Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide

Freud, Weber, Adorno and Elias

George Cavalletto

CROSSING THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL DIVIDE

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Freud, Weber, Adorno and Elias

GEORGE CAVALLETTO

Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges, City University of New York, USA

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Series Editor's Preface

I am pleased to be writing the Preface to *Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide: Freud, Weber, Adorno and Elias* by George Cavalletto and connecting some of its concerns to the overall aims of the *Rethinking Classical Sociology* series of monographs. This is the 4th volume in our series. The volume addresses a number of series' themes and also relates to many issues central to the understanding not only of the classical tradition in sociology but to theoretical problems in sociology in general. The volume makes a contribution therefore to the perennial debates revolving around the relation between the individual and society, or, what has also been labelled the macro-micro relation in social theorising. There is much to learn from Cavalletto's exegesis and his proposals, and there are many dimensions to his study that deserve close attention and have a wide relevance and resonance.

In this Preface I would like to reflect a little on our series' interest in exploring the ways in which classical sociology emerged from the intellectual debates of the mid to late 19th century, and in particular our interest in understanding the processes by which sociology differentiated itself, or was differentiated by others, from other emergent social sciences or from those social science disciplines that already had a history (e.g. such as political economy or political philosophy). The second volume in our Series, *What Price the Poor?* is related to this theme through its comparison of the social ideology of William Booth and Karl Marx and their reaction to the plight of the mass poor in London; Cavalletto's work also contributes to this endeavour, but its content extends beyond these concerns. An interrogation of the classical tradition to establish at what times, in what texts and in what ways the divide between psychology and psychoanalysis and sociology was cleaved opened by individual theorists, or means found for bringing the two together, is surely of value not only to contemporary theorising but also to this concern with the history of the discipline.

In order to further such interests no doubt use needs to be made, *inter alia*, of the work of Foucault and of Bourdieu, but let us not forget that the classical sociologists themselves had some things to say about these processes that might be of interest too.

In some quarters sociology is spoken of as part of the social sciences, and in describing the sociological perspective an author may use social science almost as a synonym for sociology. This usage may be culturally specific, or least vary from one national tradition of sociology to another (from this perspective it is intriguing that Cavalletto concentrates on the continuities and affinities of a group of German speaking authors bred in the traditions of German *Kultur*). Yet, it is not uncommon for sociology to exist in Social Science Faculties alongside Psychology and Economics and Politics, and sometimes also with Geography and Anthropology. Even where this is the case, however, some sociologists would lean more towards the humanities and cultural studies, and often this preference is dependent on the degree to which the sociologist sees herself as engaged in an applied sociology. Depending on these

perceived alignments would also be the extent to which sociology is felt closer to social psychology and/or psychoanalysis.

This grouping together of social sciences however may well belie the disciplinary differences between those subjects I have named above: a process of disciplinary differentiation lies behind these subjects, but this is somehow ignored by the subsuming of the disciplines under one umbrella notion of social science. From the outside, therefore, it is often difficult to appreciate that there might even be a psycho-social divide and hence it is held that one might usefully raid the individual social sciences one by one for assistance, much to the confusion of those from within any one social science discipline.

Durkheim's somewhat categorical statement in *The Rules of Sociological Method* where he observes that if any social phenomena is explained by psychological processes then one can be sure that the explanation is wrong, indicates the confidence with which at least one classical theorist felt that sociology had its own subject matter and approach. For sure, it is important to place this comment in context. For a start the type of psychology Durkheim had in mind might not be the discipline of psychology that we think of from our perspective; further, it needs to be remembered that Durkheim was fighting a professional battle to establish that there were phenomena that sociology alone could understand – he was not in the business, at this stage in the establishment of the discipline, of building bridges across professional differentiations and closing any apparent psycho-social divide. Durkheim's contribution therefore to the psycho-social divide can be partly explained by reference to the development of the discipline and the processes of structural functional differentiation of knowledge.

As is well known, it was Herbert Spencer that described a process of social change from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous and that he called this process one of structural functional differentiation. This process was a universal one and hence also applied to the rise of individual professions and, by implication, to the development of the various physical and social sciences. Spencer spent less time theorising processes of de-differentiation and the occasions where manifold differentiations were simplified by a process of centralisation and simplification. The rise of sociological theory, with respect to relations with other discourses – one of the themes which our series endeavours to address – including theology, literature and other social sciences – might well be illuminated from such a perspective. In other words, how did the psycho-social divide take place – from an original unity to diverse disciplinary strands, or by the independent development of disciplinary concerns which in the course of time came to stand against one another as they competed to claim certain phenomena as failing under their scholarly gaze?

Clearly reaching some understanding of these complex processes requires a degree of labour and an interrogation of a range of data that might be pertinent. For example, one index of development and differentiation is provided by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The 9th edition of this famous work (together with its supplementary volumes which taken together with 9th edition constitute the 10th edition)   is the one that is most valued by scholars, since it includes surveys of research areas from many of the most respected academics of the period. Their articles summarise current knowledge in masterly ways, but also serve to announce and direct the future

prospects of research in various fields, many of which had recently emerged. In the case of the social sciences one fact is very striking. Whilst the 9th edition carried articles on Psychology (a massive 98 columns of closely printed text in volume 20, 1886) and on Anthropology by no less an authority than E.B. Tylor (volume 2, 1875) it was only in the 10th edition, in a volume published in 1902 that Sociology received separate treatment by Benjamin Kidd; prior to this in the volumes of the 9th edition, sociological interests could be found among many other entries. These dates correspond in part to Spencer's own treatments, with the *Principals of Psychology* appearing in 1855 and the *Principles of Sociology* following much later, despite *The Study of Sociology* appearing in 1873.

The classical sociologists, as we have seen, were not unaware of these issues: such agitated Herbert Spencer in the 1860's as seen in his *Classification of the Social Sciences* and Talcott Parsons was engaging in a similar reflection in the final sections of *The Social System* (1951) on 'The Classification of the Sciences of Action'. The fact that both of these theorists addressed these questions is attributable to their theoretical concern with processes of structural functional differentiation. Parsons was obviously still reading Spencer despite his oft-quoted question (Who now reads Herbert Spencer?). Moreover, Spencer's first major publication in the Social Sciences is *The Principles of Psychology*, whereas Parsons sought to integrate psychoanalytical ideas latterly into his theory of social action. Cavalletto shows, however, that it is quite possible, and maybe even preferable, to approach the question of the psycho-social divide from perspectives that do not have their home in structural functional theorising. Moreover, for him, Parsons' attempts to cross the divide are largely unsuccessful and un-illuminating. Nevertheless, the fact that cross- over between the 'psycho' and the social vary across the subsequent history of the discipline, as Cavalletto shows, indicates that social and political context and processes of disciplinary union and fission are a necessary part of the story.

It is time to reconsider some of the well worn assumptions concerning the relation between the psychological and sociological dimensions of social reality as theorised by the classical authors. In the case of Weber, for example, it has often been repeated, using his own observations in the so-called *Hauptwerk*, *Economy and Society*, that sociology is not a part of psychology. Or, it is remembered that Weber – for both academic and personal reasons no doubt – was highly dismissive of the young science of Psychoanalysis when asked to review a submission on the subject to the journal he co-edited with Jaffe and Sombart (the *Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik*). Both of these examples claim Weber for a sociology that is not concerned with the psychological or psychoanalytic. However, when attention is paid to the detail of the argumentation in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (in distinction to the more sociological argumentation in *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism*), and moreover, when it is remembered that Weber was also involved in a series of empirical studies concerned with the psychosocial dimensions of labour, it is clear that there is much more to be said.

It just these sorts of investigations that Cavalletto undertakes with relation not only to Weber, but also to Freud, Adorno and Elias. Through careful exegesis and through attention to contextual matters, Cavalletto narrates the relations between

these four thinkers and renders their concerns relevant to our times and theoretical issues. We are in his debt.

Professor David J. Chalcraft
Cumbria
November 2006

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This book examines social scientific writings that integrate two spheres of human reality: the psychic and the social. Its focus is on a series of texts written in the first half of the last century that interconnect these two spheres, texts that represent an intellectual tradition of psycho-social inquiry which, particularly among social scientists in the United States, fell out of fashion some fifty years ago.

My examination is mainly interpretative. It reads these texts closely, seeking to discover not only what they say theoretically about the psycho-social interconnection, but also, and more importantly, how they depict it analytically—a distinction that is important, for it is one thing to state that the psychological and the sociological are conjoined in human affairs, and quite another to analytically depict their confluence. The texts are by four seminal thinkers of German or Austrian origin: Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Theodor Adorno, and Norbert Elias. Although the texts by these authors embody psycho-social approaches of the past, they are examined here principally from the perspective of a contemporary concern: to bring to light theories and analytical practices that, when properly considered, may assist those social scientists of today who remain open to, or are actually engaged in, the exploration of the role of the psyche in social reality.

A Discarded Tradition

These four authors represent two interrelated generations of German speaking intellectuals. Both Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Max Weber (1864-1920) achieved prominence in the first decades of the twentieth century; in the wake of their influence, Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) and Norbert Elias (1897-1990) developed their intellectual perspectives in the 1920s and (as exiles from Nazi Germany) in the mid 1930s. The psychological ideas of Freud helped to shape the psychological approaches of the other three, profoundly so for Elias and Adorno, and to a lesser but still noticeable degree for Weber. The sociological ideas of Weber had a wide-ranging influence on Adorno and Elias, most readily apparent in Adorno's elaboration of his concept of the rationalizing process and in Elias's elaboration of Weber's conception of the state.

These four thinkers exhibit a number of similarities of perspective. On the one hand, they sprang from the same ideational soil—a classical German Gymnasium education, Kantian and neo-Kantian formative influences, and a thorough immersion in German *Kultur*. Such specifically German outgrowths of Enlightenment rationalism gave initial shape to their cultural and social ideals. On the other hand, the chaotic, radical transformations of the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras impressed upon them a very different view of the activities of the human mind—as irrational constructs ineluctably linked to struggles of social relations, political groupings, and imperial states. The clash of these two currents, of classical order and contemporary

disorder, of reason and unreason, predisposed these four, as well as a number of other contemporary German intellectuals, to a view of human experience as inherently historical, social, and psychological.[1]

With the rise of Nazism, both the broader tradition and this particular fusion of perspectives were suppressed in Germany, only to reemerge in altered form in England and the U.S. With German immigrants as its leading proponents, along with non-German scholars indebted to the seminal thinkers examined in this book (in particular, Freud and Weber, but also, in a more limited manner, Adorno; Elias's influence is a more recent phenomenon), this intellectual movement actively explored the overlap of history, social theory, and dynamically oriented psychology. A veritable tradition of psychodynamic-social exploration came into existence, championed not only by the exiles Elias and Adorno, but also by Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Karl Mannheim, Abram Kardiner, Erik Erikson, Karen Horney, Harold Lasswell, Geza Roheim, Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Kenneth Burke, Else Frenkel-Brunswik and others.[2]

In the 1950s, however, this psycho-social tradition (as well as the larger intellectual orientation associated with it) fell into disarray under an assault within mainstream social science that effectively eliminated it as a supportable or even respectable endeavor in most academic circles. Partly to blame for its discrediting were the crudely psychoanalytic national character studies hastily produced in support of the allied effort in World War II.[3] The more fundamental cause, however, was the post-war transformation of the social sciences, a transformation shaped by governmental and corporate largess, a growing enthusiasm for "scientific" methods (however narrowly conceived), and a peculiar set of intellectual inhibitions prompted (at least to some degree) by cold war anxieties.[4] Gaining dominance not only in the academic

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1   See M. Rainer Lepsius, "Sociology in the Interwar Period: Trends in Development and Criteria for Evaluation" and Kurt Lenk, "The Tragic Consciousness of German Sociology," both in *Modern German Sociology*, eds. Volker Meja, Dieter Misgeld and Nico Stehr (New York, 1987); Karl Mannheim, "German Sociology (1918-1933)," *Politica* 1 (February 1934), 12-33; Carl E Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1980).

2   See Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York, 1986); Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960* (Cambridge, 1969); Robert Boyers, ed., *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals* (New York, 1969); Ernest W. Burgess, "The Influence of Sigmund Freud upon Sociology in the United States," *The American Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 3 (1939), 356-374; Ian Craib, *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory: The Limits of Sociology* (Amherst, 1990); George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Malinkowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality* (Madison, 1986).

3   See Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson, "National Character," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, vol. 2., ed., Gardner Lindzey (Reading, 1954); A. R. Lindesmith, "A Critique of Culture-and-Personality Writings," *American Sociological Review* 15 (1950), 587-600.

4   Charles Lemert, "The Golden Moment: 1945-1963," in *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*, ed. Charles Lemert (Boulder, 1993), 291-304. Theodor W. Adorno, et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (New York, 1969). See in particular Anthony Giddens's discussion of "the orthodox consensus" of positivism, functionalism, and anti-Marxist theories of modernisation that ruled sociology departments in the 1950s and 1960s in *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action,*

institutions of the U.S. and England, but (under U.S. sponsorship) in West Germany as well, this transformation brought in its wake the ideological hegemony of a body of practical-minded social scientific presuppositions that allowed little room for alternative, less "scientific" approaches. Filtered through the new positivistic lens, the social scientific exploration of the overlap of history, social theory, and psychoanalytically inclined psychology appeared distinctly "unscientific," as well as suspiciously foreign.

In self-defense, practitioners stripped away the metatheoretical foundation of psychoanalytic concepts in an unsuccessful attempt to reduce them to quantifiable (and thereby acceptable) behavioral variables (one example: the transformation of psychodynamic conceptions of "national character" into statistical measures of national "modal personality"[5]). Likewise, the numerous scathing attacks on psychoanalytic sociology published in the social science journals of the era typically recast its concepts into testable hypotheses that were then shown to be empirically wanting. For example, throughout the 1950s numerous articles appeared that demonstrated that no statistical correlation existed between operationalized behavioral measures such as length of breast-feeding or timing of toilet-training (mis-identified as psychoanalytic determinants) and later adult personality profiles.[6] The only psycho-social endeavor to escape significant censure at the time was Talcott Parsons' effort to translate small-group social learning outcomes into elaborately complex psychoanalytic schemata of socialization.[7] After great effort, however, Parsons' endeavor proved to be a dead-end project both theoretically and methodologically, producing little that was analytically useful or even (in plain human terms) insightful.

Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis (Berkeley, 1979), chapter 7, and in *Profiles and Critiques in Social Theory* (Berkeley, 1982), chapter 1.

5   Inkeles and Levinson, "National Character."

6   A particularly indomitable purveyor of such critiques was William Sewell, who authored a series of assaults that spanned the 1950s in which he repeatedly showed that measures of supposed psychoanalytical childhood determinates had no statistical correlation with later personality developments; see, for example, his articles "Infant Training and the Personality of the Child," *American Journal of Sociology*, LVIII, no. 2 (1952), 150-159; and "Social Class and Childhood Personality," *Sociometry* 24, no. 4 (1961), 340-356. For a sample of similar articles, see also Harold Orlansky, "Infant Care and Personality," *Psychological Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1949), 1-48; Axelrad, Sidney, "Infant Care and Personality Reconsidered: A Rejoinder to Orlansky," *Psychoanalytic Studies* 2 (1962): 75-132; Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Socialization and Social Class through Time and Space," in *Readings in Social Psychology*, eds. T. M. Newcomb and E. L. Hartley (New York, 1958), 400-425; Robert D. Hess, "Social Class and Ethnic Influences upon Socialization," *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1970), 457-557. Especially well received at the time was the highly scornful critique authored by Herbert H. Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley, "'The Authoritarian Personality'—a Methodological Critique," in *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The Authoritarian Personality,"* eds. Richard Christie and Marie Jehoda (New York, 1954), 50-122.

7   The most elaborate presentation of this approach is in Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (London, 1956).

Today's social analysts are still affected by the annihilation in the 1950s of what had previously been a viable, even expansive tradition of psychologically attuned social investigation. During the last forty-five years, as the example of the disregard shown Elias during most of this period clearly shows, psychoanalytically informed social scientists were ignored, their work for the most part dismissed. In the U.S. the disbanding of the psychoanalytic sociology section of the American Sociological Association was another sign that no coherent coterie of social scientists existed to build upon the earlier tradition.

In the last decade, however, new fields, such as the sociology of emotion and psychoanalytically informed feminist and cultural studies, have once again begun to explore the interconnectedness of society and the psyche. Especially in this context, a revisiting of a discarded intellectual tradition for which this interconnectedness was a matter of course could prove to be of assistance to today's often less assured efforts.

Interpretative Methods; Psycho-Social Paradigms

This book returns to this discarded tradition, to closely examine the ways the psycho-social interconnection was rendered in a series of texts written by Freud, Weber, Adorno, and Elias. The specific texts examined share a number of qualities. They illustrate psycho-social analytical practices and they directly advance theories concerning the nature of the relationship between psychic and social realities and the methods of analytically rendering this relationship. Also, each text typifies major concerns of its author's overall work, and thus allows an integration into the discussion of aspects of other works by the same author. And, finally, the texts exhibit enough original insightfulness that they reward our attentiveness by offering up ideas concerning the psychological content of social reality that are still useful today.

My examination of these texts is principally interpretative and theoretical. As such, it is based upon a series of contextualized close textual readings, the method of which combines a concern with textual elements (close reading) with a concern with the socio-historical-biographical world that informs these textual elements (contextualized reading). As *close reading*, my method resembles in some ways the old *explication de texte* tradition of literary studies: I look not only at explicit authorial statements, but also at ideational motifs, linguistic patterns and recurrent structural devices by which subtle perceptions of human realities are conveyed. In particular, I look at analytical practices: that is, the practices of thought that actually unfold in the word-by-word presentation of the text and that most immediately come to order the analyses one witnesses in its reading. And as *contextualized reading*, my reading also utilizes, when appropriate, methods of contextualized analyses, that is, it incorporates biographic, institutional, theoretical, socio-political and historical factors in so far as these contribute to an understanding of the text. In this regard, it is unlike traditional *explication de texte* methods, which typically eschewed contextual analysis.

The ultimate focus of my readings, however, is not the multiplicity of separate insights that arise in the process, but rather the underlying conceptual paradigms that structure the mutual association of a text's elements in ways that lend to it a larger analytical and theoretical coherence. Moreover, it is primarily the search for and the uncovering of a particular subset of these paradigms—those that structure the text's psycho-social interconnection—that drives the argumentation of my book.

The following is a brief overview of some of these paradigms.

In Part 1, I examine two distinct psycho-social paradigms advanced by Sigmund Freud: one in *The Future of an Illusion*, and the other in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In *The Future of an Illusion*, society is seen as a prior social facticity that represses, sublimates, and distributes instinctual wishes and pleasures, resulting in psychic deprivation for the underprivileged classes and a relative surplus of transmuted instinctual rewards for the privileged classes. Freud's method of analysis here translates social inequities into their psychic equivalents, resulting in a calculus of instinctual injustices that leads him to condemn modern Western society as undeserving of "the prospect of a lasting existence." He also utilizes here what he himself partially acknowledges to be an "unpsychological" notion of superego formation, depicting it as the straightforward psychic internalization of the moral dictates of societal control, another manifestation of civilization's tyranny over the psyche.

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, by contrast, society is viewed as the embodiment of instinctual dynamics, a manifestation of the psychic battle of Eros versus Thanatos. This understanding leads to the transformation into sociological concepts of ideas first developed in the interpretation of the intra-psychic dynamics of individual neuroses. These concepts are then applied to the social characteristics of large groups in a manner that divorces them from their individual psychic manifestations, as, for instance, when a community is said to embody, within its belief systems and social relationships, forms of neurotic psychodynamics that operate separately from those within the individual members of that community. Thus, a community may have a neurosis, as distinct from an individual's neurosis, a group may be infected with group-narcissism, as distinct from an individual's narcissism, and a nation's population may be inflicted with neurotic characterological disorders, as distinct from an individual's characterological disorders.

Given the clash of perspectives represented by these two books, Freud points the sociological use of psychoanalysis in two main directions. In one direction, he advances a conception of the social determination of the psyche, which, in its crudest form, envisions superego formation as a straightforward internalization of social control—an idea he admitted to be "unpsychological," but which has entered mainstream sociology as the concept of the internalization of social norms. In the other direction, he projects intra-psychic concepts onto social life as a whole, with the result that society, or (more commonly) culture, is viewed as embodying the characteristics of a psychism in its own right.

In Part 2, I examine the ways Max Weber interconnects the psyche and the social in the following texts: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, the opening methodological section of *Economy and Society*, and the two essays, "'Objectivity'

in Social Science and Social Policy" and "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology."

In my reading of *The Protestant Ethic*, I uncover a psycho-social paradigm embodied in its depictions of social actions infused with religious meaning. Accordingly, such religious action is portrayed as informed by irrational psychological states that mediate between cultural belief systems and overt social behavior in such a way that religious ethical dogma is seldom directly translated into action. Rather, the psychological (irrational and emotional) response to dogma itself shapes the action, often in a direction that contradicts the logic of the dogma itself.

This same paradigm also appears in Weber's methodological writings, most explicitly in "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology." In this work, Weber argues that to analyze the meaning of social action, the social scientist should carefully differentiate between the irrational and rational elements of that action. This separation of irrational from rational elements, he asserts, advances the inquiry into the meaning of social interaction by allowing the social scientist to interpret the irrational contribution to this interaction by means of the only type of approach appropriate for it: a psychological analysis attuned to irrational psychic mechanisms.

But Weber also insists that such psychological analysis be of a limited nature and remain subordinated to the overall social analysis. That is, on the one hand, he argues that the psychological analysis must be sophisticated enough to take account of fairly complex psychodynamic realities, including changes in psychic structure and the workings of unconscious mechanisms—among which Weber lists ambivalence, disavowal, repression, sublimation and rationalization. But, on the other hand, he insists that this analysis should be presented in simplified, non-technical terms or, in some cases, be restricted to the acknowledgement of psychic realities as empirical givens without delving into their intra-psychic dynamism.

Some may object that while Freud, Elias, and Adorno clearly belong to the same tradition of psycho-social investigation, Weber does not: the common belief is that Weber focuses exclusively on rational, not irrational, social phenomena. I am confident, however, that my presentation makes a convincing case for a *psychological Weber*. This is a Weber whose analytic practices of "*verstehende* psychology," although subordinated, as indicated above, to sociological practices, display nonetheless a recognition of the dynamic mechanisms of the psyche (such as ambivalence, repression, and sublimation) and a quite Freudian understanding of the psychodynamic differences between historically distinct personality types in terms of differences in psychic structures. For example, he portrays the differences between the traditional and modern personality as one between a psyche with a fragmented ego, little impulse control, and externalized moral controls, and a psyche constituted by a unified strong ego, intense impulse repression, and internalized moral control.

In Part 3, I focus on a little known manuscript by Theodor Adorno, "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses." An extensive interpretation of radio broadcasts by a proto-fascist preacher, this 1943 text foreshadows the later monumental study produced by him and three colleagues, *The Authoritarian Personality*. In particular, it offers an interpretation of the psychology

of fascism that remarkably resembles the methodically derived conclusions of this later work.

In analyzing this manuscript, I uncover a theory-driven psycho-social paradigm that posits a dialectic interaction between two elusive, quite distinct trans-empirical entities: an objective social order conceptualized in Marxist terms of class inequalities, commodity fetishism, and monopolization; and a deeply buried psychodynamic realm conceptualized in Freudian metapsychological terms of psychic structure, id desire, and Oedipal conflict. Adorno views these two realms as being deeply contradictor, especially in the era of late modernity—the one increasingly rational; the other increasingly irrational. But he also views the objective social domain as exhibiting a relative determinant primacy over the psychic domain, although this primacy is not expressed as a transparent translation of social structures into equivalent psychic structures. For Adorno, an increase of instrumental rationalization in the social domain is recorded by an upsurge of irrational disorders in the psychic domain: disorders of neurotic displacement and projection, of Oedipal reversal and ego collapse.

The method of analysis Adorno uses to uncover this paradoxical psychic-social interconnection is "immanent critique": interpretation generated "from within" the analyzed object, rather than imposed from without. In his hands, this method closely resembles the speculative interpretiveness of psychoanalytical practice, and it repeatedly leads him to demonstrate the oppressive nature of the contemporary social order by presenting evidence of its perverse psychic consequences rather than of its overtly oppressive sociological manifestations. Thus, Adorno's approach to analysis, while based upon the notion that the social order is the major determinant of psychic development, also leads to the view that social structural change first becomes apparent as psychic change.

In Part 4, I examine Norbert Elias's *The Civilizing Process.* In his discussions of method, Elias explicitly advances an analytical paradigm in which historical, sociological, and psychological structures are recognized as indissolubly complementary and as understandable only in conjunction with each other. However, I show that in Elias's actual empirical work the developmental processes of history are often depicted as exhibiting a type of primacy over social and psychological processes. That is, the objects of human reality that concern social scientists are viewed as being, above all else, developmental processes unfolding across history, not static states or stationary structures. Hence, an essential ingredient in the understanding of any psycho-social formation is its formative and ongoing historicity. Furthermore, conceptualized within the terms of this processual historicity, "sociogenesis" (social development) is in its turn granted a degree of primacy over "psychogenesis" (psychological development); that is, social development (historically conceived) is viewed as constituting the condition that shapes both intra-psychic and inter-psychic development (also historically conceived).

Thus in Elias's writing a view of human reality is reflected first of all by its historical orientation—its preoccupation with uncovering long-term social and psychological patterns of development—and secondarily its tendency to depict intra-psychic developments in terms of their social origins. Moreover, Elias's actual psychological conceptualization, while deeply indebted to Freud's, tends to avoid detailed intricate

examination of intra-psychic dynamics associated with psychoanalysis, although it does advance a subtle revision of the Freudian conceptions of drives and emotions, as both being not only psychodynamic and physiological processes, but also historical and social ones as well.

Clearly one focus of this book is exegetical and is thus directed at sociology's historical account of its own development. Any interpretative rereading of classic texts must address such scholarly concerns. But another purpose is present as well: to serve as a component of an argument for the resurrection of largely abandoned psycho-social practices of analysis and theoretical conjecture associated with these four thinkers. In this regard, the book is intended as a theoretical intervention in the arena of contemporary sociology. It represents, most fundamentally, an attempt to help reestablish the viability of two interlinked contentions, both taken for granted by the four writers examined, but today rather broadly dismissed by most sociologists: firstly, that the sociological enterprise should incorporate regularly and openly a recognition of the psychological qualities inherent in much of social reality; and, secondly, that this enterprise should integrate into its methodological strategies analytical and theoretical practices appropriate for rendering these psychological qualities within its accounts of the social.

PART 1
Civilization and the Psyche: Opposing Psycho-Social Paradigms in Sigmund Freud's Writings on Civilization

[In regard to Freud's earlier writings on civilization,] interpretation is unavoidably drawn into the area of cultural phenomena. The repressing agency makes its appearance as the psychological expression of a prior social fact, the phenomenon of authority, which includes a number of constituted historical figures: the family, the mores of a group, tradition, ... political and ecclesiastic power, penal and, in general, social sanctions. In other words, desire is no longer by itself; it has its "other."

– Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*

For sociology too, dealing as it does with the behavior of people in society, cannot be anything but applied psychology.

– Sigmund Freud, writing in the last decade of his life.
New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis

Introduction to Part 1

Sigmund Freud's two great books on civilization, *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, present different views of the relationship between the social world and the psyche. Examining these differences establishes a way to correct a number of misconceptions perpetuated over the years by commentators who have attempted to portray the books as if they were essentially alike—indeed, many of the disputes among those who derive theories of society from Freud's texts are traceable to this attempt. Moreover, the disentanglement of these books' psycho-social views has an importance beyond the issue of the proper reading of Freud's texts. For what we find here are two fundamentally different ways of seeing the relation of psyche and society, a difference that reverberates, in one form or another, far beyond any dispute of textual interpretation. I would argue, in fact, that every attempt to think psychoanalytically about the social world engages this difference at least implicitly, for it reflects a divide between two radically opposed conceptualizations of the psyche's relationship to that world.

The first conceptualization begins with the assertion of a radical opposition between human instincts[1] and the social world (or, in another form, between the individual and society), an opposition that, to the degree it is explicitly psychological, results in a theory of the social world modeled functionally upon what psychoanalysts call a "reaction-formation," wherein the social domain takes on the role of a repressive "other" diametrically opposed to instinctual drives. Alternatively (or, more likely, concurrently) this view results in a type of socialization theory wherein the social world is envisioned as imposing its prohibitions and norms on the psyche in the form of the internalized superego commands.

The second conceptualization begins with the assertion of a radical interrelatedness of human instincts and the social world, one grounded upon a view of the psyche as constituted within the interactions of social relations. In this view, instinct and the social world are depicted as linked in a complex figuration of interactive determinations and mechanisms, a complex interplay of psychical and social forces in which the social domain itself comes to assume psychodynamic characteristics, whether these be embodied in the symbolic order of culture, or in the more structurally determinant categories of instinctually embodied patterns of sociality.

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1   My discussion of Freud employs the term "instinct" rather than the more appropriate term "drive," as this is the rendition of the German term *Trieb* that is offered in the English translations of his texts examined here.

Chapter 1

Civilization as a Social Fact Imposed on the Psyche

In the opening paragraphs of *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud indicates that the scope of his interest extends to the "future of our civilization," an analysis of which, he declares, must includes a broad understanding of civilization's past and present conditions. He then devotes the first quarter of the book to thoughts upon this subject, which he terms "the general scheme of things."[1] A macro-analysis of "civilization"—Freud's larger interest, to which he will return two years later in his *Civilization and its Discontents*—thus sets the stage for the book's announced subject, the future of religion.

Here, for the first time in his career, Freud fully expounds the theory of the civilizing process implicit in previous works. He resurrects and synthesizes within this book's general framework notions and intuitions scattered across works written during his earlier formative and middle years, the period between 1900 and 1917 in which he also developed his first structural model of the psyche (with its division of the psyche into conscious, preconscious, and unconscious subsystems) and his first instinct theory (with its dynamic opposition between two types of instinctual drives: the self-preservative ego instincts and the libidinal instincts). Here, in some of his most brilliant writing on the sociology of the psyche, Freud brings to explicit definition the psycho-social paradigm that implicitly underpinned those earlier works, revealing both the theoretical power and the limitations of that paradigm.

In a more extended manner than in his earlier writings on civilization, the connection of the social to the psyche is made clear. On the level of concept formation, we discover that this connection is structured as a directional movement from ideas concerning external realities to those concerning internal realities: that is, the link between the two is, at this level, a shifting of the terms of analysis, a movement within conceptualization itself from the social to the psyche. Explicit expressions of this conceptual movement, of this shift of focus from ideas of external to internal realities, from ideas concerning the social world to those concerning the psyche, repeatedly appear in the opening chapters of *The Future of an Illusion*. For example, Freud notes at one point, "the emphasis has moved over from the material to the mental," adding a few pages later, "we have slipped unawares out of the economic field into the field of psychology."[2] We also discover that this same movement is embodied in the text's conception of the social world itself. For, as the next sections demonstrate, the text tends to conceptualize this world in terms of the impact it has

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1   Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York, 1989), 6.
2   Ibid., 8, 12.

upon the psyche. Thus, in its very conceptualization of social reality, one discovers a shift in perspective that that redirects thought from its social composition to its psychic effects.

1. Translations of Social Economy into Psychic Economy

The first two chapters of *The Future of an Illusion* present an overview of the economic structures upon which civilization is built. Chapter 1 begins this discussion with the assertion that the material basis of civilization rests upon two socio-economic achievements: the creation of knowledge-based techniques of production that enable humans "to control the forces of nature and extract its wealth"; and the establishment of social arrangements that regulate "the distribution of the [resulting] available wealth."[3] The beginning of chapter 2 repeats this distinction between the productive and distributive foundations of civilization: it would appear that "the assets of civilization," Freud writes, consist in a society's "available wealth and in the regulations for its distribution."[4]

Throughout these two chapters Freud repeatedly draws upon this distinction between production and distribution to argue that, in the case of all known civilizations, the distribution of social wealth has always been out of kilter with the social arrangements involved in its production. Speaking specifically of the distributive inequalities that exist between the "classes of society," Freud writes, "the satisfaction of one portion [of society]… depends upon the suppression of another." A consideration of the history of various civilizations reveals that "civilization is something which was imposed on a resisting majority by a minority which understood how to obtain possession of the means to power and coercion." This inequitable outcome continues in "the case of all present-day cultures"; thus one finds that "it is understandable that the suppressed people should develop an intense hostility towards a culture whose existence they make possible by their work, but in whose wealth they have too small a share." Contemporary civilization provides the social elite with the leisure and education to enjoy the fruits of civilization, including its artistic output, while this "kind of satisfaction … remains inaccessible to the masses, who are engaged in exhausting work and have not enjoyed any personal education." Freud's judgment of these class-based inequities is definitive: "It goes without saying that a civilization which leaves so large a number of its participants unsatisfied and drives them into revolt neither has nor deserves the prospect of a lasting existence."[5]

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3   Ibid., 6.
4   Ibid., 12.
5   Ibid., 7, 15, 17. This condemnation of class oppression is constrained by other passages in *The Future of an Illusion* in which Freud skeptically reflects upon notions of top-down societal reconstructions, exemplified for him by policies associated at the time with the Soviet Union (16, 59). Freud's social critique is also limited by his uncritical adoption of Gustave Le Bon's ideal type *la foule* (mob or crowd), translated here as "the masses," with its built-in reactionary, anti-working class bias.

More than elsewhere in Freud's writings on civilization, the constituent terms of the surface layer of his thought in these opening chapters of *The Future of an Illusion* are explicitly sociological—"classes," "classes of society," "underprivileged classes," "the masses," "the suppressed classes and the class who rules and exploits them," "social strata," "the economic field," "wealth itself and the means of acquiring it and the arrangements for its distribution," "power," "external coercion," "the great experiment in civilization that is now in progress" [i.e., the USSR].[6] Yet, another category of reality exists right beneath this sociological surface—that of the psyche. Consider this question: In what consists this wealth that is so inequitably distributed, the deprivation of which makes the masses discontent and in potential rebellion against civilization? The external materiality of goods and services, it soon becomes clear, is not the principal referent of Freud's conception of societal wealth. At each crucial turn in his argument, Freud collapses wealth's measure into an instinctual accounting.

For instance, "privation," Freud states, is to be understood in his text as referring to "the condition which is produced by the prohibition" of instinctual gratification— "the fact that an instinct cannot be satisfied." Hence, when he soon thereafter characterizes the "underprivileged classes" as suffering from a "surplus of privation," the most pertinent referent of this comment is the notion of instinctual privation, not the material privation which, we discover, serves as its external sign. And when he then adds that "the satisfaction" of civilized privileged classes "depends upon the suppression" of the unprivileged classes,[7] we begin to understand that the words "satisfaction" and "suppression" refer as much or more to instinctual suppression and satisfaction than to their material or social variants. The terms of material economy, we discover, operate here principally as the outward tokens of psychic economy; structured as class exploitation, estrangement is grounded upon the extraction and transfer of instinctual energies and pleasures from the underprivileged to the privileged classes.

Thus, social concepts become psychic concepts, as an inequitable distribution of the material goods of civilization is reconceptualized as an inequitable distribution of instinctual gratifications. Freud's thought here presumes a translational correspondence between inner and outer, although the mechanisms by which this occurs are never spelled out. For example, in the first chapter's discussion of the production and distribution of social wealth, Freud explains that these two processes overlap, since each in its own way can be a source of wealth: "an individual man can himself come to function as wealth in relation to another, in so far as the other person makes use of his capacity for work, or chooses him as a sexual object."[8] A person can gain wealth through the exploitation of another's productive labor: this maintains the level of an explicitly material and sociological characterization of wealth. Or a person can gain wealth through taking pleasure in another as "a sexual object": this, by contrast, is an instinctual and psychical characterization of wealth. The social (exploited labor) is equated with the instinctual (erotic gratification), as

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6 *Future of an Illusion*, 9, 10-11, 12, 14, 15, 16.
7 Ibid., 12, 15.
8 Ibid., 6.

the frame of analysis itself again "slip[s] unawares out of the economic field into the field of psychology."

2. The Internalization of External Coercion

The transformational logic of outward-to-inward, social-to-psyche movement that dominates Freud's thought in the opening chapters of *The Future of an Illusion* is not limited to shifts in the framework of analysis from social economy to psychic economy. This logic is also embedded in the structure of Freud's theoretical conceptualization of the historical development of civilization and of the psychic development of the individual.

For Freud, civilization is epitomized on both macro and micro levels by the introjection of authority, a historical achievement of the human race recapitulated as a developmental achievement of the individual, who is thereby transformed "from being opponents of civilization into being its vehicles." On the macro-historical level (a perspective commencing from "the beginning of history"), "it is in keeping with the course of human development that external coercion gradually becomes internalized; for a special mental agency, man's superego, takes it over and includes it among its commandments." On the micro level of individual development, each child is increasingly meant to reproduce in its own development this civilizational achievement of the internalization of coercion, for "only by this means does [the person] become a moral and social being."[9]

In this formulation (as Paul Ricoeur has pointed out), 'superego' becomes almost another name for 'civilization.'[10] The superego transforms "opponents" into "vehicles" of civilization: it turns them into "moral and social beings," that is, into civilized beings. However, a corollary of this formulation is that, given the uneven distribution of civilized instinctual gratification, only the privileged classes are motivated to internalize external coercion and thus become civilized beings. In Freud's conception, the achievement of civilization, and, with it, the psychic transformation it entails, is an uneven development, bringing the "mental advances" that "the human mind has undergone ... since the earliest times" to only certain social classes.[11]

Within the framework of a theory of civilization that presumes that "the greater [the] number [of civilized persons, i.e., people with developed superegos] is in a cultural unit, the more secure is its culture and the more it can dispense with external measures of coercion," Freud finds that the degree of superego formation varies significantly between "groups, classes [and] even single individuals." In fact, the concept of superego development and the internalization of social coercion "appl[ies] only to certain classes of society"; whole classes live in conditions that discourage the development of a superego, a fact "which is flagrant and which has always been recognized." "The masses" and the "underprivileged" strata "have no

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9   Ibid., 13-14.
10 Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: an Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, 1970), 249.
11 *Future of an Illusion*, 13.

love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability; and the individuals composing them support one another in giving free rein to their indiscipline."[12]

3. Social Class Distinctions

Thus, one discovers in Freud's psycho-social delineation of "the general scheme of things" the outlines of a theory of the inequities of the modern social class system. To draw out the basic threads of this theory, let us return to the subject we addressed at the beginning of our analysis of *The Future of an Illusion*: the various ways in which Freud's text structures the concept of social class around a series of differentiated correlations between material and instinctual dynamics. As we saw in section 1, social classes differ structurally in their access to instinctual gratification, with the lower classes suffering from what Freud views as a "privation" of instinctual pleasures. And, as we have just learned, social classes also differ psychically in the degree to which they have internalized society's demands for instinct renunciation, which the upper classes have achieved to a much greater degree than the lower classes.

   In both of these cases, social classes differ psychically not because of some inherent human difference. These differences, as we have seen, are expressions of the fact that civilized societies are structured in ways that impose upon their populations a series of unequal psychic and instinctual exchanges, in which the privileged classes benefit at the expense of the unprivileged classes. Moreover, the inequity of these exchanges is evidenced in the fact that the civilized forms of instinctual gratification enjoyed by the upper classes are in many cases produced by the lower classes' labor ("a culture whose existence they make possible by their work, but in whose wealth they have too small a share," a culture made "inaccessible" by the very conditions of its production in stupefying, "exhausting work"[13]). Thus, these privileged forms of instinctual gratification contain within them expressions of the instinctual energies of the lower classes. Material comforts and enhancements that serve to satisfy the privileged classes' self-preservative drives; beauty and other refinements that lead to the sublimated gratifications of their sexual drives: these pleasures embody instinctual energies derived from the labor of the working class. In contrast, the instinctual gratifications available to the working classes—and which the privileged classes voluntarily renounce through superego internalization—are those of a pre-civilized state of nature. The lust for incest and murder, the impulse to lie and steal, the desire for sexual promiscuity and perversion: gratifications of these natural instincts are of the type that the social order makes available to the underprivileged classes, although only within the limits allowed by the "external measures of coercion" administered by the institutions of state and church—institutions that, it goes without saying, are under the control of the privileged classes.[14]

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   12 Ibid., 8-9, 12-13, 13-14, 15.
   13 Ibid., 15, 17.
   14 Ibid., 13-14, 18-19. Implicit here is a contrast elsewhere openly stated in Freud's clinical writings: the contrast between the neuroses of the upper classes, the result of instinctual renunciations, and the perversions of the lower classes, the overt acting out of these same

4. Sociologistic and Psychologistic Formulations

Let us step back for a moment from Freud's text to raise a question about the psycho-social interconnection. Does the social world impose its structures upon the psyche or does the psyche impose its structures on the social world? Many mainstream sociologists portray the direction of determination as almost exclusively moving from the social to the psyche, their excessively "sociologistic" theories assuming that the values, norms, and definitions of a society imprint themselves in some uncomplicated way upon the individual psyche.[15] Some psychoanalytically inclined social theorists, on the other hand, portray the social world as being determined by dynamics originating within the psyche, their excessively "psychologistic" theories assuming that a clinically derived understanding of internal psychic processes can be directly projected onto social phenomena.[16] If we conceptualize these two perspectives as the two opposite end points on a scale measuring differences in the relative dominance of psyche or social, where would we place *The Future of an Illusion*?

Many of the book's conceptions are strikingly close to the sociologistic end of this scale. For instance, the opening pages of *The Future of an Illusion* characterize the superego as an instrument *par excellence* of the imposition of the social order upon the psyche. Parallel to the "advances of science and technology," Freud writes, "the human mind" itself has developed in such a manner that the "the moral demands of civilization," the "prohibitions" and "restrictions" embodied in "external coercion," have become psychically "internalized" in the form of "a special mental agency, man's superego." Accordingly, the "instinctual renunciations" demanded by civilization stamp themselves upon the psyche to become the precepts of the superego, a process that causes Freud to equate "the moral level of its participants" with "the extent to which a civilization's precepts have been internalized."[17]

That Freud attaches to this description of the superego the parenthetical qualification, "to express it popularly and unpsychologically,"[18] should warn us that he considers his formulation here to be a convenient simplification, cast for the purposes of his argument in a non-psychological form.[19] In spite of this qualification,

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desires. For example, see Freud's comments on the perversity of "an average uncultivated woman" in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York, 1989), 268.

 15 Ian Craib, *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory*, 95.

 16 Robert Bocock, *Freud and Modern Society* (New York, 1978), 33.

 17 *Future of an Illusion*, 13, 14, 15.

 18 Ibid., 15.

 19 Formulations that suggest that society's moral dictates are in some straightforward fashion internalized in the superego are "unpsychological" because they bypass any consideration of the ways psychodynamic processes alter these dictates. For example, in Freud's discussion of the interrelation of the superego and society in *Civilization and its Discontents*, the superego is said to be the product of "the conflict due to ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between Eros and the instinct of destruction or death." "What began in relation to the father is completed in relation to the group," Freud writes; in the "course of development from the family to humanity as a whole," the same drama of "the inborn

the fact that we find in Freud's text such a sociologistic conception of the superego needs to be noted. For it is this type of formulation that one finds in a number of the works of later mainstream social thought that utilized Freud's notions of psychic internalization and of the superego to explain the conformity of individuals to the demands of society. Talcott Parsons' work in the 1950s, to cite a well known example, employed this formulation to explain how social and cultural norms are "internalized," in what he termed "the personality system," in such a way that the social system's "institutionalized roles" come to "structure the superego content for the individual," impelling that person to fulfill these roles' various socially required functions.[20] Another example of this formulation is provided by the psychoanalyst and social theorist Eli Sagan, whose use of the notion of the conformist superego is epitomized by his statement: "Within a racist or sexist society, the superego demands racism and sexism. And in a Nazi society, the superego commands one to live up to genocidal ideals."[21]

Although much of the argumentation of the opening chapters of *The Future of an Illusion* is cast in ways that resemble Freud's "unpsychological" concept of the superego, distinctly psychologistic ideas also appear in these chapters. As we have seen, Freud's depictions of class differences in instinctual gratification carry with them a suggestion that the social domain itself is in some sense best evaluated in psychological terms. In these depictions, Freud comes quite close to suggesting something like a base-superstructure model, with the social as superstructure and the psychological as base.[22] He repeatedly indicates that what is really at stake in a society's arrangement of the production and distribution of material goods is its impact on a far more important economy, the economy of desire. "Civilization cannot consist principally or solely in wealth itself and the means of acquiring it and the arrangements for distribution"; this wealth, its acquisition and its distribution, he writes, "rest" on a psychical foundation that includes the "renunciation of instinct" and "measures that are intended to reconcile men to [civilization] and to recompense them [psychically] for their sacrifices."[23]

Yet statements like these, in which the material arrangements of the social world are said to "rest" or depend upon a psychical arrangements of privation and reward, should not be seen as being unequivocally psychologistic. In such statements what Freud asserts is not that these social arrangements are psychically determined, but rather that one's view of them needs to incorporate the way they are experienced psychically—psychological experience here serving, in some final regard, as a kind

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conflict arising from ambivalence, of the eternal struggle between the trends of love and death" repeats itself. Thus, the superego is not constituted as a simple "internalization" of the external authority of the parent and later of society; rather, it is a product of ambivalence toward that authority, in which love for this authority attempts to contain destructive urges against it. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (New York, 1989), 94-96.

20 Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (New York, 1954), 338.

21 Eli Sagan, *Freud, Women, and Morality: The Psychology of Good and Evil* (New York, 1988), 9.

22 Philip Rieff, introduction to *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, by Sigmund Freud (New York, 1963), 20.

23 *Future of an Illusion*, 12 (italics added).

of phenomenological referent by which to evaluate the fundamental lived experience of humans within a social world.

When we examine the opening chapters of *The Future of an Illusion*, we discover passages—like those that appeal to psychological experience—that tip the conceptual perspective toward the psyche, and others—like the unpsychological description of the superego—that tip it toward the social. How are we to reconcile these seemingly opposed perspectives? If we turn to the examination of religious illusion found in the latter chapters of the book, we discover suggestions of a way that these two perspectives might be brought together.

In these chapters, Freud examines religion from two perspectives: one, focused on the pre-historical psychological genesis of religion; the other, on the cultural facticity of religion in the present day. From the perspective of its pre-historical origin, religion is found to be the embodiment of wishes for the protection of an all powerful father, wishes that the primitive psyche projected onto the cosmos. The examination of "the psychical origin of religious ideas" shows them to be "illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind," and, extending this type of explanation to the social world at large, it suggests that civilization itself has a similar origin: possibly all our "cultural assets, ... our political regulations, ... the relations between the sexes ... and ... our scientific work" originated from similar primitive instinctual wishes. From the perspective of religion as a cultural fact in today's world, however, religion has a very different constitution. Religious ideas are established cultural facts that pre-date the life of the individual and, as such, they operate as external impositions upon his or her psyche: "civilization gives the individual these ideas [of religion], for he finds them there already; ... he takes [them] over as he does the multiplication table, geometry, and similar things."[24]

Thus, religion itself is conceptualized both psychologistically, as the embodiment of primitive wishes, and sociologistically, as a pre-existing external cultural fact that society imposes upon the individual psyche. In the reader's mind, these two accounts may not seem contradictory. One senses a historical logic at work here: we often find that ideas originated at one moment become the established cultural ideologies of a later moment. In general, however, I would argue that the depictions of religion that are found in these latter chapters reflect the same bias toward a sociologistic orientation found in the opening chapters. As Freud declares in the early pages of his discussion of religion, the basic concern of this part of his book is the present day effect of religious ideas upon the psyche: "What we are concerned with here is the finished body of religious ideas as it is transmitted by civilization to the individual," not with their original psychological "formation."[25] Yet I would also argue that Freud's investigation of the psychic origins of religion, and specifically his suggestion that not only religion but civilization itself are products of psychic needs and wishes, supplies a welcome antidote to the book's sociologistic conceptualizations of the imposition on the psyche of the ideas of religion (which the individual "takes over as he does multiplication table, geometry, and similar things") and, as we saw earlier, its similar conceptualization of the imposition upon the psyche of the class-based

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24 Ibid., 27, 38, 43.
25 Ibid., 30.

inequitable structures of instinctual privation and reward. For in their most extreme version, these sociologistic formulations tend, conceptually, to estrange the social world from any connection to psychic life other than that of imposing itself upon that life in ways that shape, transfer, and repress the psyche's mental capacities and instinctual drives. Additionally, they tend, conceptually, to strip the psyche and its instincts of any self-generating impulse toward sociality other than that gained from "external coercion" and the civilizational processes by which this coercion "gradually becomes internalized."[26]

Paul Ricoeur's characterization of Freud's early writings on civilization is apt here: "The repressing agency makes its appearance as the psychological expression of a prior social fact," he writes, "the family, the mores of a group, tradition, ... political and ecclesiastic power, penal and, in general, social sanctions" all function as desire's "'other.'"[27] Examples of the "otherness" of society (and, in particular, the "otherness" of *civilized* society) abound in *The Future of an Illusion*. "Every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization," Freud writes, "thus civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task."[28] One of the functions of the "cultural ideals" of nation and race is "combating the hostility to culture within the cultural unit," that is, defending the nation and race against the always threatening instinctual anarchy of their members. Born to an anarchic state of nature and driven by energies essentially anti-social, humankind is only held to the social by "the pressure that civilization exercises, the renunciation of instinct which it demands."[29]

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26 Ibid., 14.
27 Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 178.
28 *Future of an Illusion*, 7. 16.
29 Ibid., 19.

