

The inner work through which a person moves towards a mode of being in which he finds such inner unity and his own moral voice involves such inner undertakings as forgiving those, past and present, who are believed to have offended or hurt one, giving up grudges, jettisoning defences, grieving one's own adverse

responses to loved ones, past and present, in remorse and repentance, and making reparations, etc. Such inner changes thus inevitably go together with changes in one's attitude towards, feelings for, and relationships with others - changes which involve reconciliation with those from whom he has been alienated, and more open, giving and caring relationships with them.

It is in this way that the inward-looking self-centred ego turns outward and in the process grows. In such growing it loses some of its anxiety to please, comply and placate, and it gains in inner strength. It acquires a ground on which to stand and, on it, can now stand its ground in the face of pressure. I have already said that the super-ego, transformed into a genuine conscience, no longer speaks with an alien voice - a voice not the person's own voice. Indeed it becomes an expression of his will in his commitments. His behaviour also loses its susceptibility to erratic impulses as he acquires a stable motivation in which he comes to own his desires. They become the expression of what he cares for and as such they come under the jurisdiction of his considerations. His impulses of the moment are replaced by considered aims and desires. As for any residual impulses that remain, they can now be restrained from where the person stands in his moral conviction.

It should be clear now, I hope, that there is no sharp line between moral learning and the affective transformation of the self in a genuine psychotherapy. In either case the morality thus owned stops being a repressive and 'negative' force in the life of the individual - negative in the sense of arresting a person's growth towards being 'his own person'. It becomes a 'positive' or 'constructive' force essential to the autonomy of an individual and to his consideration of others within its parameters. It can only do so, however, if the person can give himself to the morality he comes in contact with for what he sees in it.

## **6. Adult Religion and Freud's God as a Father-Substitute**

I have spoken of genuine moral commitment and the kind of learning in which one comes to it. My argument has been that in giving it a psychological foundation or explanation Freud compromises its genuineness. This is not to say, of course, that moral behaviour is always genuine, always pure, that human beings do not often deceive themselves in their moral beliefs and behaviour in the way that Freud suggests. It is not to say that they are not, perhaps more often than not 'double-minded' in their morality as Kierkegaard depicted well.<sup>[5]</sup> The same applies to Freud's view of religion as infantile and a superstitious illusion - that is as engaging in what is immature in the believer and sought for the psychological comfort it brings.<sup>[6]</sup> For that too is often true, as Simone Weil has emphasized in her writings on religion. The trouble with Freud's view is that this is *all* that he saw in religion and in morality.

When he spoke of religious beliefs as illusory his measure of what constitutes an illusion was not a religious one. He meant that the beliefs in question were unscientific and that they had been refuted by science. When, on the other hand, Simone Weil spoke of an illusion in the same connection she meant something different; for she measured the conception of religion in question by spiritual norms. As she puts it: to receive and express truth takes work, whereas one receives what is false without work. She is speaking here of truth and falsity in the realm of the spiritual.<sup>[7]</sup> Thus a religion in which one seeks and finds worldly or psychological comfort and consolation is deceptive. That is a religion in which one seeks such comfort deceives one by taking one further away from spiritual truth. Yet quite commonly this is what believers in Christianity seek in their religion. The religion in which they practice, as they understand it, is thus at once infantile and illusory. It responds to a psychological need in them and is sought on that account.

On this point Freud is right and his response to it is moral: we should aim to grow up, throw away our crutches and face life's difficulties as a grown-up. What he does not see, however, is that there is an adult conception of the same religion. He does not see that the believer's acceptance of his dependence on God does not have to exclude an adult attitude to life. Let me try and explain.

What is meant by our dependence on God in a spiritual religion like Christianity, in Christianity spiritually understood, is very different from a person's dependence on another person. Yet even here there are

different possibilities and different ways in which we may respond to such dependence which can throw light on our question concerning different ways in which our dependence on God can be conceived in a religion like Christianity. For instance, someone as a junior partner in a firm will be dependent on his senior partner for a great many decisions taken in the firm, and for a great many other things. There may thus be many occasions when he has to seek their advice and even be obliged to toe the line. He may do so in a servile way; he may do so in an infantile way; he may find it difficult to stomach the position he thus finds himself in and so go along with his senior partners only begrudgingly. But he may do so in none of these ways even when he doesn't like what he is asked to do. That is his dependent position as a junior partner need not be felt as threatening his autonomy and, indeed, it may not do so at all. Whether or not he feels it to be threatening depends on how secure he is in himself. One can certainly take and obey the most stringent orders from a superior without compromising one's personal autonomy.

Equally in a personal relation someone may submit to the other's wish and judgment in trust and out of loyalty without surrendering his autonomy. No one would deny that giving up something one wants for someone one loves is an act of generosity and as such has one's full consent. It is the inability to do so for fear that one will lose one's ability to stand up for oneself when circumstances call for it that betrays the fragility of one's autonomy. It is thus not being able to give up, give way or yield that signals one's conduct being governed by a 'determining psychology'. Thus the generosity with which one gives, the humility in which one cedes when one is in the wrong, belong to an 'enabling psychology' and does not call for any *psychological* explanation. To be capable of such generosity, to have attained such humility, a person must have given up the ego in him which, as Simone Weil has pointed out, expands whenever it has the space to do so, clings to the space it fills, defending it tooth and nail, and takes badly anything it takes as a belittlement, such as an insult, reacting to it with destructive hostility. Here we need to distinguish between two different kinds of pride or 'amour propre', as the French call it - one which is a form of self-respect and loyalty to something one is attached to in gratitude for what one owes to it, and the other which is an identification of the ego with something in which it feels great. The first is quiet, unobtrusive and dignified; the second is shrill, jingoistic, and shallow in the way that envy, gossip and intrusive curiosity are shallow. A person who has lost the greed and sensitivity which belong to the ego is someone who is stronger in himself and wiser in his responses to life.