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Chapter 2

Backdating *The Future of an Illusion*

The Future of an Illusion was written in 1927; Freud's next book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, was completed in 1929. Though both books take as their subject the conditions of civilization, they differ radically from one another. The first book embodies a somewhat old-fashioned, liberal Enlightenment point of view. In the name of scientific rationalism, it attacks religion, characterizes it as wishful illusion, and urges readers to advance beyond their own infantile desire for an all-powerful protective father and enter a new age, one in which human beings, "educated to reality," come to rationally reconstruct, through the aid of science, the precepts and social arrangements of civilization in the furtherance of their own objective social interest. (Such an optimistic vision, his friend Oscar Pfister charged, led Freud into an illusion of his own, an "illusion of a [rationalistic] future"[1]). By contrast, *Civilization and its Discontents* exudes an outlook of melodramatic angst, and envisions a future dominated by discordant forces threatening the annihilation of humankind. This book's troubled analyses depict the human condition as inherently tragic, and conclude that if civilization can be saved, it will not be by reason and science, but rather by the instinctual power of love.

1. Clash of Psycho-Social Paradigms

The radically different perspectives of these two books derive, in part, from their antithetical paradigms of civilization's relationship to the human psyche. In *The Future of an Illusion*, civilization is a determinate coercive force—to varying degrees internalized in the form of the superego—that opposes the anarchy of instinct. It embodies a power that exists *prior* to instinct itself (to use Ricoeur's formulation[2]), and, as such, it works to repress and sublimate instinct, to transform and (as some might put it today) socially construct instinct, and it distributes the resulting gratifications and inhibitions inequitably along class lines. Human beings, born as instinct's disciples, only become "moral and social beings" by internalizing civilization's prohibitions, a kind of apostasy from instinct in which they "are turned from being opponents of civilization into being its vehicles."[3]

In contrast, *Civilization and its Discontents* depicts civilization as instinct's creation. "Civilization is a process in the service of Eros"; it is "a task that is set ... by Eros." Civilization is the expression of the life instinct of Eros, of its impulses of

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1 Peter Gay, *Freud: a Life for our Time* (New York, 1988), 536.
2 Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 178.
3 *Future of an Illusion*, 14.

affirmation and unification. It is born from and maintained by a primal urge to bring together separate organisms, "to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind." And civilization is the manifestation of Eros's eternal opposition to Thanatos, the Death instinct of inertia and disintegration, an alternative primal urge that works through "man's natural aggressive instinct, the hostility of each against all and of all against each, [in] oppos[ition to] this programme of civilization."[4]

On the one hand, civilization is the antithesis of instinct; on the other hand, civilization is the embodiment of instinct. In order to understand the import of such a fundamental difference of conceptualization, it is helpful to place these two views in the context of the development of Freud's overall oeuvre. For the formulation of the opposition of civilization to human instinct in *The Future of an Illusion* has much in common with the opposition of self-preservative ego functions to sexual instinct that exists at the center of the theory of the instincts that Freud advanced in his works of 1905-1917, but then abandoned.

Laplanche and Pontalis summarize Freud's early theory of the instincts as follows:

> In setting forth his 'first theory of the instincts', Freud seeks to equate two oppositions—namely, the clinical antithesis, in the defensive conflict, between ego and sexual instincts, and the genetic antithesis, at the beginnings of human sexuality, between the self-preservative functions and the sexual instinct.[5]

Freud's psychoanalytic writings of this earlier period regularly invoke the instinctual opposition described here by Laplanche and Pontalis. In particular, his works on culture and society regularly utilize it in ways quite similar to the version found in *The Future of an Illusion*. For instance, in an essay written in 1910, Freud states that "civilization" and "our cultural development" result from the instinctual battle of the "self-preservative ego functions" against the anti-social disruptive instincts collectively labeled the "libidinal or sexual instincts." These latter instincts "must be suppressed, restrained, transmuted, directed towards loftier goals," the essay proclaims, "for civilized psychical achievements to take place." Civilization is born, the essay adds, from "the undeniable opposition between the instincts which serve the purposes of sexuality, of gaining sexual pleasure, and those other which aim at the self-preservation of the individual, the ego instincts," an opposition in which the achievement of civilization results from the supremacy of the latter instincts over the former.[6]

In *The Future of an Illusion*, civilization, although conceptually reified as instinct's 'other,' takes the role of the self-preservative ego instincts in Freud's first instinct theory; it is the force that suppresses, transmutes, and sublimates otherwise anti-social instinctual drives. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, however,

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4   *Civilization and its Discontents*, 81, 82, 104.

5   J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *Language of Psycho-Analysis* (New York, 1973), 146.

6   Sigmund Freud, "Psychogenic Visual Disturbances According to Psychoanalytical Conceptions," in Sigmund Freud, *Character and Culture*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 54.

civilization is conceptualized as the manifestation of Eros' "cultural urge" to "unite separate individuals into ... communit[ies] bound together."[7] The very terms of this book's theory of civilization follow from the dualism of Freud's second theory of the instincts, which, as we will see in the next chapter, was developed, beginning in 1919, around the opposition not of the self-preservative and libidinal instincts, but of Eros, the impulse "to form living substance into ever greater unities," and Thanatos, the impulse to achieve "the dissolution of what is living."[8]

An essential component of the differences between Freud's two theories of the instincts is reproduced in the way "instinct" is conceptualized in these two books. "Instinct," in *The Future of an Illusion*, denotes what "instinct" denotes in Freud's first theory: the mental representations of physiological excitation—"the mental representative of the stimuli emanating from within the organism."[9] In contrast, "instinct" in *Civilization and its Discontents* denotes, for the most part, what "instinct" denotes in Freud's later, post-1919 second theory: the urge to reestablish previous states—"a kind of elasticity of living things, an impulsion towards the restoration of a situation which once existed but was brought to an end by some external disturbance."[10] Conceptualized at a higher level of abstraction, "instinct" in this second theory denotes the positive and negative aspects of the vital processes of life and death rather than a potentially measurable (that is, "economic") quantity of physiological stimuli. And it represents a shift toward a more figurative (and less scientistic) mode of psychoanalytic insight. "In psychology we can only describe things by the help of analogies," Freud declared in his later years.[11] "Instincts are mythical entities," he came to say repeatedly, adding, in one instance, "does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology like this?"[12]

There are, thus, a variety of antitheses that separate these two books, including those, as we have seen, of radically different conceptions of the nature of civilization, of civilization's relationship to instinct, and of the nature of instinct itself. Given their extent, it is not farfetched to see, in these differences, manifestations of the alternating dispositions of "the two Freuds" of whom others have written. For instance, Robert Holt's distinction between Freud, the hard-nosed scientist, "grounded in a reductionistic ideal of Science and its promise of progress through objectivity and rigor," and Freud, the heir of German *Naturphiliosophes*, given to "tender-minded,

7   *Civilization and its Discontents*, 104, 105.

8   Sigmund Freud, "The Libido Theory," in Freud, *General Psychological Theory*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 184; Sigmund Freud, "Psycho-Analysis," in Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 20 (London, 1953-1974), 265, quoted in Ernest Wallwork, *Psychoanalysis and Ethic* (New Haven, 1991), 180.

9   Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," in Freud, *General Psychological Theory*, 87.

10 Sigmund Freud, "An Autobiographical Study," in *Freud Reader*, 36.

11 Sigmund Freud, "The Question of Lay Analysis," in Freud, *Standard Edition*, vol. 20, 195, quoted in Wallack, 35 n. 29.

12 Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (New York, 1989), 118; Sigmund Freud, "Why War?" in Freud, *Character and Culture*, 143.

speculative, wide ranging and fantasylike thinking."[13] Or Paul Ricoeur's distinction between the scientist Freud on "the path of disillusion," and the romantic Freud on "the path of the love of life," the one proclaiming the "no" of the reality principle, the other affirming the "yes" of Eros.[14]

No doubt, some of the differences between these two books are reflective of dispositional differences that mark Freud's writings of different periods of his career. However, in neither book is the voice of one disposition constantly present. To the befuddlement of many a commentator, each work contains passages in which the subordinated disposition's voice rises up to complicate and contradict arguments advanced by that work's dominant voice. For instance, in *The Future of an Illusion*, the dominant voice is that of the First Freud, the spokesman for *Logos,* who sets out to debunk religious beliefs as illusionary and to argue for their replacement by precepts derived from "purely rational reasons," only to be unexpectedly waylaid by the subordinated romantic voice of the Second Freud, who emerges briefly to insists on religion's fundamental phylogenic and ontological historicity ("the primal father was the original image of God.... Hence the religious explanation is right. God actually played a part.").[15] And in the beginning of *Civilization and its Discontents*, on the other hand, this latter voice, the affirmative voice of the Second Freud, postulates the ego's origin in the "oceanic" relatedness of a mother's love, only to have the subordinated voice of the First Freud, the cynical voice of reason, counter that, no, the ego actually originates in the need of the helpless child for the protection of the father.[16]

2. A Chronological Puzzle

A recognition of such multi-voiced maneuvers, however, does not in itself fully explain the profound differences between Freud's two major works on civilization. We also face a chronological puzzle: although these two books were written only two years apart, they appear in many ways to be products not only of different dispositions, but of two radically different theoretical mindsets, each of which is associated with a different period of Freud's career. As we have seen, the first work, *The Future of an Illusion*, although written in 1927, unmistakably invokes the terms of Freud's first theory of the instincts, a theory integral to his writings from 1905 to 1917. An assault against cultural manifestations of unconscious wishes and instinctual

13 Robert Holt, "On Reading Freud," in *Abstracts of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Carrie Lee Rothgeb (New York, 1973), 64. See also Robert Holt, "Freud's Two Images of Man," in same work, 13-25.

14 Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 335-338, 551. Wallwork characterizes these differences in Freud's writings in terms of competing "Newtonian" and "Darwinian" voices. *Psychoanalysis and Ethics*, 45.

15 *Future of an Illusion*, 53, 54, 69.

16 *Civilization and its Discontents*, 10-21, 43, 89-90. For a provocative discussion of Freud's reversal in thought here, in which the child's need for the father's protection ousts its "oceanic" bond with the mother, see Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*: *Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York, 1988), 140-141.

desires (consigned collectively to the category of "illusion"), the argument of this book is structured by the psycho-social paradigm of the relation of civilization to instinct advanced by Freud's writings of this earlier period. This paradigm is found in such works as "Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," a 1908 essay containing some of Freud's first written thoughts on the relationship of instinct to civilization, which advances an argument that proclaims: "our civilization is ... founded on the suppression of instincts."[17] In contrast, as would be expected of a work written in 1929, the arguments of *Civilization and its Discontents* are structured by Freud's second theory of the instincts, which guided his thinking over the last period of his life, beginning with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and ending with *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (written in the year of his death, 1939).[18] This instinct theory locates the activities of civilization as the outcome of the battle of the instincts of life against death, Eros against Thanatos.

The chronological alignment of *The Future of an Illusion* with the early period and *Civilization and its Discontents* with the later period is so marked that it has led at least one commentator to declare that a proper reading "requires backdating, as it were, *The Future of an Illusion*" into the company of the works of the earlier period, for it belongs with "the earliest stage of his theory ... [in which] all human desires and interests can be traced to the instincts of sex and self-preservation."[19]

Even though this suggestion offers little more than a fanciful turn of thought—the notion of "backdating" is offered without further explanation, as if in itself it solves the puzzle presented by the misalignment of *The Future of an Illusion* in the overall periodization of Freud's theory development—such a suggestion does provide us with a perspective from which to ask some interesting questions: What impelled Freud to ignore the radical revisions of theory he had made almost a decade earlier? Why he did retreat here to the earliest stage of his thinking about the relationship of the instincts to civilization?

In the attempt to answer these questions, one must resist the impulse to divide Freud's oeuvre into rigidly separate periods. Freud distrusted system building; the development of his ideas did not progress through a series of tightly packaged, separate theoretical systems. Over the years, as his ideas went through a number of major revisions, he often adopted new ideas while at the same time remaining attached to older, no longer fully compatible ones.[20] In works of the later years, he was not averse to resurrecting phrases, even exact structures of thought and theoretical formulations that for all intents and purposes he had overthrown years before. "All knowledge is patchwork, and ... each step forward leaves an unsolved

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17 Sigmund Freud, "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness," in Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 25.

18 Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York, 1989); Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1989).

19 John Deigh, "Freud's Later Theory of Civilization: Changes and Implications," in *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*, ed. Jerome Neu (Cambridge, 1991), 294, 296.

20 See Robert Holt's discussion of Freud's "agglutinative" principle of revision "On Reading Freud," 40.

residue behind," was Freud's own characterization of his eclectic ways of thought.[21] When he resurrected residues of the past in *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud was following his normal patchwork method of conceptualization, but he did it here in an extreme fashion: instead of his usual practice of resurrecting a phrase here or perhaps a limited conceptual formula there, he resurrected wholesale a discarded conceptual paradigm.

3. The Social Politics of Religious Antipathy

It is my contention that, habitually predisposed to piecing old formulae and discarded ideas into new patchworks, Freud found himself impelled by a particular set of religious and political antipathies into a wholesale resurrection of his discarded first theory of the instincts and its associated psycho-social paradigm. Although the argumentation of *The Future of an Illusion* principally takes a psychological form, at bottom the concerns driving it are as political and cultural as they are psychological. In some ways, these non-psychological concerns, by stirring Freud's passion, served his genius well. But while inspiring the polemical fervor of his book, this passion at the same time distorted his thinking, as key aspects of his presentation reflect the particular limitations of their ultimate source: commonplace prejudices that Freud shared with others of his strata and time, prejudices to which he was at least partially blind.[22] These prejudices were those of the early twentieth-century secular, liberal professional bourgeoisie of Vienna in regard to the Catholic Church and the political manifestations associated with the Catholic masses, prejudices that prevented Freud from appreciating either the diversity of life experiences within the urban lower classes or the complexity of their Catholic religious faith.

For as Phillip Rieff rightly observes, the actual target of the book's polemic is not "religion at large," in particular neither Judaism nor Protestantism, but rather "the Roman Catholic Church, as [Freud] saw it in the fiercely anti-Semitic Vienna of his day."[23] Freud's reduction of the category of religion to what he took to be the dominant cultural and political manifestations of Austrian Roman Catholicism sprung from a number of sources. In the first place, Roman Catholicism was the religion of the masses of Austria, whose rise as a political force, manifested in both socialist and rightist anti-Semitic forms, threatened persons of Freud's status and religious

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21 Sigmund Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy," in Freud, *The Sexual Enlightenment of Children*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 138.

22 On Freud's inclination to sometimes blindly accept the prejudices of his strata and time, see for example Peter Gay's discussion of Freud's crude anti-Americanism, in the chapter, "The Ugly Americans," in *Freud*, 553-570. Gay writes, "most of Freud's epithets [expressed within his psychoanalytically construed statements of contempt for all things American] were a century old, and many of them were commonplaces in the circles he frequented" *(*568). In this regard, the book Freud wrote with William Bullitt on Woodrow Wilson is riddled with examples of misjudgments based upon crude prejudice. Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Twenty-Eighth President of the United States: A Psychological Study* (Boston, 1967).

23 Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist*, 3rd. ed. (Chicago, 1979), 258.

background. According to Rieff, the alarm that Freud felt in this regard caused him to reproduce in his writings "much of the hostile folklore of liberalism" concerning the dangers of the masses, whose collective action he came to view as "the major expression of man's barbarism."[24] In the second place, Roman Catholicism was the religion of another set of enemies of the new secular middle classes: the nobility and the monarchy, as well as the state institutions and schools under their control. In fact, the Catholic Church's support of the institutional power of aristocratic rule had such a conspicuous presence in the daily life of Austria that, as Peter Gay concludes, "for Freud, as for so many other unbelievers, Roman Catholicism occupied a particularly conspicuous place in the catalogue of villains to be overthrown.... [It] was the mighty adversary whose inexhaustible resources and adroit maneuvers Freud had observed at first hand in Vienna all his life."[25]

Freud's animosities and prejudices towards the Roman Catholic Church are embodied in the rhetorical stratagems that structure the thinking and writing of *The Future of an Illusion*. Most conspicuously, they structure the rhetorical framework of the latter chapters, which take the form of a debate between "the author" (Freud in the role of a crusading liberal rationalist and spokesman of the educated classes), and a loud-voiced "opponent" (a conservative romantic interlocutor, who speaks for the religious needs of the uneducated masses). In this debate, the author is the defender of "the scientific spirit in the higher strata of human society," an advocate of the "educated people and brain-workers ... [who] are to a large extent themselves vehicles of civilization." Freud's "opponent," on the other hand, is the spokesman of man's "imperative needs ... which can never be satisfied by cold science," an old guard polemicist who insists that grave disorders befall any society that seeks "to substitute reason for religion."[26] The author champions the rule of "logos" and the ego attributes of reason found among the civilized upper classes; the opponent presses for a recognition of the instinctual needs and wishes of the uncivilized masses.

This debate between author (who is clearly meant to be thought of as Freud himself) and opponent is spread across more than sixty percent of the book (chapters 4 to 10). While it is structured in such a way as to highlight the strengths of the author's overall position, the opponent is allowed at times to get the better of the argument. For instance, he is permitted to make a rather persuasive case for viewing the author's mindset as overly rationalistic: "It is very strange," he says at one point, "that a psychologist who has always insisted on what a minor part is played in human affairs by the intelligence as compared with the life of the instincts—that such a psychologist should now try to rob mankind of a precious wish-fulfillment and should propose to compensate them for it with intellectual nourishment."[27]

It pays to examine closely the terms and the rhetorical structure of this debate between civilizational aspirations of reason and instinctual needs for religion. The very structure of the debate presses Freud to adopt (in the role of the "author") the

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24 Ibid., 249-250.
25 Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, 1987), 59.
26 *Future of an Illusion*, 44, 49, 59.
27 Ibid., 44-45.

positivistic voice of "cold science," a voice that scornfully rejects religion in a manner that (as the "opponent" maintains) appears markedly estranged from instinctuality. Indeed, each antagonist in this debate is aligned with certain psychic attributes: the "author" with the ego functions of reason; the "opponent" with instinctual needs and wishes. Thus, not only is religion particularized (as the Catholicism of the masses) but it is particularized in a way that bifurcates the psyche, with the result that civilization is aligned with ego functions and religion with instincts:

$$\text{Author} = \text{civilization} = \text{ego functions (reason)}$$
$$\text{vs.}$$
$$\text{Loud Opponent} = \text{religion} = \text{instincts (wish-fulfillment)}$$

And in this bifurcation of the psyche, we find represented an opposition not dissimilar from that posited by Freud's discarded theory of the instincts (instinct as the antithesis of ego functions), nor dissimilar from that posited by its related discarded psycho-social paradigm (civilization as the antitheses of instinct). In fact, the structure of this debate and the terms by which the two spokesmen define their positions are cast (as we shall see) within the framework of this theory and its related psycho-social paradigm.

To gain a further understanding of the underlying structure and terms of this debate between civilization and religion, we need to return to what inspired Freud in the first place to write *The Future of an Illusion*, that is, a particular animosity and (I would add) prejudice. For this animosity and prejudice is embodied in the very way that religion is conceptualized in Freud's text. The category of religion is reduced to a specific institution, concretized through specific descriptive detail. Religion *is* the Roman Catholic Church in its non-aristocratic populist institutional form, the religion of the lower classes.[28] And this religion is described in highly negative ways, as the following three examples illustrate.

> *Religion makes the masses:*
> *Stupid*—

> Think of the depressing contrast between the radiant intelligence of a healthy child and the feeble intellectual powers of the average adult. Can we be quite certain that it is not precisely religious education, which bears a large share of the blame for this relative atrophy...? When a man has once brought himself to accept uncritically all the absurdities that religious doctrines put before him... we need not be greatly surprised at the weakness of his intellect.[29]

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28 Ibid., 44-50, 58-64. Religion is described in terms that the reader will easily identify with Roman Catholicism: for instance, "The priests, whose duty it was to ensure obedience to religion, met [men] half-way.... One sinned, ... did penance and then one was free to sin once more" (48). In no way do these descriptions suggest attributes of other religions. For instance, Freud clearly thought of Judaism in quite different terms, as is especially evident in Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York, 1939).

29 *Future of an Illusion*, 60.

Submissive to authority—

How can we expect people who are under the dominance of prohibitions of thought to attain the psychological ideal, the primacy of the intelligence...? So long as a person's early years are influenced not only by a sexual inhibition of thought, but also a religious inhibition and by a *loyal inhibition* [i.e., in regard to the Monarchy] derived from this, we cannot really tell what in fact he is like.[30]

And acquiescent to oppression—

Religion no longer has the same influence on people that it used to.... [The reason] for this change is the increase of the scientific spirit in the higher strata of human society.... But it is another matter with the great mass of the uneducated and oppressed, ... so long as they do not discover that people [of the upper classes] no longer believe in God, all is well.[31]

The persuasiveness of Freud's argument hinges upon the reader's acceptance of such specific institutional particularizations, which reduce what, after all, is a highly complex, multi-faceted phenomenon into a most unsympathetic set of particularized images. And as long as the reader is not put off by the obvious prejudicial quality of these negative images, their polemical thrust works to arouse an identification with the antipathy they embody, thereby allowing the reader to share Freud's outrage and, not incidentally, his sense of class superiority.

These images, both those cited above and similar others scattered across Freud's text, carry the following message: religion is the enemy of civilization, the antithesis of liberal attitudes and enlightened rationalism; religion renders "the masses" not only ignorant but constitutionally stupid, unable to separate illusion from reality; religion engenders submission to authoritarian governments and movements by preventing the development of an internalized, self-directing superego and by substituting in its place an "externalized" version of the superego, which priests and the confessional use for manipulative purposes; and religion causes the masses to become, at their worst, "a mob" (translated here as "the masses"), who "are lazy and unintelligent" and who, "hav[ing] no love for instinctual renunciation," are in need of "control … by a minority."[32]

One notices that, by pinning his argument on such negative images, Freud's condemnation of religion in *The Future of an Illusion* also takes on the specificity of a powerful indictment of the lower classes, an indictment that most readers find hard

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30 Ibid., 61 (italics added). In an editor's footnote, James Strachey explicates "loyal inhibition" as "i.e., in regard to the Monarchy." Freud's suggestion here that political inhibition "derives" from a religiously imposed inhibition of natural curiosity, which in turn is linked to the inhibition of sexual curiosity, points to a perspective on the linkage between reactionary politics and sexual repression that others following him have expanded, including most notably, Wilhelm Reich, Eric Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse.

31 Ibid., 48-49.

32 Ibid., 8, 47-50, 62. Philip Rieff writes of Freud's utilization of this conception of the concept of "the mob," that Freud did not "consider his own disdain of the masses to be distinguished from that of his sources [Le Bon and others].... His work is tinged—not altogether harmlessly—with the authoritarian colors of his predecessors." *Freud*, 230.

to resist. These images align the reader with "the higher strata of human society," the "brain workers" for whom religion has already lost its hold, the social strata that have internalized the civilizing process in true superego formation and become "vehicles of civilization," while at the same time they align the demeaned "masses" with religion, illusion, and untamed instinctuality, an alignment that renders them the "enemy of civilization"[33] (See Figure 2.1). It is in the opposition between these class associated alignments that the distancing of Freud's persona (and following upon it, the distancing of the reader) from religion is, in the final regard, rhetorically grounded and, in the deepest sense, conceptually justified.

"Vehicles of civilization"	

Civilization = reason
  Science
  Inhibited instinct
  Civilized sublimated gratifications
  Internalized superego
  Emancipation from need for external coercion
	**= "the higher strata
	of society"**

$\updownarrow$

"Enemy of civilization"	

Religion = (instinct based) illusion
  The cultural manifestations of wish-fulfillment, of desire
  Lack of internally inhibited instinct
  No internal superego (the church as externalized superego)
  Need of external coercion
  Privation of civilized gratifications
	= "the masses"

Figure 2.1 The Class Contradictions of Civilization and Religion
Freud's polemical and rhetorical stratagems align author and reader with psychic, cultural, and political attributes of the civilized upper classes and in opposition to those of illusion and instinct associated with the masses.

As Figure 2.1 makes clear, two complexes of opposing class-based alignments configure Freud's critique of religion. But, we also note, the principal terms of these alignments (upper strata = reason = civilization; the masses = instinct based illusion = religion) closely resemble those of Freud's first psycho-social paradigm (the opposition of civilization to instinct) and his first theory of the instincts (the opposition of ego functions to libidinal instincts). In fact, I would argue that the terms of this critique are cast in such a way that they actually require something like this earlier instinct theory and its psycho-social paradigm, for it is the ego and superego functions of the educated upper classes that make for civilization, and

33 *Future of an Illusion*, 14, 47, 49.

it is the unrestrained instinctuality of the masses that renders them the enemy of civilization.

Moreover, in this warring pair of super- and sub-ordinate alignments one detects the dual chains of identification that are embodied in the structure of Freud's resurrected psycho-social paradigm, as well as a possible partial explanation of the impetus behind its resurrection. As the thought processes embodied in *The Future of an Illusion* enacted their rationalistic assault upon religion, the rhetorical and polemical stratagems of this assault brought together a linked series of these warring oppositions:

civilization vs. religion   civilization vs. Catholicism   civilization vs. the masses
civilization vs. instinct

A scientistic opposition to religion was entangled in a particularized socio-political incarnation (working-class Catholicism), which cast that opposition in psychological terms as the estrangement of reason from desire and of the civilizing process from instinct. Freud utilized his patchwork methods of thought to resurrect earlier formulae; in this case, given the power of his convictions, the resurrection was wholesale. As a result, civilization (as in the discarded theory) became the 'other' of instinct, instinct the enemy of civilization.[34]

In contrast, *Civilization and its Discontents* presents a remarkably different set of oppositions. Gone is the identification of the author with "purely rational reasons"; gone is the estrangement of the civilizing process from wish, desire, and instinct. A more psychologically empathic understanding of culture is present, one congruent with an authorial voice that no longer divorces ideas from their own psycho-social embeddedness in desire. Civilization and reason itself are found rather to draw their energy, their authority, their *telos*, from the immanent impulses of instinct.

Paradoxically, however, it is the earlier book, whose argument is driven by liberal bourgeois prejudices against the lower classes and their religion, that calls for the overturning of class inequities and the equitable distribution of social happiness. And it is the later book, which builds its arguments in terms of a more integrative psycho-social conceptualization of civilization, that, in the end, advances a vision of despair, a vision not of a future of equality and human happiness, but of one of human exhaustion and annihilation.

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34 One way to understand Freud's separation here of reason from desire is to follow out his argument in terms that pit attributes of the reality principle against those of the pleasure principle. *The Future of an Illusion* is, above all else, an argument for an ethics of "reality"—"the sole purpose of my book," Freud asserts, is to call for an "education to reality" (63). On the other hand, religion is a product of wish-fulfillment, the cultural outcome of mechanisms tied to the pleasure principle. Freud's original instinct theory is grounded upon just this opposition. As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, "the relationship between self-preservation and reality is closely knit from the start," while the sexual instincts (which operate according to the pleasure principle) "emerge at the same moment as phantasy and hallucinatory wish-fulfillment." *Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 380-81.

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Chapter 3

The Social Psychism

In 1919 Freud broke with his first theory of the instincts, when, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he presented the outline of a new theory in the context of speculations sparked, in part, by the slaughter of World War One.[1] These speculations, however, relied heavily on biological metaphor, and it was only four years later, in *The Ego and the Id*, that Freud was able to link their tenor broadly to concrete psychoanalytic concerns, an advance that allowed the theory (as Ricoeur asserts) "to pass from mere speculation to actual deciphering" of psychological materials.[2] Here Freud also embedded this concept of the instincts in a new structural model that divided the psyche into three agencies: the id, ego, and superego. Then, six years later, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, both the inherent logic of the new theory and its consequent psychological applications pressed Freud's thoughts beyond the parameters of the individual psyche on to wider fields: culture, society, and civilization.

1. Freud's New Instinct Theory: from Biology to Sociology

Over the decade of the 1920s, the theoretical bases of Freud's concept of the instincts expanded outwards: *biology => psychology => sociology*. In the beginning Freud's new instinct theory was a speculation upon metabolic organic processes; at its conclusion it became also an interpretation of the social. The conception of Eros—the instinctual urge to make "one out of more than one"—passed from a speculation upon the coalescence of unicellular organisms to a sociological theory of group formation.[3] The conception of the Death instinct—the instinctual urge "to undo connections and ... reduce living things to an inorganic state"—passed from a speculation upon cellular catabolism to a sociological theory of civilizational disorder.[4]

   The pressure to expand the parameters of the new theory beyond the individual psyche was there from the beginning. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Eros was conceived as an impulse that sought to unite organisms together, while the Death instinct was conceived as an impulse that directed aggression outwards against other

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   1   Gay, *Freud*, 395.
   2   Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 296.
   3   *Civilization and its Discontents*, 65. "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." *Outline of Psychoanalysis*, 18.
   4   Ibid., 18. In the social field, the Death instinct is manifested as "the hostility of each against all and of all against each." *Civilization and its Discontents*, 82.

organisms.[5] Hence, both instincts were inherently other-directed, in contrast to the conception of instincts in Freud's first theory, which never fully broke free from its origin in a physiology of intra-psychic closed systems of stimuli arousal and discharge (at its simplest, the notion of a reflex arc).[6] As Freud moved from an *intra*-psychic theory of the instincts to an *inter*-psychic one, he thus opened the way for a type of psychical analysis that also took account of social relations: "from the very first individual psychology," Freud came to say in the 1920s, "is at the same time social psychology as well"; "in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an [loved] object, as a helper, as an opponent."[7]

As we saw in the previous chapter, when Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion*, took his first theory of the instincts and applied it in a sociological direction, this theory led to ideas of the permanent estrangement of the instincts from the social. Now when Freud, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, applied his new theory in the same direction, the social was found to be a link in a chain of correspondences connecting protoplasm, the psyche, and the social. As Ricoeur observes of these two sociological formulations, in the first theory, "the dualism of the instincts concerns only the id," but now, "starting from the instinctual interior, the war [between the instincts] spreads out until it finally bursts forth in the higher portions of the psychism, in the 'sublime,'... [that is, in] the cultural interpretation" of civilization itself.[8]

"The formula of the struggle between Eros and the Death instinct," Freud states in *Civilization and its Discontents*, "characterize[s] the process of civilization, ... the development of the individual, and ... the secret of organic life in general." That is, it covers the full primal series: biology, psyche and society. This formula embodies "*the vital process*"—*vital* meaning 'all living organisms'; *process* meaning 'the regularities of change and development that govern all living organisms.' As is the case with elementary organic matter, the social itself is formed by "the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction," for "this struggle is what life [including social life] essentially consists of."[9]

2. An Abstraction of a Higher Order

Although "the process of human civilization and the developmental ... process of individual human beings ... are very similar," these two processes are also abstractions of a different order, Freud writes in *Civilization and its Discontents*: "the process of the civilization of the human species is ... an abstraction of a higher order than is the development of the individual."[10] As an abstraction of a higher order, civilization embodies a different configuration of psycho-social dynamics than does that lower level of abstraction, the individual. Thus, civilization is not a conceptual replica of

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5   *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 60-74.

6   For example, see Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York, 1965), 576, 604-606.

7   *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 3.

8   Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 296.

9   *Civilization and its Discontents*, 69. 86.

10 Ibid., 104.

the individual writ large—not a generalized concept of individual psyches. Freud's social psychology cannot be reduced to his individual psychology.

A higher-level abstraction, the civilizing process originates in the social aggregate; a lower-level abstraction, the developmental process of the individual originates in the person. This difference is reflected in the difference "between the [instinctual] aims of the two processes." Eros's "aim" in regard to the individual is to join the individual with fellow human beings; it is the impulse to "integrat[e] a separate individual into a human group." Eros's "aim" in regard to societies at large is to create social institutions and cultural representations that attract the allegiance of separate individuals: it is here the impulse to "creat[e] a unified group out of many individuals."[11]

Moreover, at the lower level of abstraction of the individual, Eros itself is split between "two urges, the urge towards happiness, which we usually call 'egoistic', and the urge toward union with others, which we call 'altruistic'" or "the 'cultural' urge.'"[12] While the "cultural urge" in the person directly seeks "union with others in the community," the "egoistic urge," guided by "the programme of the pleasure principle," directs the individual along one or more of the twelve "paths of happiness": the paths of knowledge, creativity, love, beauty, freedom, gluttony, isolation, intoxication, asceticism, illusion, and delusion. Yet, although these "two urges, the one towards personal happiness and the other towards union with other human beings, must struggle with each other in every individual, ... this struggle ... is a dispute within the economics of the libido, comparable to the contest concerning the distribution of libido between ego and objects." It thus "admits of an eventual accommodation in the individual." What may begin as egoistic urge becomes most often a cultural urge as well: the "integration in or adaptation to a human community appears as a scarcely avoidable condition which must be fulfilled before [the] aim of [egoistic] happiness can be achieved."[13]

At a higher level of abstraction, however, the "task" of Eros embodied within the social aggregate must from the beginning be other-related. For neither the "common interests" of individuals nor the outcomes of "necessity alone, the advantages [to each individual] of work in common" are sufficient to hold society together; society only remains in place when its institutions and organizational arrangements attract the allegiance of the individual. On this level, "the work of Eros is precisely this. These collections of men are to be libidinally bound to one another." "Here by far the most important thing [for Eros] is the aim of creating a unity out of the [separate] individual human beings."[14]

At this higher level, "civilization ... obey[s] the laws of economic necessity" (that is, of the economics of libido), but it does so from the point of view of a telos that always seeks the preservation of social union. An object and process conceptualized as "an abstraction of a higher order than ... the individual," "the

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11 Ibid., 105.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 105, 106. The twelve "paths of happiness" are elucidated in chapter 2 of *Civilization and its Discontents*.

14 Ibid., 62, 82, 104-105.

programme of civilization" differs from the programme of the individual. It consists of an order of "mental processes" that exist within a spatial and temporal expanse radically different than those of the individual life. At this level, the social exists as the higher portions of the total psychism, operating upon the individual as a kind of determinant psychodynamic cultural surround.[15]

3. Four Mental Processes Embodied in the Social

Civilization and its Discontents presents four sketches of such higher order "mental processes" present in the historical and social aggregate: characterological traits informed by defenses against unconscious libidinal preoccupations; narcissistic group identifications; the strict ideal demands of a "cultural super-ego"; and the distortions of "social neuroses."

The Characterological Definition of the Social

The first of these social embodiments is characterological. Modern Europe, Freud says, has come to identify the civilizing process itself with cleanliness, order, and parsimony. "We do not think highly of the cultural level of an English country town in Shakespeare's time when we read that there was a big dungheap in front of his father's house in Stratford," Freud writes, adding ironically, "indeed, we are not surprised by the idea of setting up the use of soap as an actual yardstick of civilization." And "the same is true of order," a character trait that Freud defines as "a kind of compulsion to repeat." Such measures of civilization, he argues, reveal that the social itself is libidinally informed—in this case, informed with reaction formations (to libidinally invested anality) that take the form of "a group of traits which are familiar to us as parsimony, a sense of order and cleanliness." As social norms, these traits became dominant for reasons traceable neither to the pragmatics of "hygiene" and "utility," nor to the individual determinants of "enjoyment." Rather, they evolved from a cultural process of libidinal repression and displacement that has developed across the centuries: an evolving characterological configuration originating not out of the particular developmental history of the individual but rather out of centuries-old processes of civilizational advance, a determinant force located phenomenologically in the culture itself, "the development of civilization [being] ... a particular process which mankind undergoes."[16]

The Narcissism of Minor Differences

A second type of social embodiment of mental processes is found in the formation of cohesive social groups. Such social formations may come into existence out of economic necessity, "the interest of work in common," but they will "not hold ... together" without libidinal ties. The social is "perpetually threatened with

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15 Ibid., 59, 82, 104. The attribution of the term "mental processes" to collective or group processes appears in page 107.

16 Ibid., 46, 47, 50, 51.

disintegration" from "man's natural aggressive instinct," embodied both in the individual as the "hostility of each against all" and in the group itself as the hostility "of all against each." Countering these manifestations of the Death instinct, Eros works through the social to hold groups together by "employ[ing] every means" to bind "the members of the community together in a libidinal way." A principal form of these means is the utilization of "strong identifications ... established between members." ("Identification" is Freud's technical term for the process by which the subject, bound to the other by a feeling of similarity, reconstitutes its own identity on the model of that similarity.) But such identifications of membership almost inevitably exaggerate certain distinguishing features of the group and elevate them into a type of collective ideal. By means of these idealized common traits, the members of the group are then enabled to love their fellow members narcissistically and, at the same time, to deflect their own innate aggressivity outward toward others who do not share these common traits, a double-edged social dynamic that Freud titles "the narcissism of minor differences." Combining solidarity and intolerance, "the narcissism of minor differences" is Freud's formula for the understanding of the politics of social identity, postulated as the inherent connection of in-group narcissism and out-group aggression: "it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."[17]

This double-edged aspect of the conception of "the narcissism of minor differences" is evidenced in Freud's portrayal of the politics of identity of nation, race, religion, and class. Nationalism advances "cohesion between the members of the community" by inspiring hatred of neighboring communities; although neighboring communities are on "adjoining territories" and "related ... in other ways as well," they will be "engaged in constant feuds and in ridiculing each other." Racism also unites societies through the intolerance of others, by offering "a convenient ... satisfaction of the inclination to aggression." "In this respect the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered most useful services to the civilizations of the countries that have been their hosts; but unfortunately," Freud adds with rueful irony, "all the massacres of the Jews ... did not suffice to make" their non-Jewish neighbors "more peaceful and secure." As for religious intolerance, early Christianity "posited universal love between men as the foundation of ... Christian community," but also, as the "inevitable consequence" of this love, an "extreme intolerance on the part of Christendom towards those who remained outside it."[18]

Two contemporary political movements evidence a similar combination of solidarity and intolerance. Fascism promises to resurrect German pride and national purpose, but it is not "an unaccountable chance that the dream of a Germanic world-dominion called for anti-semitism as its complement." And the establishment of proletariat class rule in the USSR incorporates an idealization of the working class that has increased the "psychological support in the [communists'] persecution of the bourgeois."[19]

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17 Ibid., 65, 69, 72, 82. See also *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 49, 79.

18 *Civilization and its Discontents*, 72-73.

19 Ibid., 73.

The Cultural Superego

A third type of social mental process is the cultural embodiment of ideals and prohibitions in the form of "the cultural superego." Like the individual, "the community, too, evolves a superego," a superego "under whose influence cultural development proceeds." The individual's superego is formed in a drama of love, hatred, guilt, and identification, and, on this model, so is the cultural superego formed. "The superego of an epoch of civilization ... is based upon the impression left behind by the personalities of great leaders—men of overwhelming force of mind or men in whom one of the human impulses has found its strongest and purest, and therefore often its most one-sided, expression." "The impression left behind" by these heroic leaders—that is, the mythologized, often tragic, stories of their lives—comes to exert a compelling hold upon a society: it expresses certain esteemed potentialities of the society with an exaggerated purity and force; at the same time it implicates this society in the hero's downfall, tying it to the hero not only through love but guilt. Bound thus to the hero by both reverence and remorse, the community comes to identify (on the model of the individual's Oedipal identification) with this "impression left behind," embodying in its representations "strict ideal demands, disobedience to which is visited with 'fear of conscience.'"[20]

Each civilization has its own foundational heroes, whose lives and personalities have come to be represented as embodying much of the public culture, as Europe has "the figure of Jesus Christ—if, indeed, that figure is not a part of mythology"; in addition, epochs have additional public heroes whose lives come to embody ideals that inspire obedience. Through the narratives of its heroes, civilizations propagate the values that bespeak of a cultural conscience, of the ideals and prohibitions that inform a society's ethical and religious beliefs, its art and its collective narratives of self-understanding. Moreover, as a result of such public propagation, the cultural superego represents one of those "remarkable circumstance[s]" in which "the mental processes concerned are actually more familiar to us and more accessible to consciousness as they are seen in the group than they can be in the individual." For the individual, the formation of the superego has its own unique and personal origins, and it shapes the individual unconsciously for the most part. The superego of the culture occurs on the level of articulated representation that makes it "more easily detected in its behavior in the cultural community than [is the superego] in the separate individual."[21]

Communal Neuroses

A fourth type of social mental process is the "pathology of cultural communities." Society itself may become dominated by the dynamics of neuroses, those disorders of consciousness and behavior by which, as a consequence of repression, the return of the repressed comes to distort and disrupt psychic life. "Under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization ... have become

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20 Ibid., 106-107.
21 Ibid., 107-108.

'neurotic,'" infected with what in Freud's text is interchangeably termed "social neuroses" and "communal neuroses." A communal (or social) neurosis is not the same thing as a community (or society) made up of individuals who just happen to all suffer from the same neurosis. An individual neurosis is unique to that individual. It is a manifestation of specific childhood developments of the person, in which his or her ego formation was distorted by specific conflictual responses to specific instinctual repressions; it is a manifestation of a particular history, a particular innate disposition, and a particular chain of experiences. In a healthy society, an individual neurosis distorts a person's orientation to the social order, leading to a relationship of psyche to society in which a patient's psychoanalyst takes as a "starting-point the contrast that distinguishes the patient from his environment, which is assumed to be 'normal.'" In contrast, a communal neurosis is trans-individual; it is a particular manifestation of a society's history of development. Originating on a level of formative experience different from that which creates an individual neurosis, a communal neurosis does not spring from the unique dependencies of a specific childhood, but rather from trans-individual stresses and immaturities that have occurred as part of that society's history. Also, unlike an individual neurosis, a communal neurosis neither distorts the individual's orientation to society at large nor finds in it a contrasting background of "normalcy"; for a communal neurosis "no such [contrasting] background could exist," for the background is itself the distortion: it is the communal neurosis itself.[22]

In fact, a communal neurosis may operate as the antithesis of a personal neurosis. Religion—for Freud, a communal neurosis *par excellence*—"succeeds in sparing many people an individual neurosis."[23] But at the same time an individual neurosis and a communal neurosis may closely resemble each other. In the case of religion, "one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis [i.e., obsessional neurosis] as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis."[24] A communal neurosis such as religion operates with all the power of an individual's personal neurosis, but its is not constituted individually: it "imposes equally on everyone its own" distortions "of the real world in a delusional manner—which presupposes an intimidation of the intelligence," and a "fixing" of the population "in a state of psychical infantilism." As such, religion is a "delusional remolding of reality," producing "mass-delusions" that transform the cultural surround of the individual to such an extent that "no one ... who shares [the] delusion ever recognizes it as such."[25]

Not only in this last case, but in all four cases, is the social infused with psychodynamic determinations separate from those of the individual psyche. Distinct from the unique formation of the individual, society in itself is characterologically informed,

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22 Ibid., 110, 119.

23 Ibid., 36.

24 Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices" [1907], in *The Freud Reader*, 435.

25 *Civilization and its Discontents*, 32, 36

narcissistically united, impelled by cultural superego demands, and disoriented by communal neuroses. Grounded on the psycho-social analogue of the formula of instinctual dynamics—the eternal struggle between Eros and Death—the concept of society thus incorporates dynamics originally taken from a parallel concept of the psyche, but differentiated subsequently from that concept. Originating in resemblance but resulting in difference, this concept of society results with the social order itself becoming a psychological entity in its own right, an entity of autonomous existence that, as it moves beyond analogy, comes to hold sway over the individual psyche.

PART 2

The Mediation of the Psyche in Social Action: Psychological Conceptualization in Max Weber's Sociological Writings

It is of course easily overlooked that however
important the significance even of the
purely logical persuasive force of ideas ... nonetheless
empirical-historical events occurring in men's
minds must be understood as primarily
psychologically and not logically conditioned.

– Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy"

Introduction to Part 2

It is remarkable how little attention has been paid to Max Weber's use of psychological analysis and psychological concepts in his work. In fact, there appears to be a general academic assumption that psychology has no significant place in his work. And indeed, until recently no one seems to have seriously challenged the assessment made a half-century ago by Talcott Parsons that "Weber tended not to be interested in psychology and to repudiate its relevance to his problems."[1] No wonder then that if called upon to list the various kinds of concerns that lead us today to return to Weber's writing—the rationalization process, bureaucracy, charisma, social stratification, value neutrality, etc.—many of us would be nonplussed if one should insist upon adding to this list a range of topics dealing with the role of psychology in the social sciences: from various models by which to incorporate psychology into the analysis of social action to the crucial socio-historical changes in the human psyche involved in the rise of modernity.

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1   Talcott Parsons, introduction to *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, by Max Weber (New York, 1947), 26.

Chapter 4

"'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" and the Critique of Psychologism

Weber's first methodological musings on the subject of psychology's place in social analysis are found in the first two essays he wrote as he partially recovered from a protracted mental collapse that had lasted five years (1897-1902) and during which for extended periods he had been unable to write or—for most of these years— even read works dealing with the social sciences.[1] The two essays are "Roscher's 'Historical Method'" (begun in the spring of 1902 but mostly written in 1903) and "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy" (written for the most part during the month of January 1904).[2] Since, in regard to psychology, the essays cover similar ground, but the latter in a more developed manner, I will focus here on this second essay. This essay on "Objectivity" was written at the same time that Weber was beginning to work on the first part of his most famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which I will examine in the next chapter.[3]

As Alan Sica has so effectively shown, "'Objectivity' in Social Science" is deeply marked by the psychological turmoil from which Weber was just then beginning to partially emerge, a turmoil evident especially in the essay's preoccupation with and phobic depiction of irrationality.[4] And, as Sica also has pointed out, it is this essay which contains the first evidence of Weber's new awareness of a scholarly need for a sociological psychology—an awareness that no doubt developed in response to his own mental illness. Reflecting (in Sica's words) "a turning point in his overall intellectual development virtually without parallel," Weber found himself opening

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1   Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography* (New Brunswick, 1988), 226-264.

2   Max Weber, "Roscher's 'Historical Method,'" in *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*, ed. G. Oakes (New York, 1975), 53-91; "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, eds. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York, 1949), 49-112. For the dating of the writing of these essays, see Weber, *Max Weber*, 259, 306, 279, and Alan Sica, *Weber, Irrationality, and Social Order* (Berkeley, 1988), 112 n. 43.

3   Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958).

4   Sica sees in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" signs of a "schizoid" reaction to the problem of irrationality, asserting that parts of the essay exhibit Weber's inner "war with irrationality"; he also suggests that in this essay Weber "is left with a social ontology so bereft of order that it resembles more than anything else what one might imagine the interior perceptions of a psychotic to be." *Weber*, 153, 154, 155.

up to the psychological worlds of knowledge and experience and accepting "the basic conceit (though not most ramifications) both of Freudianism and of the more established and diffuse *Lebensphilosophie*, not to mention Nietzsche's seductive work."[5]

To understand how "'Objectivity' in Social Science" reveals Weber's emerging interest in psychology, we must first turn to the specific academic context in which the essay was written. The overt concern with psychology in the "Objectivity" essay echoes the German academic debate of the time over the status and role of a new "scientific psychology" then taking root in German universities. Although lodged within philosophy departments as a sub-specialty and known by several titles, most frequently "physiological psychology" (the title I will use here[6]), the

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5   Ibid., 156, 158, 114-115. Sica's claim here that Weber accepted the "basic conceit" of "Freudianism" might be seen as involving something of an overstatement. One could question the extent to which Weber actually accepted Freud's "basic conceit," if by this is meant the psychodynamic repercussions of repression in the creation of unconscious processes which in turn irrationally influence conscious processes. There are, of course, numerous references to the unconscious in Weber (as in his relatively frequent acknowledgement that motives of action are often unconscious) and quite open usage of the notion of repression (as we shall see in our discussion of the 'personality' in *The Protestant Ethic*). But beyond this there is little to suggest a full understanding of the contradictory psychical dynamics by which the repressed seeks indirect outlets, although, as we shall see, Weber exhibits a superbly subtle understanding of the paradoxical nature of psychic processes in general. Also, in his last years Weber indicated a general theoretical awareness that social action could be motivated by repressed desires. See Weber's statement in the opening section of *Economy and Society* that "the 'conscious motives' may well, even to the actor himself, conceal the various 'motives' and 'repressions' which constitute the real driving force of his action." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds., Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1 (Berkeley, 1978), 9. Moreover, only three years after writing "'Objectivity' in Social Science" Weber himself acknowledged having read Sigmund Freud's "major works" and finding them potentially quite significant: "there is no doubt that Freud's line of thought *could* become very important in suggesting interpretations for whole series of cultural phenomena, especially in the area of the history of religion and morality," he wrote in 1907. However, in the same document Weber expressed some hesitation over the immaturity of many aspects of early psychoanalytic theory: "one has only to follow through all the changes which Freud has made in one decade to see how alarmingly thin, in spite of everything, his material still is (all of which is very understandable and is certainly *no reproach*)," he stated, adding that "Freud's theories ... have admittedly changed considerably over the years, and I have the impression, speaking as a layman, that they have not yet by any means reached their final form." It needs to be remembered that these comments were written only ten years after Freud's own self-analysis had launched the early breakthroughs of psychoanalysis and well before Freud wrote his major metapsychological works. "Freudianism" in *Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman (Cambridge, 1978), 383-384.

6   In this study, "physiological psychology" will be used to designate all forms of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German academic psychology modelled on the exact sciences. This is the designation that Weber commonly used, especially in the earlier portion of these years. However, it should be noted that as the first decade progressed Weber began more readily to use increasingly specific titles for the emerging branches of the same psychological approach, for instance "neurology" and "psychiatry," and he also began

new psychology was based upon the premise that cognitive, sensory, and other conscious mental processes (and later also neurological processes) were as law-governed as other processes examined by the exact and natural sciences. From its beginnings in Wilhelm Wundt's laboratory of psychological philosophy founded at Leipzig University in 1879, the new science had begun to expand throughout the German university system; the proportion of full professorships in departments of philosophy held by advocates of the new psychology grew dramatically in Germany, from seven percent in 1892 to over twenty-three percent by 1913.[7] In the forefront were those who began to argue that the new psychology should be recognized as the foundational science of philosophical and social inquiry: that logic, epistemology and aesthetics were nothing but psychological processes of the mind; and that the subject matter of economics, history, and the other social sciences were nothing but components of psychologically based behavior.[8] Conceived as an exact science modeled on the natural sciences (hence, the title "physiological psychology"), this new psychology was promoted as providing a way to conceptualize such activities as the logical thought of philosophy and the market place behavior of economics in terms of psychological laws of the mind, discoverable "in [the mind's] origins and in its actions, and in its deepest basic factors."[9]

By the early 1900s, the new psychology's evangelizing had clearly been effective in the social sciences. Most notably, a leading German historian of the time, Karl Lamprecht, argued that the new psychology needed to be taken up as the foundational discipline of historical research: psychology, he argued, is "the mechanics of the *Geisteswissenschaften*" and "history as such is nothing but applied psychology."[10] Such far-reaching claims called forth an increasingly angry response first from non-psychologists in German philosophy departments, who began to call for the expulsion of the psychologists from their midst (eventually leading to the founding of independent departments of psychology within German universities in the 1920s), and then from other disciplines as well. This backlash focused itself on the "heresy" of "psychologism," defined as the unwarranted claim that psychology should serve as the theoretical foundation of both philosophy and the human sciences.[11]

In "'Objectivity' in Social Science," Weber places this debate about "psychologism" within a larger, brilliantly argued analysis of the differences that exist between two radically distinct scientific approaches in the type of

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increasingly to use the simple title "psychology" for all these branches considered together. Hence, my insistence (for clarity's sake) on using the term "physiological psychology" in relation to Weber's works written in the years from 1904 to 1920 involves something of a terminological simplification. However, when Weber entitled his study written in 1908 of the neurological and psychological factors in labor efficiency, he used a title related to "physiological psychology," *Zur Psychophysik der industriellen Arbeit*.

7 Martin Kusch, *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (New York, 1995), 95-121, 126, 129, 147-150; Daniel N. Robinson, *An Intellectual History of Psychology* (Madison, 1976), 345-346, 371-372.

8 Kusch, *Psychologism*, 3.

9 Friedrich Eduard Beneke, quoted in Kusch, *Psychologism*, 101.

10 Quoted in Kusch, *Psychologism* 153.

11 Kusch, *Psychologism*, 3.

phenomena studied, the method of concept formation and the quality of knowledge: *Geisteswissenschaften* (which Weber's translators render interchangeably as 'the social sciences' and 'the cultural sciences') and *Naturwissenchaften* (translated as both 'the natural sciences' and 'the exact sciences').[12] Within this larger argument, Weber commences his comments on the role of psychology in the social sciences by succinctly stating the foundational claims of the new psychology:

> Above all, the point of view still persists which claims that the task of psychology is to play a role comparable to mathematics for the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the sense that it analyzes the complicated phenomena of social life into their psychic conditions and effects, reduces them to their most elementary possible psychic factors and then analyzes their functional interdependencies. Thereby, a sort of "chemistry" if not "mechanics" of the psychic foundations of social life would be created.[13]

But such an approach is impossible for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, Weber continues, for even if "we succeeded by means of psychology ... in analyzing all the observed and imaginable relationships of social phenomena into some ultimate elementary 'factors,' ... and then formulated rigorously exact laws covering [these factors'] behavior," we could never derive from such "factors" and "laws" any actual historical-cultural phenomenon, "such as capitalism." To understand any specific historical-cultural phenomenon involves an "entirely ... distinct task" than that utilized by the exact sciences.[14] For, unlike the natural and physical phenomena of the exact sciences, which are conceptually limited to *quantitative* properties of uniform universal categories, the historical-cultural phenomena of the social sciences consist of unique individual historical configurations, each of which are necessarily *qualitatively* distinct from the others and irreducible to larger uniform abstractions.

Given this distinction between different types of phenomena, one should not be surprised to discover that there is also an "irreconcilable cleavage" between the *Naturwissenchaften* (with which psychologism's advocates identified) and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (with which Weber aligns the social sciences) in their methods of constructing general concepts and of utilizing them to gain knowledge. On the one hand, the exact sciences utilize an "abstract-theoretical method," which aims to construct a system of general conceptual theorems, and which from these theorems aims to deduce the uniform quantitative aspects of the phenomena that are its subject matter. On the other hand, the social sciences utilize an "empirical-historical method," which aims through empathetic understanding (*verstehen*) to

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12 The notion that the subject matter of *Geisteswissenschaften* (the social sciences) called for a differed method of understanding from that employed in the natural sciences was promoted in the nineteenth century by a number of German philosophers, most prominently Johann Gustav Droysen, Wilhelm Windelband, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Heinrich Rickert. In sociology this position was advanced not only by Weber, but also by Georg Simmel and Alfred Schutz; a version of it is found among the social theorists of the Frankfurt School, including Theodor Adorno, and also in Norbert Elias's work, as is evident in the way (as we shall see in Part 4 of this book) he frames his opposition to academic psychology.

13 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 74-75.

14 Ibid., 75.

grasp the individuality of distinct, historically concrete phenomena. The general concepts utilized in this latter method differ from those of the exact sciences: "like a *utopia* which has been arrived at by the analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality," general concepts in this method take the form of "ideal types" that serve "heuristically" to facilitate the empathetic understanding of the concrete individuality of historical phenomena.[15] Given their heuristic nature and the type of empathetic understanding they assist, these ideal types cannot serve—as do the general concepts of the exact sciences—as theorems from which phenomena can be deduced.

A basic reason why historical-cultural phenomena can never be deduced from some larger uniform general conceptual system is because "knowledge of social reality" is epistemologically different from knowledge of the natural world. The behavior of the phenomena of interest to the social sciences is rooted in historically variable "value-ideas" specific to concretely individual "cultural and psychic events." Knowledge of such historical-cultural phenomena is of a qualitative different order from the knowledge of the exact sciences.[16] That this is so is not the result of whether or not "cultural or psychic events ... are 'objectively' less governed by laws," but rather the result of the fact that "the knowledge of social laws is not [in itself] knowledge of social reality." Knowledge of such lawful social and psychic phenomena may provide "one of the various aids used by our minds for attaining" knowledge of social reality, but knowledge of social reality itself consists of a very different quality:

> knowledge of *cultural* events is inconceivable except on a basis of the *significance* which the concrete constellations of reality have for us in certain *individual* concrete situations. In *which* sense and in *which* situations this is the case is not revealed to us by any law; it is decided according to the *value-ideas* in the light of which we view "culture" in each individual case. "Culture" is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance.... This is the purely logical-formal fact which is involved when we speak of the logically necessary rootedness of all historical entities in "evaluative ideas."[17]

Not only is the value-laden meaningfulness of human social life the subject matter of the social sciences; it is also the means by which it is understood. That is, the value-laden meaningfulness of human life is both what is to be understood and the medium through which understanding is achieved. Using the Kantian term for a fundamental category of understanding that makes knowledge of phenomena possible, Weber asserts that "the *transcendental presupposition* of every cultural science" is our existence as "historical-cultural beings"; that is, the transcendental ground upon which we are able to understand historical-cultural phenomena is "that we are [ourselves] *cultural beings*, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it *significance*."[18]

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15 Ibid., 87, 90.

16 Ibid., 80, 74-76.

17 Ibid., 80-81.

18 Ibid., 81 (italics altered). In rendering this sentence, I have drawn upon a slightly different translation of the sentence found in Tracy Strong, "Weber and Freud: Vocation and

All those in the social sciences who are enamored with and wish to partake of the recent successes of the natural sciences overlook this distinctive epistemological quality of the social sciences, continues Weber; they are driven by "the will-to-believe of naturalistic monism"—a naturalistic monism that Weber asserts includes, in a swipe at turn-of-the-century Marxism, "socialist criticism." At first such social scientists tried to formulate abstract theorems of history by "constructing 'laws' in the rigorous sense through the mere juxtaposition of historical observations," but they came to realize that this was a "methodological impossibility." But now, with the arrival of the new scientific psychology, Weber writes, these social scientists finally think they have gained a sure way of achieving their goal: "now in order to arrive at these laws ... they take it to be a fact that we always have a direct awareness [formalized in the methods of the new psychology] of the structure of human actions.... Hence ... science can make human behavior directly intelligible with axiomatic evidentness and accordingly reveal its law." Such methods of "direct awareness," they argue, can lead to "the formulation of immediately and intuitively *evident* laws"; and from these laws, they think that they can construct "a system of abstract and therefore purely formal propositions analogous to those of the exact natural sciences"—formal propositions that will lead to "intellectually mastering the complexity of social life."[19]

Weber argues that this program of research advanced by psychologistic social scientists evidences "the naturalistic prejudice that every concept in the cultural sciences should be similar to those in the exact natural sciences." Currently, Weber explains, its proponents were calling for a grand collaborative research project of all the social sciences, envisioning that each of them would seek to discover the key psychological motive that determines the social life under its purview: "exact economic theory deals with the operation of *one* psychic motive, the other theories have as their task the formulation of the behavior of all the other motives into similar sorts of propositions." In this endeavor, psychological economics, with the "psychological isolation of a specific 'impulse,' the acquisitive impulse," has shown the way. When each of the other social sciences succeeds in isolating the specific impulse that determines its subject matter, these findings will serve as the basis for an all inclusive "'social psychology' as the future foundation of the cultural sciences," a social psychology that will gather together "all the other motives" of social behavior into a coherent body of "psychological axioms" from which actual historical phenomena will be explained "by ostensibly following the analogy of the physical science propositions." This is the psychologistic program, and it is doomed to failure, Weber argues, for it neglects the fundamental differences between the social sciences and the exact sciences in the type of phenomena studied, the method of concept formation, and the epistemological quality of knowledge. Weber scornfully rejects this grand vision of an all-encompassing, collaborative abstract-theoretical "social psychology" as utterly "meaningless."[20]

Self-acknowledgement," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 10 (4) 1985, 396.

    19 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 86, 87.

    20 Ibid., 80, 87-88.

From Weber's blanket rejection here in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" of a psychologistic social psychology (as well as from far less elaborated but similarly pointed rejections found in several other works[21]), scholars have tended to conclude that Weber favored the banishment of psychology in all its forms from the social sciences.[22] Ironically, the contrary conclusion is nowhere more evident than in this very essay. In fact, as Alan Sica suggests, it is this essay, which so effectively demolishes the premises of psychologism, that also first registers Weber's conversion to a positive view of psychology.[23] As a result (I would suggest) of Weber's new awareness of the essential role of psychology in human affairs (due at least in part to his own experience with mental illness), his scathing rejection of psychologism that we have been discussing suddenly changes course in mid essay when he advances a new, positive evaluation of psychology's role in social analysis.

As we shall see in a moment, Weber's new position in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" takes the form of a double-sided viewpoint that contains both the negative evaluation I have explicated above and also his new positive evaluation. This viewpoint is double-sided because Weber's emerging evaluation of the role of psychology in the social sciences is based, at one level, upon the distinction between two types of psychology: physiological psychology modeled on the exact sciences, and a *verstehende* psychology that seeks to gain empathetic psychological understanding of the unique meaning of specific historical-cultural phenomena. But it is also double-sided because, even in the terms of this first distinction, Weber's opposition is not directed at physiological psychology per se, but only at the type of physiological psychology that would presume to serve as the foundational basis of all of the social sciences. In fact, several years after completing "'Objectivity' in Social Science," Weber himself attempted to find a major place for physiological psychology in social analysis, utilizing this psychology in his 1908 major empirical study on *Zur Psychophysik der industriellen Arbeit* [The Psychophysics of Industrial Work].[24] Thus, even his opposition to physiological psychology is directed only at its

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21 In particular, as we will see, in Weber, *Economy and Society*, and Weber, "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," *The Sociological Quarterly* 22 (Spring 1981).

22 This is a position argued by Serge Moscovici in *The Invention of Society* (Cambridge, 1993) As will become clear shortly, Moscovici overstates Weber's hostility to psychology, an error that is heightened by his failure to differentiate between Weber's extreme hostility to all signs of "psychologism" and Weber's positive appraisals of the role in social analysis both of data derived from "physiological psychology" and of interpretations of the motivation of social action derived from an empathetic, *verstehende* social psychology. For others who have argued that Weber rejected the use of psychology in all forms, see Peter A. Munch, "'Sense' and "Intention' In Max Weber's Theory of Social Action," *Sociological Inquiry* 15 (4) 1975, 59-65; and Edith E. Graber, "Interpretive Sociology is Not Part of a Psychology," *Sociological Inquiry* 15 (4) 1975, 67-70.

23 Sica, *Weber*, 156.

24 Marianne Weber writes that in preparing for his 1908 empirical study of the effect of industrial work on the workers and worker efficiency at the Oerlinghausen textile mill, owned by Weber's relatives, he "studied the most important writings on psychophysics (i.e., physiological psychology). He concentrated particularly on the studies of Kräpelin and his pupils." (Kräpelin was a psychiatrist, a professor at Heidelberg University and the founder of

association with "psychologism"—the claim that this psychology could serve as the foundation of the social sciences.

In "'Objectivity' in Social Science" itself, Weber's double-sided appraisal becomes apparent when he reverses in mid paragraph an attack on psychologism that has covered fourteen pages to suddenly acknowledge that there have been "partly brilliant attempts which have been made hitherto to interpret economic phenomena psychologically." This sudden shift of perspective leads immediately to an important positive methodological proposition concerning the relation of psychology to social analysis:

> the procedure does not begin with the analysis of psychological qualities, moving then to the analysis of social institutions [as with the method of psychologism], but ... on the contrary, insight into psychological preconditions and consequences of institutions presupposes a precise knowledge of the latter and the scientific analysis of their structure.[25]

This methodological reversal of the strategy of "psychologism" is extremely important, as we shall see when discussing *The Protestant Ethic*. Instead of proceeding from psychological to social analysis, from psychological "factors" or "motives" to their use as the basis of explanation of social factors, the social scientist should first develop a "precise knowledge" of the social factors (or, in the case of *The Protestant Ethic*, the cultural factors of religious ideology) and only from within the context of this knowledge should he or she then supplement the analysis with a psychological inquiry. Utilized in this order, Weber continues, "in concrete cases, psychological analysis can contribute then an extremely valuable deepening of the knowledge of the historical cultural *conditioning* and cultural *significance* of institutions."[26]

But Weber's methodological reversal is more extensive than this reversal of what to analyze first, social or psychic factors. Unlike the abstract deductive method of psychologism, an "empirical-historical" utilization of psychology works to assist social scientists in their endeavor to grasp the particularized historical specificity of diverse social situations:

> The interesting aspect of the psychic attitude of a person in a social situation is specifically particularized in each case, according to the special cultural significance of the situation in question.... Social-psychological research involves the study of various very disparate *individual* types of cultural elements with reference to their interpretability by our empathic understanding [*verstehen*].[27]

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pharmacopsychology; in part, he is known for his research on *dementia praecox* and manic depression). Marianne reports that Weber concluded from this study that "while collaboration between the natural and the social sciences was possible 'in principle' and their psychophysical concepts were usable for the projected inquiry, the sociological analysis of mass phenomena could use neither the method of the 'exact' laboratory experiments nor the uncertain results of the theory of heredity." *Max Weber*, 330. 331.

25 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 88.
26 Ibid., 89-90.
27 Ibid., 89.

Such "social-psychological research," based upon "our empathic understanding," is, in fact, what Weber was engaged in during the same period in which he was writing his "Objectivity" essay.

Alluding to a major argument of that work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber offers the example of how one should analyze "historically effective ideas" such as "Calvin's doctrine of predestination":

> It is of course easily overlooked that however important the significance even of the purely logical persuasive force of ideas ... nonetheless empirical-historical events occurring in men's minds must be understood as primarily *psychologically* and not logically conditioned.[28]

That is, the historical effectiveness of Calvin's doctrine of predestination will be found not in "the purely logical persuasive force of ideas," but rather in the impact that the idea had on people's minds "psychologically and not logically." Foreshadowing another basic argument of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber suggests that with the understanding that "historically effective ideas" must be understood psychologically and not logically, one comes to see that

> the ideal-typical character of ... historically effective ideas is revealed still more clearly when those fundamental main principles and postulates no longer survive in the minds of those individuals who are still dominated by ideas which were logically or associatively derived from them.[29]

In other words, an investigation of relevant psychological factors is a necessary aspect of any attempt by social science to understand how the effects of an idea such as Calvin's doctrine of predestination could remain dominant in the minds of individuals and of a civilization centuries after its main principles and postulates had lost all conscious presence. As we will see, many of Weber's formulations of social-historical events in *The Protestant Ethic* take the form of these assertions. They place a separate intervening variable between historically effective cultural ideas (in this case, Puritan religious doctrine) and their actual social effect (the creation of modern capitalism): the intervening variable of the psyche.

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28 Ibid., 96.
29 Ibid., 89, 96-97.

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The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and the Psychology of Religiously Inspired Social Action

Weber's writing of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* overlapped his work on his essay "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." According to Marianne Weber's biography of her husband, Weber began work on part one of *The Protestant Ethic* in 1903, before he wrote "'Objectivity' in Social Science," and finished it in the late spring of 1904, in the months following completion of the essay; and he completed part two the following year.[1] The finished work, moreover, is marked even more deeply than "'Objectivity' in Social Science" by the major psychic conflicts that lay at the root of his mental collapse. As is attested to by Marianne Weber's comment about her husband's deep psychological involvement in the work, "this work is connected with the deepest roots of his personality," *The Protestant Ethic* provided a way for Weber to come to grips with his inner conflicts.[2] As we will see, *The Protestant Ethic* represents, psychoanalytically, something of a "working-through" of these conflicts, an element of which involved, as Arthur Mitzman has argued, a partial purgation of his own tyrannic, puritanical superego.[3]

1. The Discipline of Psychology

As might be expected given his state of mind at the time, Weber casts a major focus on psychology in *The Protestant Ethic*. In fact, psychology is a double focus of the book: firstly, psychology as a discipline and mode of analysis, and, secondly and more importantly, psychology as a realm of human experience and a central component of social action and cultural-historical development. But Weber's viewpoint on these various aspects of psychology can be easily misread if one is not sensitive to the nuances of Weber's opposition to "psychologism." For example, a central tenet of Serge Moscovici's *The Invention of Society* is Weber's supposed hostility to any form of psychology, a prime example of this explicit hostility being exhibited in the following endnote attached to the last paragraph of *The Protestant Ethic*:

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1   *Max Weber*, 279, 326, 704.
2   Ibid., 335.
3   Arthur Mitzman *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New Brunswick, 1985), 173-175.

The above sketch has deliberately taken up only the relations in which an influence of religious ideas on the material culture is really beyond doubt. It would have been easy to proceed beyond that to a regular construction which logically deduced everything characteristic of modern culture from Protestant rationalism. But that sort of thing may be left to the type of dilettante who believes in the unity of the group mind and its reducibility to a single formula.[4]

Moscovici's criticism of this passage centers on the apparent inconsistency of Weber's dismissal here of the conception of "a collective psyche" while nonetheless advancing elsewhere in the book an analogous conception in his notion of "the spirit of capitalism."[5] What Moscovici overlooks is the fact that the formulation of Weber's dismissal in this endnote clearly references the structure of thought expounded by psychologistic historians: the foundational reduction of human behavior to a set of mental traits or motives from which all socio-historical events are then to be "logically deduced." Placed within the context of Weber's polemical opposition to such an "abstract-theoretical" approach in the social sciences, the passage can be clearly seen for what it actually is: an attack on "the type of dilettante" social scientist who advanced the doctrines of psychologism. (Weber may well be thinking here of Karl Lamprecht, the leading psychologistic historian—elsewhere in the endnotes Weber explicitly targets Lamprecht, as we shall see, in two separate attacks on the historian's misuse of psychology). The target of this passage's attack is the type of social scientist who constructs psychological theorems detailing the universally valid fundamental psychic factors of the human mind, an endeavor necessarily premised upon the concept of "the *unity* of the group mind [within perhaps an evolutionary theory of the stages of psychological development, as found in Lamprecht's work] and its reducibility to a single formula" (the foundational goal of psychologism). Moreover, Weber's target is the type of social scientist who further believed that from such theorems (rendered in the passage's sarcasm as "a single formula") historical outcomes (sarcastically rendered as "*everything* characteristic of modern culture") could be "*logically deduced*" ("logical deduction" being the identificatory method of psychologism and the exact sciences that it tried to emulate).

Weber's hostility is very focused in this passage, as it was in "'Objectivity' in Social Science"; it is aimed at the attempts to employ the approaches of physiological psychology in the foundational manner of "psychologism." Otherwise, in *The Protestant Ethic* Weber is quite open to the use of the findings of physiological psychology. In fact, it might be argued that he is sometimes too open-minded in this latter regard. For example, the book's "Introduction" makes reference to "comparative racial neurology and psychology" in a discussion of the effect of "biological heredity" on cognitive differences between the Occident and Orient. Only when these scientific endeavors "have progressed beyond their present and *in many ways very promising beginnings*," Weber writes, "can we hope for even the probability of a satisfactory answer to [the] problem" of the relative influence of

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4　Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 284. What I refer to as "endnotes" in this study stood in the 1920 German publication of the text as footnotes; in translating the text into English, Talcott Parsons transferred these notes to the end of the book.

5　*Invention of Society*, 182.

heredity and environment in explaining why "certain types of rationalization have developed in the Occident and only there."[6] Elsewhere in *The Protestant Ethic*, in the context of calling attention to the way religious emotionalism undermines "the rational character of conduct"—"as is to-day the case among the American negroes"—Weber discusses "the pathological character of Methodist emotionalism as compared to the relatively mild type of Pietism." He hypothesizes that these differences might be traced to differences in the ascetic penetration in life, but defers to neurology as the proper authority to determine if race itself might be a factor: "only a neurologist could decide that," he states.[7]

In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber's evident respect for the new psychologists extends beyond the promise of comparative neurology. He speaks favorably of a range of psychological approaches, from the various types of physiological psychology modeled on the exact sciences, including the biologically grounded, emerging fields of psychiatry and neurology, to the type of non-physiological psychology entitled "*verstehende* psychology" that was to be found in the work of his friend Karl Jaspers. Moreover, he praises those psychologists who from a psychological perspective analyze culture-historical phenomena, as long as this work is not of a deductive psychologistic character, viewing favorably "the attempts like that of Karl Jasper's (in his book *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, 1919), ... [and Ludwig] Klages's *Charackterologie*, and similar studies which differ from our own in their point of departure" (that is, a point of departure lodged in the discipline of psychology rather than in Weber's own academic discipline, which at the time was variously defined as economics and political science).[8] He praises Willy Hellpach, a professor of medicine with whom Weber was in correspondence,[9] for his "serious attempt to make use of psychological concepts in the interpretation of certain historical mass phenomena ... [in] *Grundlinien zu einer Psychologie der Hysterie*, chap. xii, as well as his *Nervosität und Kulture*"[10] (Hellpach's work on mass hysteria, one suspects, was a major source for the neurologically tinged analysis of religious emotionalism found in *The Protestant Ethic*). And in a lengthy endnote Weber respectfully and insightfully discusses William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, appropriating from the book material on the irrationality of religious experiences.[11] The one writer associated with psychology for whom Weber expresses scorn is the historian Karl Lamprecht, who, as we have seen, was the leading champion of "psychologism" in the social sciences. Lamprecht's "completely worthless ... schematic treatment of Pietism" and his wrongheaded "theory of psychological evolutionary stages" meet separate rebukes from Weber, who also laments the fact that the "many sided" work

6   *Protestant Ethic*, 30-31 (italics added).
7   Ibid., 143, and the passage's endnote, 252.
8   Ibid., 186.
9   Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Max Weber and His Contemporaries* (London, 1987), 279.
10   *Protestant Ethic*, 244.
11   Ibid 232-233.

of Hellpach, which he otherwise praises, "has been harmfully influenced by certain of Lamprecht's theories."[12]

Weber was obviously well read in, and influenced by, the works of the various branches of academic psychology, but fortunately he also recognized how extremely underdeveloped these psychological endeavors were in the early years of this century. (As noted above, psychology did not achieve recognition as a separate discipline in German universities until the 1920s.) In *The Protestant Ethic* he is noticeably hesitant to directly use its terms or framework (an uneasiness that apparently faded somewhat several years later with his *Zur Psychophysik der industriellen Arbeit*). For example, while Weber clearly draws on neurological and psychiatric writings in his descriptions of the irrational states of religious emotionalism (Hellpach's work, as I stated above, appears to have been especially helpful here), he holds back from completely adopting their technical psychological approach.

An examination of a frequently discussed endnote and the passage it qualifies offers an opportunity to glimpse the complexity of Weber's uneasiness with the terminology and framework of academic psychology, especially of its branches associated with the exact scientific methods of physiological psychology. The passage is in the section in *The Protestant Ethic* devoted to "Pietism." In this passage, Weber offers an almost clinical description of the pattern of psychical cycling between religious ecstasy and nervous exhaustion, authoritatively supporting his description with a rhetorical appeal to the "neuro-pathologically understandable":

> The emotion [of Pietism] was capable of such intensity, that religion took on a positively hysterical character, resulting in the alternation which is familiar from examples without number and neuro-pathologically understandable, of half-conscious states of religious ecstasy [alternating] with periods of nervous exhaustion, which were felt as abandonment by God.[13]

That Weber is uneasy with how close this passage gets to technical psycho-neurology is apparent from the endnote appended to the passage:

> We are here for good reasons intentionally neglecting discussion of the psychological, in the technical sense of the word, aspect of these religious phenomena, and even its terminology has been as far as possible avoided. *The firmly established results of psychology, including psychiatry, do not at present go far enough to make them of use for the purposes of the historical judgments.* The use of its terminology would only form a temptation to hide phenomena which were immediately understandable, or even sometimes trivial, behind a veil of foreign words, and thus give a false impression of scientific exactitude, such as is unfortunately typical of Lamprecht.[14]

It is important to read this endnote carefully, for it invites misreading.[15] First of all, Weber is not here disclaiming any intention to discuss "the psychological," but rather is disclaiming the intention to discuss "the psychological, *in the technical sense*

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12 Ibid., 244, 248.

13 Ibid., 130.

14 Ibid., 244 (italics added).

15 For an example, see Moscovici, *Invention of Society*, 181.

of the word." Secondly, the endnote must be read in relation to the textual passage to which the endnote is attached—a passage that in "technical terms" could be said to be about 'the neuro-psychology of hysterical manic-depressive cycling associated with emotional ecstasy.' In fact, the passage is the closest that Weber comes in *The Protestant Ethic* to embracing the approach of physiological psychology—he uses here the concepts of psychic states, hysteria, nervous exhaustion, and mood cycling between elation and depression, along with an appeal to psychological expertise contained in his invocation to the "neuro-pathologically understandable." I suggest that it was the evident presence in his text of this psychological technicalness that made Weber subsequently hesitate, and that prompted the endnote. Thirdly, Weber justifies his disavowal of technical psychology only in terms of the immaturity of psychology as a science (a reservation echoed, as we saw, in the regret expressed by the book's "Introduction" that while "comparative racial neurology and psychology" had "in many ways very promising beginnings," a determination of the influence of biological heredity on the different cognitive developments of various civilizations would have to wait until this science had "progressed"). Psychology's results, as he says in the endnote, "do not *at present* go far enough to make them of use."

The immaturity of psychological understanding in 1903 and 1904 had to be painfully clear to anyone who, like Weber, had so recently spend months in psychiatric sanitariums in mental collapse, and it is no doubt to our benefit that he "intentionally neglected" the contemporary psychiatric technical framework in writing *The Protestant Ethic*. Finally, Weber's disavowal must be seen in the context of his polemical opposition to the ways psychologistic social scientists used the law-like findings of physiological psychology. In this endnote, in fact, Weber's expression of unease with technical psychology quickly becomes subsumed within, and thus an aspect of, his more abrasive rejection of the psychologistic methods "typical of Lamprecht" and his followers that attempt to reduce the social sciences to a technical psychology. These methods, Weber states, "hide phenomena ... behind a veil of foreign words and thus give a false impression of scientific exactitude."

2. The Mediation of Psychology between Idea and Action

Only when placed within the context of Weber's polemical opposition to psychologism can the disavowal here of the technical approaches of physiological psychology be readily disentangled from the repeated positive utilization in *The Protestant Ethic* of "the psychological, in the [non–]technical sense of the word," a utilization that is facilitated primarily by Weber's own version of what he elsewhere calls "interpretative psychology,"[16] a method for which the label "*verstehende* psychology" is also appropriate. The rest of this chapter will focus on explicating Weber's use of such a non-technical psychology in *The Protestant Ethic* and showing how it serves as a central component in his more generalizable theory of religiously inspired social action.

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16 "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," 154-155.

Weber asserts at the beginning of chapter 4 of *The Protestant Ethic* that at the heart of his argument lies a fundamental distinction between the roles played by ethical injunction and psychological motive in the determination of conduct:

> We are naturally not concerned with the question of what was theoretically and officially taught in the ethical compendia of the time [of the founding of Protestant asceticism], however much practical significance this may have had through the influence of Church discipline, pastoral work, and preaching. We are interested rather in something entirely different: the influence of those psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it.[17]

In the last year of his life, Weber appended to this passage an endnote highlighting the importance he attributed to its distinction between "ethical compendia" and "psychological sanctions": "This [distinction] has been badly misunderstood in the discussion of these questions," Weber wrote in 1920, adding that the scholars who have differed with his theses about the relationship of religion to capitalism "continually cite the ethical writers ... as codifications of rules of conduct without ever asking which of them were supported by psychologically effective religious sanctions."[18] The erroneous belief that patterns of behavior can be understood as directly following from ethical injunctions without the mediation of the intervening psychological factors ("psychological sanctions") seems to have been common of early readers of *The Protestant Ethic*; a few pages later, Weber added another endnote, in which he states with some annoyance that "of the relation between dogmatic and practical psychological consequences we shall often have to speak. That the two are not identical it is hardly necessary to remark."[19] And thereafter quickly followed another appended endnote, in which Weber reiterates the same distinction "between the logical and the psychological consequences" of religious ideas in determining "the practical religious attitude."[20]

These endnotes remind one of the premise that "'Objectivity' in Social Science" had advanced—"empirical-historical events occurring in men's minds must be understood as primarily *psychologically* and not logically conditioned." Moreover, Weber here highlights the distinction between ethical doctrine and psychological motivation with the aid of a recurrent thematic motif, citing the same paradoxical relationship between the doctrine of predestination and rationality that he used in the "Objectivity" essay. Setting up the terms of this relationship in *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber refers to "the deep pessimism of Pascal, which ... rests on the doctrine of predestination" and to Carl Bernhard Hundershagen's dislike of the doctrine of predestination as being "based on the purely deductive opinion that it necessarily leads to moral fatalism."[21] Weber then asserts that "fatalism is, of course, the only logical consequence of predestination, but on account of the idea of proof [of

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17 *Protestant Ethic*, 97.
18 Ibid., 217.
19 Ibid., 225.
20 Ibid., 232.
21 Ibid., 222, 227.

salvation] the *psychological* result was [for Calvinists] precisely the opposite."[22] In other words, as "'Objectivity' in Social Science" had earlier suggested, the doctrine of predestination led to fatalism *logically* but not *psychologically*.

This and other similar examples of the mediation of psychology between idea and action constitute a recurrent major theme of *The Protestant Ethic*. In an endnote that is in itself a brilliant small essay on the difference between, on the one hand, classical and Renaissance notions of rationally motivated economic action and, on the other hand, the psychologically influenced ethic of modern capitalism as exhibited in the sayings of Benjamin Franklin, Weber makes this mediation of psychology crystal clear:

> The essential point of the difference is (to anticipate) that an ethic based on religion places certain psychological sanctions (not of an economic character) on the maintenance of the attitude prescribed by it, sanctions which, so long as the religious belief remains alive, are highly effective, and which mere worldly [pragmatic] wisdom like that of [the Renaissance economic rationalist] Alberti does not have at its disposal. Only in so far as these [psychological] sanctions work, and, above all, in the direction in which they work, which is often very different from the doctrine of the theologians, does such an ethic gain an independent influence on the conduct of life and thus on the economic order. *This is, to speak frankly, the point of this whole essay, which I had not expected to find so completely overlooked.*[23]

Weber's evident irritation at those who overlooked his thesis on psychological mediation is here directed principally at Weber's colleague, the political economist Werner Sombart, who in his book *Der Bourgeois* (1913) had failed to appreciate, according to Weber, the fundamental distinction between purely rational pragmatic economic behavior, a type of conduct found in all eras of Western history and in most non-Western civilizations as well, and behavior driven by the psychological motivation that lay at the heart of "the spirit of capitalism." "The point of his whole essay" had been "completely overlooked," Weber snaps with noticeable irritation, "the point" being that the spirit of capitalism followed neither from that type of pragmatic rational appraisal of economic conditions suggested by the term "worldly wisdom" nor from "the doctrine of the theologians." The attitudinal impetus behind the rise of modern capitalism was not of an "economic character"—its character was neither "utilitarian" nor related to "economic rationalism" (terms used elsewhere in the endnote). Rather, the impetus was to be found in a particular religiously oriented "psychology."[24]

Moreover, as Weber suggests elsewhere in the same endnote, because of this psychological factor the impact of Protestantism remained in effect long after Protestant religiosity itself died out. In fact, in Benjamin Franklin we find the Protestant ethic secularized: Franklin "no longer related his recommendation of economy to religious conceptions," yet "a lack of care in the handling of money means to him that one so to speak murders capital embryos, and hence ... [exhibits]

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22 Ibid., 232 (italics added).
23 Ibid., 197 (italics added).
24 Ibid., 194-198.

an ethical defect," an ethical defect still unconsciously grounded on just such religious conceptions.[25] Psychology so mediates the linkage of idea to conduct that even when the idea becomes dormant, the psychological mediation may remain in effect. In the case of the impact of Protestant religiosity on modern capitalism, the structures of psychological motivation outlived discarded religious belief—the same situation which "'Objectivity' in Social Science" had addressed when it called for psychological analysis due to the fact that "fundamental principles ... no longer survive in the minds" which nonetheless remain dominated by "ideas" that originally "associatively derived from [these principles]."

The "revolutionary force" of modern capitalism, Weber states elsewhere in the same endnote, sprang from "an *ethos* which was fully developed ... in the Protestant worldly asceticism"; it sprang neither from "worldly rationality" nor "official Church doctrine," but rather from a "religious belief [that] was able to set the [psychologically enforced] sanctions of salvation and damnation on the fulfillment of a particular (in this case methodically rationalized) manner of life."[26] For Weber, "the point" of *The Protestant Ethic* itself lies in this last sentence, in its paradoxical assertion that a "religious belief" had generated psychological pressures (psychological "sanctions") associated with "salvation and damnation" that were relievable only through the adoption of the "methodically rationalized" life of modern capitalism. And, in what is central for our purposes, this paradox in turn is itself structured by the ideal-typical model of religiously inspired social action which, as we will see, characterizes this action in general in *The Protestant Ethic*: that is, a model of action centered on the psychological mediation between idea (i.e., religious beliefs) and action (i.e., methodical capitalist behaviors).

3. Weber's Model of Religiously Inspired Social Action in Terms of "Ascetic Protestantism as a Single Whole*"*

The model of social action central to Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic* will be represented in my examination here as follows:

$$\text{idea} \rightarrow \text{psychology} \rightarrow \text{action}$$

As will become clear in the following, "idea" serves as shorthand for the religious beliefs and religious practices which give birth to psychological pressures and motives; "psychology" refers to these psychological pressures and motives; "action" refers to the social action that results from these psychological pressures and motivations. As will also become clear, this action model serves the double duty of referring both to a particular frame of analysis, where "psychology" functions as a reference to a mode of analysis (i.e., psychological analysis), and also to the phenomenal (or experiential) processes analyzed, where "psychology" refers to actual psychic processes. While Weber never methodologically reflects upon his use

25 Ibid., 196.
26 Ibid., 196-197.

of this model in his text, the model nonetheless so deeply structures his thinking in *The Protestant Ethic* that I believe it is fair to refer to it (as I will do in this study) as "Weber's model of religiously inspired action."

Let us flesh out this model of social action. Weber sets up the argument of the last half of *The Protestant Ethic* (part two of the book), in terms of the first and third components of his model of action (*idea -> action*), when he states at the conclusion of part one that "the following study [i.e., part two] may ... contribut[e] to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history."[27] Weber's meaning here is relatively clear; since not all ideas become effective historical forces, the religious ideas he will be examining are of a certain type: ideas that through some unnamed special quality escaped the ethereal sphere of mere ideation to become practical, effectual forces of historically important action. In part two itself, Weber clearly states the nature of this unnamed special quality (all the while in his endnotes castigating those who failed to grasp it): as discussed above, he begins chapter 4 (the opening chapter of part two) with the statement that ideas of Protestant asceticism became historically effective forces not through "what was theoretically and officially taught in the ethical compendia of the time" (that is, *idea -> action*) but rather through the additional presence of mediating "psychological sanctions" (*idea -> psychology -> action*). Weber's statement here is so clear that it is no wonder he was annoyed with commentators who missed it: "We are interested in the influence of psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it."[28]

The rhetorical composition of this last sentence and its placement at the beginning of the crucial fourth chapter of *The Protestant Ethic* pointedly highlights it as a major thesis statement of the chapter and of part two of the book as a whole. And, to our purpose, it also concisely and straightforwardly exemplifies the model of action that structures Weber's conceptualization of religiously inspired social action in *The Protestant Ethic*:

Idea	"originating in religious belief and the practice of religion,"
↓	
Psychology	"psychological sanctions" arose and in turn ...
↓	
Action	"gave direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it."
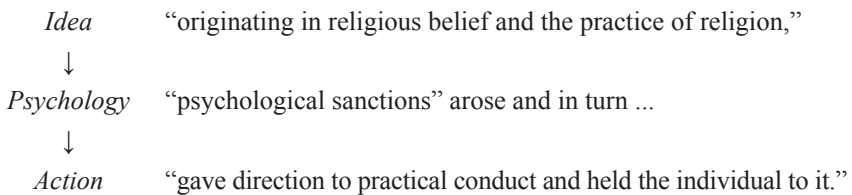
Let us analyze each of these three components (idea, psychology, action) as they appear in Weber's discussion, concentrating on the second component (psychology) and covering the first (idea) and third (action) only to the degree necessary to understand how these other components interact with psychology. At this point in my argument, I will more or less ignore denominational differences and, as *The Protestant Ethic* often does, present the ideal-typical theoretical construction that

27 Ibid., 90.
28 Ibid., 97.

Weber labels "ascetic Protestantism as a single whole," viewed however, as Weber does, with a distinctly Calvinist (and Puritan) cast.[29]

3.1 Idea (Model of Action)

Weber places at the origin of religiously inspired social action the two interrelated factors of religious *belief* and religious *practices* (which, following Weber's example, I have subsumed under the rubric *idea*). As we have just seen, for Weber, only certain types of religious belief and practice are able to become "historically effective ideas," that is, are able to inspire the required psychological pressures powerfully enough to motivate action that has a historical impact. In his various other works on the sociology of religion, Weber repeatedly places at the origin of such effective religious ideas those dealing with the question of personal salvation.[30] In *The Protestant Ethic*, he does likewise: "The question of *certitudo salutis* [certitude about one's personal salvation] ... for every non-sacramental religion of salvation ... has been *the origin of all psychological drives* of a purely religious character," Weber writes, adding shortly thereafter, "All the religious movements which have affected large masses have *started* from the question, 'How can I become certain of my salvation?'"[31] Of the historical period of his concern, the Reformation and its aftermath, Weber states that this period was

> an age to which the after-life was not only more important, but in many ways also more certain than all the interests of life in this world[.] The question, Am I one of the elect? must sooner or later have arisen for every believer and have forced all other interests into the background. And how can I be sure of this state of grace?[32]

A major theme of chapter 4 of *The Protestant Ethic* is the way that Protestantism focused upon the ever-present uncertainty of salvation by attempting to answer this last question—how can one be sure of one's state of grace?—with answers that took the form of what Weber refers to as "the doctrine of proof."

For the early Protestants, this doctrine consisted of the dual rejection of two states of being that in Catholicism were seen as radically distinct alternatives: the *status naturae* and otherworldliness. In the case of the first rejection, as Weber states in his closing summation of chapter 4, "the decisive point was, to recapitulate [the argument of the chapter], the conception of the state of religious grace, common to all the [Protestant] denominations, as a status which marks off its possessor from the degradation of the flesh, from the world." Thus, "the decisive point" of the doctrine of proof was its identification of the *status gratiae* [grace] with the rejection of the mortal pleasures and concerns of the *status naturae*—that is, its identification with

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29 Ibid., 155.

30 See "The Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions" and "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1946), and "The Sociology of Religion" in *Economic and Society*.

31 *Protestant Ethic*, 228, 229 (italics added).

32 Ibid., 109-110.

a life governed by *asceticism* (the renunciation of "the degradation of the flesh"). Combined in a seemingly paradoxical manner with this ascetic rejection of the mundane ("the flesh, ... the world") was the second rejection, the dismissal of an otherworldliness divorced from the mundane. Yet in a strange way this second rejection actually logically followed from the first, as it entailed a rejection of all those religious practices and institutions—such as the confessional, the sacraments, the accumulation of good works, the priesthood, and monasticism—which flew in the face of any consistent asceticism by separating Godliness from the practices of daily life and thus encouraging laymen to seek only periodically, if at all, to rise above the *status naturae*. This latter rejection—especially the view that monasticism abandoned lay persons to a daily life governed by the *status naturae*—led to a broader rejection of otherworldliness in general in favor of a qualified *worldliness.* These twin rejections (of the *status naturae* and otherworldliness), however, created a dilemma: how to combine both asceticism and an embrace of worldliness in a unified worldview? The solution was to locate the proof of salvation in conduct that, while ascetically transcending the *status naturae*, was paradoxically distinctly worldly: "a specific type of conduct unmistakably different from the way of life of the natural man," but nonetheless lived "within the world and its institutions." Weber terms this combination of viewpoints "worldly asceticism."[33]

3.2 Psychology (Model of Action)

In Talcott Parsons' translation of *The Protestant Ethic*, the phrase "psychological sanctions" appears eight times in sentences delineating the psychological aspect of Protestant worldly asceticism.[34] But, according to the Weberian scholar Reinhard Bendix, the second word in this phrase, "sanction," is a mistranslation of Weber's German text. In the case of the thesis sentence from the beginning of chapter 4 with which we began this discussion of Weber's model of action, Bendix reports that a literal translation of that sentence should read: "We are interested in ascertaining those psychological *impulses* [not *sanctions*] which originated in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave direction to the individual's everyday way of life and prompted him to adhere to it."[35] According to Bendix, "sanction" is Parsons' mistranslation of the German word used by Weber, *Antrieb*, for which the literal translation is "impulse."[36] Bendix suggests that Parsons came up with the phrase "psychological sanctions" to cover several different formulations used by Weber in German to refer to a group of related psychological conditions, formulations that Bendix translates from the German as "psychological disposition," "psychological

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33 Ibid., 153-154.

34 Ibid., 97, 128, 178, 197, 203, 217, 234, 265.

35 Reinhard. Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley, 1977), 63-64, 273.

36 Stephen Kalberg's translation of *The Protestant Ethic* translates *Antriebe* as "psychological motivations," which, while better than "psychological sanctions," is still somewhat wide of the mark, since *Antrieb* (or its plural, *Antriebe*) means "impulse" (or, in the plural, "impulses," "impulsions" and "urges"). Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, 2002), xxxi, 55.

rewards," and "driving force," in addition to "psychological impulse." Bendix suggests that these diverse formulations reveal some confusion on Weber's part in regard to the concept he was attempting to develop, and that a better term would have been *Anreiz* ("incentive"), since "the problem turned, after all, on the extent to which the orientation of Calvinist doctrine and pastoral practice had become internalized, i.e., had become impulses of the believers."[37] From a different perspective, Alan Sica also chastises Parsons for altering "impulse" to "sanction," but for Sica Parson's sin is that he thereby "rationalized" Weber: "an 'impulse' is by definition 'irrational' and a 'sanction' is somehow altogether different."[38]

I suggest that Bendix's interpretation of "psychological sanction" correctly places psychology in a mediating position between idea and action, but that he is mistaken in characterizing that mediation as the psychic internalization of the orientation of doctrine and practice. Such a characterization is all too reminiscent of the general understanding by sociologists of the role Talcott Parsons assigned to psychology in his model of social action that dominated much of American sociology in the 1950s—the decade in which Bendix wrote his book on Weber. I find no evidence that Weber's model of action utilizes such a sociologistic concept of internalization—the notion that motivation is explained in terms of a process by which beliefs (or norms) are unproblematically incorporated without major distortion into the psyche, thereby becoming impulses (or "need-dispositions" in Parsonian vocabulary). In such a version of internalization, *idea* is faithfully translated into *action* via a *psychology* limited to supplying the action's motivational energy.