In the complexity of the social life to which we belong we are dependent on one another in a great many different ways. In any case trusting or loving someone is itself making oneself dependent on him or her. It is the inability to accept such dependencies and avoiding them, that should alert us that psychological defences are at work to protect and bolster up a fragile autonomy. Such fragility comes from an underlying emotional dependency which the person has been unable to outgrow. Hence Fairbairn's concept of 'mature dependency' which presupposes that a person has outgrown his early narcissism and ego-centricity and has grown up affectively.

Now God's reality is very different from the reality of a person, this difference being a categorical one. God is not an object; He does not exist in time and does not occupy space. He has been characterized as at once 'love' and 'goodness' and has been said to be found by the individual 'within': 'in your heart'. Certainly this makes what is meant by our dependence on God radically different from what our dependence on another human being amounts to. One's dependence on a spiritual God is spiritual. This means that it is only in one's relation to God as goodness that we have a spiritual life. In other words, one is dependent on goodness for one's spiritual existence and well-being. It is in caring for God as goodness that a person comes to recognize this dependence. Hence such a person pities those who turn their backs on God as goodness and think they can get on without Him: thus Socrates pitying Archelaus in the *Gorgias* and Sonia pitying Raskolnikov in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. It takes real compassion to pity someone who does harm to others.

A believer sees his dependence on God also in relation to God's will, His will, or 'hand' as it is sometimes put, being seen by the believer in everything that happens. He thus takes what happens, when it is pleasing, as a gift in gratitude, and when it is painful without resentment and without questioning it. He takes it in humility in the first case without ever thinking that his good fortune was his desert, and with patience in the latter case and without complaint. In all these cases it takes *emotional maturity* on the part of the believer to

accept his dependence on God - a maturity in which the self, in the sense of ego, is put aside in compassion, humility, gratitude and patience in the face of suffering.

Thus, however different what one's dependence on God means within a spiritual religion like Christianity from what it means to be dependent on another human being, we have the same gamut of possibilities in the two cases - except for this big difference, namely that what God one believes in is logically dependent on the way one takes one's dependence on Him affectively. For if one takes it in an infantile way, that is if one derives psychological comfort from it, so that one is resentful when one does not find that comfort when in need of it, then one does not believe in a spiritual God but in a father-substitute.

This is all that Freud sees. He does not see that there is another way of understanding Christianity in which what it demands from the believer, far from being easy, in fact goes against the grain with us, against the pull of what Simone Weil calls 'moral gravity'. In the version in which it is *easy* to believe in the God of Christianity it could be said that the believer is deceived; for it is a worldly God, an infantile father-substitute in whom he believes. It is only in the version which makes it *hard* that the believer's eyes are opened to the reality of a spiritual God. Belief in such a God thus, far from engaging the infantile aspect of the believer's character, in fact calls for affective maturity. That is why Simone Weil says that God has absented Himself from this world, has hidden himself from us and placed an infinite distance between Himself and us for us to cross, and barriers to overcome before we can find Him. In other words, only a hidden God is a spiritual God - in the way that only when the good one does is inconspicuous to one does one have goodness in one's heart.

As I have already said, it takes inner work, the overcoming of inner resistance to believe in a spiritual God, to give one's heart to goodness. Without the transformation which comes through such inner work, if one has the patience to give it time and wait, one cannot come to any spiritual truth, one cannot find one's soul.

I do not believe, however, that the framework of beliefs that belongs to Christianity is the only one in which one can find one's soul in this way - just as I do not believe that Freudian psychotherapy is the only form of psychotherapy in which one can move towards greater inner unity and the personal autonomy which belongs to such unity. The important distinction in the case of psychotherapy is between psychotherapy which treats the person it aims to help as an individual capable of taking responsibility for his life and one which imposes its own solutions on him - or at least tries to, however good its intentions. Just as in the case of religious belief the important distinction is between reaching one's beliefs through inner work and coming to them through indoctrination.

Let me make it clear that I am not suggesting that Christianity or any other religion is a form of therapy. No, what I am suggesting is that coming to religious belief in a spiritual religion takes inner work and that moral and spiritual knowledge or wisdom is to be found in a person's mode of being - as Plato has pointed out. And the same is true of self-knowledge - as Freud has pointed out. For to come to self-knowledge is to come to oneself; and to come to oneself is not to come to a self ready-made, waiting to be discovered. It is to work through one's inner conflicts and to come to a wholeness in which one owns oneself, a mode of being in which one has the space to be oneself.

## 7. Conclusion

My main criticism of Freud's psychology has been directed to its 'psychologism', that is to its reduction of the spiritual to the psychological, and, paradoxically, to its blindness to the possibility of an enabling psychology, as I called it, in which determinism has a limit and psychology and morality are at one with one another. The whole burden of my paper has been to argue that here psychological explanation of human behaviour explains away fundamental concerns and aspirations of human life as sham and, therefore comes to an end.

1 Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. W. J. N. Sprott, (W. W. Norton, 1933), p. 95.

2 Leon Pierre-Quint, *Andre Gide*, Gallimard, 1952, 106.

3 Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Le Republique du Silence', in *Situations III*, (Gallimard, 1949), 11-12

4 See Ernest Jones, 'Love and Morality', *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, January 1937.

5 See Soren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart*, trans. Douglas Steere, (Fontana Books, 1961).

6 See Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scott, (The Hogarth Press, 1949).

7 Simone Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grace*, (Librarie Plon, 1948), 63.