Rather, Weber's model of the movement of *idea -> psychology -> action* is premised upon the relatively autonomous power of human psychology to alter ideas in such a way that the transition from idea to action is highly problematic, as is evident in our earlier discussion of Weber's distinction between the logical consequence of the doctrine of predestination (fatalism) and its psychological consequence (worldly ascetic activism). As we saw, Weber repeatedly insists that psychological motivation must be considered as a process separate from the logical dictates of doctrine, since the resulting action does not follow rationally or logically from these dictates. In *The Protestant Ethic*, psychological processes initiated by ideas are portrayed as psychic responses, often highly emotionally charged, that can alter the substance and intent of the ideas, often in paradoxical directions, resulting in actions that in no way could be said to have followed simply from, to use Bendix's language, "the orientation of doctrine and pastoral practice [that] had become internalized, i.e., had become impulses of the believer." For Weber, the orientation of the doctrines and practices of worldly ascetic Protestantism did not in itself become impulse. It was rather the psychological responses to these doctrines and practices that became impulse (or "sanctions" in Parsons' translations).

In this regard, Sica's suggestion that Weber's original German carries the connotation of "irrationality" is more to the point. In fact, as Weber's later methodological works make clear, for Weber the object of "psychology" is the analysis of irrational behavior, and the term "psychological" designates human irrationality

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37 Bendix, *Max Weber*, 273.
38 Sica, *Weber*, 168.

(we shall examine the role assigned to psychology in these works in chapter 6). In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber makes much of the irrationality that human psychology brings to religiously inspired social action. In an early passage defining the book's general approach, he tells the reader that "we are here particularly interested in the origin of precisely the irrational element" that motivated the Protestant calling to "rationalize life,"[39] and at eight other points in the book he explicitly refers to the irrational aspects of worldly ascetic rationalism (for example, Weber speaks of early capitalists as getting "nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well" and of the "irrational" motivation "from the view-point of personal happiness, ... where a man exists for the sake of his business, instead of the reverse").[40] Indeed, the paradox of an irrational Protestant religiosity producing the methodical means-end, instrumental rationalism of modern capitalism is clearly central to the argument of *The Protestant Ethic*. Moreover, an essential component of this same argument consists of Weber's repeated critique and rejection of the alternate liberal view, popular during his lifetime, that the rationalism of the Enlightenment and, specifically, the instrumental rationalism of economic self-interest gave birth to modern rationalism.[41] For Weber (and for that later intellectual movement that combined Weber's thought with Marxism and Psychoanalysis, the Frankfurt School), modern instrumental rationalism is the product of psychological irrationality.

But this irrationality should not be fetishized; Weber does not conceptualize the irrationality of the psyche as a completely autonomous factor, but rather always connects it to the other elements within the model of action that structures his thought. Weber explicitly argues against making so much of the irrationality of religiously inspired psychic dynamics that consideration of the logic of ideas is completely severed from considerations of religious motivation and therefore of religiously inspired actions. "The Calvinistic faith is one of the many examples in the history of religions of the *relation* between the logical and the psychological consequences for the practical religious attitude," Weber argues in a sentence structured by his model of religiously inspired social action (*idea* {"the logical" of "Calvinist faith"} -> *psychology* {"the psychological consequences"} -> *action* {"for the practical religious attitude"}).[42] Weber continues, "the logical structure of the Calvinist concept of God" exercised such "tremendous influence" (through "the psychological consequences") that it can be said that "the God of the Puritans has influenced history as hardly another before or since" (again Weber's model of social action: *idea* {"the logical structure of the Calvinist concept of God"} -> *psychology*

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39 *Protestant Ethic*, 78. The phrase itself, "rationalize life," is taken from a sentence shortly preceding that from which the rest of the quotation is taken; it concerns the concept of a calling, in particular, a "calling as a task [to "rationalize life"] which is necessary to capitalism." Ibid., 77.

40 Ibid., 71, 70. Discussions of irrational aspects of worldly ascetic rationalism can also be found in 53, 152, 232, 256-257.

41 Weber explicitly disassociates modern rationalism from the Enlightenment on pages 45, 76-77, 106 (however, he does identify the Enlightenment itself as the "heir" of Puritan asceticism on 182).

42 Ibid., 232 (italics added).

{"psychological consequences"} -> *action* {"has influenced history"}).[43] In this regard, Weber criticizes the psychologist William James for underestimating the influence of ideas on the irrational elements of religious experience:

> The content of ideas of a religion is, as Calvinism shows, far more important than William James ... is inclined to admit.... The religious experience as such is of course irrational, like every experience.... But that irrational element, which is by no means peculiar to religious experience, but applies (in different senses and to different degrees) to every experience, does not prevent its being of the greatest practical importance, of what particular type of system of ideas is [sic], that captures and moulds the immediate experience of religion in its own way.[44]

In other words, the particular structure and content of religious ideas deeply influence ("captures and moulds") the irrational psychology of religious experience, pushing it in one or another direction, infusing it with more or less intensity, and so forth. For Weber, an understanding of the ways that the irrational elements of psychic dynamics reshape ideas into motivations for actions does not obviate the need to consider the role that the content of these ideas itself plays in influencing just those dynamics.

Moreover, when we examine Weber's overall utilization of psychology in *The Protestant Ethic*, we find that for the most part the focus is less on issues of irrationality than on those of motivation, although it goes without saying that this motivation is at its core irrational. Specifically, Weber's utilization of psychology is focused on the ways that "psychological sanctions" or "psychological impulses," arising in response to ideas about the uncertainty of salvation, come "to *compel* the methodical rationalization of life," a rationalization of life that "*results*" (because of inner motivational pressures) from the "subjective [i.e., psychological] adoption of an ascetic faith."[45] (Here again we find Weber's model of action: *idea* {"ascetic faith} -> *psychology* {"psychological sanctions compel"} -> *action* {"methodical rationalization of life"}.) Examining this focus on motivation in Weber's psychology, we find that Parsons' translated term "psychological sanction" is associated with a number of other terms to indicate Weber's multifaceted concern with the concept of a psychological motivational dynamic that, while influenced by ideas, alters those ideas into psychologically powerful impulses that propel actions. Among these associated terms, we find "motive force," "motive" and "motives," "motivation," "motivating," "subjective motives," "psychological drives," "psychological motive force," "psychological force," "psychological stimulus," "compulsion," "compel," inner "pressure," "fear which drives," and "tremendous pressure."[46] Additionally, we should note that the very word Weber often used in his German text to indicate motivation, *Antreib*, has overtones of irresistible pressure (*Trieben* = to push) and

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43 In Weber's text, the phrase "psychological consequences" is not here repeated, but it can be understood as implicit, given that the subject of the endnote is the psychological response to ideas.

44 Ibid., 232-233.

45 Ibid., 128, 152 (italics added).

46 Ibid., 68, 70, 101, 106, 108, 126, 128, 128, 152, 158, 183, 224, 228, 278, 280, 282.

is a cognate of the word Sigmund Freud used to indicate the dynamic pressures of psychic 'drives' (*Trieb*). For Weber, religiously inspired social actions, such as those that constituted the Protestant Reformation, are psychically driven actions, actions pressured, propelled, and compelled by powerful psychological motive forces.

3.2.1 Elementary Concepts of Psychic States

One motive force above all others is central to Weber's depiction of the psychological pressures compelling ascetic Protestant action: salvation anxiety. (Although the term "salvation anxiety" is frequently used in commentaries on *The Protestant Ethic*, it does not appear in Weber's text.[47] The extreme nervousness associated with the uncertainty of salvation is instead expressed by such terms as "fear," "sullen worry," "tremendous tension," "anxious fear of death and the beyond," "religious anxiety" and "anxiety."[48]) In *The Protestant Ethic*, the psychological state I have here termed salvation anxiety is one of intense apprehension and dread that originates in response to Protestant ideas concerning the uncertainty of salvation and that is only relievable, if at all, by actions imbued with methodical rationality. Examples in *The Protestant Ethic* of the use of the notion of salvation anxiety are numerous. For instance, when Weber states that "worldly activity should be considered ... the most suitable means of counteracting feelings of religious anxiety," he is speaking of salvation anxiety, as he is when, in an examination of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, he describes the "anxious fear of death and the beyond" that causes Bunyan's hero, Christian, to abandon his wife and children in the City of Destruction, and adds that this is the same "fear which drives [Christian] ... to a restless and systematic struggle with life."[49] Similarly, Weber describes early Protestant believers as filled with "sullen worry" and preoccupied with an "anxiety that they should be assured of salvation and grace."[50] Also, Weber indirectly refers to salvation anxiety when he argues that the "religious belief" of worldly ascetic Protestantism was transformed into "a revolutionary force" by the "set[ting of] the *sanctions of salvation and damnation* on the fulfillment of a particular (in this case methodically rationalized) manner of life."[51]

As the logic of a number of Weber's assertions suggests, 'salvation anxiety' and 'psychological sanction' are largely overlapping concepts. The anxiety of the first serves as the motivational pressure, the "sanction," of the second. In Weber's ideal-typical explanation, salvation anxiety altered history; it is *the* psychological state (or "psychological sanction") that motivated the social movement of worldly ascetic Protestantism, as it also motivated the original attitudes (or "spirit") of the pioneers of modern capitalism. Parenthetically, it should be noted that in proposing

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47 For example, the term appears in the three essays separately authored by David Zaret, Gianranco Poggi, and Philip Benedict in *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth (New York: 1993).

48 *Protestant Ethic*, 107, 108, 112, 117, 141, 246, 250, 272.

49 Ibid., 107-108. 112.

50 Ibid., 141, 246.

51 Ibid., 197 (italics added).

anxiety as the principal motivation for crucial social action, Weber here is not alone among sociologists; a number of later sociologists have also relied on psychologies of anxiety to explain social action, including, as we shall see in Part IV of this book, Norbert Elias in *The Civilizing Process*. Other sociologists who have utilized anxiety for this purpose include Alfred Schutz (*The Problem of Social Reality*), Erving Goffman (*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*) and Anthony Giddens (*The Constitution of Society*).[52]

With this elucidation of the concept of salvation anxiety in mind, the reader may now more clearly understand why I said earlier that Weber's psychology is not based upon a sociologistic concept of the internalization of ideas or norms. For, first of all, salvation anxiety is above all else an *affective state*, not an internalized idea or norm; secondly, it is an *affective response* to ideas about salvation and damnation, and as such is distinct from the believer's cognitive grasp of these ideas; thirdly, it is an *affective state that seeks relief*, and as such it motivates a type of action (worldly methodical rationalism) that is sharply (even irrationally) distinct from the sacred tenor of the ideas themselves. Nonetheless, salvation anxiety is closely connected, as a psychological response, to the specific ideas that elicited it. For it was these ideas that had the power to stimulate in believers the acute psychological distress that I have subsumed under the label of "salvation anxiety." These ideas, counseling the uncertainty of salvation, put at issue the believer's eternal future as a daily, continuous worry. Abandoning the mediation of Church, priesthood, and magical sacraments, they placed the believer in a frighteningly solitary relationship with God, unassisted by symbol, ritual, or sacerdotal intercession. And, abandoning religious practices that undid sin, like the confessional and the accumulation of good works, they brought to the fore a harrowing siege mentality in which the believer was charged with an ever vigilant censorship against "natural" impulses and emotions that could at any moment signal one's eternal damnation.

We are now beginning to understand more clearly how psychological mediation functions in Weber's model of religiously inspired action, especially in its relationship to the first term, ascetic Protestant ideas. But to understand this term even more precisely, it is important to note that, hypothetically, in a sociological model of action like Weber's, the mediating psychological term could be, firstly, an affective state other than anxiety and, secondly, a psychological state other than an affective one. The mediating psychological state could be conceptualized as a psychical mechanism, for instance, projection, often found in sociological psychologies of social scapegoating. But that the psychological term in Weber's case is an affective state, and even more that it is anxiety, allows the psychological explanation of motivation to be remarkably simple and straightforward. Anxiety is a basic psychic reaction to the perception that one's existence is in danger, and, as such, it is inherently an affective state that seeks relief in actions to alter the conditions of that perception so as to relieve the internal pressures of distress. With the partial exception of some types of anxiety associated with psychotic or acute neurotic states, it is also almost always a social affect, that

52 Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers: The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague, 1973); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959); Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Berkeley, 1986).

is, it almost always involves other persons and as such it is an interactive link with a social environment: a response to an impingement from that environment that results in inner psychic pressure to engage in actions that will alter the conditions of that social environment. Given this conceptual simplicity, anxiety can serve sociology as a motivational affect *par excellence*, although one would think that hate, love, and envy might rival it as other similarly motivational affects (and, one might think, similarly attractive motivational explanations of certain types of social action).

In cases such as this, I propose the use of the adjective *elementary* as the appropriate conceptual and description term for use in explanations of social action of a singular affect (such as anxiety, hate, love, or envy) or a singular psychic mechanism (such as projection, sublimation, or identification). These affects and mechanisms are *elementary* both in terms of pure psychodynamics (i.e., singular properties of intrapsychic dynamics) and in terms of a sociological psychology (i.e., singular psychological properties utilized in explanations of social action). Within the framework of social analysis, the ideal-typical concepts designating these psychological states will also be called *elementary*; that is, the category of *elementary* is applicable to the concepts of these states as well as to the actual states themselves. In ideal-typical descriptions, any one of these affects and mechanisms may be portrayed as the dominant psychical component in sociological explanations of behavior or attitude.

3.2.2 Secondary Concepts of Personality Types

Elementary psychological concepts often serve singularly in social explanation, but they also serve in combination with similar elementary states as building blocks in more complex psychological explanations of social actions. In the instance at hand, salvation anxiety serves as an elementary psychological state that by itself takes the mediating psychological position in many of *The Protestant Ethic*'s ideal-typical explanations of social actions, but, as we will see in a moment, salvation anxiety also serves as one element in the constitution of a more complex psychic phenomenon and concept.

In this latter case, I propose the use of the adjective *secondary* as the appropriate conceptual and descriptive term. Complex psychological phenomena are *secondary* both in terms of pure psychodynamics (i.e., complex psychic formations constituted by the interaction of a number of elementary states or processes) and in terms of a sociological psychology (i.e., complex psychological formations within a social actor utilized in explanations of social action). To be specific, in *The Protestant Ethic* salvation anxiety serves not only as a singular element in explanations of the motivation of social action, but also as a component of more complex psychological explanations: that is, as a component of one of two particular personality formations within a typology of polar opposite personality types. (See Figure 5.1 on page 85 for a graphic depiction of the categories of this discussion and of the argument of the next eighteen pages.)

To examine how Weber develops these personality types and utilizes this typology, let us return to *The Protestant Ethic* and to Weber's description of the psychological effects of worldly ascetic Protestantism. Weber repeatedly suggests

that beyond inducing an "increasing anxiety over the *certitudo salutis*" (i.e., the *elementary* psychic state of salvation anxiety), doctrines of worldly ascetic Protestantism caused a traumatic change of the very tenor and structure of the believer's personality. These doctrines "doomed" the believer to the psychic condition of chronic anxiety, a condition of "tremendous tension" for which there was "no mitigation." The doctrines did this in part by eliminating the traditional means by which such anxiety might be alleviated: "no priest," "no sacraments," "no church," "no God," could now help the believer; "no one could help him." And the very way that these means of alleviation were eliminated brought down upon the believer an additional psychic disability: "unprecedented inner loneliness." For on the one hand, the ascetic Protestant doctrine of the absolute transcendentality of God condemned believers to spiritual isolation: "in what was for the man of the age ... the most important thing in life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone." On the other hand, ascetic Protestant doctrine condemned believers to a personal "inner isolation" devoid of the reassurances of affectionate bonds of interpersonal closeness, by branding desires for intimacy as "idolatry of the flesh" and insisting that believers learn instead "to direct this [affectionate] energy into the field of objective (impersonal) activity" (Weber's phrasing here indicates his familiarity with the psychological concept of sublimation, which he uses explicitly elsewhere in his writings).[53] Besides isolating believers both spiritually and interpersonally, ascetic Protestant doctrine also alienated them from their own inner "nature," by demonizing the inclinations of "natural" impulses and emotions as leading to (and as signs of) eternal damnation. As a result, the conscious mind severed its connection with the "spontaneous" and "impulsive enjoyment of life" and learned to abhor "all sensuous pleasures." In fact, these doctrines so successfully linked heightened anxiety to notions of pleasure that pleasure itself was psychically debased, leading to that great "reversal" that lies at the heart of the emergence of the spirit of capitalism "of what we should call the natural relationship" between human happiness and pleasure (on the one hand) and acquisition and labor (on the other), the reversal whereby acquisition and labor were transferred from means to life's pleasures into life's ends, these formerly "eudaemonistic" ends demoted to, at their best, mere means.[54]

Chronic anxiety, spiritual and interpersonal isolation, the sublimation of the desire for intimacy into impersonal organizations, alienation from bodily impulse and psychic emotion, the debasement of pleasure: taken together, these various psychical conditions clearly reveal that Weber's utilization of psychology involves complexities that extend beyond the mere concept of a specific affective state serving as the motivation of a specific type of action. In Weber's depiction these conditions interact in a dynamic fashion to constitute an emergent psychologically coherent phenomenon, abstractly conceptualized as a personality type. And with this

53 Ibid., 104, 106-107, 224. For further evidence that Weber had a fairly sophisticated notion of sublimation, see examples of the use of the concept on pages 224 and 226, and see also *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 25.

54 Ibid., 53, 78,166, 167, 236. For further discussion of the "reversal" that Weber speaks of here, see also 60, 70, 73, 166.

notion of personality type in mind, a previously unnoticed structural element of *The Protestant Ethic* is brought into high relief: for we are now able to clearly see that the major arguments and themes of *The Protestant Ethic* are structured by a typology of two polar opposite personality types, each type viewed as the product of a distinct religious culture (Catholic or Protestant). For example, the basic argument of chapter 1 of *The Protestant Ethic* is clearly structured by the categories of this simple typology; much of the chapter is devoted to describing the difference between Catholic and Protestant personality types in terms of attitudes toward work, entrepreneurship, education, leisure, social change, and social mobility. And in chapter 4 we find the same typology of personality types (again based on a distinction between Catholic and Protestant), but this time framed in terms of an explicit psychology of distinct personality formation.

In chapter 4, this polar typology of personality types is grounded upon the distinction between the natural man of Catholicism (and Lutheranism) and the 'personality' of ascetic Protestantism. The natural man (Weber's text uses the term "natural man" three times, and also associates the word "nature" and its derivatives with this personality type eight other times in the book) is identified with the *status naturae* and further equated with "the average man."[55] Associating the natural man not only with Catholicism, but also with Lutheranism, Weber argues that these churches promoted a "quite realistic" acceptance of human worldly weakness, especially through their use of the confessional, which provides the natural man with regular opportunities for the "periodical discharge of the emotional sense of sin," but with the additional "psychological effect" that it "relieves the individual of responsibility for his own conduct."[56] As a consequence of this religious acceptance of human weakness (which I will term *sacramental worldliness* for the purposes of classification), this personality type is without an inward sense of ethical direction, his moral impulses being "planless and unsystematic." He lacks the psychic "unity" of character to counteract the "conflicting motives" that sway him this way and that, and that lead to repeated excesses of debauchery followed by passionate atonement. He is thus a kind of "spontaneous child of nature," thoughtlessly prey to "the spontaneous vitality of impulsive action and naive emotion." In terms of social feelings, the natural man is ruled by "his natural feelings" for family; and in terms of economics, he is without any sense of occupational calling and "does not 'by nature' wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and earn as much as is necessary for that purpose."[57] This characterization of the Catholic "average man" is remarkably similar to Sigmund Freud's denigrative description of the Catholic masses in *The Future of an Illusion*.[58] Although not explicitly articulated in psychoanalytic terms, Weber's characterization also easily translates into the terms of Freud's characterization there of the negative psychodynamic effects of Catholicism: a personality structure with no firmly developed superego, and with a

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55 Ibid., 53, 60, 62, 117, 127, 153, 154, 237, 239. The phrase "natural man" is found on pages 99, 148 and 153.

56 Ibid., 106, 116, 117, 127, 250.

57 Ibid., 60, 116, 117, 126, 127, 237.

58 As detailed in Part 1 of this book.

weak or fragmented ego, poor impulse control, and an only superficially repressed id.

Opposed to this negative depiction of the natural man is a concept that became a favorite of Weber's: 'personality.'[59] (To distinguish the general psychological concept of personality from this use of the term, I will set it off in single quotation marks.) Taken from neo-Kantian philosophy, the concept of 'personality' was utilized by Weber to indicate the transformation of the planless, unsystematic character of the natural man into a unified, purposeful 'personality' with a strong calling dedicated to higher values.[60]

It is important to note that, given this basic meaning, Weber's use of 'personality' changed in nuanced ways over his lifetime. In the last year of his life, in his 1919 lecture "Science as a Vocation," Weber has this to say about 'personality': "in the field of science only he who is devoted *solely* to the work at hand has 'personality'"; a person only becomes a 'personality,' he adds, when he or she has "an inner devotion to the task," a devotion that lifts the person "to the height and dignity of the subject he pretends to serve."[61] However, fourteen years earlier, in *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber's definition of 'personality' has a distinctly different tenor. While it also includes the notion of a dedication to a calling, this earlier definition is cast both in an ambiguously troubling and explicitly psychological form. Weber's definition of 'personality' in *The Protestant Ethic* begins:

> the Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it [i.e., Puritanism] taught him itself, against the emotions. *In this formal psychological sense of the term* it tried to make him into a personality.[62]

Besides utilizing psychology (in fact, "formal psychology") as the frame of reference and as the subject matter of his comments ("constant motives ... against the emotions"), Weber here also identifies the concept of 'personality' with Puritanism in general. He then adds to his psychological definition of 'personality' a puzzling sentence that calls attention to itself by its offhanded, brutal bluntness:

> Contrary to many popular ideas, the end of this asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life: the most urgent task the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment, the most important means was to bring order into the conduct of its adherents.[63]

The combination here of compulsion ("the most urgent task") and matter-of-fact inhumanness ("the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment") raises a number of questions. Does not the brusque extremeness of the sentence's assertion that the Puritan 'personality' sought to repress all positive affects ("against the emotions,"

59　*Protestant Ethic*, 119.

60　Harvey S. Goldman, "Weber's Ascetic Practices of the Self," in *Weber's Protestant Ethic*, 170-172; and Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London, 1988), 69-72, 92-93.

61　Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, 137.

62　*Protestant Ethic*, 119 (italics added).

63　Ibid.

"the destruction of … enjoyment") indirectly acknowledge the problematic origins of the ideal of 'personality' itself? Might not Weber be subtly disparaging here his own commitment to the "height and dignity" of the committed 'personality'? The passage, I believe, distinctly hints of an undercurrent of critical misgiving.

From other sources, we may surmise that in the last years of his life Weber came to consider worldly ascetic Protestantism to have been the first worldly social movement in history to promote self-transformation in service of a calling to higher values and, as such, to have been an essential, positive precondition to the possible achievement of 'personality' in the contemporary Western world.[64] To the older Weber, the history of 'personality,' its close association with Puritanism and its contemporary realization, were thus all viewed in a positive light.[65] (From a strictly biographic standpoint this homage to ascetic Protestantism can be seen as an acknowledgement of Weber's own indebtedness to his Calvinist forebears, who clearly passed down to him as their legacy more than just an independent income.[66]) But in the case of the above quoted problematic sentence, written years earlier, the emphasis seems to be less on the heightened dignity of service to higher values that later came to serve as the core of Weber's concept of 'personality' than on what appears to be a compulsive need to repress the emotions, destroy spontaneity, and eliminate all impulsive enjoyment ("the most urgent task the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment").

This reading of the passage is reinforced by a number of even more openly negative references in *The Protestant Ethic* to the same qualities of ascetic Protestantism that are here identified with 'personality': in particular, those which pointedly deplore its "extreme inhumanity" and "sharp brutality," as well as those with less blatant but nonetheless clearly negative qualifiers, such as "narrowness," "unfreeness," "misanthropy."[67] These sharply negative characterizations at the very least indicate an element of ambivalence toward the idea of the Puritan 'personality' and the extraordinary human costs that it entailed. And they indicate a characterization of 'personality' that can be seen as distinct from Weber's later, more positive portrayals. In these later portrayals, Weber appears to have come to unambiguously accept the psychic costs of 'personality' either as minor in the scale of things or, at the most, as an inevitable necessity given the historical realities of Western cultural development and the psychological realities of human nature. (One might also see Weber's more positive, later position as a reflection of his having overcome several of the more damaging disabilities associated in his earlier life with his commitment to making himself into a 'personality'': in his last years he had regained enough psychological

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64 On ascetic Protestantism as being the precursor to contemporary 'personality,' see Hennis, *Max Weber*, 93 and Goldman, "Weber's Ascetic Practices of the Self," 171-172.

65 That Weber came to hold an unambiguously positive position on 'personality' is particularly evident in his 1919 essay "Science as a Vocation," where, for instance, Weber identifies "manliness" with 'personality.' *From Max Weber*, 155.

66 The psychological and cultural elements of this legacy, as well as the economic, are repeatedly brought out in Marianne Weber's biography of her husband.

67 *Protestant Ethic*, 104, 122, 127, 223. For further deprecative comments directed at Calvinist doctrine and the qualities that are inherent to the notion of 'personality,' see also 102, 107, 223, 226.

stability to handle the pressure of regular teaching, accepting a professorship at University of Vienna, and he had overcome some of his sexual inhibitions, as witness his passionate love affair with Else Jaffé.[68])

The Protestant Ethic's evident ambivalence toward 'personality' and the associated Puritan type (as opposed to the Catholic natural man), along with the explicit psychological emphasis of Weber's depiction, distinguishes it from his later more positive and less psychological depictions of 'personality.' Biographically, I contend, this ambivalence can be associated with Weber's prolonged mental collapse. For even in Weber's own mind, his psychological breakdown was closely linked, in the first place, to his "asceticism of work" (his wife's term for his compulsive need for continuous intellectual labor[69]) and, in the second place, to his pathological need to maintain dominance over his own sexual "animality" ("the most urgent task the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment").[70] Moreover, Weber's portrait of the Puritan 'personality' in *The Protestant Ethic* can be seen as a kind of partial psychodynamic "working-through" of these psychic difficulties brought to the surface by his mental collapse—in particular, of what Weber himself termed "my inner treadmill" and his obvious phobic sexual inhibitions.[71] In addition, this portrait can be seen as an element in Weber's less conscious attempts to work free from his crippling identification with his mother, Helene Weber, and the rigid work asceticism and sexual repression which she had bequeathed him.[72] In fact, I would argue (as

68 Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, 604. Guenther Roth writes of Weber's love affair, "Weber fell in love as never before, with a women in her forties whom he had known for twenty years. Thus, he finally experienced a passionate relationship with one of the 'erotic women' and 'enchantresses' against whom he had warned himself, but one who was reassuring through long familiarity and could be trusted to do right by his wife and his brother in spite of it." *"Marianne Weber and her Circle*, xlii. For details of Weber's affair with Else Jaffé, see Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters: The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes of Love* (New York, 1974), 162.

69 Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, 106. Also see 195, 236, 338, 341.

70 Weber could be quite insightful about the compulsive nature of his "asceticism of work." Shortly before his nervous breakdown, he wrote his wife that "when after years of loathsome torment I had finally achieved an inner equilibrium, I feared a profound depression would set in. It did not happen, and I believe it was because I worked constantly and thus did not let my nervous system and my brain get any rest. Quite apart from my natural need to work ... I believe I could not take the risk of letting the incipient relaxation of my nerves ... turn into enervation [depression]." Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, 196.

71 Ibid., 236. Of the subject of Weber's sexual inhibitions, Mitzman writes of Weber's refusal to accept until late in his life "any concession to his tormentingly rebellious 'animality.'... Indeed, one of the few facts that seems to have been preserved from Weber's written description of his symptoms is that his intermittent sleeplessness from 1898 until his death was based at least partly on a terror of uncontrolled nocturnal ejaculations." *Iron Cage*, 285.

72 Arthur Mitzman describes in *The Iron Cage* Weber's identification with his mother in terms of his incorporation of her into his superego: "his mother—whose (paradoxically) paternalistic authoritarian code dominated his soul through his harsh and demanding superego. And here lay the paradox that almost drove Weber mad: the horror of his early adult life was that no amount of worldly asceticism could procure him the grace and forgiveness of his Lord,

Arthur Mitzman does) that the writing of *The Protestant Ethic* offered Weber the opportunity to "perceiv[e] the historical dimension of his personal dilemma" and that in doing this it allowed him to partially work-through these psychodynamic conflicts by objectifying their personal origins critically within a larger social-cultural portrait of their historical origins.[73] Supportive of my contentions here is the fact that the portrait of the Protestant 'personality' in *The Protestant Ethic* contains elements that appear to uncannily replicate Weber's own psychopathologies (as well as those of his mother), some of which he had become all too aware as he commenced his slow recovery from mental collapse while working on *The Protestant Ethic*.

Thus, unlike his later discussions of 'personality,' much in the book's description of ascetic Protestantism suggests that at the time of its writing Weber viewed the ascetic Protestant 'personality' as containing within it overtly psychopathological elements. One might question the degree to which Weber was able to recognize these elements as overtly psychopathological, though Karl Jaspers' appraisal of the "autopathography" that Weber wrote about his own self-acknowledged psychopathologies as being "a *classic* of its kind beyond any comparison," filled with both "absolute truthfulness (hiding *nothing*)" and "extreme minuteness and drastic concreteness," suggests that Weber was fully capable of recognizing the diverse manifestations of psychopathology and of identifying them both in personal and larger socio-historical terms.[74] But even if Weber was not fully conscious of the pathological quality of some of these elements at the time of the writing of *The Protestant Ethic*, certainly an examination of his portrait of the Protestant 'personality' supports the view that it contains openly pathological elements.

Above all, *The Protestant Ethic* depicts the psychic structure of the Protestant 'personality' as not only motivated by anxiety but also internally shaped by it to a pathological degree. The book depicts the Protestant 'personality' as manifesting a psychic structure that defends itself from the stress of its own internally generated anxiety by constantly deflecting awareness of its cause away from the conscious self and towards what ascetic Protestantism asserted to be the real antagonist,

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for Helene Weber represented to her son a feminine as well as a masculine Godhead. As a masculine Godhead, she demanded of him a life of unsparing dedication to his work, and only through such unsparing dedication to his work, such ascetic subjection to the condition of son-hood, could he attain her grace..." (93). Having achieved such a dominant position within her son's superego, Helene Weber inevitably was the target of her son's anger as he struggled to emancipate himself from its (and her) tyranny. When Mitzman interprets *The Protestant Ethic* as Weber's "truly Nietzschean assault on his own superego," we understand that this is as well an assault on his mother's internal presence; Weber, Mitzman states, "was able to gouge out of his superego and examine critically the commandment of unceasing labor that had been lodged there ... by identifying the work ethic of his mother's Calvinist ancestry" (175, 173). The ethical imperatives of "asceticism of work" were not the only issue that Weber identified with his mother. Green reports that Weber viewed his mother as having "an aversion from all sexuality." *Von Richthofen Sisters*, 109.

73 Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 173-174.

74 Weber's detailed "autopathography" was written before 1914 at the behest of a psychiatrist, and upon Weber's death left to Karl Jaspers; Jaspers returned it to Weber's wife after 1933, and she destroyed it in 1945. Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 285.

the inner and outer realities of the *status naturae*: "only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature," Weber explains, obviously referring less to external nature than to the *status naturae* within the human psyche itself. Overseen by the most "intensive form of the religious valuation of moral action" ever to exist (what psychoanalysis would see as a sign of an extremely harsh superego, except for the fact that this moral function, unlike the Freudian superego, is conceptualized as both rational and completely conscious), the ascetic Protestant psyche so compulsively monitors its every thought and feeling that, according to Weber, seventeenth century Calvinists described it as an ethical variant of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*: a psyche that exclusively identifies itself with its own ethical rational self-control.[75] In psychodynamic terms, Weber's portrait of the Protestant "personality" suggests a psyche characterized by a fundamental alienation from its own basic nature: an alienation caused by the attempt of the conscious mind to transcend its inescapable connection to contradictory psychic processes (as opposed to their "realistic" acceptance by the natural man); an alienation from the influences of the body and the emotions that aims "to free man from the power of irrational impulses"; an alienation that identifies itself with "the supremacy of the purposeful will" and the will's ability to bring "actions under constant self-control with a careful consideration of their ethical consequences."[76] Given the various aspects of this alienation, the Protestant psyche is obviously also alienated from its own unconscious, as Weber's endnote on Calvinist inhibitions to sociability reminds us, noting there that "the psychological basis of Calvinistic social organizations" reveals that "the individual never enters emotionally into them"; Calvinists only form social organizations for "rational motives" that "always remain *above the threshold of consciousness*," in contrast to those non-Calvinists whose social motives obviously include emotions and impulses that emerge from below the threshold of consciousness.[77]

In all these various ways, Weber depicts the Protestant 'personality' as neurotically anxious, compulsively self-controlling, and, to a pathological degree, alienated not only from spontaneous emotions and erotic impulses but also from the cathectic nature of human sociability. From what can be derived from biographical accounts of Weber's life, all these tendencies are identifiable as aspects of what Marianne Weber termed her husband's "severe neurosis of many years duration" (although it should be remembered that at the turn of the century, "neurosis" was still thought by most to be a neurological illness traceable ultimately, as it is in Marianne's biography of her husband, to defects of the "nervous system," "weak nerves," and "nervous exhaustion").[78]

Even if one has doubts about the pertinence of such biographical considerations, it cannot be maintained that Weber presents the Protestant 'personality' in a totally

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75 *Protestant Ethic*, 116, 118.

76 Ibid., 116, 118-119.

77 Ibid., 223 (italics added).

78 *Max Weber*, 203, 236, 277. Marianne Weber's identification of her husbands illness as a "severe neurosis" is quoted by Guenther Roth, "Marianne Weber and her Circle," intro. to Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, xxi.

positive manner in *The Protestant Ethic*. Rather, we find that Weber's critical presentation of the natural man is balanced by an equally critical portrait of the Protestant 'personality': the undisciplined, ethically lax natural man finding thus his equal in the neurotically anxious, compulsively self-controlling Protestant 'personality.'[79] Moreover, considered in terms of Weber's model of religiously inspired social action (*idea -> psychology -> action*), these two personality types are analytically located in equivalent positions. Each of these particular personality types analytically inhabits the psychological mediating position within a specific type of social action: action, as we shall see, characterized in the case of the natural man by economic traditionalism and in the case of the Protestant 'personality' by modern capitalism. That is, each personality type takes the position of *psychology* in Weber's paradigmatic model of action (*idea -> psychology -> action*) and thus functions in itself as the ideal-typical psychological response to specific religious *ideas* and as the ideal-typical source of motivation for specific social *action*.

Hence, in this way the mediating *psychological* term in Weber's model of religiously inspired social action is compounded. As we have seen in the case of ascetic Protestantism, this mediating term is taken at times by the *elementary* concept of salvation anxiety, but at other times it is taken by the *secondary* concept of the compulsively self-controlling, neurotic Protestant 'personality.' In fact, as we will later see, when chapter 5 of *The Protestant Ethic* elaborates the capitalist forms of action associated with ascetic Protestantism, with one notable exception[80] there are no references to salvation anxiety; rather it is this 'personality' itself that is portrayed as the source of motivation for that action. And in the case of action associated with Catholicism and Lutheranism, the mediating psychological term is most often taken by the *secondary* concept of the unplanful, impulsively uninhibited personality structure of the natural man. In this case, the mediating psychological position is never held explicitly by an elementary concept of a psychic state like salvation anxiety, since Weber does not explicitly supply the natural man with such a dominant psychological state. Implicitly, however, an implied *elementary* concept is suggested, which I will here term *natural uninhibited impulsivity*.

3.2.3 Tertiary Concepts of National Character Types

While the conceptual category of personality type functions in the position of a *secondary* motivational explanation of religiously inspired social action, ascetic Protestant on the one hand, and Catholic (and Lutheran) on the other, personality type is not the highest level of abstraction in Weber's depiction of distinct psychologies

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79 In reality, Weber's feelings toward both of these polar opposite personality types were deeply ambivalent. For instance, there are indications that in the years of his mental collapse he developed strong positive feelings for the life of the natural man. In Marianne Weber's biography of her husband, these feelings become most evident in his attitudes toward Italy, which clearly stood symbolically for the way of life of the natural man. "[Max] was often gripped by an irrepressible longing for it [Italy]," Marianne writes, stating that it served in his illness as "a second homeland" and that "he yearned to escape to the south." *Max Weber*, 255, 261

80 *Protestant Ethic*, 178.

issuing from distinct ideas and motivating distinct actions. The categories established by the secondary level concept of personality type also expand beyond the psychology of personality formation to structure a somewhat similar *tertiary* level concept. (The term *tertiary concept* will herein be used to denote a third level of psychological abstraction, constituted by the transformation and generalization of secondary properties of single persons into more expansive concepts of properties common to groups of people.) The tertiary level concepts found in *The Protestant Ethic* concern the psychological characteristics of national (and regional) populations—for the most part what Weber designates as *national character*. National character can be considered as a *tertiary* concept both in terms of pure psychodynamics (i.e., the complex interpersonal and intergenerational psychodynamics of group psychology) and in terms of a sociological psychology (i.e., the complex interpersonal and intergenerational psychological characteristics utilized in explanations of the social action of large multigenerational groupings of people).

In *The Protestant Ethic*, the secondary concepts of the polar opposite uptight ascetic Protestant and impulsive Catholic-Lutheran personality types both serve as the bases of, and are facilitated by, the related tertiary conception of polar opposite types of national character: Anglo-Saxon national character on the one hand and Germanic national character on the other. Just as Weber's major argument of *The Protestant Ethic* relies on a polar typology of personality types, by extension it also relies on a polar typology of national character types. For instance, the argument of chapter 1—with its extended comparison of Catholic and Protestant mentalities—would not be viable without the acceptance of the underlying assumption that each of these populations is so characterologically homogenous that it may be spoken of in terms of a singular character type that has been socially reproduced throughout a population over many generations.[81]

To understand how Weber utilizes notions of national character, let us first look at the passage in chapter 3 that scholarly tradition has relied on in its insistence that Weber neither uses nor accepts the validity of concepts of national character.[82] The passage begins with Weber questioning why the worldview of England's Puritanism was uncongenial to Catholicism and Lutheranism alike. Could the differences be attributed to differences in "national character"? This possibility Weber disparagingly dismisses in two widely noted sentences:

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81 We should note, however, that there is some slippage in the way Weber locates the division between Catholic or Luther populations and ascetic Protestant populations; in chapter 1, the division is located in Germany itself, while in later chapters it is located as existing between Germany and the Anglo-Saxon countries of England and the United States.

82 See Bendix, *Max Weber*, 65, and H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, "Introduction: The Man and His Work," *From Max Weber*, 65. Gerth and Mills state that Weber "rejects such conceptions as 'national character.'" Gerth and Mills link the conception of national character to "the Hegelian traditional" that "permeated German historiography and ... conservative thinking" during Weber's time, and fail to acknowledge Weber's utilization of a more psychological conception of national character in *The Protestant Ethic*.

> The appeal to national character is generally a mere confession of ignorance, and in this case it is entirely untenable. To ascribe a unified national character to the Englishman of the seventeenth century would be simply to falsify history.[83]

These two sentences appear so definitive that scholars have taken them to be conclusive evidence that Weber had no use for any type of concept of national character.[84] However, a problem with this conclusion arises when one reads Weber's very next sentence, which surprisingly appears to rely on a notion not dissimilar from that which has just been dismissed:

> Cavaliers and Roundheads did not appeal (sic) [appear] to each other simply as two parties, but as radically distinct species of men, and whoever looks into the matter carefully must agree with them.[85]

With this qualification, it becomes apparent that Weber's dismissal of the concept of national character in this case consists of a geographical quibble: seventeenth-century England could not be spoken of as having "a *unified* national character" because Protestantism had split the English into the two radically different characterological formations ("species") of Royalist and Puritans. The question arises: How is this concept of "radically distinct species of men" different from the concept of national character? And the answer that the larger context of this passage gives is that, other than their geographic aspects, there is no fundamental difference at all: Weber's separate "species" and his "national character" both denote the characterological commonality of a population group that is radically different from another population group.

The passage continues:

> On the other hand, a difference of character between the English merchant adventurers and the old Hanseatic merchants is not to be found; nor can any other fundamental difference between the English and German characters at the end of the Middle Ages, which cannot easily be explained by the differences of their political history. It was the power of religious influence, not alone, but more than anything else which created the differences of which we are conscious to-day.[86]

In examining these last two sentences, we note that since Weber uses the notion of a population's "character" twice (speaking of the shared "character" of early English and Hanseatic merchants and the similar "characters" of England and Germany at the end of the Middle Ages), he clearly has no difficulty with the concept of a people sharing a common "character." In fact, in these sentences he relies heavily on just such a concept, thereby again reducing his dismissal of the concept of national character to a geographic quibble: one may speak of a shared character (England and Germany before the Reformation) and a difference in character (England after the Reformation), but one cannot speak of an English national character, because

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83 *Protestant Ethic*, 88.
84 See for example Bendix, *Max Weber*, 65.
85 *Protestant Ethic*, 88-89.
86 Ibid., 89.

England in the seventeenth century did not share a "*unified* national culture" and England in an earlier time shared a *trans-national character*. Weber here assumes most of the aspects of the very notion (that population conglomerates can be spoken of as sharing a "character") that he has been taken to have denied (that one can speak of the population of a nation sharing one "character"). Again the only difference between the assumption and the denial here is the geographical nature of the shared character.

If a population's "character" is not determined by geography, then what factors do determine it? Weber answers this question in the last passage quoted above when he states that it was essentially "the power of religious influence" that led to the emergence of the lack of congeniality between England's Puritans and the Continent's Catholics. Moreover, from the larger context we know that when Weber asserts that the "characters" of the English and of the Germans had been essentially the same at the end of the Middle Ages, he is pointing to their common Catholic religious culture. Thus, the end point of Weber's dismissal of the concept of national character is two interrelated notions: firstly, in terms of characterology, we can speak of various groups of people as sharing a common character; and, secondly, this common character is grounded in a common religious culture.

Given his geographically based qualifications, the underlying notion that structures Weber's thought on the characterology of populations might well be termed *regional* or *religious character* were it not for the fact that, for the most part, *The Protestant Ethic* speaks of religious culture in the very terms of Weber's dismissal: as realizing its effect through the formation of *national character* (the term itself appears in this context seven different times in the Parsons' translation, and the concept of a character structure specific to a nation underlies seventeen other passages[87]). For example, Weber begins chapter 5 by stating that to understand how the ideas of ascetic Protestantism came to influence everyday economic conduct, it is necessary to understand how the various combinations of religious practice, belief, and institutional behavior became, over time, the "decisive influences in the formation of national character." And elsewhere in the book he states that religious ideas must be understood as being "in themselves, that is beyond doubt, the most powerful plastic elements of national character." At other times, however, he speaks more broadly in terms of trans-national and intra-national character: for instance, he refers to "the character of peoples" formed by Old Testament norms and to "certain differences in the character (including the economic character) of peoples which have been under the influence of one or the other of two ascetic movements [Calvinism and Pietism]."[88]

But almost all of the other references to notions of a population's shared character conceptualize that character as national. The fundamental polarity dominating Weber's use of the concept of national character is between the Puritan influenced Anglo-Saxon national characters of the United States and England and

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87 "National Character": 105, 155, 173, 183, 218, 278, 279. Concept of common character: 88-89, 105, 118, 119, 127, 139, 143, 173, 217, 218, 223, 224, 233, 240, 249, 256, 279.

88 Ibid., 139, 155, 166, 277-278.

the Catholic and Lutheran influenced national character of Germany. Discussed in sixteen separate passages in the book, present-day American and English national characters are portrayed in a number of ways as profoundly influenced by earlier Puritan religiosity.[89] One present day influence is said to be the "disillusioned and pessimistically inclined individualism which can even to-day be identified in the national characters and the institutions of the peoples with a Puritan past," a consequence, Weber asserts, of the "unprecedented inner loneliness" and "isolation" that Calvinism brought to believers. Similar dour and not so dour consequences of Puritanism on present-day Anglo-Saxon national characters are said to include a lack of spontaneity, narrowness, constraint, social coldness, sobriety, the repression of impulses, utilitarian worldliness, excessive pragmatism, compulsive industriousness, disrespectfulness, and anti-authoritarianism. And while for the most part England is placed squarely in the Puritan camp, this country is also said to have retained and successfully fused some elements of its earlier spirit of "merrie old England" with that of Puritanism: "both elements, that of an unspoiled naive joy of life, and of a strictly regulated, reserved self-control, and conventional ethical conduct are even to-day combined to form the English national character." For the United States, Weber foresees a future in which "the secularization of American life" will become so expansive that it will "have dissolved the traditional [Puritanical] national character."[90]

Weber distinguishes the national characters of England and the United States from that of Germany in a number of ways. While discussing the difference between the psychological make-up of the natural man of Catholic and Lutheran Germany and that of the Protestant 'personality' of the Anglo-Saxon countries, he states that even today

> the typical German quality often called good nature or naturalness contrasts strongly, even in the facial expressions of people, with the effects of that thorough destruction of the spontaneity of the *status naturalis* in the Anglo-American atmosphere, which Germans are accustomed to judge unfavorably as narrowness, unfreeness, and inner constraint.[91]

Unlike Puritan national cultures, German "naturalness" springs from "the fact ... that Lutheranism, on account of its doctrine of grace, lacked a psychological sanction of systematic conduct."[92] Weber also argues that, as a result of the ascetic Protestant renunciation of idolatry of the flesh, differences in political cultures can be seen in

> the relative immunity of formerly Puritan peoples to Caesarism ... as compared with many things which we have experienced since 1878 in Germany.... A repudiation of all hysterical idolization of [the great man] and of the naive idea that political obedience could be due anyone from thankfulness.[93]

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89 Ibid., 88-89, 105, 118, 119, 127, 139, 143, 173, 217, 218, 223, 224, 233, 249, 256, 279.
90 Ibid., 62, 105, 127, 169, 173, 176, 178, 218, 224-225.
91 Ibid., 127.
92 Ibid., 128.
93 Ibid., 224-225.

    In all these cases, Weber utilizes the notion of national character to illustrate the ways in which contemporary characterological differences between nations can be explained by differences in their past religious experiences. That is, national character is conceived of as a principal means by which the present has been shaped by the past (national character thus being something like a time-machine function lodged within the very fabric of social reproduction, continually bringing forward the past into the present). In this regard, we are reminded of the discussion in chapter 4 of this book of the passage from Weber's "'Objectivity' in Social Science" in which it is asserted that psychological analysis assists in uncovering how a forgotten past might dominate present-day social reality.[94] In fact, I would argue that Weber's entire endeavor in *The Protestant Ethic* depends upon the reader's tacit acceptance of the concept of national character, for this concept serves as the implicit foundation upon which Weber's basic argument is built, allowing it to present contemporary attitudes associated with modern capitalism as "what the great religious epoch of the seventeenth century bequeathed to its [present-day] utilitarian successor" and in turn to suggest that lodged in the secular, instrumentalist character of contemporary behavior is evidence of the origin of modern capitalism in seventeenth-century ascetic religiosity.[95]

    However, nowhere in *The Protestant Ethic* does Weber provide an explicit account of the means by which character traits persist over the generations. That is, he presents neither a theory nor a description of psychological reproduction. Nevertheless, Weber unquestioningly believes that character traits persist over the generations—the basic arguments of his book could not stand without this belief. (Weber himself must have developed an acute awareness of the psychological realities of intergenerational reproduction—especially those having to do with parenting and early intersubjective relationships—from his reflections on the connection of his own psychopathologies with those of his parents and theirs with those of their parents, an awareness of neurotic intergenerational reproduction fully evident in the opening chapter of Marianne Weber's biography of her husband, which details a number of such similarities between Weber's grandparents, parents and his own early childhood personality.) In a crucial passage at the beginning of chapter 4, however, Weber does hint that he has a sketchily formulated notion of psychological reproduction in mind. Although "the various different dogmatic roots of ascetic morality [from the Reformation and its aftermath] did no doubt die out after terrible struggles," Weber explains, "the original connection with those dogmas has left behind important *traces* in the later undogmatic [contemporary capitalist] ethics."[96] (It helps here to remember that the primary meaning of "trace," to cite one dictionary definition, is "a surviving mark, sign, or evidence of the former existence, a barely discernible indication or evidence of some quantity; an extremely small amount of some chemical component, such as a trace of copper in a composition."[97]) Beginning with this notion of "important traces" from the past persisting within

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94 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 96-97.
95 *Protestant Ethic*, 176.
96 Ibid., 97 (italics added).
97 "Random House Webster's Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus."

the ethos of present-day national populations, Weber goes on to suggest the type of historical occurrence that might have created such "traces" in the first place: he suggests that ascetic Protestantism's introduction of ideas concerning the uncertainty of salvation had such an impact that the "power, overshadowing everything else," of these ideas caused a "moral awakening which seriously influenced practical life," an influence that survives till today.[98] Weber does not further explicitly explain how the "important traces" of this extraordinary characterological restructuring of the seventeenth century could survive after the dogmas have disappeared, but he indicates the importance of psychology as the conveyer of these traces when he follows the statement about "traces" with the thesis statement of chapter 4 discussed earlier, thereby indicating that the "important traces" of past religiosity embodied in present-day "undogmatic ethics" are one and the same as "the influence of those psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it."

The logic of this passage and of the numerous other references to national character lead me to argue that in *The Protestant Ethic* national character functions as a psychological concept and not, as some might claim, a cultural one. The qualities that are passed down through the generations are not cultural norms or worldviews; they are psychological character traits, especially those that effect the ethical configuration of the psyche, such as those involved in the repression of emotion and impulse, the linkage of anxiety to pleasure, the identification of the conscious mind with ethical rationality, and the internal use of this rationality to supervise one's own actions and thoughts. (To these characterological traits of repression and rational self-control elaborated originally in connection with the portrayal of the Protestant 'personality' in chapter 4 of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber adds in chapter 5 another, which is said to have emerged more slowly than these other traits and which is also suggestively psychological: "the Puritan tradition could, and in part did, lead to a powerful spiritualization of personality," that is, to a personality formation infused with a new, intense inwardness.[99])

In addition, there are a number of other rather obvious reasons why national character in *The Protestant Ethic* functions as a psychological concept, rather than a cultural one. Most basically, the two national characters portrayed in the book exist as tertiary generalizations of two more thoroughly articulated secondary concepts of personality formation, both of which are presented by Weber in a psychological manner (involving descriptions of emotions and impulses, their repression or lack of repression, the role of conscience and reason in the structure of the psyche, and so on). The Germanic natural character is almost nothing other than a generalized concept of the impulsive, emotional natural man, as the Anglo-Saxon national characters of the United States and England are almost nothing other than a generalized concept of the emotionally and sexually repressed, anxiously self-controlling Protestant 'personality'; and, in fact, as we saw, Weber explicitly termed this latter concept "psychological." Furthermore, in the case of the Protestant

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98 *Protestant Ethic*, 97.

99 Ibid., 170. In specific, Weber is here talking about a heightening of artistic imagination.

'personality,' this personality type is itself but a secondary concept based upon the more fundamental elementary "psychological sanction" of salvation anxiety. Put in terms of conceptualization, the psychological quality of the tertiary concept of Anglo-Saxon national character is attested to by the fact that it is conceptually built upon the secondary psychological concept of the Protestant 'personality,' as in turn this secondary concept is built upon the elementary psychological concept of salvation anxiety.

In fact, the tertiary concepts of national character types in *The Protestant Ethic* function fundamentally as nothing more than the secondary psychological concepts of personality types writ large, with this one very significant proviso: the personalities are ideal-type portraits of seventeen-century religious persons, while the national character types are ideal-type portraits of early twentieth-century national populations. Put simply, the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon national characters are the twentieth-century outcome of seventeenth-century personality transformations. Thus, inherent in the book's very notion of national character is the temporal concept of the intergenerational reproduction of psychological traits across a significant time span.

The concept of national character as it is utilized by Weber brings to a sociological psychology particular temporal and spatial dimensions: *temporal* in the sense of the powerful influences of past generations on the psychic configurations of present generations; *spatial* in the sense of the expansive intergroup influences of a psychology across populations. And in both capacities, we are again led to speak, as we were in regard to our earlier discussion of personality type, of a psychology of psychic structure, although now modified with the addition of the following two concepts that are implied by the logic of Weber's argument. First, the basic psychic architecture of personality formation is socially and psychodynamically transmitted through the generations (personality formation thus being in itself a medium through which the past shapes the present). Second, the restructuring of the psyches of an entire population can occur when an era's forceful new ideas (and, one might add, its traumatic events or radical changes in social institutions) have a "power, overshadowing everything else," with the result that this new formation becomes then the psychic basis for the characterological reproduction of future generations. None of these ramifications of the concept of national character are fully articulated by Weber, but I would argue that they follow from and, in fact, implicitly underlie the thrust of his major arguments.

With the conclusion of this discussion of national character, the analysis of the psychological component of Weber's model of religiously inspired social action is completed. To recapitulate our discussion, let us consider Figure 5.1 on page 85.
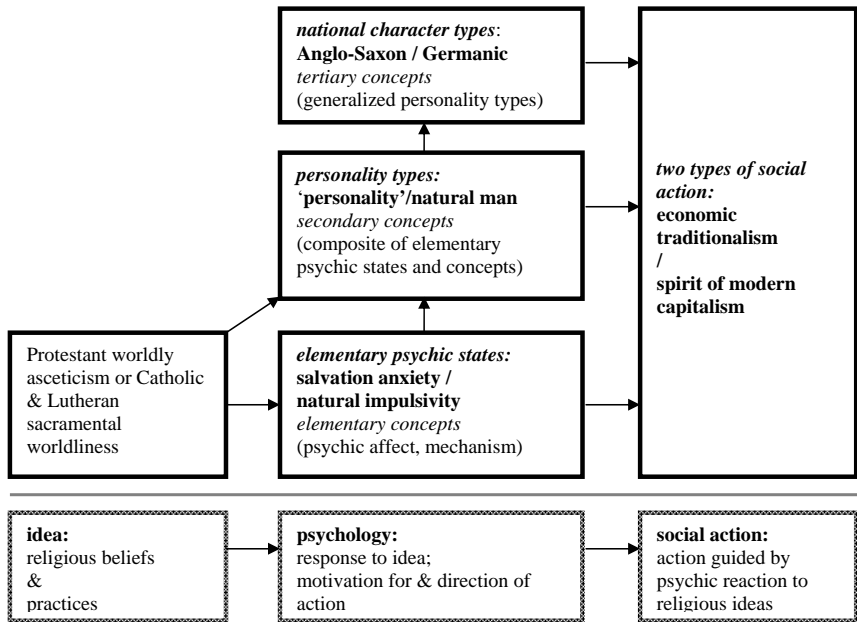
Figure 5.1 The Three Levels of Psychological Concepts in *The Protestant Ethic*
The arrows on the left indicate the influence of ideas on the psyche; the arrows on the right indicate psychic motivation for and direction of social action.

Figure 5.1 depicts the three levels of binary psychological concepts that we have encountered in our analysis of *The Protestant Ethic*: *elementary* psychic states (salvation anxiety versus, by implication, natural uninhibited impulsivity), *secondary* polar personality types ('personality' versus the natural man) and *tertiary* polar national character types (Anglo-Saxon versus Germanic).

Looking first at the depiction of ascetic Protestantism, we see a progression of influences of *psychology* upward from the lowest conceptual level to the highest, in which each level serves as the elementary building block for the next higher level: the elementary level concept (salvation anxiety) becomes a basic conceptual building block in the constitution of a secondary level concept (Protestant 'personality'), and this in turn becomes generalized spatially and temporally in the constitution of the tertiary level concept (the national characters of the Anglo-Saxon nations). In addition, *The Protestant Ethic* describes the *ideas* of ascetic Protestantism as having direct influence on two psychological levels: the elementary level (resulting in salvation anxiety) and the secondary level (directly contributing other psychological qualities to the formation of Protestant 'personality'). In turn, all three levels of psychology are also explicitly conceptualized as separately motivating modern capitalist *action*.

In regard to the far more sketchy depiction of the natural man, *The Protestant Ethic* fails to advance explicitly any singular elementary concept of *psychology*, although

such an elementary concept is implied (natural uninhibited impulsivity). Explicitly, the discussion of psychology commences with the secondary level concept of personality type (the natural man), and advances then to the generalization of this type into a tertiary level concept (the Germanic national character). In terms of the influence of *ideas*, Catholic and Lutheran sacramental worldliness is indicated as the ideational cause, implicitly, of the elementary level of "natural" impulsivity and, explicitly, of the secondary level concept of the natural man. In turn, the implicit elementary level impulsivity and the explicit secondary and tertiary psychological entities are indicated as motivating the *action* exemplified by economic traditionalism.

3.3 Action (Model of Action)

With the completion of the discussion of *psychology* as the mediating term between *idea* and *action*, we now turn to a brief examination of the social action portrayed as resulting from this psychological mediation. Weber concludes the crucial fourth chapter of *The Protestant Ethic* by arguing that the various types of action produced by the psychological response to worldly ascetic Protestantism partook of fundamentally the same innovative character: a worldly asceticism that directed human conduct into "the market-place of life"—Weber's provocative phrase, suggestive not only of the mundaneness of daily life but also its commercialization.[100] An extended analogy appears repeatedly in the book between the *otherworldly* asceticism of Medieval monasticism, in which daily conduct was also structured by rational planning, with the Protestant *worldly* asceticism associated with the rise to modern capitalism. Weber argues that, in the Middle Ages, monasticism had "emancipated [itself] from planless otherworldliness and irrational self-torture" of early charismatic Christian religiosity and achieved a new, more orderly otherworldliness in which daily monastic conduct was ruled by the methodical and constant application of rationally organized purpose, but that it had been able to do this only by fleeing from the world of mundane affairs, leaving "the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched."[101] In contrast, Protestant worldly asceticism rejected monasticism, "strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but neither of nor for this world."[102]

With this move of Christian asceticism into "the market-place of life" (commercialization thus becoming the vehicle of spiritual esteem), we arrive at the conjunction that binds together part one and part two of the book, the union of "The Spirit of Capitalism" and "The Protestant Ethic." As the concluding, fifth chapter repeatedly makes clear, the combination in Protestant asceticism of self-denial and acquisitiveness resulted in a "valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly [occupational] calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith," a result that

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100 Ibid., 154.

101 Ibid., 118-119, 153, 154. Analogies between Medieval monasticism and worldly ascetic Protestantism also appear on 121, 154, 158 and 174.

102 Ibid., 154.

was "the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we have here called the spirit of capitalism."[103] Or as Weber even more explicitly concludes in the last pages of the book: "The essential elements of the attitude which was there [in part one] called the spirit of capitalism are the same as what we have just shown [in part two] to be the content of the Puritan worldly asceticism, only without the religious basis."[104] In terms of attitudes alone (and ignoring Weber's numerous qualms about such an equation), ascetic Protestantism prefigured modern capitalism as spiritual endeavor, while capitalism resulted as ascetic Protestantism secularized in the form of an economic ethos.

Chapter 5 focuses on the ways Protestant worldly asceticism assisted the birth of modern capitalism. First of all, it transvalued labor. "Hard, continuous bodily or mental labour" served to glorify God, according to the early ascetic Protestants. Along with cold baths, hard labor was explicitly considered an ascetic technique for keeping at bay "all those temptations which Puritanism united under the name of unclean life," erotic impulses being the most unclean. But more importantly, "labour came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God." St. Paul's injunction that "He who will not work shall not eat" was held unconditional for everyone, and unwillingness to work held evidence of a lack of grace. Thus the imperatives of methodical, systematic labor vanquished impulsiveness, spontaneity, and pleasure. Condemned were idle talk, luxury, and sociability, as distractions from labor; wasting time (from labor) was considered "in principle the deadliest of sins."[105]

The Protestant concept of "calling" sanctified this notion of labor, to the inestimable benefit of capitalism. The view that God's Providence had prepared a calling for every person (or, at least, every saved person) made labor in one's calling the vehicle by which one both contributed to God's glory and tested one's grace. And in this way both capitalist profit and proletarian exploitation were legitimated, for "the treatment of labour as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the business man"—that is, the riches of capital accumulation and the underpaid drudgery of the worker's labor were equally expressions of God's Providence. For the capitalists, this view "legalized the exploitation" of the worker by "interpreting the employer's business activity as a calling"; to profit thus by fulfilling God's stewardship was a sign of God's approval; profits contributed to His glory, as failure to profit detracted from it. Such notions bequeathed to the modern capitalist "an amazingly good, we may even say a pharisaically good, conscience in the acquisition of money" (Weber's rhetorical flourish here betraying his ironic view of bourgeois moral logic). For the workers, proletarianization was also taken to be a manifestation of God's Providence. Protestant asceticism took "the idea that faithful labour ... is highly pleasing to God"—"even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities"—and "deepened this idea most powerfully" by creating "the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness: the psychological sanction of

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103 Ibid., 172.
104 Ibid., 180.
105 Ibid., 157-159.

it through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace."[106] In other words, ascetic Protestantism instilled salvation anxiety within the workers and then channeled this anxiety into labor, the faithful execution of which became the only legitimate means of its relief. Thus, for both capitalist and worker, Weber ironically implies a certain cruel equity within the conscience of capitalism, an equity by which the faithful laborer and the profiting capitalist were viewed as both animated by anxiety in the quest of salvation.[107]

3.4 Model of Action Summarized for "Ascetic Protestantism as a Single Whole"

To summarize my argument up this point, I need to return to an overview of Weber's model of religiously inspired social action. Drawing upon the preceding examination of the three components of action, and in terms of the generalized ascetic Protestantism presented there, the following fleshing out of this model is suggested.

> **Idea**: Worldly ascetic Protestantism separated Christians from traditional beliefs and practices (magical rites, priestly intersession, Church sacraments, the confessional) that answered humanity's age-old worries about the uncertainty of salvation; at the same time, it greatly intensified these worries doctrinally while leaving but one direction to seek salvation: ascetic conduct in the world.

> **Psychology**: Consequently, with only one outlet, intense salvation anxiety was penned up within a psyche doctrinally alienated from and made hostile to (inner and outer) nature and channeled into the willful transformation of the psyche from the unplanful and impulsive natural man into the compulsively self-controlling, purposeful 'personality.' The impact of this transformation so altered the psyche that major traces of it have persisted for generations and still determine the national character of the originally affected countries.

> **Action**: Only offered release in worldly ascetic activism, salvation anxiety energized and transformed the economic order, infusing it with a new rational

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106 Ibid., 176-179. See also 162-163, 170-172.

107 Of course, behind this ironic equity lies Weber's concept in *The Protestant Ethic* of the "reversal of what we should call the natural relationship" between pleasure and acquisition (53), "where [for the bourgeoisie] a man exists for the sake of his business, instead of the reverse" (70) and for workers "labour must ... be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself" (62). A parallel exists here between the views of Weber and those of Karl Marx, for Weber's concept is quite close to Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism," in which the attributes of human relationships are transferred to commodities and the attributes of material goods are transferred to the relations between persons. In both Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism" and Weber's concept of the reversal of ends the ultimate ends of human life cease to be found in such goals as happiness, pleasure, and sociability and become embodied in an ever expanding demand of capital accumulation, which becomes the end-all of human endeavor. And in both concepts, social motivation itself shifts from use value to exchange value and from human relations to the relations of capital.

methodicalness. In a similar manner, ascetic Protestantism sanctified both faithful labor on the part of workers and capitalist exploitation on the part of the bourgeoisie as expressions of God's Providence, initiating modern capitalism.

Of course, this is an extremely condensed, ideal-typical elucidation that disregards denominational differences and focuses instead on the three components of a model of action of "ascetic Protestantism as a single whole"—the viewpoint pursued in the previous sections of this chapter and found in much of *The Protestant Ethic*. Yet the book, particularly its crucial fourth chapter, often pitches its argument at a lower level of abstraction, in which four distinct denominations of worldly ascetic Protestantism emerge, each sharply differentiated from the others. It is to these denominations that we must now turn.

4. The Different Ascetic Protestant Denominations (Model of Action)

The four ascetic Protestant denominations on which Weber focuses his discussion are Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and Quakerism. Weber's portraits of these denominations are detailed enough so that each can be analyzed in terms of the three components of the model of religiously inspired action (*idea -> psychology -> action*). Briefly, I will present here an examination of key differences between these denominations. A fuller, but also more elliptical presentation of this comparison appears as part of Table 5.1, beginning on page 94; the present discussion will be followed by an examination of the material contained in the table.

Idea. Differences in religious beliefs and practices between the branches of worldly ascetic Protestantism can best be seen in the ways these denominations grappled with the uncertainty of salvation. Both Pietism and Methodism minimized the intellectual aspect of their doctrines of proof of salvation (in contrast to Calvinism), emphasizing in its place intensely emotional practices that sought religious repentance and reconciliation with God, these latter two states viewed as the means of both gaining the *status gratiae* and of imbuing one's daily conduct with the requisite rational diligence. Quakerism, while likewise theoretically underdeveloped, adopted a pneumatic doctrine that promoted practices of calm, conscientious deliberation, interpreted as the infusion of the Holy Spirit into the soul and as such a direct manifestation of the *status gratiae*; that is, for Quakers, submission to God's voice as it spoke through their conscience and assumed form in their actions was taken as in itself proof of the condition of grace. For the more logically consistent Calvinists, however, the combined doctrines of predestination, of the absolute transcendentality of the Deity, and of the corruption of all human impulse and emotion, narrowed their conception of proof drastically. Neither reason nor emotion could gain direct intellectual or spiritual knowledge of one's standing before God. All that was left was to embrace wholeheartedly Calvin's *"decretum horrible"* that "the world existed to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone" and, then, as the logical extension of this doctrine, to dedicate one's life to the proposition that action in this world gained meaning if it was "solely activity *in majorem gloriam Dei.*" With the additional Calvinist

conceptualization of the Divine Will as impersonal, orderly, and supremely rational, the believer's only option was to attempt to become a tool of such a Divine Will, by laboring in one's own occupational calling with similar impersonality, orderliness, and rationality, the success of which was to be taken as the sole available sign of one's possible salvation.[108]

Psychology. The ideas of Calvinism, in particular, offered little emotional relief from salvation anxiety other than "a systematic self-control which at every moment stands before the inexorable alternative, chosen or damned," which is to say that other than promoting a restless, rational worldly activism that utilized this anxiety productively as motivational energy, it did not offer any direct emotional release. In fact, as we have seen, Weber goes so far as to say that the Calvinist was "doomed" to a "tremendous tension" for which there was "no mitigation."[109] But the other ascetic Protestant denominations did put forth ideas that provided ways of lessening the "anxiety over the *certitudo salutis*," although in doing so, they nonetheless channeled the results toward an ascetic worldliness that, while often less rigorous, resembled Calvinist ascetic worldliness. Like the doctrines of Calvinism, the doctrines of these denominations pressed upon the believer the spiritual isolation of an unmediated relationship with God and also promoted a rejection of "natural" emotions and impulses, but they advanced these positions in such a way that the resulting psychological reaction of salvation anxiety was mitigated by replacing the future-orientation of Calvinism with a focus on the here and now. (Similarly, in his essay "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" Weber concluded that in most cases, "psychologically considered, man in quest of salvation has been primarily preoccupied by attitudes of the here and now."[110])

In the case of Pietism, "the pressure of [anxiety concerning] the state of grace which had continually to be proved and which was concerned for the future in eternity, was diverted to the present emotional state," in which believers sought through "humility and abnegation" God's forgiveness of their sins. With this diversion of salvation anxiety, Pietists sought its total release in feelings of "reconciliation ... with God *now*"; but so intense could be this striving for emotional release that at times it took "on a positively hysterical character" which alternated between ecstasy experienced as blissful union with the Deity and depressive abnegation experienced as His abandonment.[111] Methodism also promoted a religious emotionalism of the here and now, embodied in its case in practices that brought followers to "terrible ecstasies" in which guilt was purged, repentance and conversion experienced, and, with the calming down of ecstasy, "an immediate consciousness of justification and forgiveness" implanted in the psyche.[112] On the other hand, the Quakers' concern with the here and now took

108 Ibid., 102, 108, 109, 114.

109 Ibid., 115, 117. "Restless" is an adjective repeatedly applied to Calvinism and Puritanism; see Ibid., 137, 170, 172.

110 *From Max Weber*, 278.

111 *Protestant Ethic*, 131, 137-138 (italics added).

112 Ibid., 140.

the form of so silencing the flesh (as an expression of its rejection of the *status naturae*) that followers' thoughts and acts were experienced as expressions of the Holy Spirit and, as such, as evidence of the *status gratiae*. This practice of the calm, conscientious deliberation of thought and action

> rested psychologically above all on the idea of expectant waiting for the Spirit to descend.... The purpose of this silent waiting is to overcome everything impulsive and irrational, the passions and subjective interests of the natural man. He must be stilled in order to create that deep repose of soul in which alone the word of God can be heard.[113]

Fundamental to this cultivation of calm deliberation was the Quaker's "radical elimination of magic," which, given Weber's logic, included the magical aspects of the psyche itself ("everything impulsive and irrational," i.e., emotionally distorted thought, disavowed intentions, wishful magical thinking), and left the follower "no other psychological course than the practice of worldly asceticism."[114]

Each of these non-Calvinist denominations devised its own methods to deal with salvation anxiety, yet we may nonetheless conclude that "anxiety over *certitudo salutis*" remained dominant in the psychologies of each of them, as it did in the case of Calvinism. For in all these cases (and not just that of Calvinism), the pursuit of a psychic release from anxiety was a pursuit driven by the more elementary affective state of the salvation anxiety itself. More fundamentally, these denominations, including Calvinism, displayed the same pattern: doctrinal ideas concerning the uncertainty of salvation initiated the affective reaction of salvation anxiety, which in turn sought release in various practices and actions interpretable as proof of salvation.

Action. As we have seen, for the ascetic Protestant denominations, salvation anxiety was channeled into "the market-place of life," where success in one's occupational calling came to be taken as the primary sign of the *status gratiae.* This was particularly true of Calvinists, who, following Calvin,

> viewed all pure [i.e., religious] feelings and emotions, no matter how exalted they might seem to be, with suspicion[.] Faith had to be proved by its objective results in order to provide a firm foundation for *certitudo salutis*. It must be a *fides efficax*, the call to salvation [must be] an effectual calling.[115]

Making "labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him," the notion of effectual calling pressed Calvinists to increasingly identify salvation with occupational success, the end result being "those self-confident saints whom we can rediscover in the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism and in isolated instances down to the present."[116]

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113 Ibid., 148-149.
114 Ibid., 149.
115 Ibid., 114.
116 Ibid., 109, 112.

But for Pietists and Methodists, occupational success was not sufficient; one must have the additional emotional experience of Godly reconciliation. In the case of Pietism, "the need to feel reconciliation and community with God now" often led either to a withdrawal into separatist, biblically-inspired communities where one could pursue the "eternal bliss" of salvation in the here and now, or to a substitution for "the self-confidence" of the Calvinist of the "attitude of humility and abnegation" appropriate for the faithful simple laborer, "who did not seek acquisition, but lived according to the apostolic model," an attitude that on a larger social level, as we have seen, assisted in the creation of a dedicated labor force attuned to the needs of modern capitalist exploitation.[117] In the case of Methodism, however, the positive appraisal of religious emotionalism led not to separatist communities or humble self-abnegation but rather to the belief that, although successful rational conduct in the world was a necessary condition of grace, it was insufficient; that in addition the believer must have undergone the ecstatic psychic transformation of repentance and rebirth that brought to that conduct "the self-confidence of the righteous man."[118]

Quakerism, on the other hand, found itself closer to Calvinism in some of these matters: it was averse to religious emotionalism and emphasized the importance of having an occupational calling, although in this case, an explicit ingredient of that calling was a rational conscientiousness extremely favorable (as Weber points out) to the rise of modern capitalism, such as that manifested in the Quaker business ethic formulated as "honesty is the best policy." Additionally, the refusal of Quakers to serve the state or bear arms narrowed the range of activities open to the worldly application of the "whole shrewd and conscientious rationality" inculcated by Quakerism's practices of calm ratiocination, with the result that "the intensity of interest in economic occupations was considerably increased."[119]

5. The Place of Psychology in Religiously Inspired Social Action

With the distinguishing elements of the various Protestant denominations in mind, I need now to recapitulate their differences in terms of our primary concern in regard to *The Protestant Ethic*: the role of psychology in religiously inspired social action. First of all, the different denominations clearly presented different characteristics of worldly actions: the cold impersonality of the Calvinist capitalist, the humble faithfulness of the Pietist worker, the self-confidence of the saved-again Methodist, the shrewd conscientiousness of the Quaker businessman. Secondly, differences in religious ideas did not in themselves account for these differences in action; rather, it was the psychological responses to ideas that functioned as their immediate cause, as the following comparisons show.

The Calvinist belief that God's will is characterized by rationally ordered impersonality (*idea*) resulted in the cultivation by believers of a disposition shaped by a similar rational impersonality (*psychology*), this psychological disposition in turn resulting in the cold aggressivity of "the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic

117 Ibid., 136, 137, 138 178. See also 130, 241.
118 Ibid., 141-143.
119 Ibid., 148-151.

age of capitalism" (*action*).[120] Pietism directed its believers to seek repentance for their unworthiness (*idea*), which inflicted upon these believers profound feelings of self-abnegating humility (*psychology*), with the result that these emotions in turn led believers to assume the role of the humble, faithful worker so useful to the rise of capitalism (*action*). The Methodist beliefs and practices (*idea*) that aimed to free the believer of any feelings of sin—and the fact that, ideologically, Methodism had "less intensive development of the sense of sin"[121]—resulted in personalities infused with feelings of sin-free perfection (*psychology*), feelings which gained believers a heightened self-confidence in their worldly occupations (*action*). And the Quaker belief that quieting the emotions allowed God to speak through the believer's rational conscience (*idea*) created personalities structured by a conscientious style of rational deliberation (*psychology*), which in turn resulted in a shrewdly conscientious occupational activism (*action*).

In all these cases, ideas so influenced psyches—psyches that, we must remember, had been primed to receive these ideas in the first place by the acute anxiety inflicted upon them by other ideas about the uncertainty of salvation—that these psyches were changed; these changed psyches in turn were impelled (by anxiety seeking release) to express their resulting psychological characteristics (emotions, psychological dispositions, guilt-based moral inclinations) in action. In all these cases, psychology is found to mediate between the impact of ideas and the resulting social action. And, in terms of analysis, the inclusion of psychology is found in all these cases to be a necessary part of the understanding of that action.

These and other permutations of the psychological mediation between idea and action can more completely be shown by a careful examination of Protestant denominations listed in Table 5.1, which places these denominations within the larger context of all the major religious groupings discussed in *The Protestant Ethic*. (Catholicism and Lutheranism are thus included, but their discussion will be held off until our discussion of differences between the ascetic Protestant denominations is completed.) In examining Table 5.1, the reader will notice that to the left of the three columns are listed the major religious groupings of *The Protestant Ethic*, the last four being the ascetic Protestant denominations we have been discussing. For each religious type, there are several ideal-typical action-sets made up of interconnected entries from each of the three columns. It is possible that a few of these interconnections may appear to the reader as being rather forced, but all are taken from the text and I believe all are credible.

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120 Ibid., 112.
121 Ibid., 143.

Table 5.1 Six Religious Groupings

Weber's model of religiously inspired social action as exemplified by the six religious groupings detailed in *The Protestant Ethic*, divided between the two churches portrayed as associated with economic traditionalism and the four ascetic Protestant denominations associated with modern capitalism. Each action-set reads across the page and incorporates one entry from each of the columns of the three components of social action, linked by arrows indicating influence or causation. All items are taken from *The Protestant Ethic* (mostly chapter 4, but also chapters 3 and 5).

	Idea ->	Psychology ->	Action
Catholicism	• *sacramental worldliness* beliefs and practices realistically accommodate human weakness ->	• *natural man / Germanic national characters*: divided psyche (fragmented ego) with little impulse control ->	• planless unsystematic life; no sense of occupational calling
	• confessional as means to gain God's forgiveness ->	• confessional periodically discharges sense of guilt (undeveloped superego) ->	• the individual freed from responsibility for his own conduct
	• monasticism ->	• freed of irrational self-torture & planless other-worldliness, monastic psychology is given structure by methodical rationality	• monastic rational asceticism separated from & leaves untouched spontaneity of natural man in the world
Lutheranism	• *sacramental worldliness* salvation through faith ->	• emotional reconciliation with God along with deep feelings of sin-stained unworthiness ->	• acceptance of traditionally situated occupations & social order; no psychic drive to alter world
	• *gratia amissibilis*: grace regainable through penitent contrition ->	• no psychological pressures to repress spontaneous impulses & acts ->	• only in the immediate aftermath of confession or sermon is believer able to rise above *status naturae*
	• *vessel of God*: mysticism ->	• passive rest in God (highest state: *unio mystica*) ->	• lacks positive valuation of external activity
Calvinism	• rationally consistent doctrines: predestination & absolute transcendentality of God ->	• intense salvation anxiety willfully channeled into methodical rational action ->	• *fides efficax*: success from diligence at one's occupational calling only sign of grace
	• impulses & emotions identified with sin-ridden *status naturae*; rationally ordered impersonal action identified with God's will ->	• '*personality*' / *Anglo Saxon national character*: unitary ego dedicated to impersonal, future-oriented calling: compulsive self-monitoring & self-control aimed at continuous transcendence of status naturae; psyche alienated from its own unconscious ->	• hard-edged legalism, methodical enterprise, self-confident heroic capitalism; accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save; specialized division of labor as sign of divine calling; destruction of the spontaneity of the *status naturae*
	• desire for intimacy is idolatry of the flesh ->	• unprecedented inner loneliness ->	• impersonal social relations
	• *tool of God*: man exists for the sake of God ->	• instrumentalism of the self in service of impersonal higher cause ->	• man exists for the sake of his business

	Idea	->	Psychology	->	Action
Pietism	• *praxis pietatis* places doctrine in background & practices of religious emotionality in forefront	->	• divert Calvinistic future orientation to emotional states in the present, as means of alleviating salvation anxiety with experiences of present reconciliation with God	->	• tendency of withdrawal from world into spiritually elect communities
	• salvation through repentance: religious practices aimed to induce repentance as first step to grace	->	• feelings of humility & self-abnegation replace Calvinist self-confidence	->	• grace identified with deliberate methodical labor in attitude of humility & self-abnegation, as in case of faithful, exploited worker
	• religious practices aimed at eudaemonistic ideal of experiencing eternal bliss emotionally in the present	->	• hysterical alternation between blissful reconciliation with God & depressive abandonment by God	->	• faithful official, clerk, servant
	• sometimes belief in doctrine of predestination	->	• doctrine contemplated in emotional state	->	• fatalism
Methodism	• doctrinal indifferent methodical practices aimed at emotional acts of repentance & conversion as means to salvation	->	• occasional emotionalism aimed at ecstatic attainment of repentance, creating pure feeling of absolute certainty of forgiveness & grace	->	• ascetic conduct in daily life as necessary but not sufficient sign of true conversion; feelings of grace also needed
	• sanctification: emotional act frees one of sin	->	• feelings of perfection, elimination of guilt & anxiety	->	• self-confidence in occupation of rational character
	• sometimes belief in doctrine of predestination	->	• understanding of doctrine influenced by feelings of grace and perfection	->	• far-reaching self-confidence
Quakerism	• pneumatic doctrines: God only speaks when the flesh is silent	->	• rational deliberation through calming of impulses & emotions, so that Holy Spirit directs daily life through disinterested reason	->	• shrewdly conscientious rational conduct
	• radical elimination of magic from the world	->	• radical disavowal of magical thinking: i.e., of thought processes influenced by unconscious processes, emotionality, or impulsivity	->	• psychological elimination of magical thinking allowed no other course than the practice of worldly asceticism
	• repudiation of worldly powers and pomp	->	• unconditional submission to God as guide to purposeful rational action in the world	->	• refusal to bear arms or take oaths restricts worldly activism to occupational calling

An examination of Table 5.1 in terms of the differences between the ascetic Protestant denominations (the last four religious groupings on the table) reveals that it contains not only a schematic presentation of the points of differences that we have been discussing but also other major differences between the denominations. For example, we note that the same idea, predestination, appears in the rows pertaining to Calvinism, Pietism, and Methodism, but that in each case a different action resulted. With Calvinism, the doctrine of predestination led to restless occupational diligence. With Methodism, it led to far-reaching, self-confident action. With Pietism, it led to fatalism. (In this last case, the reader will remember our earlier discussion of Weber's assertion that predestination logically leads to fatalism, and, in fact, in this one case, it appears to do just that, although it is the emotional contemplation of the doctrine of predestination rather than its logic that leads to the fatalism of the Pietists.[122]) Since the idea, predestination, is the same in all three cases, *idea* cannot explain the differences in *action*, leaving *psychology* alone to provide the explanation. In fact, in each case a different psychological response to the doctrine of predestination is described by Weber as having led to a different type of action: the pressure of salvation anxiety caused by the doctrine drove Calvinists to a restless impersonal activism; ecstatic feelings of perfection inspired Methodists to react to the doctrine with far-reaching, self-confident occupational behavior; and the emotionalism of self-abnegating humility caused Pietists to respond to the doctrine with a pessimistic fatalism that then pervaded their view of action.

To complete our examination of the differences between the ascetic Protestant denominations, the reader is asked to examine the linked action-sets that distinguish each of the denominations and to perform the following experiment several times: take an item from the *idea* column and ask yourself, does the *action* listed across from it in the third column fully follow from the *idea* alone (as a necessary consequence of the idea) or is something left out, a gap in understanding. Now consider the entry under *psychology* in the corresponding middle column and ask yourself if it helps to fill in the gap. I believe that in most, if not all, cases the reader will discover that the psychological entry is clearly needed to begin to grasp the full meaning of the resulting social action.

Table 5.1 also includes the two non-ascetic religious groupings portrayed by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic*, Catholicism and Lutheranism. Weber's views of these churches were discussed earlier in this chapter as they pertain to his depictions of the personality type of the natural man and the national character of Germany, both of which serve as analytical and historical foils to Weber's main subject, ascetic Protestantism and its influence in the rise of modern capitalism. But Weber's discussion of these two churches also raises the same crucial question we have focused on in regard to the ascetic Protestant denominations: What is the role of psychological response processes in religiously inspired social actions? An examination of the action-sets attached to these churches again reveals the same pattern: it is the response of the *human psyche* to *ideas* that shapes religiously inspired *action*. Especially in regard to the natural man, as we saw earlier, Weber depicts a certain type of personality structure resulting from the sacramental worldly

122 Ibid., 131.

ideas of these two churches (their "realistic" accommodation with "natural" human weakness[123]). This is a personality structure consisting of (to use the psychoanalytic terms) an underdeveloped superego, a fragmented ego, and a poorly repressed id. And in Weber's portrait it is clearly these psychological characteristics (and not the churches' ideas) that led to the planless, unsystematic, and irresponsible life that he attributes to the lay followers of these churches.

Furthermore, in the entries of Table 5.1 regarding these churches, we should pay special attention to Weber's own major concern: that is, how does an understanding of these churches assist in the understanding of ascetic Protestantism? For example, consider Weber's contrast between the two different ideas concerning man's relationship to God formulated as "vessel of God" and "tool of God," the first identified in Table 5.1 with Lutheranism (and in the text also with Pietism) and the second with Calvinism. If a person is urged by religious ideas to become a vessel of God (as one is in Lutheranism), then certain psychological experiences become possible: ego diffusion is encouraged (and not feared, as it would be in Calvinism) and experienced as "a feeling of actual absorption in the deity" (and not as the indolent collapse of higher purpose, as it would be in Calvinism). From the position of psychology, this reflexive positive (or negative) ideological reshaping of the experiences of ego diffusion has major repercussions, resulting in fundamentally different psychic dispositions, the first shaped by the "passive search for the fulfillment of the yearning for rest in God" (Lutheranism), and the second by the restless instrumentalization of the self in service of a God that "requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to His commandment, in accordance with that purpose" (Calvinism). This resulting mediation of psychic configuration or personality type (and not directly the difference between the ideas of "vessel" and "tool") explains the fundamentally different types of action that follow: the Lutheran's lack of positive valuation of external activity; the Calvinist's ceaseless instrumentalization of the self in action that was originally based upon the premise that "God does not exist for men, but men for the sake of God," but later transferred to the belief that "man exists for the sake of his business, instead of the reverse."[124]

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123 Ibid., 116.
124 Ibid., 70, 102-103, 108, 112.

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Weber's Later Methodological Writings and Three Types of Psychology

In the following I will interrelate Weber's early and late theoretical enunciations on the place of psychology in social analysis. The early views will be represented by the work of 1904 analyzed in chapter 4 of this book: "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." The later views will be taken from two theoretical works on sociological method written in the last decade of Weber's life: the lengthy discussion of sociology's relationship to psychology (subtitled "Relation to Psychology") in Weber's essay of 1913, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," and the opening methodological sections (especially the section subtitled "The Definition of Sociology and of Social Action") of *Economy and Society*, written between 1918 and 1920.

These two later works were written specifically from the position of the discipline of sociology, in contrast to the earlier work, which was written before the discipline of sociology had emerged in Germany, and in which Weber advances a position associated with the German tradition of *Geisteswissenschaften*. The first of these later works, the recently translated "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," is a complex theoretical essay on sociological method which contains the only extensive theoretical discussion of the relation of psychology to sociology to be found in Weber's oeuvre. The second work, the opening methodological section of *Economy and Society*, represents a reworking of "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," but, as Weber himself wrote, with the terminology "simplified as far as possible and hence considerably changed in order to render it more easily understandable."[1] One consequence of this reworking is that, while the specific theoretical framework of the earlier essay's discussion of psychology remains intact, most of the explicit discussion of psychology itself has been excised.

1. Psychologism

The first thing we learn from these works about Weber's approach to psychology is what it is not. As we have seen, both "'Objectivity' in Social Science" and *The Protestant Ethic* are marked by Weber's hostility to those German psychologistic social scientists and philosophers who had gained significant influence in the

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1   Edith Graber, "Translator's Introduction to Max Weber's Essay on Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," *The Sociological Quarterly* 22 (Spring 1981), 147; *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 3.

German universities by the turn of the century with the claim that the new exact science of physiological psychology should serve as the foundational science of their fields as well. Major mistakes in reading Weber occur because of the general ignorance of the impact of psychologism on German academia in the first decade of the twentieth century and of the fierce debate that it occasioned at the time. Although the debate subsided during the second decade of the century, its embers spring to life in unexpected places in Weber's later methodological works. For instance, much has been made of the lengthy discussion of sociology's relationship to psychology in "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," with major attention focused on the opening sentence of that discussion: "Interpretative sociology ... is not part of a 'psychology.'"[2] This very sentence has come to be repeated a number of times and has even been taken as the title of an article, all apparently without awareness that the sentence and part of the section that it heads are aimed polemically at the German proponents of psychologism.[3] Thus, misunderstandings about Weber's actual position on the role of psychology have been reinforced. A similar sentence has been trumpeted from the other major methodological work of Weber's last years, the opening section of *Economy and Society*, and again with the same result. Here, in a discussion of the type of action that is totally rational, Weber writes that "this very case demonstrates how erroneous it is to regard any kind of psychology as the *ultimate foundation* of the sociological interpretation of action" [italics added].[4] In both of these cases, what Weber rejects is not the sociological use of psychology per se (as the sentences have tended to be read), but rather the psychologistic claims that the new psychology should serve as the "ultimate foundation" of sociology and that sociology should be considered to be "part of a 'psychology.'" The lesson here is that in reading Weber's various discussions of psychology one must always distinguish the polemical assaults on psychologism from the more positive remarks on the uses of psychology. Failure to make this distinction reinforces the claim that Weber rejected any role for psychology in social analysis and in the emerging social science of sociology.

2. Physiological Psychology

German academic psychology originally entitled itself "physiological psychology" not because it considered psychology to be reducible to biology, but rather because it considered mental processes to be law-governed in the same manner as the physical

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2   "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," *The Sociological Quarterly* 22 (Spring 1981), 154.

3   Graber, "Interpretive Sociology is Not Part of a Psychology," 67-70. The key to Graber's misunderstanding is contained in her misreading of the very sentence she has taken for her title, for Weber's concern is not to differentiate the field of study of sociology from that of psychology; rather, his concern is embodied in the sentence itself. That is, Weber's concern is to dismiss the claims of proponents of psychologism (such as Karl Lamprecht) that all the social sciences should be an integral "part of a 'psychology.'"

4   *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 19.

processes studied by the exact sciences.[5] As we saw in chapter 4, in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" Weber rejects psychologism's claim that social reality itself can be reduced to this new psychology's findings of the lawful aspects of mental processes. He rejects these claims not "because cultural or psychic events" are known to be "'objectively' less governed by laws," but rather "because the knowledge of social [as well as cultural and psychic] laws is not knowledge of social reality but is rather one of the various aids used by our minds for attaining this end."[6] That is, what Weber objects to is the psychologistic claim that social reality can be adequately understood in terms of the law-governed processes discoverable within it. As we saw, for Weber there is a radical divide between processes understandable in terms of abstract laws and those that constitute the value-laden significance of social reality.

But we must be careful here. In "'Objectivity' in Social Science," Weber objects to psychologistic reductionism, not to the utilization of findings about law-governed psychological processes. Indeed, as the sentence just quoted suggests, Weber held that such findings constitute "one of the various aids used by our minds for attaining" knowledge of social reality. In fact, in *The Protestant Ethic* Weber presents himself as one who, in this regard, is perhaps too eager to invoke the aid of the law-like findings of physiological psychology. For as we saw, Weber refers twice there to the possible usefulness of future findings of "comparative racial neurology" concerning "biological heredity" in helping to understand the role race might play in producing higher levels of rationality in Europeans than in Orientals and African-Americans.[7] But the uses Weber finds for physiological psychology are usually not so questionable. Examples include Weber's effective utilization of physiological studies on hysteria[8] in his portrait of Pietist religious hysteria in *The Protestant Ethic*, and, only three years after the completion of that book, his major attempt to incorporate physiological psychology in an empirical study of industrial efficiency (*Zur Psychophysik der industriellen Arbeit*).

Weber's later methodological works restate the distinction found in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" between the rejection of psychologistic reductionism and the helpful utilization of findings of physiological psychology. The distinction, however, is now placed within a new theoretical framework. Whereas "'Objectivity' in Social Science" is written from the position of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (the social and cultural sciences), with their subject matter identified as "the knowledge of social reality," the later methodological works are written from the position of the newly emergent discipline of sociology, with its subject matter identified as "the meaning of social action." To understand the terms of this new theoretical framework, I will need to digress briefly and sketch Weber's conception of the meaning of social action

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5   Robinson, *Intellectual History of Psychology* 345.

6   "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 80.

7   Weber's long standing belief that "comparative racial neurology" might turn up information that would link social differences to biologically based racial differences tied to "skin color" is also evident in the opening theoretical section of *Economy and Society* (vol. 1, 8), where he writes of possible future findings concerning "differences in hereditary biological constitution, as of 'races.'"

8   *Protestant Ethic*, 130, 244.

(a topic, moreover, that in its own right pertains to our larger inquiry into the place of psychology in social analysis).

In his later methodological writings Weber came to insist that sociology "is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action," that the interpretation of social action "is concerned with the subjective meaning of action," and that "the subjective meaning of action" is that which "the acting individual attaches … to … behavior … [and which] takes account of the behavior of others."[9] Succinctly put, Weber's thesis here is that sociology's concern is the ideal-typical interpretation of a particular content of human action, specifically an action's *subjective intended meaning as it is related to others*. A closely related corollary of this thesis is that an action is "subjectively meaningful"—and "social"—*only* if it follows from subjective intention and is oriented toward others; if it is not subjectively intended and socially oriented, then the action is said to be "devoid of subjective meaning," a phrase that often appears in Weber's later methodological writings and, as we will see, is especially applicable to physiological psychology.[10] Two key elements are involved in Weber's concept of the meaning of social action: subjective intention and orientation toward others.

To grasp the role that *subjective intended meaning* plays in Weber's conception of social action, first one must understand that, contrary to some scholarly opinion,[11] an account of the motivation of action is central to Weber's notion of social action. However, as we saw in the case of *The Protestant Ethic*, the account of motivation is specifically attuned to questions of the subjective intentions of social actions and limited to ideal-typical concepts. In part, the resulting artificial simplification of the complex and heterogeneously personal motivational life of populations is a product of the very nature of ideal-type concept formation (and in this regard it is not very different from the ideal-typical theorizing of psychoanalysts), but the framework of intentional social analysis additionally limits the analysis of motivation to the ways it pertains to meaningful patterns of social interaction. It is just such limitations in the consideration of motivation that distinguish a sociological use of psychology from, say, a clinical use of psychology.

Moreover, in Weber's methodological pronouncements, the intended meanings or motives of social action are often conceptualized as conscious and as at least partially rational, but they need not be either. Weber repeatedly incorporates notions of unconscious motivation and intention in his depiction of certain activities, stating, for instance, that "in the great majority of cases actual action goes on in a state of inarticulate half-consciousness or actual unconsciousness of its subjective

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9   *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 4.

10 For this phrase and variants of it, see for example, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 151, 156, 157; and *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13.

11 Cf. Graber, "Interpretive Sociology is Not Part of a Psychology" (69), who argues that for the most part Weber eschews discussion of motives, an assertion that flies in the face of Weber's preoccupation in a number of both early and later works not only with the intended meaning of acts (as cognitively construed), but more broadly with the subjective initiations (motives) of action (material and ideal interests; affective and habitual determinations).

meaning."[12] Moreover, Weber acknowledges that the motives of such actions can be conflictual (that is, ambivalent), disavowed, repressed, sublimated, and rationalized.[13] For instance, he writes that "the 'conscious motives' may well, even to the actor himself, conceal the various 'motives' and 'repressions' which constitute the real driving force of his action," that "actors in any given situation are often subject to opposing and conflicting impulses, all of which we are able to understand," and that "sociology recognizes, of course, ... the existence of 'rationalizations,' of 'substitute satisfactions' of drives and the like."[14]

As to the second conceptual element, *orientation toward others*, Weber usually means by this simply that for an action to be socially meaningful, it must be attuned in some fashion to the expectations, reactions, and initiatives of other actors. But Weber also expands this notion to include an orientation toward *objects*. "To us," Weber states, "'action' ... is always intelligible behavior toward *objects*." "Objects," Weber adds, include not only "other persons" and "material goods ... [as] 'outer' objects," but also "'inner' objects," such as found in "Buddhist contemplation and Christian asceticism."[15] (At least superficially, Weber's notion of "object" appears here to be not far removed from that found in psychoanalysis.)

Related to this inclusion of orientation toward "'inner' objects," Weber's position remains grounded theoretically in the conceptional framework expounded in "'Objectivity' in Social Science." As we saw in the examination in chapter 4 of that text, the unique subject matter of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is the "value-ideas" by which a culture imbues specific concrete situations with human significance and endows (as "historical" beings) persons in these situations "with the capacity and will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it significance."[16] Applied to the analysis of social action this theoretical framework leads to the notion that for an action to be meaningful, it must be an expression of a historically and culturally situated human being and his or her willful assertion of value (a variant on the notion of "'inner' object"), whether this is considered in terms of separate value spheres (ascetic, mystical, economic, political, aesthetic, erotic, or intellectual) or in terms of the formal nature of the ends (in particular, absolute values, emotional expression, or traditional habituation).[17]

With this understanding of Weber's conception of the meaning of social action in place, we can now turn to Weber's discussion of psychology in his later methodological essays. As mentioned above, in these works Weber restates the distinction found in his earlier writing between the rejection of psychologism's

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12 "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," 152. See also *Economy and Society*, 21 and 24.

13 *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 9, 10, 25; "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 155, 156, 157.

14 *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 9, 10; "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 156. Weber utilizes the notion of "substitute satisfaction of drives" in the "Sociology of Religion" chapters of *Economy and Society*, for instance, 603.

15 "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," 152 (italics added).

16 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 80-81.

17 "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," *From Max Weber*, 323-359; *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 24-26.

reductionist use of physiological psychology and the acceptance of a more limited use of its findings, but he now grounds this distinction on what had become, for Weber, a more fundamental distinction between the *conditions* of social action and the *meaning* of social action.

In "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," Weber writes:

> Interpretive sociology, however, is concerned neither with physiological phenomena which used to be called "psychophysical" (pulse rates, for example, or changes in reaction time and the like) nor with strictly psychic conditions whereby the psychological phenomena might be characterized (for example, the combination of feelings of tension, pleasure, and aversion). Rather, interpretive sociology makes distinctions in terms of the typical *meaningful* relationships of action.... Variations in [physiological] psychological qualities of behavior, therefore, are not as such directly relevant for us.... But the relevance for interpretive sociology of processes devoid of subjective "meaning" [of action]—as, say, the course of vital statistics, the selection processes of anthropological types, or, of purely [i.e., physiological] psychic facts–lies exclusively in their role as "conditions" and "consequences" toward which meaningful action is oriented, just as climatic or botanical conditions are relevant for economic theory."[18]

Subsuming the notions of prior influences and of subsequent consequences within the notion of *the conditions of action*, we can render Weber's point here in terms of the following comparison: just as knowledge of the climatic or botanical environment is relevant to economic theory in providing information on factors contributing to the material "conditions" of economic action, so physiological psychology is relevant to social analysis in providing information on the neurological, sensory, and cognitive "conditions" of actors engaged in social action. Or, to put it another way: while the findings of the exact sciences (such as that of physiological psychology) are "devoid of subjective 'meaning'" in terms of "the typical *meaningful* relationships of [social] action" (that is, they do not on their own lead to action which is social, that is, action motivationally oriented to others and to values or ends), what they say about the contextual *conditions* of this action may nonetheless help the analyst in the interpretation of that meaning.

A similar distinction is also found in the opening theoretical section of *Economy and Society*. Weber argues there that attempts to grasp the meaning of social action may turn up findings that exhibit numerous law-like "statistical uniformities," but that these uniformities do not constitute "the understandable subjective meaning of a course of social action." Among such uniformities "devoid of meaning" are "certain psychic or psychophysical phenomena such as fatigue, habituation, memory, etc.; also certain typical states of euphoria under such conditions of ascetic mortification; finally, typical variations in the reactions of individuals according to reaction-time, precision, and other modes." In such cases, "if adequacy in respect of meaning [of social action] is lacking, then no matter how high the degree of uniformity and how precisely its probability can be numerically determined it is still an incomprehensible statistical probability, whether we deal with overt or subjective processes."[19] As

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18 "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," 153.
19 *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 7, 12.

we have seen, Weber insists that sociology itself "is concerned with the subjective meaning of action" which "the acting individual attaches … to … behavior … [and which] takes account of the behavior of others."[20] As such, sociology's findings are distinct from the quantitative uniformities uncovered by the exact sciences; in fact, in terms of an understanding of "psychological elements,"

> the more precisely [these psychological elements] are formulated from a point of view of natural science, the less they are accessible to subjective understanding. This is never the road to interpretation in terms of subjective meaning [of action]. On the contrary, both for sociology in the present sense, and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning-complex of action.[21]

Weber's rejection here of physiological psychology, however, is limited to its incompatibility with the primary concern of sociology: that is, its determination of "the subjective meaning of action." As in "Some Categories in Interpretive Sociology," Weber both condemns the psychologistic aspiration to reduce sociology to the terms of physiological processes and grants this type of psychology the subsidiary role of supplying information on the *conditions* (but not the *meaning*) of action. He writes in *Economy and Society:* "uniformities [that] are not [subjectively] 'understandable' are naturally not on that account any the less important.... Such phenomena ... become conditions, stimuli, furthering or hindering circumstances of action."[22] However, while granted this subsidiary role, physiological psychology is not privileged over any of the other exact sciences, which, in fact, are all granted an equal subsidiary status in regard to social analysis:

> The behavior of physiological entities such as cells, or of any sort of psychic elements, may at least in principle be observed and an attempt made to derive uniformities from such observations.... But the subjective understanding of action takes the same account of this type of fact and uniformity as of any other not capable of subjective interpretation [of the meaning of social action]. (This is true, for example of physical, astronomical, geological, meteorological, geographical, botanical, zoological facts, [as it is] of those aspects of psycho-pathology which are devoid of subjective meaning.)...

> The results of a type of psychological investigation which employs the methods of the natural sciences in any one of the various possible ways may naturally, like the results of any other science, have outstanding significance for sociological problems; indeed this has often happened. But this use of the results of psychology is something quite different from the investigation of human behavior in terms of its subjective meaning. Hence sociology has no closer relationship on a general analytical level to *this type of psychology* than to any other science.[23]

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20 Ibid., 4.
21 Ibid., 13.
22 Ibid., 12-13.
23 Ibid., 13, 19 (italics added).

3. *Verstehende* Psychology

In all of the works under examination, Weber's depiction of physiological psychology contains implications that a distinctly different psychology may exist. For instance, in the passage above, Weber's identification of physiological psychology as "*this* type of psychology" rhetorically references "*another* type of psychology" as well. Weber's conception of antithetical psychologies began in "'Objectivity' in Social Science," where, as we have seen, he spends a number of pages severely chastising the proponents of psychologism for their notion that the psychological laws associated with physiological psychology could serve as the foundation of all of the social sciences, only suddenly in mid-paragraph to launch into a passage that extols a very different type of psychology and a very different type of psychological collaboration with the social sciences. In contrast to his dismissal of psychologistic proposals to reduce social facts to psychological laws, he embraces there what he terms a "social psychology" that will assist in learning "increasingly how to understand institutions in a psychological way."[24]

What kind of "social psychology" does Weber have in mind in "'Objectivity' in Social Science"? As we have seen, it is an interpretive psychology that acknowledges the "extremely heterogeneous and highly concrete structure of psychic motives and influences," rather than one that attempts to reduce all psycho-social phenomena to a few universal laws. In terms of institutional analysis, Weber envisions a social-psychological collaboration which would presuppose "the knowledge of individual institutions as a point of departure," with psychological investigation only beginning after the establishment of "a precise knowledge of [institutions] and the scientific analysis of their structure"—a reversal of the order of investigation promoted by psychologistic social analysis. Similarly, in terms of cultural analysis, Weber envisions an understanding of "the special cultural significance of the situation" as the crucial framework from which a determination can then be made of "the psychic attitude of a person in a social situation [as it] is specifically particularized in each [cultural] case"—again a reversal of the order of investigation promoted by psychologistic social analysis.[25]

Envisioning the implementation of such a social-psychological collaboration, Weber envisions a "social-psychological research" that focuses on the "various very disparate *individual* types of [socio-]cultural elements with reference to their interpretability by our empathic understanding."[26] The key phrase here is "interpretability by our empathic understanding," a phrase that we know from other works by Weber (and from the larger German *Geisteswissenschaften* tradition) refers to the notion of a type of interpretative understanding (i.e., *verstehen*) in which an observer seeks to grasp the meaning of other people's action by putting himself or herself in their socio-cultural position (i.e., through empathy).[27] In addition, when

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24 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 89.

25 Ibid., 88-89.

26 Ibid., 89 (italics in original).

27 Werner J. Cahnman, "Max Weber and the Methodological Controversy in the Social Sciences," *Sociology and History*, eds. Werner J. Cahnman and Alvin Boskoff (New York,

(as it explicitly is in "'Objectivity' in Social Science") the phrase is specifically applied to the collaborative effort of "*social-psychological* research," the phrase also refers to the *psychological* notion of a kind of interpretive understanding in which an observer imaginatively places himself or herself in the circumstances of a socially and culturally positioned actor in order to recreate internally through empathy "the *psychic* attitude of a person in a social situation [as it] is specifically particularized [by the] cultural significance of the situation."[28] Weber is well known as an advocate and a practitioner of *verstehende* social analysis; what becomes clear here is that he is also an advocate and (as we saw in our analysis of *The Protestant Ethic*) a practitioner of *verstehende* psychological analysis.

Among Weber's later methodological statements concerning the emerging discipline of sociology, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" offers the most explicit and by far most detailed explanation of situations in which a *verstehende* sociology needs to seek the collaborative assistance of a *verstehende* psychology. Social action, Weber writes there, varies between two poles: rational and irrational. In cases of purely rational action (i.e., "*zweckrational*" [means-end rational] action in which both ends and means "are rationally taken into account and weighed"), "interpretive sociology" has no need of psychology, for the calculations of reason embodied in such action are rationally transparent and thereby possess, as Weber states elsewhere, "the highest measure of 'self-evidence.'"[29] In fact, the more rational an action is, "the less meaningful intelligibility of its course is enhanced by any psychological consideration whatever."[30] However, in those cases where an action deviates either partially or totally from such rationality, interpretive sociology needs to seek the help of "interpretive psychology" in order to grasp the meaning of the non-rational (that is, irrational) components of the action. (Weber treats all cases of "non-rationality" as cases of "irrationality."[31])

Moreover, the construction of a hypothetical "rational ideal-typical limiting case" is to be used to determine from among the components of such action those that are irrational and therefore in need of psychological interpretation:

> in every explanation of "irrational" processes ... it is necessary ... to determine how the rational ideal-typical limiting case of pure instrumental and correct rationality *would have* proceeded. Only when this is determined ... can the course of action be causally attributed to both objectively as well as subjectively "irrational" components, because only then does one know what aspects of the action are "only psychologically" explicable.... Thus, there is no other way to establish what of the "psychic" data ... has become relevant.[32]

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28 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 89 (italics added).

29 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 151. The definition of *Zweckrational* appears in *Economy and Society*, 24-25.

30 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154.

31 Weber does not postulate a third category standing between rationality and irrationality, as, for instance, Talcott Parsons does with the concepts of "nonlogical action" and "non-rational action."

32 Ibid., 154.

As we see here, Weber's concern is to establish a set method through the use of hypothetically rational "limiting cases" by which to ascertain the components of action that deviate from rationality, and thereby to locate the relevant "psychic data" that is "only psychologically explicable." (Alan Sica lambastes Weber's methodological notion here of the use of rational "limiting cases" to determine irrationality, but in Weber's defense I would point out that, at least abstractly, this notion resembles rather closely Sigmund Freud's notion of the use of rationality as embodied in the "reality principle" to expose the neurotic aspects of a patient's action as irrational deviations from that principle.[33] In fact, I suggest that often in our daily lives we intuitively utilize methods similar to Weber's to judge whether various actions are reasonable or not.)

Weber goes on to elucidate three distinct types of social action that contain components that are "only psychologically explicable," distinguishing each type of action in terms of its degree of irrationality within two analytically distinct frameworks: the action as viewed objectively (viewed externally, without taking into account subjective intention) and the action as viewed subjectively, "from the inside out" (i.e., viewed in terms of intention).[34] The first of these three types of action is almost completely rational: objectively and subjectively, it is characterized by self-interested instrumental rationality, but the subjective aspect of this rationality is marred by the fact that, consciously, this self-interested rationality is "disavowed." With this type of action, the "essential aspect of the task of interpretive psychology ... consists precisely in the disclosure of relationships [of the elements of actions] that are insufficiently or not at all noticed and thus in this sense are not subjectively rationally oriented"—the disclosure especially of motives that unconsciously advance some hidden personal self-interest and, at the same time, hide these intentions from consciousness by use of the psychic mechanism of disavowal:

> Apart from certain aspects of so-called psychoanalytic work that have this character, a construct such as Nietzsche's theory of *ressentiment* also contains an interpretation that derives from the rationale of an interest constellation an objective rationality of outer or inner behavior, a rationality insufficiently or not at all noticed because, for understandable reasons, "disavowed."[35]

The second type of social action, which has been "substantiated hundreds of times," and is especially noticeable "in cultural history," occurs in cases where a type of objectively rational action appears to have been brought into motion by subjective "instrumental rationality" but which "actually originated historically through wholly irrational motives," and only later came to contain "a high degree of technical '*correct* rationality.'"[36] Weber here is clearly referring to *The Protestant Ethic*, in which, as

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33 Sica, *Weber*, 189.

34 "From the inside out" is one of Weber's ways of describing how "interpretative sociology" captures "the (subjectively intended) meaning of ... action." "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 153.

35 Ibid., 155.

36 Ibid., 156. Weber defines "correct rationality" as that type of rationality found in actions which are "'correctly' oriented toward objectively valid goals," in distinction to

we saw, he repeatedly insisted that the triumph of rationality in Western society did not originate from pragmatic rational appraisals of economic conditions but rather from "psychological impulses" that psychically set the sanctions of salvation and damnation on the achievement of a manner of life guided by methodical rationality. Among "the psychic data" of other versions of this type of social action, Weber lists "the existence of 'rationalizations,' of 'substitute satisfactions' of drives [sublimation], and the like."[37]

Weber's third type of social action occurs when rational analysis is contradicted by an actual course of events. In this case, the sociologist is confronted with action both subjectively and objectively irrational, and which thus offers no room for rational understanding. Such action can be interpreted solely in psychological terms and is thus only "psychologically 'understandable,'" not "rationally understandable." Here Weber utilizes the same example of the belief in predestation that, as we have seen, he used in both "'Objectivity' in Social Science" and *The Protestant Ethic*.

> One can logically infer, for example, that unconcern for the salvation of others is a consequence of mystical contemplative religiosity, and one can [logically] infer that fatalism or ethical anomie is a consequence of the belief in predestation. In fact, in certain typical cases, the first can lead to a kind of euphoria that is subjectively "experienced" as a unique generalized feeling of love. To this extent an at least *partially* "incomprehensible" context is present. This feeling is often acted out in social action as "acosmic love"—a context that is naturally not "instrumentally rational" but is psychologically "understandable." And belief in predestation can ... allow the believer's capacity for actively ethical action to become the cognitive basis of his belief in his own salvation.... Belief in predestation can, in "psychologically" understandable ways, be the product of very specific, meaningfully understandable life circumstances and qualities of character (to be accepted as givens) [i.e., external and internal qualities of action that are psychologically understandable, but not logically, rationally understandable, and thus to be taken as a "given" in the psychological construal of the "meaningfully understandable" content of action, in this case, ethical action following from a belief in predestation].[38]

In cases such as these, in which acosmic love for others issues from a-social contemplation or belief in predestation leads to the conviction that one's purposeful actions are signs of salvation, Weber states, "it is self-evident to sociology that the actual action is not determined by ... logically and rationally inferable [relationships] but rather by psychological relationships."[39]

With the construction of these three ideal-typical categories of social action, Weber is able to illustrate three fundamentally distinct relationships of psychology to sociology, with each type of action corresponding to a different mixture of objective and subjective rationality and irrationality. Repeatedly he positions these distinct actions along the middle three-fifths of what he calls (according to the translation) a "gliding scale" (sic), one end of which marks entirely rational action

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"subjectively rational instrumental action that is not correctly oriented toward objectively valid goals, as in the case of magic" (154-155).

37 Ibid., 156.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

that is transparently understandable to reason and the other end of which marks entirely irrational action that Weber classifies as "meaningless."[40] (See Figure 6.1 for a graphic representation of the relationship between various categories of action contained in Weber's "gliding scale.")
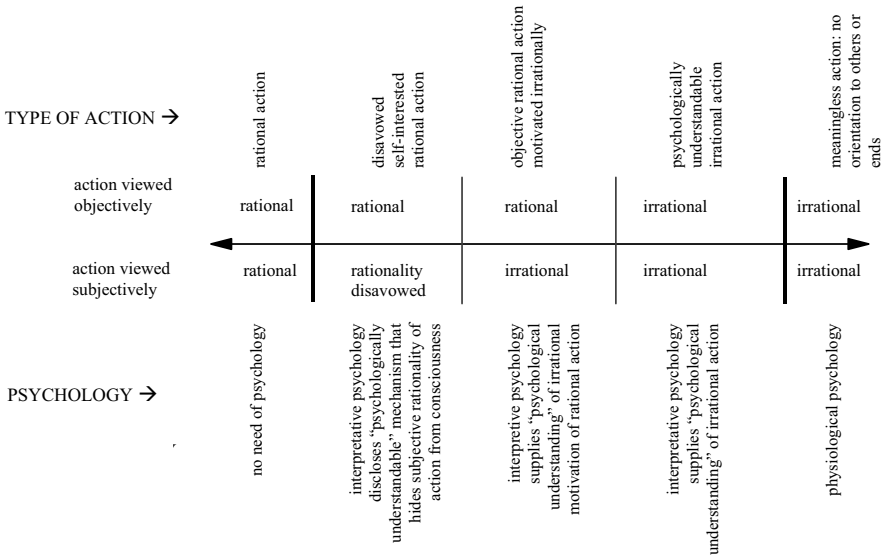
TYPE OF ACTION →	rational action	disavowed self-interested rational action	objective rational action motivated irrationally	psychologically understandable irrational action	meaningless action: no orientation to others or ends
action viewed objectively	rational	rational	rational	irrational	irrational
action viewed subjectively	rational	rationality disavowed	irrational	irrational	irrational
PSYCHOLOGY →	no need of psychology	interpretative psychology discloses "psychologically understandable" mechanism that hides subjective rationality of action from consciousness	interpretive psychology supplies "psychological understanding" of irrational motivation of rational action	interpretive psychology supplies "psychological understanding" of irrational action	physiological psychology

Figure 6.1 Gliding Scale of Types of Action
Weber's "gliding scale" of five ideal typical categories of actions, each representing a different mixture of objective and subjective qualities of rationality and irrationality and each calling for a different relationship of interpretive sociology to psychology.

As stated above, the understanding of actions at the extreme of the first end of this gliding scale, that is, action that is entirely rational in both its objective and subjective aspects, has no need of psychology; means-ends rationality alone is the method by which one achieves understanding of this type of action. (In truth, such entirely rational action has no special need of an understanding of subjectivity at all, since in its rationality the subjective appraisal of an action's course coincides with the objective appraisal, "the expectations held subjectively about the behavior of *objects* ... [being] formed on the basis of valid experience (objectively correct rationality)."[41]) The type of action at the extreme of the opposite end of the scale is more problematic, however. This type of action is so entirely irrational in both its objective and subjective aspects that it represents "wholly unintelligible psychic or physical phenomena 'in' and 'about' a person." This type of action is "'meaningless' action,"[42] for it lacks any meaningful intention or orientation toward others, toward outer or inner objects (value-ideas) or toward ends.

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40 Ibid., 154, 156, 157.
41 Ibid., 154.
42 Ibid., 156, 157.

In between these two extremes Weber's three types of "psychologically understandable" action find their place: (1) action that objectively and subjectively exhibits a self-interested rationality which, however, is consciously denied and thereby subjectively partially rendered irrational (disavowed action); (2) action that objectively is rational but that subjectively originates irrationally (as in the case of ascetic Protestantism, wherein methodical rationality was originally motivated by salvation anxiety); (3) action that is incomprehensible rationally because it is both objectively and subjectively irrational, but that nonetheless is "psychologically understandable" (as in the cases of the doctrine of predestination leading to a belief that worldly activism is a sign of salvation and of the mystic's a-social contemplation leading to acosmic love for others). Beyond this third type of action (rationally incomprehensible but psychologically understandable) on Weber's scale one should imagine a borderline past which action can no longer be considered intentionally meaningful or oriented toward others or toward ends. The psychology that is appropriate for this type of "meaningless" action is physiological psychology; typical actions include neurological and sensate alterations associated with tension, pleasure, and aversion, changes in pulse rate or in reaction time, as well as uncontrollable reflex reactions to exceptional stimulus.[43]

In the theoretical construction of his "gliding scale," Weber's major aim is not to repeat his critique of physiological psychology but rather to indicate the range of variation that exists in the relationship of sociology to psychology—"the relationships of interpretive sociology to 'psychology' are formed differently in each individual case," he states—and, more importantly in terms of our purpose here, to offer three ideal-typical categories of action containing components of action he alternatively terms "psychologically understandable" and "only psychologically explicable" and (as distinct from "rationally understandable" and "rationally explicable" components of action). Moreover, Weber indicates two qualifications in terms of these categories of action that are especially pertinent to our focus here. In the first place, he suggests that most social action partakes of at least some aspect of irrationality, and hence requires some element of psychological understanding, stating in particular that "between the poles of purely (subjectively) rationally oriented action and purely unintelligible psychic data [meaningless action] lie the commonly so-called 'psychologically' understandable (irrational) relationships [of action types], [all of] which in reality merge in fluid transition."[44] As Alan Sica has pointed out, Weber's discussion of irrationality in "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology" indicates that he was clearly aware of "the necessary interrelation of irrationality and action" when he acknowledges with this sentence that different types of psychologically understandable actions "in reality merge in fluid transition" with each other.[45] (One also remembers in this regard our earlier discussion of the endnote that Weber late

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43 Ibid., 152, 156; *Economy and Society*, 25.

44 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154. Alan Sica's translation of this sentence suggests that the "fluid transition" between rationality and irrationality applies to all five categories of action, which I have indicated by the addition of the bracketed "all of." Sica, *Weber*, 189-190.

45 Sica, *Weber*, 190.

in his life added to *The Protestant Ethic* in which he disputes William James' special attribution of irrationality to religious experience: "[an] irrational element … is by no means peculiar to religious experience but applies (in different senses and *to different degrees) to every experience.*"[46])

Secondly, Weber's discussion raises the question of what exactly constitutes "psychological understanding" of those components of social action that are "only psychologically explicable." His repeated use of the phrase "psychologically understandable," in contrast to "rationally understandable," may at times be somewhat ambiguous, but at several points he clearly defines the phrase in the same terms that he used in "'Objectivity' in Social Science," that is, as empathic understanding (*verstehen*). An observer can gain a psychological understanding of the psychological components of a social action, Weber indicates, when that action is "capable of being empathetically relived."[47] (The reader will remember that in "'Objectivity' in Social Science," Weber's phrase is "interpretability by our empathic understanding.")

Turning to the opening methodological section of *Economy and Society*, we find that while its reworking of the arguments of the "Some Categories" essay eliminated most of Weber's explicit discussion of psychology, it does further assist us in grasping the meaning of Weber's concept of the "psychologically understandable." In the opening pages of this book, Weber echoes the similar passage in "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" discussed above, when he states that "the basis of certainty" in understanding the meaning of social action varies between two poles: in cases of purely rational actions, "rational understanding" provides the basis of certainty; and in cases of irrational, emotional action, "emotionally empathic" understanding provides the basis of certainty.[48] In the latter case, "empathetic certainty is achieved when an action and the complex of feelings experienced by the agent is completely re-lived in the imagination."[49] (In the opening pages of the methodological section of *Economy and Society*, Weber uses the notions of "empathic understanding" and "emotional empathic understanding" interchangeably—thereby aligning *empathy* with *emotions* and identifying "*empathetic* understanding" as the means by which the observer "grasps the *emotional* context" of an action through "sympathetic participation" in that action. The notions of "empathic understanding" and "emotional empathy" thus do much of the same work as—and take the place of—the notions of "psychological understanding" and "only psychologically explicable" in "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology.") Moreover, in achieving this empathic understanding, the observer's emotional character and behavior is itself a factor, for "the more we ourselves are susceptible to such emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, ambition, envy, jealousy, love, enthusiasm, pride, vengefulness, loyalty, devotion, and appetites of all sorts, and to the 'irrational' conduct which grows out of them,

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46 *Protestant Ethic*, 233 (italics added).

47 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154.

48 *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 5.

49 I have used here the translation of Weber's sentence from the translation of Weber's text by E. Matthews in W. G. Runciman's edition of *Max Weber: Selections in Translation*, 8.

the more readily can we empathize with them."[50] Conversely, according to the logic of Weber's argument, if the observer is *totally* incapable of certain emotions and irrational actions, then he or she will be unable to gain any empathetic understanding of social actions associated with these feelings and actions.[51]

Thus, Weber suggests in *Economy and Society* (as he also does in both the "Objectivity" and "Some Categories" essays) that the observer gains understanding of the irrational, emotional components of social action by placing himself or herself in the socio-cultural position of the actor, thereby internally evoking the emotions that this position calls forth, and then interpreting these emotions analytically. Of course, as the "Objectivity" and "Some Categories" essays explicitly argue, the task of interpreting these emotions belongs to an empathetic psychology, that is, to a *verstehende* psychology. *Economy and Society*, however, only hesitantly acknowledges this, for instance, in the well known passage in which Weber distinguishes between the understanding of rational action that has no need of psychology ("this very case [i.e., rational action] demonstrates how erroneous it is to regard any kind of psychology as the ultimate foundation of the sociological interpretation of action") and the understanding of the irrationalities of action in which psychology has a role ("in explaining the irrationalities of action sociologically, that form of psychology which employs the method of subjective understanding [i.e., *verstehende* psychology] undoubtedly can make decisively important contributions").[52]

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50 *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 5-6.

51 My conclusion here might appear to be undercut by Weber's use of the aphorism "One need not have been Caesar in order to understand Caesar," but in Weber's hands this aphorism refers to cases in which an observer has access to a lesser degree of intensity of an emotion displayed by the social actor, not to cases in which the observer totally lacks access to such an emotion: "even when such emotions are found *in a degree of intensity* of which the observer himself is completely incapable, he [the observer] can still have a significant degree of emotional understanding of their meaning and can interpret intellectually their influence on the course of action and the selection of means." *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 5, 6 (italics added).

52 Ibid., 19.

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Weber's Use of *Verstehende* Psychology in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

As intriguing as some of Weber's ideas on the role of psychology in social analysis are, they may well invite skeptics to raise a question about their applicability to actual social analysis. In particular, the question might arise: Do any of Weber's actual works of social analysis substantively embody any of these methodological conceptualizations? I suggest that one of Weber's works of social analysis in particular does this, and in ways that amplify and extend his methodological ideas in directions not fully apparent in their original form: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Similar examples of psychologically based social analysis abound in Weber's later works, particularly in passages and sections of his various writings on religion—most markedly the "Sociology of Religion" chapters of *Economy and Society*, but also the essays "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" and "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions." However, Weber never again focuses so concentratedly as he does in *The Protestant Ethic* on a single social phenomenon which, at its inner core, is so deeply psychological.

We have seen how in the years following the writing of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber became deeply annoyed that most commentators missed the psychological core of this work. As reported earlier, he came to insist that "the point of this whole essay" (i.e., *The Protestant Ethic*) was "completely overlooked" when commentators missed the distinction "between dogmatic and practical psychological consequences" (that is, the distinction between actions resulting from rational imperatives and those resulting from psychological motives) and the fact that "the two are not identical."[1] Elsewhere, in a passage not discussed earlier, Weber again assaults those who misread the book, adding that the connection between the asceticism of Protestantism and the profits of capitalism was well understood even by Protestants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: "they knew very well what they were doing," he writes, adding "all I have done is to investigate their [i.e., the original ascetic Protestants'] underlying *motives* somewhat more carefully [than they did themselves]."[2]

Weber's claim in this last sentence that motivational investigation was "all I have done" points explicitly to what his commentators so completely missed. It was in Weber's psychological investigation of irrational motivation that he discovered the dynamics of anxiety and self-instrumentalization that tied ascetic Protestantism

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1   *Protestant Ethic*, 197.
2   Ibid., 280 (italics added).

to modern capitalism—an investigation which, while consciously eschewing "technical psychology" (i.e., physiological psychology), gained its insights through the successful implementation of the very *verstehende* psychology that he extols theoretically and abstractly in his methodological works.

Indeed, I would argue that it is from the perspective of the implementation of *verstehende* psychology in *The Protestant Ethic* that Weber's more theoretical pronouncements on psychology's relationship to sociological analysis are best understood. For instance, as we have seen, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" advances the notion that to discover the irrational components of an action the social analyst should "determine how the rational ideal-typical limiting case of pure instrumental and correct rationality *would have* proceeded" and then compare this limiting case with the actual course of events; this will reveal those aspects of the action that deviate from that ideal case and are therefore both irrational and in need of psychological explication.[3] Is this not exactly what Weber does at a number of points in *The Protestant Ethic*?

Take, for example, Weber's depiction of the pragmatic "worldly wisdom" of classical and early European writers on household management as being

> the sort of economic rationalism which really existed as a reflection of economic conditions, in the work of authors interested purely in "the thing for its own sake" everywhere and at all times; in the Chinese classicism and in Greece and Rome no less than in the Renaissance and the age of the Enlightenment.[4]

Weber's aim in this passage, and in several additional pages of extended analysis of worldly "economic rationalism" that accompany it, clearly is not to present this exposition for its own sake; his aim, rather, is to develop an analytical foil which will help to disclose aspects of the irrationalities that lie at the heart of Puritan rationalism. In particular, Weber's portrayal of the worldly wise (i.e., purely rational) handling of economic resources, in which nothing enters into the deliberations of economic matters but "the thing for its own sake," serves analytically exactly the purpose that Weber later ascribed to his methodological conception of a "rational ideal-typical limiting case of pure instrumental and correct rationality"; in this specific case, it serves as a comparative standard by which to measure the irrationalities contained in Benjamin Franklin's economic aphorisms, of which, Weber says, "a lack of care in the handling of money means to [Franklin] that one so to speak murders capital embryos," thereby revealing ethical anxieties generated by concerns other than "the [economic] thing for its own sake."[5]

Another set of ideas from "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" is even more strikingly illuminated when viewed from the perspective of *The Protestant Ethic*. As the reader will remember, this essay presents a "gliding scale" typology in which actions are differentiated according to whether they are objectively and/or subjectively rational or irrational. Three distinct possible combinations of these determinations apply to actions that contain components that are "only

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3   "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154.
4   *Protestant Ethic*, 196, 197.
5   Ibid., 196.

psychologically explicable" and therefore call for empathetic "psychological understanding," while two other possible combinations do not.

Various aspects of this typology can be usefully applied to Weber's depiction of religiously inspired action in *The Protestant Ethic*. To begin with, the analysis of the ideal-typical action of ascetic Protestants (methodical rationalism issuing from salvation anxiety) in terms of the typology's classificatory division of action into objective and subjective components helps illuminate the way this action intermeshes with the book's conception of the rise of modern capitalism. Viewed in the terms of this classificatory division, the type of ascetic Protestant action that led to the rise of capitalism is seen as simultaneously subjectively irrational and objectively rational. That is, when viewed in the subjective terms of intentions "from the inside out," this action exhibits the irrational dynamics of a psychic state (salvation anxiety) that is "only psychologically explicable." When viewed in objective terms without consideration of these subjective intentions, however, the action exhibits the logical patterns of an instrumental means-end rationality (the logic of modern capitalism) that is "rationally understandable."

The merit of this double-sided perspective becomes especially apparent when compared with the one-sided perspective of a number of accounts of the rise of capitalism advanced by analysts other than Weber. In some of these other accounts, the social analysts appear to have been seduced by capitalism's objective rationality into either disregarding its subjective components or into assuming that this rationality also typifies these subjective components. Thus the tendency of some social analysts, especially Marxists and Utilitarians, is to either brush aside questions of subjective intention in their explanations of capitalism's rise or, when pressed, to rely on unexamined notions of rational economic self-interest and of rational choice to explain the motivational dynamics at play. As a corrective, Weber's classificatory division of social action into objective and subjective components points to the need to treat each component of any action under study with equal analytical rigor—an approach, it goes without saying, that necessitates also a willingness to use the tools of psychology if subjective irrationalities are found to be integral to the action.

However, when the model of religiously inspired action explicated in chapter 5 of this book (*idea -> psychology -> action*) is compared to Weber's overall "gliding scale" typology explicated in chapter 6, it becomes clear that the model is not applicable to all of the typology's categories of action. First of all, this model is not applicable to the "gliding scale's" two opposite end-point categories of action (as illustrated by Figure 6.1 on page 110): purely rational action (action both objectively and subjectively rational) and socially meaningless irrational action (physiological action lacking subjective orientation towards others and ends). As we have seen, purely rational action has no need for psychological analysis, and thus the mediating middle term of psychology is, in effect, excised from the model (*idea -> action*). And, as we have also seen, socially meaningless irrational action is neither intentional nor oriented toward others or toward ends, and thus the first term (*idea*) is in effect excised (*idea* being the principal medium by which intention and orientation toward others and ends are framed) and the psychological term altered (*physiological psychology -> action*).

On the other hand, the "gliding scale's" three middle categories of action each are socially meaningful and include subjective components that are irrational and "only psychologically explicable," and thus all three fit the model as it stands (*idea -> psychology -> action*). However, in Weber's conception of his "gliding scale's" typology, these three middle categories are applicable to a broad array of action types besides those that are religiously inspired, thus eliminating any impression we may have gained from *The Protestant Ethic* that social actions with psychologically irrational components are particular only to religiously influenced behavior. (As we have seen, Weber himself makes this point in his endnote on Williams James' views on religion: the "irrational element [is] ... by no means peculiar to religious experience but applies (in different senses and to different degrees) to every experience."[6]). Rather, the model, with all three of its terms, *Idea, psychology,* and *action*, is appropriate to *all* forms of socially meaningful action that contain at least some elements of irrationality.

But clearly, when used in these other, non-religious contexts, the model needs to be given a more comprehensive label than "model of religiously inspired social action"; utilizing Weber's designation from "'Objectivity' in Social Science" for the collaboration of social and psychic interpretative methods, I propose "the *social-psychological* model of action." In addition, I suggest, this more comprehensive model should allow the inclusion of influences other than the cultural beliefs and practices in the first term (*idea)*. In particular, it should allow inclusion of the relatively independent role that *social structure* plays in influencing action. Thus I suggest the following further expansion of the model of action:

   social structure & cultural idea -> psychology -> action

Just this inclusion of *social structure* is, in fact, explicitly called for in "'Objectivity' in Social Science," where (as we saw in chapter 4) Weber asserts that to incorporate psychological understanding into one's analysis of "social institutions," in particular institutions of "economic phenomena," one must begin with a "scientific analysis of their structure" before proceeding to the "psychological analysis."[7] And in the conclusion of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber similarly points to such an inclusion, when in the book's last paragraph he admits that his work needs to be supplemented with a study that would "investigate how Protestant Asceticism was ... influenced in its development and its character by the totality of social conditions, especially economic." In fact, this latter comment foreshadows the combination of cultural and social structural approaches that, as an endnote to this paragraph itself suggests, Weber later accomplished in his "Sociology of Religion" chapters of *Economy and Society*.[8]

But even when our focus is restricted to the analysis of the types of social action depicted in *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber's "gliding scale" typology is useful in revealing their distinguishing characteristics. For example, the ideal-typical actions

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6   Ibid., 233 (italics added).
7   "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 88.
8   *Protestant Ethic*, 183, 284.

associated with Catholicism and Lutheranism ("traditional" social forms within Weber's schema) differ from those of the four ascetic Protestant denominations in that their structure is both objectively and subjectively irrational and thereby structurally close to the completely irrational end point of Weber's "gliding scale." On the other hand, ideal-typical actions associated with Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and Quakerism are subjectively irrational while objectively rational, and thereby they are structurally at the midpoint of Weber's scale. And in the last pages of *The Protestant Ethic*, a third ideal type of social action is suggested: action associated with contemporary bureaucratic capitalism, which, with its elimination of substantive subjective irrationality ("specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart"[9]), positions modernity itself at the extremity of the purely rational (and non-psychological) opposite end point of Weber's "gliding scale."

Moreover, one notices that the placement on Weber's "gliding scale" of these action categories mirrors their actual historical order. In fact, the suggestion of an evolutionary schema is revealed in which human action evolves from the extremity of one end of the scale to the other. This is a schema in which human development begins in the instinctual reflexivity of psycho-physiological animality (pre-social existence)—the position at the extreme right of the scale as depicted on page 110 —and progresses to subjectively and objectively irrational meaningful actions (traditional society as exemplified by Catholicism and Lutheranism), and then on to a transitional stage (the ascetic Protestant Reformation), at which point subjective irrationality initiates a new, methodical, systemic rational order (modern capitalism) which, in turn, eliminates the relevancy of psychology to action and renders subjectivity a mere echo of the objectively rational order—the position depicted as the extreme left of the scale. (Viewed in this light, Weber's last stage is shown to be remarkably similar to Theodor Adorno's identification of modernity's administered society with the elimination of substantive subjectivity and hence with "the end of psychology."[10])

In this and other ways, the conjunction of the categories of action from Weber's "gliding scale" typology and the model of action from *The Protestant Ethic* suggests new possibilities in the structural analysis of action. To give an additional example, the religiously inspired action of ascetic Protestantism is revealed to be structurally similar to a variety of non-religious types of social action. These include actions of economic import associated not only with the secularized reformulation of ascetic Protestantism in Benjamin Franklin's economic aphorisms, but also, to take a contemporary example, with actions taken in the name of the objective economic imperatives that are said to rationally follow from the globalization of capitalism but which are also infused with unstated irrational ethical anxieties about appearing weak-willed and insufficiently resolute. Analytical similarities also become evident

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9   *Protestant Ethic*, 182.

10   "In Adorno's view, modern man ... no longer represented a suitable object of study for genuine psychology: the psychologist examining him must inevitably become a sociologist, since he was directly encountering society within the supposed individual." Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 423. An analysis of Adorno's views is presented in Part III of this book..

between theoretical efforts that on the surface might appear quite distinct from Weber's but which, in structurally interesting ways, are really quite comparable. An example here is the portrayal of the paranoiac origins of instrumental rationality in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[11]

Even the overall thematic order of exposition of *The Protestant Ethic* can be interpreted in terms of the overlap of the book's model of action ((*idea -> psychology -> action*) and the movement through the various categories of Weber's "gliding scale" typology (action viewed *objectively* or *subjectively*; action characterized as *irrational* or *rational*). In the broadest sense, chapter 1 of *The Protestant Ethic* ("Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification"), chapter 2 ("The Spirit of Capitalism"), and chapter 3 ("Luther's Conception of the Calling") are all focused on ascetic Protestant and early modern capitalist action from a "sociologically explicable" perspective (they examine cultural *ideas* and offer an analysis of their *objectively rational* aspects). In contrast, the crucial fourth chapter ("The Religious Foundations of Worldly Asceticism") is principally concerned with *psychology* (salvation anxiety, 'personality,' Anglo-Saxon national character) and a *subjectively irrational* analysis of ascetic Protestantism's "only psychologically explicable" aspects. Chapter 5 ("Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism") portrays a resolution (in fact, a tragic resolution) of the previous perspectives and analyses in a conclusion of *objectively rational action*: the triumph of bureaucratic capitalism. The resulting *objective and subjective rationality* entailed by this triumph is then apotheosized in the image of the modern bureaucrat/businessman stripped of both spirituality and passion and entrapped in an "iron cage" of "mechanized petrification" and reified instrumental rationality.[12]

From a dramaturgical point of view (to utilize an approach to written works advocated by Kenneth Burke[13]), the whole book might be seen as one complete symbolic act, which in this case is registered on two related planes. On the first plane of this symbolic act, the model of action (*idea -> psychology -> action*) is echoed substantively as the movement from the cultural manifestations of ascetic Protestant religiosity through a triplet of psychological irrational responses (particular types of affect, personality formation, and national character) to a dispirited capitalism:

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11 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972). See especially the chapter on "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment" (43-80) and parts of "Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment" (178-208).

12 *The Protestant Ethic*, 182, 181, 183,

13 Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Englewood Cliffs, 1945) and *Attitudes toward History* (Boston, 1959). That Weber's book should be seen as constituting a complete symbolic action is suggested by Serge Moscovici's assertion that *The Protestant Ethic* is not a book of science but rather "a myth": "in spite of its repeated references to science, what is important about *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is that it is a myth. It is perhaps the sole myth concerning the origins of the modern era to which sociology has been able to give birth.... It can be neither proved nor disproved, one can merely acknowledge it. This is precisely what constitutes the unity and grandeur of the exposition and its irrefutable value." *Invention of Society*, 179. See also Alan Sica's discussion of the presence of a strong aesthetic approach in Weber's writing and his assertion that Weber "probably wrote and thought via an aesthetically attuned and directed analytic apparatus." *Weber*, 63-64.

Idea   the cultural manifestations of ascetic Protestant religiosity

↓

Psychology   salvation anxiety => 'personality' => Anglo-Saxon national character

↓

Action   bureaucratic capitalism, "mechanized petrification."

On the second plane of this symbolic act, the analytical categories of action (*objectivity / subjectivity* and *rationality / irrationality*) are echoed formally as the movement from an ascendant, irrational subjectivity to an ascendant, impersonal rational objectivity. Here, the category of subjective-irrational / objective-rational action (a subjective spiritual irrationality that dictates actions aimed at rationalizing the objective world) leads to the category of objective rational / subjective rational action (a totally rationalized objective world of action that turns back upon its subjective origins and imposes upon it its own dispirited rationality):

subjective irrationality   =   *ascendant irrational subjectivity*:
-> objective rationality   salvation anxiety dictates life of instrumental rationality

↓

objective rationality   =   *ascendant impersonal rational objectivity*:
-> subjective rationality   iron cage of industrial capitalism rationalizes the
                                        psyche & eliminates "spirit" and "heart."

Moreover, from a dramaturgical perspective, the *psychological* moment of Weber's book is discoverable not only in the unique subject matter of *The Protestant Ethic's* fourth chapter but also in an alteration in the form of the chapter's style of thought and writing. In the book's fourth chapter Weber's argument loses its previous tone of dryly persistent objectivity and is moved forward by the injection of a number of intuitively bold and psychologically powerful assertions. Drawing on subjective resources of insight not employed in earlier chapters, the chapter involves an authorial shift in orientation from what Weber referred to in "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology" as the logical analysis of the "rational understandable" to the "empathetically reliv[ing]" of the "psychologically explicable," and from what he referred to in *Economy and Society* as the shift from the "logical and mathematical" reasoning of "purely intellectual understanding" to "the sympathetic participation" of "emotional empathic understanding."[14]

In these passages, Weber's words at times assume an almost Nietzschean oracular quality. For instance, deep conflictual passions are at play in passages such as the following:

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14 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154, 156; *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 5.

> In its extreme inhumanity this [Calvinist] doctrine must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. That was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual.[15]

> Quite realistically the [Catholic] Church recognized that man was not an absolutely clearly defined unity.... The priest ... dispenses atonement, hope of grace, certainty of forgiveness, and thereby granted release from that tremendous tension to which the Calvinist was doomed by an inexorable fate, admitting of no mitigation. For him such friendly and human comforts did not exist. He could not hope to atone for hours of weakness or of thoughtlessness by increased good will.[16]

> Now every Christian had to be a monk all his life. The drain [by monasticism] of asceticism from everyday worldly life had been stopped by a dam, and those passionately spiritual natures which had formerly supplied the highest type of monk were now forced to pursue their ascetic ideals within mundane occupations.[17]

The emotional intensity of inner conflict suggested in these passages—an oscillation between grandeur ("magnificent consistency," "passionately spiritual natures," "the highest type of monk") and abandonment ("unprecedented inner loneliness," "the tremendous tension ... doomed by an inexorable fate," "friendly and human comforts did not exist")—might be viewed as typical fin de siècle melodrama. But our knowledge of the psychological conditions in which these sentences were written (as discussed earlier in chapters 4 and 5) tells us otherwise. Weber knew whereof he spoke because he himself was immersed in this conflict—the proud commitment to an intellectual and psychical asceticism totally dedicated to the service of higher values, the consequent near impossibility of forming either casually close male friendships or heterosexual erotic relationships, and the pathological torture that such excessive asceticism brought down upon its devotees.[18]

Such passages highlight the personal nature of the emotional premises of Weber's understanding, as they attest methodologically to Weber's ability to "empathetically relive" the psychological experiences of previous historical actors. We begin to better understand what is at stake in Weber's claim in *Economy and Society* that the emotional character of the social observer is an essential element in his or her ability to achieve "empathic accuracy" through a "sympathetic participation ... [that] can adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place." Weber enacts in such passages a living proof that such a sympathetic participation is inexorably tied to the observer's own emotional history and is, in fact, contingent on his or her susceptibility "to emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, ambition, envy, jealousy, love, ... and to the 'irrational' conduct which grows out of them."[19]

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15 *The Protestant Ethic*, 104.

16 Ibid., 116-117.

17 Ibid., 121.

18 Marianne Weber,196, 364-365, 415-417, 437; Mitzman, *Iron Cage*, 49-50, 276-291; Roth, "Marianne Weber and her Circle," xlvii; Green, *von Richthofen Sisters*, 114-115, 118.

19 *Economy and Society*, 6.

But my attempt here to uncover in the passages of *The Protestant Ethic* the embodiment of key methodological concepts of Weber's theoretical writings has perhaps reached a point beyond which loom the dangers of biographical reductionism. With these dangers in mind, I want to return to the original focus of this study and to the one methodological work that has a relationship to *The Protestant Ethic* that is both unproblematic and straightforward: Weber's essay "'Objectivity' in Social Science." As we have seen, "'Objectivity' in Social Science" and *The Protestant Ethic* are biographically closely related: they were written during the same period of Weber's life; they both register his efforts to recover the use of his intellect after five years of mental collapse; and they explicitly share several major overt themes as well as a preoccupation with irrationality.

In terms of methodology, "'Objectivity' in Social Science" provides an almost schematic account of the structure of the psychological analysis in *The Protestant Ethic.* In the first place, in its vision of a positive collaboration of *verstehende* psychological and social analysis, the essay suggests that psychological investigation should concentrate on "the highly concrete structure of psychic motives and influences."[20] This is exactly the focus of the psychological analysis of *The Protestant Ethic*, with it extensive explication of the distinct ways that salvation anxiety motivated the various Protestant denominations. Even the book's emotionally charged fourth chapter, as evidenced by passages quoted above, displays this focus, portraying, in this case, a particularized "highly concrete *structure* of psychic motive." Numerous passages within this chapter display a psyche split between anxiety-ridden compulsions and desire for relief, a structure of extreme ambivalence in which 'a magnificent consistency of purpose' is offset by feelings of 'unprecedented loneliness,' a sense of being 'fated to tremendous tension' by 'the desire for human comforts.'

Secondly, "'Objectivity' in Social Science" suggests that the collaborative endeavor of sociology and psychology should begin with social and cultural analysis and proceed to psychological analysis only after establishing both "a precise knowledge of [institutions] and the scientific analysis of their structure" and an understanding of the "special cultural significance of the situation."[21] This procedural order of analysis Weber also explicitly promotes in *The Protestant Ethic*, when he insists that the understanding of the irrational psychological elements of an action does not obviate the need to fully understand the cultural ideas that set those irrational elements into motion. Moreover, as we have just seen, this methodological order of analysis is present structurally in the book's overall exposition, with the first half of the book (the first three chapters) establishing the social and cultural context which in turn becomes the framework of the book's major psychological examination (the fourth chapter). In fact, when considered in the context of the principal of literary criticism that asserts that the structure of an author's formal methods reflects the author's underlying conception of his/her subject matter's structure,[22]

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20 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 89.

21 Ibid., 89-89.

22 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Garden City, 1957).

this methodological rule of analytic order (*idea -> psychology*) is discovered to be but an incomplete and second level manifestation of Weber's more fundamental conception of the reality of his subject matter: religiously inspired social actions (*idea -> psychology -> action*), but with the third term, *action*, left (in terms of method) to the reader. That is, the end point of Weber's methodological progression is critique: the closing pages of *The Protestant Ethic* are clearly intended to provoke in the reader a resistance to those tendencies of the modern world that (in Weber's mind) promote a heartless mediocrity of spirit and a cynicism of purpose.

Thirdly, "'Objectivity' in Social Science" suggests that to understand the psychological component of action the social analyst must seek to interpret by means of "our empathetic understanding" the ideal-typical "psychic attitude of a person in a social situation [as] particularized in each [cultural] case." [23] As we have seen, Weber enacted this mode of analysis in the writing of *The Protestant Ethic*. Thus changes in the very texture of the text's style exhibit the author's effort to recreate (or "empathetically relive") within himself the ideal-typical "psychic attitude" called forth by the particularized cultural situations of major religious groupings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In light of these correspondences between methodological prescription and analytical practice, I believe it is safe to assert that Weber's reflections upon his own contemporaneous experiences of the research for and the writing of *The Protestant Ethic* furnished a model for his description in "'Objectivity' in Social Science" of the ideal form of "a—still to be created—social psychology" and its collaboration with socio-cultural analysis:

> The procedure does not begin with the analysis of psychological qualities, moving then to the analysis of social institutions, but..., on the contrary, insight into the psychological preconditions and consequences of institutions presupposes a precise knowledge of the latter and the scientific analysis of their structure. In concrete cases, psychological analysis can contribute then an extremely valuable deepening of the knowledge of the historical cultural *condition* and cultural *significance* of institutions. The interesting aspect of the psychic attitude of a person in a social situation is specifically particularized in each case, according to the special cultural significance of the situation in question. It is a question of an extremely heterogeneous and highly concrete structure of psychic motives and influences. Social-psychological research [research that combines social and psychological analysis] involves study of various very disparate *individual* types of cultural elements with reference to their interpretability by our empathic understanding [as the fourth chapter of *The Protestant Ethic* carefully differentiated the belief and practices of various denominations and churches and then elicited various ideal-typical subjective responses to them]. Through [this] social-psychological research, with the knowledge of individual institutions [and cultural elements] as a point of departure, we will learn increasingly how to understand institutions [in this case, both those of Protestantism and of early modern capitalism] in a psychological way.[24]

Is this not a fair description of how we experience Weber's use of psychology in *The Protestant Ethic*? For Weber captures there disparate individual types

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23 "'Objectivity' in Social Science," 89.
24 Ibid., 88-89 (italics in original).

of religiosity within nuanced, concrete ideal-type portraits, into which he then inserts himself empathically (even to the point, as we have seen, of evoking very personal aspects of his own psychopathological responses). From these ideal-type portraits he renders an emotionally charged interpretation "from the inside out" of what each specific type of religiosity did to the psyche: the profound anxieties and hopes it raised, its offering of but limited avenues of psychic solace, avenues that significantly included, as Weber's astute psychological explication reveals, the worldly commercial activism that created the world of modern capitalism.

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PART 3
Power and the Psyche: Theodor Adorno's First Examination of the Authoritarian Personality

The social forces to which each individual is subject are so tremendous that he has to yield to them not only economically ... but also psychologically under the social and cultural pressures put upon him, a pressure which he can bear only by making it his own.... [H]e ceases to be an ego, a "self"....

The prospective fascist may long for the destruction of himself no less than for that of the adversaries, destruction being a substitute for his deepest and most inhibited desires.... Annihilation is the psychological substitute for the millennium—a day when the difference between ego and the others, between poor and rich, between powerful and impotent, will be submerged in one great inarticulate unity [in] ... this negative substitute [of true solidarity].

– Theodor Adorno, "The Psychological Technique of
Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses"

Introduction to Part 3

Theodor Adorno lived in the United States in exile from Germany for eleven years, from 1938 to 1949. For more than half of this time, a principal source of his income was the American Jewish Committee, in the form of grants for research on, and analysis of, American anti-Semitism.

During this time, Adorno also remained identified with the Institute of Social Research, as the *Institut für Sozialforschung* became known after it was driven from Nazi Germany. Because a string of bad investments depleted the Institute's endowment's funds in the late 1930s, it had itself become unable to continue to support most of its activities from its own funds.[1] Thus, in 1939, after being forced to lay off most of its New York staff, to eliminate its aid to German refugee scholars, and to discontinue its theoretical journal, the Institute's director, Max Horkheimer, and Adorno (both of whom were to shortly relocate to California), along with Friedrich Pollock and several other associates (who would remain in New York), decided to seek funding from U.S. foundations. From the beginning, they framed most of their proposals as research projects on the psycho-social causes of anti-Semitism. These early proposals posed the question: How had anti-Semitism managed to achieve such extraordinary power? And they proposed to answer it by conducting research that would lead to the construction of characterological typologies aimed at revealing those potential unconscious traits of modern populations that rendered them receptive to fascist agitation.[2]

However, the Institute's first proposals were rejected: by the American Jewish Committee in 1940, and the Rockefeller Foundation and the New York Foundation in 1941. But then, due to the stubborn persistence of another Institute associate, Franz Neumann, and a fortuitous change of directorship in the American Jewish Committee's Research Department, a breakthrough occurred in the summer of 1942 when the AJC requested further details and a budget breakdown. Shortly thereafter, the AJC granted the Institute $10,000 to cover twelve months of proposed projects.[3]

The following is an examination of a monograph that Adorno prepared under the terms of this grant. The interpretive method and theoretical conclusions of this monograph remarkably resemble those of Adorno's later work on another project funded by the AJC, the well-known (and often commented upon) 990-page social psychological classic, *The Authoritarian Personality*.[4] The monograph itself, however, has been ignored in scholarly commentaries on Adorno's work and by historical accounts of psycho-social literature in general. Nonetheless, given the power of its

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1   Rolf Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 261-265.

2   Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 273-276, 324-325; Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950* (Boston, 1973), 167-169.

3   Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 274, 277, 278, 353-356.

4   Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, 1950).

insight and the innovation of its method, the work deserves to be incorporated in these commentaries and accounts, and not only because of its status as a historical document—as Adorno's first investigation of the psychology of fascism—but also because it is a work which in its own right contains persuasive, penetrating psycho-social interpretation of the fascist personality.

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Chapter 8

"The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses"

The initial grant from the American Jewish Committee covered the expenses of the Institute of Social Research's project on anti-Semitism for the twelve months beginning April 15, 1943. According to plans devised at the last minute in New York by Pollock and Leo Lowenthal of the Institute and representatives of the AJC, the funds were to finance both "political" research under Pollock's direction in New York, and "psychological" research under Horkheimer's direction on the West Coast. The news of the unexpected grant caught the West Coast contingent of the Institute by surprise. Newly settled in the bungalow community growing up around Santa Monica, and deeply enmeshed in their co-authorship of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno found themselves forced to interrupt their joint philosophical efforts. In an attempt to partially satisfy the requirements of the AJC grant but also continue their theoretical collaboration, the two men devised a plan to refocus their philosophical endeavors and to explore theoretically the destructive tendencies lying at the root of anti-Semitism. For the AJC's benefit they labeled their writing project "Psychology of Anti-Semitism" (by the end of the following year, this study was added to *Dialectic* as its final chapter, under the title "Elements of Anti-Semitism").[1]

The West Coast group's other major contribution toward satisfaction of the AJC grant was to be a two-part project on "the psychology of destructive tendencies within civilized society": the first part, the preparation of a content analysis of the speeches and articles of American anti-Semitic and fascist agitators; and the second, based upon this analysis, the production of a popular handbook that would allow ordinary citizens, especially American Jews, to disarm fascist agitation. Adorno was assigned principal responsibility for the first part of the project, although as the work on the content analysis progressed Lowenthal took a brief leave from the Institute's New York office to visit the West Coast and contribute a short analysis of the fascist agitator George Allison Phelps. Another Institute associate, Paul Massing, contributed an analysis of the agitator Joseph E. McWilliams.[2]

Throughout the summer and well into the fall of 1943 Adorno labored over a collection of transcripts of broadcasts of a local pro-fascist preacher, Martin Luther Thomas. Adorno concentrated on the addresses that Thomas had broadcast daily over Los Angeles radio during a four month period in 1935, from which he uncovered a number of fascist agitational techniques, each of which he elucidated with a few

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1 Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 324, 355-357.
2 Ibid., 358.

pages of analysis. By late October 1943, he had completed a manuscript of 50,000 words (the equivalent of 130 printed book pages), entitled "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses."[3] Adorno's manuscript was organized around the analysis of thirty-four fascist agitational "techniques" that he found exemplified by the Thomas broadcasts. It also contained numerous suggestions for "counterpropaganda" aimed at exposing the "tricks" involved in these fascist techniques, suggestions clearly meant to assist the development of the second stage of the project, the preparation of a popular anti-agitational handbook.

Upon receiving the manuscript, Horkheimer apparently expressed approval, although he remarked that it was "not done in the strictly traditional American way." Apropos of Adorno's method, a mixture of explication and speculation, Horkheimer added that perhaps it was best "to attempt things by such methods by which we can do them best rather than to put ourselves into a straight [sic] jacket."[4] What the AJC thought of the manuscript is not known, but it should be noted that Adorno's follow-up proposals for additional field research in preparation for the popular anti-agitational handbook were never implemented, and that although the production of a handbook remained active for several years in the plans of the Institute (the subject turned up in various reports and proposals to the AJC in 1944 and 1945), efforts to derive an anti-agitational handbook from Adorno's manuscript proved fruitless.[5]

Several years later, however, the handbook project itself was revived, but within a different context and without Adorno's assistance. By then Horkheimer had been the director of the AJC "Studies in Prejudice" book series for some time and commissioned Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman to produce *Prophets of Deceit: a Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (published in 1949).[6] Lowenthal and Guterman's book made no direct use of Adorno's analyses of Thomas' broadcasts, although it did utilize a number of agitational categories from Adorno's typology of agitational techniques. The authors acknowledged this debt, stating in their preface that they had "drawn freely upon the earlier studies of the Institute on the subject, especially that of Adorno."[7]

Adorno's study of Martin Luther Thomas' radio addresses remained unpublished during his lifetime. The work was published posthumously in 1975, appearing as Adorno had written it, in English, as the first item in the second volume of sociological writings in the German edition of Adorno's collected works.[8]

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3   Ibid.

4   Ibid.

5   Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 244, 358, 366, 378, 380, 394, 694.

6   Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (New York, 1949).

7   Lowenthal and Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit*, xvi.

8   "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, *Vol. 9.1: Soziologische Schriften II*, ed. Susan Buck-Morss and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), 7-141. An edition of this same text is also available from Stanford University Press: Theodor W. Adorno, *The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses* (Stanford, 2000). This latter edition is a facsimile of the first. In *Gesammelte Schriften*, however, the manuscript begins on page 11, while in the Stanford University Press edition it begins with page 1.

1. Latent Fascism

In the mid 1930s, a little-known evangelical preacher in Southern California, Martin Luther Thomas, attempted to launch a religiously framed, politically oriented fascist organization to which he gave the name, "the Christian American Crusade." From his unadorned "little old-fashioned church" in Los Angeles, Thomas published the movement's "official" newspaper, *The Christian American Crusader*, as well as pamphlets that he claimed were distributed by the hundreds of thousands.[9] However, Thomas apparently appraised his own voice as a more potent medium of agitation than the printed word. His oral agitation took two distinct forms: frequent semi-private speeches before his committed followers, and daily sermon-like addresses broadcast over Los Angeles radio to the public at large.

In the speeches meant only for the ears of his more committed followers, Thomas railed from the pulpit of his church and the stage of the larger Trinity Auditorium against "the Jews" and "Communists," who, he charged, were taking over America. In these addresses, Thomas was openly anti-Semitic and pro-fascist. But in his daily radio talks, Thomas muted these fascist sentiments. In this second form of agitation, he reached out to a much larger audience, addressing his listeners in a personalized, neighborly tone of alarm. Here, he avoided explicit anti-Semitism altogether, replacing references to "Jews" with allusions to "these forces" and "nonbelievers." However, the direful talk of America's imminent downfall at the hands of "the Communists" remained.[10]

It is evident from references in Adorno's manuscript that he had access to reports of Thomas' overtly anti-Semitic non-broadcast orations.[11] Yet he chose to restrict his analysis of Thomas exclusively to the radio addresses. The reason for this restriction is at first difficult to comprehend. In a study aimed at combating anti-Semitic fascist propaganda, one might well wonder whether it would have not only been easier but also more useful if the blatant forms of this propaganda had been included. Adorno's ignoring of Thomas' overtly anti-Semitic material might even be seen as self-serving, as if Adorno were above all else intent on proving the cleverness of his own mind. The question must be asked: Why, in his analysis of Martin Luther Thomas, did Adorno avoid a form in which anti-Semitic fascism was obvious and manifest (Thomas' overtly fascist non-broadcast rallies) and deal only with a form in which it was latent and hidden (Thomas' radio addresses)?

In addressing this question, it is helpful to realize that in this, his first study of authoritarianism, Adorno established an approach that remained in many ways with him throughout his subsequent studies on the same subject. Not only this manuscript but all of Adorno's subsequent writings on authoritarianism exhibit a preoccupation with the latent forms and the latent meanings of fascism and anti-Semitism. The method of analysis found in all these works is itself linked to this preoccupation. For in all these works, Adorno's method is both psychoanalytic (the analysis of psychodynamically latent, unconscious mechanisms) and abstractly

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9 "Psychological Technique," 31-32, 36, 56.
10 Ibid., 39-40, 67, 130-133.
11 Ibid., 39-40, 68, 70.

social-theoretical (the analysis of socially latent, unrecognized macro-forces of monopolistic social control, reification and commodification). When placed in the context of these other works, the decision to restrict his analysis to Thomas' broadcasts becomes understandable. As he did in these other works, Adorno sought to elaborate an approach suitable to his major concern: uncovering in the latency of the unexceptional—here, relatively innocuous radio sermons—the hidden structural transformations of psyche and society that could explain the rise of fascism. Moreover, in all of his work, whether philosophical, sociological, or cultural, Adorno's primary intellectual mode was always *elucidation*—the uncovering of the structures hidden under (and within) surface phenomena.[12] This was the way his mind worked; this was the approach that framed his thinking about the nature of human society and the human psyche.

Such are some of the considerations that assuage doubts raised about Adorno's approach in "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses." Yet when viewed in the context of the AJC project to combat anti-Semitism, certain questions remain: Did Adorno's habits of thought here prove to be inappropriately subtle, given his assignment to establish the groundwork for a popular handbook? Could it be that by ignoring Thomas' overtly fascist and anti-Semitic addresses, Adorno inadvertently limited the usefulness of his analysis to the AJC project on anti-Semitism? Was Horkheimer implying as much when he stated it was "not done strictly in the American way"? If Adorno's work here was judged by the AJC, or even by Horkheimer, as being out of keeping with the requirements of the larger project on anti-Semitism, it would not have been the first time Adorno had been unable to satisfy the requirements of organizations with interests other than those of the Institute. Only a couple of years before, Adorno's work for Paul Lazarsfeld at the Princeton Radio Research Project had been judged so out of accord with the project's goals that the Rockefeller Foundation had de-funded the part of the project for which he was responsible, in effect firing him.[13]

2. Theoretical Motifs

On the surface, Adorno's manuscript lacks conventional structures of unity. The work takes the form of a typological classification and examination of thirty-four separate fascist propaganda techniques, each of which is labeled with a descriptive title, "'Persecuted Innocence' Device," "A Great Little Man," "'Unity' Tricks," "'Dirty Linen' Device," "'Tingling Backbone' Device," "'Last Hour' Device," and so on. Each technique is written up in a brief semi-independent essay and, along with five

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12　See Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (New York, 1978), especially 98-102. Rose describes Adorno's sociological method in the following manner: "Adorno's own approach is more helpfully called Deutung than 'theory'. Deutung is translated as 'interpretation' in the English translation ... but 'elucidation' would be better.... Adorno's procedure is best described as an 'indirect method', or as the 'physiognomy of appearance', since it involves the elucidation of the relation between the underlying process of society and the forms in which the process appears" (102).

13　Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 236-246.

other brief introductory and concluding sections, gathered somewhat arbitrarily into four chapters. In the manuscript as a whole, there are no conventionally apparent overarching larger structures, no statements of general theses or overall summary of conclusions, no step-by-step building of major arguments.

Yet counter balancing this lack of predominant structures of unity is the presence of a number of major theoretical themes that are stated, developed for a paragraph or so and then dropped, only to be restated and further developed in another context in a later section. And this process of restatement and further development occurs a number of times before the manuscript concludes. These themes, or motifs, make this manuscript more than just a collection of thirty-four independent mini-essays. Operating as recurrent thematic strands that weave in and out of the separate sections, these theoretical motifs hold the manuscript together and make it something greater than its parts, a totality that embodies an intellectual thickness and complexity greater than any incremental accounting could provide from the separate sections alone.

Adorno's analysis of Thomas' radio addresses has, therefore, an inexplicit but subtle unity—a unity which bespeaks an ideational gestalt, the coherence of which is achieved principally through the intermittent development of a number of theoretical motifs. It is to these theoretical motifs that I now turn, in an explication of "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses."

2.1 The "Objectivity" of Fascist Propaganda

Propaganda normally is associated with falsehood and subjectivity, with manipulatively untrue representations of reality that appeal to subjective biases, phobias, and desires. However, utilizing a dialectic turn typical of his thinking, Adorno finds in Thomas' propaganda expressions of, and in some cases the embodiment of, contemporary objective conditions. Within the so-called "subjective" phenomena of propagandistic manipulation, Adorno uncovers the objectivity of the social conditions of late modernity.

In the very first page of his investigation, Adorno asserts that the same "highly *objective* set of propagandistic devices" characterizes fascist agitation in general and Thomas' agitation in particular.[14] What specifically does Adorno mean by calling the devices or techniques of fascist propaganda "objective"? At first the "objectivity" that fascist propaganda is said to embody appears to consist solely in the fact that non-German fascists, including Thomas, consciously adopted rhetorical devices originated by Hitler and the German National Socialists. In the first several pages Thomas is said to be "thoroughly acquainted" with Hitler's techniques through "his affiliation" with American fascists, and a particular technique of Thomas' is said to have been "taken from the arsenal of Hitler."[15] But then in the 125 pages that follow these assertions, pages that contain numerous allusions to and discussions of Hitler's rhetorical techniques, there is not one example of Thomas taking a technique from Hitler. Rather, in these pages Adorno repeatedly discusses Hitler's rhetorical practices as a means to make evident the implicit fascist character of passages quoted

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14 "Psychological Technique," 11 (italics added).
15 Ibid., 13, 14.

from Thomas' radio sermons, passages that for the most part do not appear on the surface to be fascist at all.[16] The "objectivity" that characterizes Thomas' fascist propaganda is to be derived from sources other than its similarity to German fascist propaganda.

In thirteen different places in the manuscript, fascist propaganda technique is associated with the practice of advertising,[17] and repeatedly fascist propaganda is explicitly said to be, in fact, a form of advertising. Fascist leaders in general are said to engage in "self-advertising," and a number of Thomas' techniques are said to be "obviously borrowed from commercial advertising."[18] Adorno further asserts that "Thomas is an advertising expert. He gives much more attention to his advertising techniques than to the ideas which he tries to sell." Concerning fascist propaganda in general, Adorno adds, "the mode of 'selling an [fascist] idea' is not essentially different from the mode of selling soap or a soft drink."[19]

More than anything it is this association with advertising that points to the "objective" character of Thomas' propaganda. This objectivity, however, is not derived directly from the fact that fascists borrow their techniques from commercial advertising. Rather, the objectivity embodied in fascist propaganda derives from the fact that, as a form of advertising, it partakes in an essential manner in the larger "objective" order of what Adorno here calls "late industrial society."[20] Adorno's argument (developed in the recurrent appearance of the motif in various sections of the manuscript) can be construed to run something like the following. In the first place, advertising as a form in itself serves to blur in mass consciousness "the borderline between advertising and reality."[21] Thus, as a central element in the commercialization of popular culture, advertising assists the endeavors of the "modern monopolization of public communications" to substitute "manipulated irrational gratifications [that] are spurious" for "real pleasure or joy," and prepares the way for the fascist substitution of "propaganda" for "objective truth."[22]

Secondly, fascist propaganda, as a political form of advertising, embodies an additional element of objectivity: the more "the borderline between 'objective statements' and propagandistic devices" becomes blurred and "the more power is concentrated in the agencies and individuals who control the channels of communication, the more their [i.e., the fascists] propaganda amounts to 'truth' insofar as it expresses true power relations."[23] In explicitly subverting the masses' ability to experience truth and pleasure unmediated by centralized authority, fascist propaganda openly expresses the totalitarianism implicit in the true power relations of "late industrial society." In this regard, it is even more "objectively truthful" than commercial commodity advertisement. For it openly and unashamedly sublates truth

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16 Ibid., 16, 21, 22, 29, 44, 49, 52.
17 Ibid., 12, 15, 18, 26, 36, 40, 50, 56, 62, 64, 74, 68.
18 Ibid., 12, 56. See also 64, 74.
19 Ibid., 38, 50-51.
20 Ibid., 26.
21 Ibid., 15, 26.
22 Ibid., 15, 18, 102.
23 Ibid., 15.

in the higher service of political power, and in doing this, it "justif[ies] authoritarianism which is an inherent tendency of modern industrial organization."[24]

Thirdly, fascist propaganda is indicative of the objective social order in that it embodies in an advanced manner a unique quality that distinguishes contemporary authoritarianism from earlier forms. It embodies the politicization of the rampant instrumentalism inherent in capitalist relations of production. It embodies the replacement, within an expanded political sphere, of means-rationality for the ends-rationality previously associated with social and political authority. Fascism, as a political movement, epitomizes on a political level the compulsion of "late industrial society" to subvert human collective ends and replace them with instrumental means. The propaganda of fascism is an ultimate expression of this subversion, the completion of the process of modern alienation from substantive ends that originated and remains grounded in the capitalist transmutation of the use-value of human labor into exchange value. An outgrowth of the industrial order, fascist propaganda is "a kind of psycho-technics, borrowed from the modern factory and applied to the population as a whole," the political embodiment of that estrangement from substantive human purpose—"the shift ... from end to means"—that constitutes "one of the axioms of the logic of fascist manipulation."[25]

> The end is [in Thomas' words] "that we might demonstrate to the world that there are patriots ... willing to give their lives for the cause of God, home and native land."... The transformation of means into an end is blatant: "To give their lives for the cause of God" is a means [but this] ... negative concept of sacrifice remains the last end Thomas has to offer. The means by which it is supposed to be achieved are the Christian American Crusade, its paper, the pamphlets, the money for which Thomas asks. All the weight of his propaganda is thrown in to promote the means. Propaganda is the ultimate content of this propaganda.[26]

Thomas' use of propaganda has no end beyond the persuasion of his followers to embrace the "negative concept of sacrifice": sacrifice to "the cause" of "the movement" becomes the end, rather than the means toward the realization of some future substantive goal beyond this means. Propagation of "the cause of God" becomes "the cause" itself: "Propaganda itself becomes the purpose of propaganda"; "the movement [comes to be] conceived of as an end in itself."[27]

Repeatedly in the manuscript appear various formulations of this theme of the politicized substitution of means for ends: "the emphasis is shifted from the 'what' to the 'how,'" Adorno says of the role of propaganda in Thomas' campaign; in Thomas' propaganda the achievement of majority rule is "hypostatized ... as an end in itself rather than as a means"; "fascism justifies leadership by nothing but leadership, [as the] admiration of power"; Thomas "substitut[es] the concept of the movement itself for the aim of the movement," a substitution in which the "self-denial" demanded

24 Ibid., 47.
25 Ibid., 18, 42.
26 Ibid., 42.
27 Ibid., 71, 41.

by fascism "is interpreted in terms of an end rather than a means."[28] This politicized universalization of means-rationality constitutes "one of the deepest psychological changes that have taken place in our time," Adorno writes.[29] What began as an alienation of labor from substantive ends—a beginning located in the early capitalist transformation of labor into a commodity (the transformation of human activity into "parts of the machinery of capitalism")—achieves its completion here in a dual faceted psychological self-alienation. First, human beings become means to themselves ("become tools to themselves, to recognize and treat themselves as means rather than as ends") and then, out of a desperation for meaning, they transpose this sense of self as pure means into an even more radical self-alienation: the "negative sacrifice" of self to the higher cause of fascism.[30]

One aim, although usually not fully articulated, underlies this final means-ends transformation: the establishment of omnipotence as an end unto itself, divorced from human concerns. Listeners are drawn to Thomas' radio broadcasts not because of his religious sermonizing but because they recognize beneath it "his lust for power and his administrative manipulation, ... what matters to them is an organization, competitive power." The presentation of "fascist rationality consists in the establishment of an omnipotent power system rather than in the enforcement of any 'philosophy.'"[31] Fascist propaganda embodies the instrumentalization of human life in its totality, the complete subservience of all of life to the "manipulations" of pure "omnipotent power."

2.2 From Liberalism to Monopolism; from the Liberal Self to Ego Collapse

A recurrent motif in the manuscript is constructed from a pair of linked contrasting conditions: economically, a contrast between two phases of capitalism; and psychologically, a contrast between two types of personality structures. Fascism is seen as an outcome of the transition from the first to the second position in each of these contrasts: economically, as an outcome of the transition from entrepreneurial capitalism to monopoly capitalism; and, psychologically, as an outcome of the transition from autonomous personality structures to submissive authoritarian personality structures. How does Adorno connect this psychological transformation to his explanation of social transformation?

In the early stages of capitalism, the normative individual is conceived as being an autonomous entrepreneur. He (the entrepreneur is distinctly male in Adorno's scheme) is the "independent individual of the liberal era of free competition." He is an economically "self-sustaining and self-controlled unity," grounded upon a material "existence firmly established in itself and secure." The psychological counterpart to

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28 Ibid., 24 n. 9, 38, 41, 51, 62.

29 Ibid., 24 n. 9.

30 Ibid., 24 n. 9. Adorno wrote in an essay of 1953 that "the increased fragmentation of the division of labour has not only continued to make men into parts of the machinery of capitalism but has induced them to become tools to themselves, to recognize and treat themselves as means rather than as ends." Rose, *Melancholy Science*, 90.

31 "Psychological Technique," 81, 86-87.

this economically "self-sustaining unity" is a "united, integrated personality": that is, a personality whose psyche is structured around "an ego" or "a 'self.'" Such a psychological structure, marked by ego strength, "reflects the strength to compete [economically] with others."[32]

The competitiveness of entrepreneurial capitalism thus requires the personality structure of the liberal self. The psychic structure of the liberal self is dominated by a strong ego, an ego guided by reason, an ego with stoic control over otherwise disruptive impulses and emotions. With such an ego formation, the liberal self represents the model of psychological self-determination (reflective in turn of a corresponding condition of economic self-determination). In addition, the liberal self is the mainstay of the bourgeois family, an institution doubly upheld by the male entrepreneur's paternal role: economically, he is "the guarantor of the life of his family," providing his family with the basis to become "a self-sustaining, independent, economic unity"; and psychologically, he represents "a superior social agency," the source of its members' internalized ethical ideals (their superegos).[33] The embodiment of a psyche structured by a coherent strong ego and paternal superego, this normative liberal self serves as an exemplar of the bourgeois ideal of "the uniqueness of the individual, his autonomy and importance."[34]

The rise of monopoly capitalism spells the end economically of the liberal entrepreneur and of his psychological embodiment, the liberal self. In economic terms, his position as the society's normative representative is taken, at best, by "the employee" and, at worst, by "the beggar."[35] As the economy becomes centralized, and with it, the polity under various forms of integrated statism, the whole social order presses toward a radical de-individualization. In this situation, "the masses today ... feel themselves to be objects of ... anonymous processes to which they are subject ..., hidden powers which [their] existence obeys."[36] Economically, where once the individual felt that he determined his own fate,

> no one but the very rich feels himself as the master of his economic fate any longer but rather as the object of huge blind economic forces working upon him. Everyone senses that he is somehow at the mercy of society; the spectre of the beggar looms behind the psychological imagery of each individual.[37]

At best, "the individual is reduced to a mere cog."[38]

The psychological repercussions are severe. "The social forces to which each individual is subject are so tremendous that he has to yield to them not only economically ... but also psychologically." Under pressure of an increasingly monopolistic integration involving the economy, communications, culture, and state, the autonomy and unity of the liberal psyche collapse. Social reality no longer

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32 Ibid., 19, 20.
33 Ibid., 19-20, 27.
34 Ibid., 11.
35 Ibid., 19, 30.
36 Ibid., 64.
37 Ibid., 30.
38 Ibid., 11.

supports the creation of "a unified, integrated personality." Increasingly, the person "ceases to be an ego, a 'self.'" People "cease to be individuals in the traditional sense of self-sustaining and self-controlled unity."[39] All that remains of "the individual" is the ideology of the individual. Traits that the individual had previously embodied—spontaneity, uniqueness of personality, conscience—are now little more than ideologies promulgated by mass culture and mass politics to manipulate the masses.[40]

With the end of the individual comes the end of his previously achieved ego functions: in particular, the end of reason. The modern psyche tends toward "a complete breakdown of a logical sense." Displaying a mode of cognition Adorno terms "atomistic thinking," the mentality of the masses becomes "too weak to maintain a continuous process of making deductions." Undermined so gravely, the psyche reverts to regressive patterns of response and impulse—cognitively to a kind of fragmented concrete operationalism, and emotionally to a kind of unreflective impulsivity and propensity to act out; "they know what they want and what they do not want, but they cannot detach themselves from their own immediate and atomistic reactions."[41] Unable to abstract or think in a systematic rational fashion, the post-liberal mind is easily manipulated by the "magical" thinking served up by commercial culture, advertising, and, most dangerous of all, by fascist propaganda.[42]

At the heart of this psychological collapse is what Adorno sees as the decline of the paternal role of the father and, with it, "the decline of the family." With the replacement of the entrepreneurial position by that of "employee" (and its always potential alternative, "beggar"), the substantiality of the father's paternal role evaporates. No longer able to ensure his family's economic autonomy, he ceases to embody the paternal authority that had once served, psychodynamically, as the inner psychic source of entrepreneurial autonomy. "As the father ceases to be the guarantor of the life of his family, so he ceases to represent psychologically a superior social agency" that had previously been internalized as a superego ideal within his offspring.[43]

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39 Ibid., 19, 20.
40 Ibid., 11, 16, 62, 84.
41 Ibid., 44, 46.
42 Ibid., 18, 48, 50.
43 Ibid., 27. No aspect of Adorno's use of psychoanalytic theory has been more criticized than his notion that with the end of liberal capitalism fathers cease to be the type of substantive figure that children (especially boys) can internalize to form a type of superego which resists authoritarianism and allows for a degree of social autonomy. These critiques have been inspired, for the most part, by two articles written by Jessica Benjamin: "Authority and the Family Revised: or, A World Without Fathers?" in *New German Critique*, No 13 (Winter 1978) and "The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology," *Telos*, No. 32 (Summer 1977). While they advance some useful and provocative ideas, these articles also serve as the source of several seriously mistaken ideas as to what exactly Adorno wrote about internalization and the decline of the father, ideas which have been accepted apparently without close examination of the original texts by a number of authors. For example, C. Fred Alford accepts Benjamin's basic argument without question in his *Narcissism: Socrates, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven, 1988), 125-135.

Adorno suggests that this collapse of paternal authority is in itself a precondition to the rise of fascism. Fascist leaders as unlike as Thomas and Hitler were unable to overcome their own extreme antagonism to their fathers and to the paternal ideal, and consequently were neither able to internalize the paternal position nor represent it for their followers. The fascist leader is ever "the image of the *son*, of him who is not yet 'the man' himself.... He is as weak as [his followers] are."[44] The fascist leader

> is a son ... dependent on and at the service of something bigger than himself. This greater entity is, however, no longer the father. It is vague and utterly undefined.... [It is] the collectivity of all the 'sons' gathered around the fascist organization.... The fascist leader is supposed to gain control by "giving himself up" and surrendering himself to the collectivity. It is from this latter that the fascist leader derives his authority and for which he stands in all his symbolic utterances.[45]

With images such as "the bachelor Hitler," Adorno adds, paternal and patriarchal features are totally overturned, as they are in fascist culture in general.[46]

Within the context of this depiction of the demise of the liberal self and the rise of fascism, it helps to be as precise as is Adorno (who is not very precise at all) in portraying the dynamics of causal determinacy between social and psychological spheres. The manuscript's depiction of the relationship between social and psychological factors under the conditions of entrepreneurial liberalism suggests a simple one-directional base-to-superstructure causality, which at least superficially translates into an equally simple one-directional economy-to-psychology causality. Economic conditions are said to "require" certain psychological formations; psychological formations are said to "reflect" economic formations.[47] With the transition from entrepreneurial to

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For Adorno, the failure of Oedipal internalization leads to psychic ill-health and the loss of psychic substantiveness and wholeness. This is also the view adopted by a number of psychoanalytically inclined social theorists, for example, Philip Cushman, in his *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (Reading, Mass, 1995), and Christopher Lasch, in two books, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York, 1978) and *The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Trouble Times* (New York, 1984). For Benjamin, on the other hand, the failure of internalization leads to autonomy, true social relatedness, and psychic good health.

44   "Psychological Technique," 26 (emphasis in original).

45   Ibid., 27-28. Adorno's phrase, "the collectivity of all the 'sons,'" is a clear reference to Freud's description of the primal polity of brothers that came into existence upon their killing of the primal father found in chapter 4 of *Totem and Taboo* (New York, 1989), 181-185. Adorno's argument that "sons," not "fathers," are at the forefront of the fascist organization resembles, as Adorno himself acknowledges in a footnote, Erik H. Erikson's similar argument found in a 1942 article for *Psychiatry* that was later recast as the chapter "The Legend of Hitler's Youth" in Erikson's *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed, (New York, 1963). In a manner somewhat similar to Adorno, Erikson argued that the "German father's essential lack of true inner authority" contributed to his son's adolescent revolt and that Hitler's appeal to such young men was as "the adolescent who refused to become a father" (332, 337).

46   "Psychological Technique," 28.

47   For example, see Ibid., 19-20.

monopolistic capitalism, however, social determinants beyond the simple economic ones come into play. The psyche faces an expanding integration of impersonal monopolistic determinants, in which formations within the political sphere coalesce with those from within the spheres not only of production and distribution but also of mass communications and culture. This integrated combination, variously labeled by Adorno "the impersonal order," "anonymous social processes," "the social and cultural pressure" and at one point simply "monopolism," overwhelms the post-liberal psyche and leaves it no room for independence.[48]

While at times Adorno characterizes the contemporary integration of objective determinants with words that point to a continuing primacy of economic factors (references to "the concentration of economic power" and "big ownership," at other times he suggests that superstructural forces (cultural and political) have in some regards overtaken those of the economic infrastructure. For example, when discussing the rise of fascist movements, Adorno writes of a distinction between "the old and the new 'elites'—between those who own big property and those who 'protect' and, to a considerable extent, control it by their terror apparatus."[49] The relatively straightforward primacy of the economy in liberalism, a primacy that paradoxically required of the individual a degree of psychic independence, has been replaced by a monopolistic integration of economic and superstructural forces. The integration of "social and cultural pressure" takes on as much importance as that of the economy and, especially when political formations such as those of fascism are added, they represent a combination so overwhelming that the psyche becomes unable, in an important sense, to maintain a unified ego or to be a coherent self.[50]

In explicating Adorno's views of the historical and psychological changes that mark the transition from economic liberalism (and its psychological correlative, ego autonomy) to economic, cultural, and political monopolism (and its very different psychological correlative, ego collapse), it is helpful to turn momentarily to material Adorno was writing in the months before he began the Thomas manuscript. In 1942, Adorno wrote out a series of notes, unpublished to this day, on the subject "toward a new anthropology" (*Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie*). In these notes he suggested that Freud's psychoanalytic model of psychic structure, while true for the earlier liberal stage of capitalism, was not applicable in the current monopoly stage. Adorno wrote that the historical and psychological changes of recent history were so massive that they constituted a veritable anthropological change in the historically conditioned "nature" of humankind. With the downfall of entrepreneurial capitalism, he asserted, came "a new anthropological type," a fundamentally new type of human being, with new social functions and a new type of psychic formation. In the case of this new anthropological type, the role of repression in the formation of psychic structure had been replaced by the immediate gratifications of mass culture. In addition, the coherent autonomous ego, and the psycho-social forces that supported its formation,

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48 Ibid., 11, 64, 19, 16, 15.

49 Ibid., 50, 123, 127.

50 Ibid., 19.

had been eliminated by overwhelming social and cultural forces that de-structured the psyche and caused it to conform to the forces that overwhelmed it.[51]

Adorno's manuscript on Thomas' radio addresses contains a number of passages that echo his *Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie*. For example, in discussing how the collapse of the liberal self prepares the way for the mass submission to fascist figures like Thomas, Adorno writes:

> The social forces [of today] to which each individual is subject are so tremendous that he has to yield to them not only economically by becoming an employee (rather than remaining a self-sustaining social unit), but also psychologically under the social and cultural pressure put upon him, a pressure which he can bear only by making it his own cause. He must act in terms of adequate conformist behavior rather than in the terms of a unified, integrated personality.[52]

For Adorno, thus, fascist submission is a type of psychic collapse. Conceptualized in the structural terms of the psyche of the Freudian subject, his ideas here can be schematized as follows:

		Entrepreneurial Liberal Self	→	*Authoritarian Submission*
Superego	=	internalization of paternal authority	→	no autonomous conscience
Ego	=	strong unified ego guided by reason	→	ego collapse, end of reason
Id	=	repression structures the psyche	→	immediate gratification

2.3 Masochistic Submission

In his radio broadcasts, Thomas adopted the persona typical of fascist leaders: "the great little man." As leader, the great little man "is both weak and strong": weak so as to provide a basis for the identification of the followers with the leader; strong so as to embody the powerful collectivity achieved in this very act of identification.[53] The leader thus presents in his own persona the paradoxical transformation at the core of fascism: weakness into strength. The leader provides "a model for the very attitude that he intends to affirm in his listeners": "the weak can become strong if they surrender their own private existence to the 'movement,' the 'cause,' the 'crusade.'"[54]

In this transformative surrender to fascist collectivity lies "the central mechanism of the mass psychology of fascism: the transformation of the feeling of one's own impotence into a feeling of strength."[55] Stripped of those material sources of inner strength which the ego-centered psyche of the liberal era possessed (in particular,

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51 My description of Adorno's *Notizen zur neuen Anthropologie* is based on the discussion of the manuscript in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectic: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York, 1977), 177, 179-180.

52 "Psychological Technique," 19.

53 Ibid., 29.

54 Ibid., 12.

55 Ibid., 54.

stripped of entrepreneurial property), the member of the masses finds himself overwhelmed by social "pressure which he can bear only by making it his own cause."[56] This pressure is so great that his only way out is to turn himself into a vehicle of the very pressure which overwhelms him, by finding a way to invest that pressure in a social form with which he may identify. A successful fascist movement is one that takes up into its own authoritarian forms representations of the objective pressures that had previously overwhelmed its members. In such cases, the masses "identify themselves so strongly with the power system [of the organization] that they are ready to undergo any hardship, as proof of the power and virility with which their own humiliation seems to incorporate them."[57]

On one level, therefore, it might seem that such authoritarian submission empowers those who submit, if only through the ability to provide representations of power with which those who submit can identify. But behind this paradoxical reversal of power lies a deeper psychical reversal, for embodied in the mechanism of submission is a self-negation that has ominous psychological ramifications: the fascist way out from under the overwhelming pressures of modernity leads to the negation of the psyche itself ("the negative sacrifice" of fascism). As the example of Nazi Germany illustrates, Adorno argues, the solidarity of fascist collectivity is a negative one, a solidarity that leads to human annihilation.

> Annihilation is the psychological substitute for the millennium—a day when the difference between ego and the others, between poor and rich, between powerful and impotent, will be submerged in one great inarticulate unity. If no hope of true solidarity is held out to the masses, they may desperately stick to this negative substitute.[58]

The logic of self-negation at the heart of fascist collectivity seeks the negation not only of the ego but also of all differentiation. In this regard, it clearly partakes of the psychodynamics of masochism. Even behind the "sadism" that the fascist collective perpetuates upon others, Adorno writes, lies such deeper "masochistic" desires. But speaking of these masochistic desires, Adorno adds, somewhat mysteriously: "the prospective fascist may long for the destruction of himself no less than for that of the adversaries, *destruction being a substitute for his deepest and most inhibited desires*."[59]

What are these "deepest and most inhibited desires" associated with masochism for which "destruction" of self and others serves as a substitute? Adorno does not say here, but since this theme will reappear in later works in somewhat more explicit fashion (in particular, in *The Authoritarian Personality*), it is appropriate to explore Adorno's meaning here.

Adorno's psychoanalytic theorizing rests upon a thorough knowledge of Freud's writings. For Freud, the deepest and most inhibited desires of masochism for which destruction is but a substitute were those of the male child who, in a negative resolution of the Oedipal complex (a resolution that fails to internalize the father),

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56 Ibid., 19.
57 Ibid., 129.
58 Ibid., 72-73.
59 Ibid., 22, 72 (italics added).

is motivated by a desire to be loved by the father "in a genital sense," a desire that when repressed comes to be represented unconsciously as a desire to be beaten, castrated, and annihilated.[60] In a passage that Adorno will echo, Freud wrote that the adult masochist may reenact this original desire in ways that bring about the

> chastisement from the great parental authority of Fate. In order to provoke punishment for this last parent substitute the masochist must do something inexpedient, act against his own interests ...[,] possibly destroy his own existence.[61]

Parallel to Freud's conception, Adorno's passage, which speaks of the "deepest and most inhibited desires" of masochism, asserts that the presence of these inhibited desires

> is confirmed by the constant references of fascists to self-sacrifice, or by certain statements made by Hitler.... Here the fascist's subconscious knowledge of the ultimate hopelessness of his undertakings probably comes into play. He realizes ... that in the long run [his fate] is doomed. Any keen observer could notice this feeling in Nazi Germany before the war broke out.[62]

It is as an expression of this unconscious longing to sacrifice the self to the great "parental authority of Fate" that, the passage adds, fascist propaganda makes its ultimate "promise": "the promise ... of destruction as such."[63]

In the concluding sentence of the Thomas manuscript, Adorno seeks, in summation, to capture this ultimate negation, a negation that is lodged at the heart of the "agitator's dream." At its base this dream contains, Adorno states, "the unification of the horrible and the wonderful, the drunkenness of an annihilation that pretends to be salvation."[64]

2.4 "Our Thesis on Ambivalence"

Although varying in the amount of explicit description provided, fascist oratory contains repeated attacks on licentious, criminal, and treasonous behavior. Returning again and again to sly innuendos and open descriptions of sins both sexual and violent, the fascist orator infuses his rhetoric with contradictory meanings: on the surface level, he operates in a quasi-rational manner to elicit negative responses from the audience; at an unconscious level, he sets in motion various "underlying irrational psychological mechanisms," mechanisms that, in contradiction to the surface denigration, produce "certain unconscious gratifications as supplementary effects of the negative statements."[65] The fascist orator thus proves himself to be "a

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60 Sigmund Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten," in *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 126.

61 Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem in Masochism," in *General Psychological Theory*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), 200.

62 "Psychological Technique," 72.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., 141.

65 Ibid., 13, 63.

practical psychologist": "even if he denounces psychoanalysis as a Jewish racket," Adorno says of the orator, "he knows something about ambivalence in action." [66]

The psychologically skillful use of "ambivalence in action" is at the center of a number of the "devices" employed by Thomas (most explicitly, the rhetorical devices that Adorno entitled "Emotional Release," "If You Only Knew," "Dirty Linen," "Tingling Backbone," "Last Hour," and "Black Hand"). Moreover, various characteristics of "ambivalence" are to be found "throughout Thomas' method." The structure of Thomas' presentations assumes a "double and almost self-contradictory character," combining in particular conscious denigration with unconscious gratification.[67] When Thomas reports that the Soviet government has forced its female population into prostitution, his audience is made to fear that "the Communists" planned to do the same to their daughters, wives, and sisters.

> The surface effect is that people react, out of fear, by organizing themselves to combat the threatening danger. The unconscious effect is, bluntly speaking, that they enjoy the description of atrocities because they themselves want to commit them some day.[68]

Adorno compares such ambivalent responses to the attitude of people who eagerly sniff a bad odor all the while protesting against its repulsiveness; "one does not have to be a psychoanalyst to suspect that these people unconsciously enjoy the bad smell."[69] In Thomas' case, "the simple motive of gratification to be obtained through spicy revelations overshadows most other considerations"; he "particularly relishes picturing the Communists as a lot of wanton criminals."[70]

The fact that fascist orators are so preoccupied with uncovering sin should not come as a surprise. The mass culture from which fascism springs is itself deeply infused with what Adorno calls an "attitude of snooping"—an ambivalent craving to uncover and expose the dark hidden secrets of others. This "attitude of snooping" especially pervades today's mass media.[71] Adorno hints that impulses activated by this attitude include those grounded on a regressive recapitulation of infantile desires to spy upon the primal scene of parental intercourse: modernity's "attitude of snooping" is "deep-rooted in the unconscious psychological process," Adorno states, adding that this unconscious process "longs for the gratification of catching a glimpse of one's neighbor's private life."[72] (In a Freudian framework, stating that something is "deep-rooted in the unconscious process" suggests that its origin lies in the early history of the psyche; in that case, "one's neighbors" would be one's parents or a symbolic representative of them.) A culture pervaded by ever-present stimuli that call forth sado-masochistic desires to invade and obliterate (as a means to participate vicariously in and identify with) the dirty-dark privacy of others provides

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66 Ibid., 13.
67 Ibid., 63, 71.
68 Ibid., 71.
69 Ibid., 68.
70 Ibid., 69.
71 Ibid., 12.
72 Ibid.

not only a mass psychology ready to be exploited by fascist leaders; it is already in itself, insists Adorno, "an attitude closely akin to fascism."[73]

What does Adorno mean by associating fascism with the desire to snoop? On the one hand, this "attitude of snooping"—Adorno refers to it later as "the neurotic curiosity prevailing within modern mass culture"—is indicative of "a universal feature in present day mass culture."[74] For modern mass culture as a whole, not only its "gossip columnists" and "inside-stories," is built upon a hypocritical "ambivalence in action" by which "the dark, forbidden things whose revelation [the listener] indignantly enjoys are the same things that he himself would love to indulge in."[75] But on the other hand, although this desire for vicarious pleasures has come to characterize mass culture in general, fascism has taken it a step further, to a state in which "this mechanism has become automatized."

> The gratification comes to be derived from the act of revelation as such, no matter what actually is revealed. Revelation *per se* is experienced as the fulfillment of a promise and obtains an almost ceremonial character.[76]

Fascist revelation and denunciation thus become ritualized, reducing "the objective weight of the revealed facts" to little importance. "The fascist-minded listener, at least, is willing to accept without examination any scandal story, even a most stupid one like the ritual murder legend."[77]

In automatizing the ambiguous gratification of scandalized revelation, fascist orators "feed upon the lack of emotional gratification in an industrial society."[78] Experts of diverse "psycho-technics" that employ psychodynamic mechanisms like ambivalence to provide the release of unconscious and repressed emotions, these fascist orators surreptitiously supply the masses with "irrational satisfaction which is denied them by today's social and economic setup," satisfaction slipped to them through rhetorical devices that bespeak a pervasive, corrosive hypocrisy.[79] Such gratifications are false, Adorno insists. "The manipulated irrational gratifications are spurious"; they do not "touch upon the roots of emotional frustration in our society." They are a "mere substitute for the fulfillment of desires."[80]

The fascist use of ambivalence not only provides "spurious" gratification to a society denied true gratification; it also provides a "spurious" sense of community to a society denied true community. In the impersonal society of today, the masses find the detachment characteristic of the objective order unendurable (a register in its way of the collapse of independent, strong ego and superego structures discussed previously) and hence "virtually each individual today suffers" from "feelings of

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73 "Ibid.
74 Ibid., 12, 64.
75 Ibid., 12, 68.
76 Ibid., 68.
77 Ibid., 68-69.
78 Ibid., 17.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 18.

despair, isolation, and loneliness."[81] Most people feel they have been somehow "left out," a feeling that deeply threatens the post-liberal psyche and engenders obsessive conformism, the desperate need to be in the "in-group."[82] The fascist ritualized practice of revelatory innuendos and harangues seems in itself to promise such people that "they are going to be 'let in'"; "people are allowed to peep behind the scene, as it were, and to learn the inside story. They seem to share the privilege of the well-informed few."[83] With this illusionary privilege of being "let in," grounded upon the skillful use of "ambivalence in action," the audience of the fascist orator is drawn into the fascist community: "the libido of the listener is satisfied when he is treated as an insider."[84] Adorno cautions, however, that this libidinal fellowship is ultimately not only illusionary; it is also neurotically regressive, based on ego-loss and narcissistic merger. In the fascist community, "there is no real pleasure or joy, but only the release of the feeling of one's own unhappiness and the achievement of a retrogressive gratification out of the submergence of the self into the community."[85]

Adorno's recurrent reflections in the Thomas manuscript on the varied role of ambivalence lead him several times to touch briefly upon a mechanism that operates structurally on the same principle, but that, in Adorno's later writings on fascism, came to be considered separately from ambivalence and to overshadow it in importance: projection. In the manuscript's first reference to "projection," Adorno writes,

> It is incidentally one of the most outstanding characteristics of fascist and anti-Semitic propagandists that they blame their victims in an almost compulsory way for exactly the things which they themselves are doing or hope to do.... It is this pattern through which the mechanism of psychological "projection" makes itself felt throughout fascist ideology.[86]

The term "projection" here calls attention to a particular manifestation of that contradictory presence of opposed attitudes that elsewhere in the Thomas manuscript is discussed in terms of "ambivalence": in projection, a person disowns one of his/her own ambivalent attitudes (the one that is unconscious) and falsely experiences it as an attribute of a second person, with the result that it serves to justify an attack upon and victimization of that second person. The passages in which "ambivalence" rather than "projection" is used avoid the question of whether the contradictory unconscious attitude is displaced onto other persons. For instance, in speaking of the fact that Thomas' listeners "enjoy the description of [Russian] atrocities because they themselves want to commit them some day," Adorno refers to the listeners' "*ambivalence* towards atrocity stories," rather than their *projection* of the desire to commit these atrocities onto the Russians.[87]

81 Ibid., 11.
82 Ibid., 19.
83 Ibid., 64, 68.
84 Ibid., 13.
85 Ibid., 18.
86 Ibid., 14.
87 Ibid., 71 (italics added).

Besides the explicit indication that unconscious desires have been displaced onto other persons, what in particular distinguishes "projection" from "ambivalence" in the manuscript is that projection occurs in order to justify an attack upon one's enemies. Structured so, "projection" is inevitably associated with a particular manifestation of paranoia: delusions of persecution and intense counter-aggression. Adorno uses the term "projection" in only three places in the manuscript, and in each he elaborates particular cases in which a projected attitude takes the paranoiac form of "rationaliz[ing] aggressiveness under the guise of self-defense."[88] Adorno reports that Thomas' fellow anti-Semite, Father Coughlin, justifies the Hitlerian war against Jews as "a 'self-defense mechanism.'"[89] Thomas himself, Adorno adds, tells "atrocity stories of an utterly fantastic nature" about the Soviet Union so as "to terrify people with the vision of their immediate destruction." In this way "he builds up a paranoiac system which he later attacks"; "he consciously or unconsciously reckons with a 'paranoiac' attitude among his listeners, a kind of persecution mania" which then will serve as justification of the atrocities he plans to unleash against the Communists.[90] The pattern that underlies such "red-baiting" is also repeated, at an even higher level, in fascist anti-Semitic attacks against the Jews. Projection so dominates the fascist image of the Jew that this image "is based less upon Jewish peculiarities than upon the mentality of the anti-Semite." In attacking the Jews, the fascists target this (self) image, although in the end, of course, it is "the Jews themselves [who] are destroyed."[91]

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88 Ibid., 14, 21-22, 117.
89 Ibid., 22.
90 Ibid., 116-117.
91 Ibid., 117.

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Chapter 9

Retrospective:
The Thomas Manuscript as Viewed by Adorno's "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America"

Twenty-five years after completing his study of Thomas' radio addresses, Adorno wrote a reflective essay, "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," in which he discussed the development of his work as a sociologist during his stay in the U.S. Although Adorno's remarks on the Thomas manuscript play a small part in this later essay, they are in their way revelatory, and thus warrant our close examination here. In a few incisive sentences Adorno presents an encapsulated view of major elements of his conception of sociological method, and suggests that the Thomas manuscript helped establish the model of sociological investigation he came to refine in his later work. His first sociological endeavor to investigate authoritarianism (Adorno produced four additional significant works on the subject), the analysis of Thomas supplied him "with a good deal of stimulation for items that were useful" later in the preparation of the greatest of these works, *The Authoritarian Personality*.[1]

To begin with, in his comments on the Thomas manuscript Adorno's choice of words is revealing. His comments commence with the statement that his investigations of authoritarianism began with the work he did on this manuscript, which he identifies as "a larger monograph on the socio-psychological technique of

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[1]   Adorno, "Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America," in Fleming and Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration*, 365. Besides the Thomas manuscript, three other major works on authoritarianism were written by Adorno in English for U.S. audiences: two articles, "Anti-Semitism and Fascist Propaganda," in *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease*, ed. Ernst Simmel (New York, 1946), 125-137, and "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," *Psychoanalysis and the Social Sciences*, 3 (1951), 408-433; and his contributions to Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality*. The only major work on authoritarianism that Adorno wrote in German was his contribution to *Gruppenexperiment. Ein Studienbericht*, ed. Friedrich Pollock (Frankfurt, 1955). The method of psychoanalytically informed qualitative analysis of transcripts (either of radio broadcasts or personal interviews) that Adorno first used in the Thomas piece and further developed in his contributions to *The Authoritarian Personality* was also utilized in this last work. (*Gruppenexperiment* is a socio-psychological study of post WW II German political consciousness, with a special focus on the aftereffects of the authoritarianism of the Nazi regime.)

a fascist agitator who had recently been active on the American West Coast, Martin Luther Thomas."[2] In Adorno's hindsight, the reader notices, the indicated focus of the Thomas work has been altered by a slight change in appellation: the study whose title indicates it concerns "psychological technique" is reconstituted as a study concerning "*socio*-psychological technique." Is the addition of the prefix "socio" the result of a faulty memory? The designation "socio-psychological technique" does not appear anywhere in the Thomas manuscript, while the title's "psychological technique" appears there in a number of formations (for instance, in references to propaganda devices as "psychological technique," "psychological stimuli," and "psycho-technics"[3]). Adorno's memory is not to be faulted, however. For is not "socio-psychological" a superior designator of that intermixture of sociological and psychological factors we found operative in the major thematic motifs of the work? As we saw in the previous section (and will see more pointedly shortly), seldom is a technique of psychological manipulation discussed that is not also found to be an expression of larger sociological determinants.

Adorno's comments go on to characterize the Thomas study as "a content analysis of the more or less standardized and by no means numerous stimuli that fascist agitators employ."[4] The assertion that fascist agitation employs a limited number of relatively standardized stimuli (techniques) calls for comment. One may recall that, in our earlier analysis of the manuscript's motif concerning the objective status of fascist rhetorical devices, these devices are depicted as expressive of the emergent supremacy of instrumentalized power over human affairs, a supremacy exemplified in a manipulative (fascist) authoritarianism cut off from substantive human ends. We need not look far in Adorno's other writings to find the connection between the assertion that fascist agitational techniques are limited and standardized and the view that these techniques express the social-political triumph of instrumentalized power. In many of Adorno's writings, he employs the concept of the total reification of developed capitalist society, a form of society in which the ontologized abstractions of administrative rule and commodity exchange come to dominate not only social behavior but also human consciousness. One of the attributes of a totally reified society is that the logic of standardization inherent in both complex administration and commodity exchange dominates not only the economic and political spheres, but also culture, the norms of rationality, and consciousness itself. Intrinsic to the administrative and material spheres of capitalist society, standardization spreads to its subjective spheres: the texture of the experiences and characteristics of the psyche become molded by typification and stereotype.

Given this connection between standardization and modern society, it should not surprise us to discover that establishing and examining typologies, whether types of rhetorical manipulation (as in the Thomas piece) or types of personality structure (as in *The Authoritarian Personality*), came to be Adorno's usual procedure in his sociology of authoritarianism, as it did also in his sociology of culture (for instance, typologies of musical behavior). About this practice, Gillian Rose has written,

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2   "Scientific Experiences," 364 (emphasis added).

3   Ibid., 18, 38, 39.

4   Ibid., 364.

> In his major areas of [empirical sociological] research [Adorno] established and examined typologies.... These typologies are not intended to provide classificatory schemata which could be tested, or ideal-types in the sense of refined concepts against which reality could be measured. The beliefs and behavior of people in particular spheres of social action are observed to be rigid and stereotyped in a specifiable and limited number of ways. These 'types' are then shown to be determined by the underlying process of society, the mode of production. The production of value in exchange and the concomitant mode of domination in late capitalism give rise to 'typed' behavior which tends to be generally or universally prevalent.[5]

Adorno's general predisposition to think typologically followed from (and in turn perhaps reinforced) his convictions about the nature of late industrial society; it followed from his belief that the reification of society increasingly stamped all human activity within the molds of stereotypy. While it might appear that Adorno chose to break his analysis of Thomas' rhetoric practices into a number of typological classifications because such a method offered convenience in research and presentation, the actual rationale for Adorno's typological thought is that it reflected the structure of the behavior studied.

To return to the sentence in Adorno's recollections that led us to the relationship of reification and typology, we notice that this sentence begins by identifying the genre of the Thomas piece as "a content analysis," a characterization elaborated upon several sentences later, where the same work is spoken of as "one of the first *critical* and *qualitative content analyses* to be carried out in the United States."[6] By itself, the phrase "content analysis" referred to a popular genre of sociology in the U.S. at the time, a genre of inquiry that embraced an objectivist methodology with the aim of establishing quantitative determinations of semantic structures manifest in public communications.[7] Adorno's notion of content analysis—the critical and qualitative analysis of latent content, a mode of analysis to which Adorno would return most notably in *The Authoritarian Personality*—sharply differed from this popular approach, and even for most of us today his method is not immediately identifiable as among the regular options of sociological investigation. His approach therefore deserves further definition. What exactly is critical, qualitative content analysis?

Analysis. With reference to Adorno's sociology in general and to the Thomas work in particular, analysis involves a course of study of an object of social meaning (in this case, Thomas' radio addresses) that begins by breaking this object into its constituent elements (a typology of thirty-four psychological techniques) and then leads to an examination of each of these elements (techniques) to assess its separate constitution (the collapse of the ego-centered and superego-guided liberal self, submissive masochism on mass scale, a culture of hypocrisy that denies genuine pleasure and offers in its place the spurious titillation of ambivalent revelations)

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5   *Melancholy Science*, 103.

6   "Scientific Experiences," 365 (emphasis added).

7   Bernard Berelson, "Content Analysis in Communication Research," in *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, ed Berelson and Morris Janowitz, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966).

and its relationship to the whole (the manipulative power of economic and political monopolism which takes the form of a reified social totality existent as an end in itself).

Content. As we saw earlier, Adorno's focus is on the latent content of social objects, not the manifest content to which American sociological content analysis normally restricted itself. Moreover, for Adorno, the actual objects appropriate for such a method of content analysis were distinctly marginal as measured against those favored by mainstream sociology. Like Walter Benjamin (who in this regard, as well as others, deeply influenced Adorno), he was particularly drawn to phenomena either seemingly insignificant or decidedly un-mainstream. But whatever object he chose to analyze, whether it was the astrology columns of the *Los Angeles Times* ("The Stars Down to Earth"), a collection of transcripts of interviews with evening college students, psychiatric patients, San Quentin prisoner inmates, and service club Rotarians (*The Authoritarian Personality*), or a distinctly new style of modern popular music (Adorno's various analyses of jazz), Adorno approached it as a content both highly particularized and thoroughly expressive of the social totality.[8] In terms of content, Adorno himself defined sociology as a "societal physiognomy of appearance"[9]; the act of sociology was for him an interpretive act that aimed to uncover within the overt content of "the factual and the individual" the latent imprint of "totality's social givenness."[10]

What would we then say is the sociological "content" analyzed in Adorno's manuscript on Thomas' addresses? On the level of its unique manifest character, the content is four months of idiosyncratic, banal daily radio addresses, captured in transcripts gathered empirically by a stenographer listening to a radio some eight years before they were turned over to Adorno for analysis. On the level of wider social meaning, however—this is ultimately the content that concerns Adorno—the content is the latent truth captured within these addresses about an increasingly flawed social totality.

Qualitative. As we have noted, the accepted form of content analysis in the U.S. was "quantitative," so much so that a survey of the genre from the period found that "the single characteristic on which all the definitions [of content analysis] agree" is "the requirement of quantification." The purpose of such a genre was the numerical analysis of manifest semantic structures of various public communications; the genre's claim to objectivity was based upon its ability to assign "numerical

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8   Adorno, "The Stars Down to Earth: The Los Angeles Times Astrology Column," *Telos*, no 19 (Spring 1974), 13-90; Adorno, "Perennial Fashion—Jazz," in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, ed Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (New York, 1989), 199-203.

9   "Physiognomy": *physis* appearance; *gnomon* interpret. The art of discovering temperament and character from outward appearance; the reading of appearance. As early as 1939 (Buck-Morss, *Melancholy Science*, 176) Adorno defined his sociological method as "physiognomics," and in the last years of his life Adorno used the term in a key passage to his introductory essay to Adorno et el., *Positivist Dispute*, defining sociology there as "the societal physiognomy of appearance" (34).

10 Adorno, *Positivist Dispute*, 34.

frequencies" to the recurrence of various semantic variables.[11] In contrast to such quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis (from Adorno's perspective) does not restrict itself *a priori* to a mathematically structured analysis of a narrow range of manifest variables, but rather is open to a full range of interpretative experiences and insights. In contrast to the quantitative analysis of content, qualitative analysis is by nature hermeneutical, and, in particular in the case of Adorno, highly sensitive to nuances of implication, paradox, and double meanings. For Adorno, to perform qualitative analysis is to treat an object of sociological content as a text rich with latent manifold significations: an approach, incidentally, that no doubt contributed to Adorno's frequent choice of textual transcripts as the social object for analysis—as in the case of the Thomas manuscript (and also of Adorno's contributions to *The Authoritarian Personality*). Adorno himself defined his sociological approach at the beginning of his essay on his "scientific experiences" in the U.S.: "I considered it to be my fitting and objectively proffered assignment to *interpret* phenomena—not to ascertain, sift, and classify facts and make them available for information."[12]

Critical. On the simplest level, "critical" in this context connotes a type of thought that questions common explanations and seeks to penetrate appearance to grasp the true state of things. But on a more complex level, "critical" refers to a whole category of Western thought, one in which the term connotes reason's assault upon the claims of tradition and revelation (the Enlightenment), the inquiry into the pre-conditions of reason (Kant), the dialectical negation of historical restraints through expansion of consciousness (Hegel), the uncovering of the material conditions of social power and ideology (Marx), and the unveiling of the psychological and instinctual foundations of human affairs (Freud). Within this historical context, critical analysis is a type of thought that aims to unveil the hidden structures of society's development, of culture's advance, and of the constant and alterable qualities of the human psyche. Inherently, it takes its stand as a critique of the ideologies of the day, and seeks to elucidate the secret inequities of the social and psychological *status quo*. Furthermore—to paraphrase one of Horkheimer's seminal definitions of critical theory—critical theory, while aware that social totality permeates all meaningful experience and even frames critique itself, is nonetheless committed to a search for truths beyond the relativism of history, truths that are, in the best of circumstances, simply valid, the opposite of falsehoods. In the Thomas manuscript, such a critical spirit is evident on almost every page. Just as the manuscript contains no indications of an interest in quantitative analysis (for instance, Adorno never quantifies Thomas' uses of his various techniques), the manuscript nowhere suggests a non-critical or reportorial interest in the facts of Thomas' life or the history of his radio addresses (of which we learn next to nothing). From the very first line of the manuscript, Adorno focuses the power of his critical intelligence on the manifold content of Thomas' rhetoric, treating it as yielding specimens that under his analytic knife would reveal not only the secrets of its *genus* (anti-Semitic fascist propaganda), but those of its *family* (authoritarianism) and of its *order* (capitalism). Everywhere Adorno treats the surface sense of Thomas' words as an object to be critically exploded; everywhere he

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11 Berelson, *Public Opinion*, 263.
12 "Scientific Experiences," 339.

acts upon these words with the conviction that their actual meanings are guided by logics of indirection, on levels both psychodynamic (unearthed as within the order of Freudian mechanisms: displacement, ambivalence, projection, sado-masochism, ego collapse, the failure of paternal internalization) and societal (illuminated by a macro theory of reified society, of society overwhelmed by monopolistic instrumentalization).

From this discussion of the qualities of the genre in which Adorno placed his Thomas manuscript ("critical and qualitative content analyses"), we gain some insight into the basis for Adorno's claim, especially in comparison to what passed as orthodox "content analysis" in the U.S., that his work was "one of the first critical and qualitative content analyses to be carried out in the United States." Furthermore, in Adorno's 1969 recollections, the Thomas manuscript is assigned an originating position not only in terms of U.S. sociology, but also in terms of the development of Adorno's own sociology. However, one needs to realize that as a sociological genre, Adorno's particular brand of content analysis shares many similarities with his own non-sociological works on literary, musicological, and philosophical matters. To distinguish fully Adorno's developing sociology from this work in other disciplines, one must attend to Adorno's discussion of sociological method, as it is found in both the main body of "Scientific Experiences" and in the specific comments on the Thomas manuscript.

Adorno states that the crucial methodological problem confronted in the Thomas manuscript was to find a means of analyzing a social object (Thomas' broadcast transcripts) in a manner that could adequately "treat types of [subjective] reactions [of the listeners] as well as [treat] objective determinants" within the social totality.[13] Although similar attempts to combine in one analysis insights concerning both subjective response and objective social determinants informed all of Adorno's later U.S. sociological works, the solution reached in the Thomas manuscript, Adorno adds, was such that these later works, in particular *The Authoritarian Personality*, were able to achieve "no further reconciliation and unification of the two 'approaches'" than that already achieved in the Thomas study. To grasp fully what is at stake here in Adorno's statement—that in regard to the methodological problem of combining subjective and objective approaches the Thomas manuscript represented an uneasy solution not exceeded in his later works—we need to look at the larger discussion in which it is framed.

Early in his essay on his "scientific experiences" in the U.S., Adorno writes that his stay here had forced him to grapple with the question of sociological method. Resisting pressures to adapt to the notion of "method" in "its American sense, in which methodology virtually signifies practical techniques for research," he had developed notions of sociological method based upon the "understanding [of] the word 'method' in its European sense of epistemology."[14] Rather than a mere procedure of research or method of presentation, sociological method was to be considered the means by which one grasped knowledge of the world, that is, an epistemology.

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13 Ibid., 364.
14 Ibid., 343.

More fundamentally, the essay makes clear, the epistemological problem that Adorno found at the heart of his sociological endeavors in the U.S. centered on the difficulty of conceptualizing the interrelationship of the social totality and the individual, of society and psyche. In Adorno's sociology of culture and of authoritarianism—his twin sociological concerns in his U.S. years—this preoccupation structured his thought, although at times it was alternatively framed, sometimes in the terms of the interrelation of a Hegelian-tinged bipolarity of object and subject; at other times in terms of critical theory's attempt to link theoretical reason to empirical research. Within the context of these polarities, the question of sociological method as epistemology boiled down to this: Should one commence inquiry from the position of a theory of social totality—a position necessarily theoretical, since the "structures of the total society ... resist direct empirical treatment"[15]—or from a position empirically or interpretatively derived from the subjective data of individuals? More abstractly stated, the question was whether one should begin from the position of society or from that of the individual. According to Adorno, American sociologists, committed to methodological individualism and scientistic empiricism, "proceed[ed] from the subjects' reactions as if they were a primary and final source of sociological knowledge," while he himself remained convinced that inquiry must commence from a theory of the social totality.[16]

Whether sociological inquiry begins from the position of individuals or from that of the social totality deeply influences the inquiry's ability to conceptualize the opposite position and the interrelationship between the two. Adorno doubts that "one can proceed from the data derived from subjects to the objective social factors"; he doubts that "one can really proceed from the opinions and reactions of individuals to the social structure and the social essence." "The apparently primary, immediate reactions" of individuals, he felt, are "insufficient as a basis for sociological knowledge because they [are] themselves conditioned" by the structures of society.[17]

The data derived from individuals is neither fully spontaneous nor immediate; its form and substance are conditioned by objective factors of the social totality. A social science that grounds itself exclusively upon generalizations derived from the collection of the raw data of subjective reactions of individuals becomes epistemologically entrapped, unable to derive from its data the macro-elements of society that are the ultimate determinants of the reactions. The result, typical of much American sociology, was that inquiry "regards [subjectively derived] data as the essence of science and the theory of society as a mere abstraction." Unable to find a way to derive links from the data of individuals to objective theoretical thought about the role of society in the shaping of the data, such inquiry is forced to dismiss notions of the social totality as "in the tradition of nominalism, as a mere *flatus vocis*." Such an approach, however, is misleadingly "superficial and misguided," because "subjectively oriented analyses have their value only within the objective theory."[18]

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15 Ibid., 345.
16 Ibid., 343.
17 Ibid., 345.
18 Ibid., 343, 346, 357, 364.

For Adorno, sociological method begins from theoretical reasoning about the objective structures of the total society—structures that, as stated above, "resist direct empirical treatment"—and then necessarily proceeds to a second step as important as the first: to the incorporation of "subjectively oriented methods of research," by which Adorno means not only the methods of empirical gathering of individual reactions, opinion, and beliefs then dominant in U.S. sociology, but also the methods of psychoanalytical interpretation that he favored.[19] (Adorno tends to identify a method with the matter it studies: "objective methods" are those that deal with "politico-economic" structures of the social totality, while "subjective methods" are those that deal with the "purely subjective basis" of phenomena and with "psychology." In this latter case, even some methods that profess to be "objective," such as empirical surveys of audience response, are said to be "subjective."[20]) Beginning in social theory, the incorporation of subjective data into theoretical work is not only far easier than the opposite; it is also "absolutely essential," for social theory on its own becomes rigid and sterile. Subjective data provides social theory with the means of self-correction by presenting it with "totally unexpected results," results that the social theory in no way could have anticipated. Equally important, it leads to "the refinement and revision of my [theoretical] propositions."[21] Twice referring to the "famous formula of Freud's" concerning the need to recognize the complementarity of environmental and endogenous factors in psychic constitution, Adorno argues by analogy that subjective analysis needs to be combined with social analysis because such a combination provides similar "complementary advantages."[22] Speaking of American models of empirical research aimed at ascertaining subjective reactions and opinions, he writes: "My own position in the controversy between empirical and theoretical sociology, so often misrepresented, particularly in Europe, I may sum up by saying that [such] empirical investigations are not only legitimate but *essential*,

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19 "Scientific Experiences," 357.

20 Adorno makes it quite clear that the "quantifications" from large scale surveys used in *The Authoritarian Personality* are as much part of that book's "subjectively oriented methods of research" as are the psychoanalytically informed interpretative methods utilized in its "qualitative case studies" ("Scientific Experiences," 356, 359). It needs to be noted that Adorno's distinction between objective and subjective methods of research and analysis involves complexities beyond these mentioned. For example, methods of scientistic empiricism may be "subjective" even when they guide the study of "objective phenomena" if they reject abstract theorizing about macro-social determinants and if they deny their own constitutive subjectivity—in these cases, "objective means the non-controversial aspect of things, their unquestioned impression, the facade made up of classified data, that is, the subjective." Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London, 1974), 69. As Gillian Rose explains, "A so-called 'objective' method which seeks to eliminate all traces of subjectivity is subjective." *Melancholy Science*, 152.

21 "Scientific Experiences," 352, 357, 364.

22 Ibid., 357, 359. The concept of a complementary series was "used by Freud in order to account for the aetiology of neurosis without making a hard-and-fast choice between exogenous or endogenous facts. For Freud these two kinds of factors are actually complementary—the weaker the one, the stronger the other—so that any group of cases can in theory be distributed along a scale with the two types of factors varying in inverse ratio." Laplanche and Pontalis, *Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 71.

even in the realm of cultural phenomena."[23] In this regard, Adorno writes of how the "Child Study" of his colleague Else Frenkel-Brunswik turned up "totally unexpected results" indicating a distinction between conventional and authoritarian character structures. Frenkel-Brunswik's empirical work discovered that

> 'good,' i.e., conventional, children, are *freer* from aggression and therefore from one of the most fundamental aspects of the authoritarian personality, and vise versa.... From this aspect of the Child Study I began to understand for the first time wherein, quite independently, Robert Merton discerns one of the most important justifications for empirical research—that virtually all findings can be explained theoretically once they are in hand, but not conversely.[24]

One should note that within Adorno's scheme the correct conception of the interrelationship of society and psyche is reflected methodologically in the correct utilization of social theory and "subjective oriented analysis": the social totality conditions the structure of subjectivity; social theory provides the context in which the empirical research of individual response may be correctly elucidated. Although theory about the social totality assumes within this process a certain primacy, theoretical reasoning about society and empirical research on subjectivity are mutually enlightening, each serving to refine and correct the other. Theory of "objective social factors illuminate[s] subjective reactions, even in their concrete details," while "subjectively oriented methods of research [serve] as a corrective for the rigidity of abstract thought, in which the supremacy of the system becomes a substitute for insight into the concrete relationship between the system and its components."[25]

Thus Adorno arrived at the major methodological premises of his "Scientific Experiences" essay: first, the insistence on the methodological primacy of social theory; and second, the contention that incorporation of subjective material is essential to the vitality of such social theory. When Adorno wrote, in the essay's passage about the Thomas manuscript, of his attempt there to achieve "reconciliation and unification of the two 'approaches'" of subjective and objective methods, he had specifically in mind the ways in which the Thomas manuscript served as an early, uneasy embodiment of his own evolving ideas on sociological method. In the Thomas manuscript "a content analysis of ... standardized ... stimuli that fascist agitators employed" served as the means of arriving at "types of [subjective] reactions [of the listeners] as well as objective determinants" within the social totality.[26] Concurrent elucidations of two opposed types of content were brought together: subjective response (the listeners' "types of reaction") and macro-social theory (the "objective determinants" of the social totality). Two approaches, subjective and objective, were reconciled, if not unified.

For Adorno, then, correct sociological method was modeled on what he took to be *the primary epistemological relationship*: the relationship variously presented

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23 "Scientific Experiences," 353 (italics added).
24 Ibid., 364.
25 Ibid., 345. 357.
26 Ibid., 364.

as that between social totality and the individual, society and the psyche, objective and subjective realities; a relationship in which the first term is both primary and nonetheless dependent upon the second. In what warrants being called "Adorno's psycho-social dialectic," he insisted upon a sociology that captures this relationship, that establishes procedurally, methodologically, a conceptualization of social reality incorporative of both the relative separateness of the polar terms of the relationship and the complex dynamic that ties them together. Adorno's commentary on the Thomas manuscript in the "Scientific Experiences" essay is focused on the specific ways the manuscript reconciled these polarities.

Appropriately, he concludes his commentary with an illustration of the two major premises of his sociological dialectic (acknowledging the primacy of the social; nonetheless recognizing the importance of subjectively oriented analysis); he provides a capsule examination of how changes in the structures of society effect changes in the mentality of the masses.

"It certainly remains to be said," Adorno says, "that agitators on the 'lunatic fringe,'" such as Thomas, were in themselves

> probably not even the most important objective factor promoting a fascistically inclined mentality among the masses. This susceptibility reaches deep in the structure of society itself and is generated by society before demagogues deliberately come to its aid. The opinions of the demagogues are by no means as restricted to the lunatic fringe as one may at first, optimistically, suppose. They occur in considerable measure in the utterances of so-called "respectable" people, only not as succinctly and aggressively formulated.[27]

The logic of this passage bears close examination, for in it we find modeled the mixture of objectivity and subjectivity that follows from Adorno's sociological dialectic. Demagogues such as Thomas, the passage states, do not create the affinity for fascism in the "mentality among the masses"; rather, this mental predisposition toward fascism originates within "the structures of society." Notice the exact steps in Adorno's formulation: the mental "susceptibility" toward fascism (a matter of the subjective order of psychology) "reaches deep in the structures of society" (a matter of the objective order of sociology); such conditions of the psychic "susceptibility" (subject) are "generated by society" (object). Adorno's logic of argument continues: a specific configuration of proto-fascist subjectivity (consisting, as shown in the Thomas manuscript, of ego collapse, superego failure, masochistic submission, loss of the capacity to experience authentic pleasure, etc.) originates within a specific proto-fascist objectivity (a society structured at all levels by the instrumentalized monopolism of late capitalism). Given the existence of these objective preconditions and the subjective preconditions which follow from them, it is clear that "the most important objective factor promoting a fascistically inclined mentality among the masses" is not to be found among the demagogues of "the lunatic fringe." Reflecting fundamental changes in the objective structures of society, fascist mentality subjectively emerges in the broad base of the masses, arising as significantly, if less overtly, in "so-called 'respectable' people" as in such fringe figures as Martin Luther Thomas. Within this dynamic, the demagogue's major role is to make fully

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27 Ibid., 364-365.

manifest subjectively what the objective conditions already predispose the masses to become—the mass supporters of fascist totalitarianism.

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Chapter 10

The Psycho-Social Dialectic of Adorno's Analysis of Thomas' Broadcasts

On returning from his 1969 recollections to a direct examination of "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses" itself, we will not be surprised to find throughout this earlier manuscript the sociological dialectic that Adorno later trumpeted in "Scientific Experiences." However, the dialectic often does not appear in forms as simple or transparent as those outlined in this later work. In fact, upon closer examination, Adorno's critical, qualitative content analysis of Thomas' addresses turns out to contain many examples of the dialectic that are of a far more complex composition than indicated in the later essay.

To make evident the actual complexity of this dialectic as it appears in the Thomas manuscript, let us consider it in its separable aspects.

1. The Primacy of Social Theory

At its highest level of abstraction, the sociological dialectic evident in the Thomas manuscript is consistent with the dictate of "Scientific Experiences" that states that social theory should be given primacy over empirical and interpretative subjective analysis. Indeed, the specific analysis directed at Thomas' addresses clearly occurs from a position informed by a theory of society: specifically, a theory of the transition from liberal to post-liberal capitalist social relations, and, more particularly, a theory of the increasing reification, instrumentalization, and monopolization these relations have undergone as a result of this transition. Epistemologically, this pre-existing theory shapes the method of Adorno's analysis (we remember that to Adorno, "method" is to be understood "in its European sense of epistemology"); Adorno grapples with the transcripts of Thomas' broadcasts from a theoretical perspective that views the post-liberal social order as objectively proto-fascist; this perspective conditions his analysis of Thomas' rhetoric and casts it as an exemplar of this larger social-historical setting. Moreover, by beginning from the position of social theory, Adorno guaranteed that (as "Scientific Experiences" would have it) he would not become caught in the epistemological traps of pure empiricism or methodological individualism associated with subjectively oriented methods, traps in which Thomas' addresses would have been viewed "as if they were [in themselves] a primary and final source of sociological knowledge."

Thus the Thomas manuscript follows Adorno's 1969 essay's prescription that social theory should be primary. Or does it? When the Thomas manuscript is examined closely, a type of theory other than social clearly emerges also in the

forefront: specifically, the theoretical meta-psychology of Sigmund Freud—his theory of psychic structure, of drives and unconscious mechanisms—and Adorno's elaborations upon this theoretical psychology. Psychoanalytic theory informs much of Adorno's analysis, operating in conjunction with social theory to reveal the post-liberal transformations underpinning the appeal of fascism. Often, indeed, a premise of social theory about a social condition is explicated not in terms of its social constitution but rather in terms of its psychodynamic ramifications, as when the emergence of societal "monopolism" is explicated not by a presentation of detailed evidence of economic, cultural, and political concentration but rather in terms of its effect on the psyche, in terms of ego loss and masochistic submission.

In several important aspects Adorno's version of Freudian meta-psychology resembles his theory of society: specifically, the theory of the psyche shares several formal features characterized in his 1969 essay as belonging to social theory. First of all, while psychoanalytic theory may not escape the empiricist's grasp as easily as does social reification theory, it nonetheless is, in Adorno's hands (as it is, in fact, in Freud's hands), a theory that also "resists direct empirical treatment"; even today, much of Freud's meta-psychology remains beyond empirical verification. Secondly, Adorno's analysis of the "subjective response" to Thomas' broadcasts is absolutely dependent upon his prior commitment to theory (in this case, Freud's metapsychology); to have eschewed this theory could easily have entrapped him (as would have an eschewal of social theory) in that combination of pure empiricism and methodological individualism that "proceed[s] from the subjects' [overt conscious] reactions as if they were a primary and final source" of knowledge.[1]

Adorno's commitment to the primacy of theory, then, is two-sided: both social and psychoanalytic theories frame his analysis of the transcripts of Thomas' radio addresses. However, it is important to realize that Adorno does not treat these two types of theory as epistemologically equivalent. Although he is somewhat vague as to the exact form this takes, "objective" social theory almost always has a type of determinant primacy over "subjectively oriented" theoretical metapsychology (in this regard, as we saw earlier, Adorno associates interpretation based upon psychoanalytic theory, and thus psychoanalytic theory itself, with "subjectively oriented methods"). For instance, the theory of the exchange relations of liberal capitalism is offered as the determinant context in which Freud's theory of psychic structure is articulated, while the theory of post-liberal "monopolism" operates as the causative background against which Adorno sketches his theory of ego and superego collapse. Within the framework of theory, social conditions call forth psychic conditions; changes in social structure lead to changes in psychic structure. A theory of society is the framework for a theory of the psyche.

Without reducing psychology to sociology, Adorno grants social theory primacy over psychoanalytic theory. While each type of theory retains its own distinct logic and concepts—for instance, capitalist society is characterized as being increasingly dominated by (instrumental) rationality, the psyche by increased irrationality—theorizing about the social totality nonetheless logically precedes that about psychic reality. As Adorno acknowledges in "Scientific Experience," he "never questioned

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1   "Scientific Experiences," 343, 345.

the primacy of objective factors over psychological"; he always remained convinced that "an objectively oriented critical theory of society" should serve as the framework for a "subjectively oriented" theory of the psyche.[2] An "objectively oriented" theory of society provides the horizon against which "subjectively oriented" insights involving psychic structure, drives, and mechanisms are to be properly viewed. The reader will remember that in "Scientific Experiences" Adorno also states that "the apparently primary, immediate reactions" of individuals are "insufficient as a basis for sociological knowledge because they [are] themselves conditioned" by the structures of society. While psychoanalytic theory in Adorno's hands can illuminate the underlying dynamics of the psyche by which these "immediate reactions" occur, it cannot in itself provide the way to "proceed" to the social determinants that "conditioned" those dynamics. Only an analytical procedure that commences from an awareness of "the primacy of objective factors over psychological" and an awareness of the primacy of social theory over psychoanalytic theory can do this.

2. Theorizing by Elucidation and the Theoretical Listener

As we read the Thomas manuscript, we are aware that the reasoning process presented in the text represents an intellectual investigation already well along in its development and that Adorno, in some previous "first act," has already generated from a study of the radio transcripts a typology of thirty-four socio-psychological techniques that he now holds to be (in the words of "Scientific Experiences") "the more or less standardized and by no means numerous stimuli that fascist agitators employ." The reasoning process presented in the manuscript itself is thus a "second act," an investigation organized within a pre-existent categorization, in which various elements of Thomas' addresses are placed for an analysis that aims, as Adorno later wrote, "to treat types of reaction as well as objective determinants."[3]

One should carefully note the different intellectual processes associated with these two "acts" in Adorno's reasoning about Thomas' broadcasts. (See Figure 10.1 on page 166.) The "first act," the establishment of a typology of standardized fascist technique, follows a procedure often found in Adorno's sociology, as we have already seen. Adorno's reasoning here reflects his more generalized theoretical view that the "monopolism" of late capitalism has stamped the constitution of social, cultural, and psychic realities within the molds of stereotypy. The "second act," which occurs within the pages of Adorno's manuscript itself, uses this typology as a formal structuring device; under the heading of each category, Adorno selects passages from Thomas' broadcast transcripts which he then elucidates critically. In this latter process, which might be called "theorizing by elucidation," Adorno endeavors to construct concepts that illuminate the rhetorical type and the manuscript's various thematic motifs, principally by directing his elucidation in two opposing (and dialectically complementary) directions: to subjective "types of reactions"; and to their "objective determinants" within the social totality.

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2   Ibid., 356-357.
3   Ibid., 364.
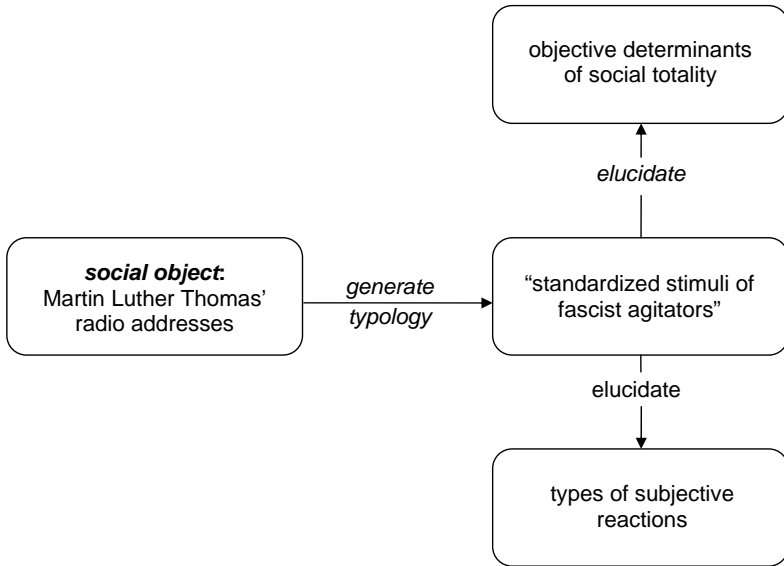
Figure 10.1 Adorno's Process of Analysis
In a "first act" completed before the analytical processes enacted in the manuscript itself, Adorno examined the transcripts of Martin Luther Thomas' radio addresses and generated from them a typology of standardized "stimuli" (thirty-four fascist rhetorical techniques). Then, with this typology in hand, he engaged in a "second act" that takes the form of his manuscript; in the intellectual process enacted on its pages, we observe Adorno placing passages from the radio addresses within the structure of his typology and critically elucidating them by directing his interpretations in two dialectically opposed theoretical directions: to the unconscious structures and mechanisms underlying subjective reactions, and to their objective determinants structuring the social totality.

As the main action of Adorno's "second act," theorizing by elucidation is the central intellectual activity embodied in Adorno's manuscript. Adorno advances a conceptual insight here, another there, his thought process usually tied to passages either indirectly described or directly quoted from the transcripts of Thomas' broadcasts, passages that in their elucidation are revealed to contain suggestions not only of their social but also their psychological constitution. In both cases, the process as we follow it leads from the empirically cited "stimuli" to the non-empirical, theoretical construction of the social and psychic orders. It is in this movement of Adorno's thought, enacted before us on the pages of the manuscript, that the psycho-social dialectic of the manuscript takes shape and is made manifest.

In regard to the psychological side of Adorno's dialectic, some have objected that an untenable and crude notion of media manipulation underlies Adorno's predilection, fully apparent here, to appear to be reasoning directly from the informational

content of a media object to the psychology of the actual listener.[4] First of all, such objections tend to forget that Adorno was fully cognizant of the distinction between "content analysis" and the actual response of listeners: as he stated in "Scientific Experiences," "it would be naive to take for granted an identity" between content and response, adding however that "it would no less naive to consider the two things as totally uncorrelated."[5] But even more to the point, such objections tend to forget that Adorno's "listener" is a theoretical and typological construct (built around "*types* of response") and as such is not derived directly from the media object at all, but rather from the more complex process of theoretical elucidation by which objects are examined from the perspective of social and psychodynamic theory. At no time does Adorno pretend to offer an empirical description of the psychology of Thomas' listener. In fact, as we saw earlier, upon finishing the Thomas manuscript Adorno proposed to the AJC a follow-up empirical study that would lead to such a description, requesting that "field workers [be sent] to meetings [to] record exactly when there is applause and when not, and what the various degrees of enthusiasm are."[6] Adorno's listener as he/she exists within the Thomas manuscript is not offered as an empirical entity but rather as a theoretical typified construct.

Even in regard to Adorno's request for a follow-up empirical study of the listener, a profile of such an empirical listener most likely would not have been Adorno's final goal. As we have seen, Adorno held that the proper aim of subjectively oriented methods (and, in particular, empirical methods) is the refinement and correction of theory. Most probably this was the end that he hoped his proposed empirical study would assist him to accomplish. For if unmediated by non-empirical psychoanalytic or social theory, a purely empirically constructed profile of Thomas' listener (for example, through statistical measures) would have been, in Adorno's eyes, "a reified, quasi-scientific *caput mortuum*," an entity thought to be "a primary and final source of sociological knowledge" but in actuality "insufficient as a basis for sociological knowledge because [it was itself] conditioned" by both psychodynamic and social forces uncapturable in the empirical process—psychodynamic and social forces only reachable by theoretically informed elucidation.[7]

3. Immanent Critique

From what has been concluded so far, it can be seen that Adorno's principal method in the Thomas manuscript takes the form of a double-sided (social/psychic) elucidative theorizing which, while focused on Thomas' radio transcripts, is premised on its own (epistemologically prior) double-sided theoretical perspective (social theory providing the context for psychodynamic theory). A crucial qualification, however,

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4   Alex Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1991), 78-82.

5   "Scientific Experiences," 352-353.

6   Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 358.

7   The first quotation is taken from Adorno's discussion of positivist sociology in "Sociology and Psychology," *New Left Review*, 46 (Nov-Dec 1967), 78; the latter two quotations are from Adorno's "Scientific Experiences," 343, 345.

needs to be added to this view. In his elucidation of Thomas' addresses, Adorno seldom seems to manipulate the radio transcript, as it were, "from above."[8] Adorno's elucidative theorization most often does not appear to originate from a transcendent point outside the transcripts, but rather from within the transcripts themselves. He seldom seems to arrange quotations from the broadcasts to illustrate a pre-existing didactic point; one rarely finds a declarative thesis statement followed by a set of quoted passages that serve simply as examples, or a set of quoted passages that leads to a summary generalization. Rather, the impression is that it is the indirect logic discoverable within Thomas' transcripts that propels Adorno's thought onward, that it is—in effect—the broadcast transcripts themselves that bring Adorno to his theoretical reflections concerning facets of contemporary social and psychic conditions.

Grounded in the transcripts of these broadcasts, Adorno's theorizing seems to "stumble" upon insights inspired by the unexpected turns of Thomas' thought. "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses," in fact, could be described in its entirety as a manuscript that strings together hundreds of such occasions in which the transcripts lead Adorno to stumble into theoretical insight. An example of such elucidatory stumbling into insight is the marvelous short passage previously discussed that exists within a larger paragraph on page 12 of the manuscript. Here, a discussion of the transcripts suddenly leads Adorno to speak of the prevalence in mass culture of a longing "for the gratification of catching a glimpse of one's neighbor's private life," a longing that he labels "the attitude of snooping" and that he then perceptively brands, "an attitude closely akin to fascism."

It could be argued that the meandering quality of Adorno's elucidations— the following of the indirect logic embodied in the broadcast transcripts; the resulting repeated stumbling into insights out of which small nuggets of theory are constructed—is in itself an indication of (and perhaps springs from) the presence within Adorno of an uneasy balance between three distinct inclinations: a proclivity to aggressive abstraction; a repugnance toward schematically fixed systems of thought (especially closed theoretical systems); and a poetic, speculative predisposition to give way to the overdetermined suggestibility of objects (this latter in the manner of a sophisticated reader luxuriating in the multilayered meanings of a poem or, perhaps more appropriately, a psychoanalyst who utilizes the uncensored suggestibility of a dream analysis to unpack its significations). Adorno himself tended to place his method of speculative rumination under the rubric "immanent critique" (although the reader will remember that in "Scientific Experiences" Adorno's label was "critical, qualitative content analyses"). As did other Frankfurt School members, he envisioned the immanent critique of a social object as proceeding "from within," that is, as being spun from out of the non-linear contradictions discoverable within the object itself.[9]

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8   "Despite reflection upon totality, dialects does not proceed from above." Adorno, *Positivist Dispute*, 38.

9   "Social theory, developed through immanent criticism, is concerned to investigate (aspects of) the social world 'in the movement of development'.... Critique proceeds, so to speak, 'from within' and hopes to avoid, thereby, the charge that its concepts impose irrelevant

But however one chooses to label Adorno's unique blend of theory and textual elucidation, it is important to realize that the thought process enacted in the Thomas manuscript is one that follows the indirect logic of the passages from the broadcast transcripts and continually discovers there not so much illustrations of a pre-established theory, as inspirations for new elaborations of an over-arching theoretical perspective, elaborations that appear to emerge from the suggestiveness of the passages themselves, a process that functions not so much to originate as rather to expand and enhance theory, as well as to lead equally to its refinement and correction.

4. Method as a Reflection of the Dialectic of Reality

Enacted in the theoretical elucidations found on the pages of the Thomas manuscript, Adorno's methodological psycho-social dialectic asserts implicitly (and, at times, explicitly) the existence of another dialectic: the dialectic of psychic/social reality itself. By the precepts of Adorno's own theory, this second dialectic is not easily grasped, as it interrelates these two elusive, quite distinct trans-empirical realities: an objective social totality that resists direct empirical treatment; a subjective psychodynamic reality that, grounded within unconscious structures and dynamics, also resists direct empirical treatment. Yet the import of Thomas' addresses to Adorno (and of Adorno's manuscript to us today) lies in what he was able to derive from these addresses of the terms of this larger historical dialectic and, specifically, of these terms as they existed at one particular turning point in the formation of late modernity: the moment of fascism's ascendancy.

Indeed, it can be argued that Adorno's work uniquely captures essential aspects of the larger dialectic at this historical moment, for in it the two poles of modernity's radically divided social/psychic reality (in which "inner and outer life are torn apart"[10]) achieved a perverse reunion in an inhuman, negative synthesis: uniting, on the one hand, a societal "monopolism" (in which economic, cultural, and political spheres cohered instrumentally to serve omnipotent power) as an end unto itself, with, on the other hand, a post-liberal psychic formation wracked structurally by ego collapse and superego loss and dominated regressively by masochistic submission and paranoiac projection. Adorno's socio-psychical method implicitly gains its credibility from its ability to expose the brutal logic of this particular late modern negative synthesis: an inhuman, reified societal logic that in turning in on itself stripped a population of the

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criteria of evaluation on the object. As a result, a new understanding of the object is generated—a new comprehension of contradictions and possibilities." David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley, 1980), 184.

10 The alienation of social reality from psychic reality is a "split between the living subject and the objectivity that governs the subjects and yet derives from them.... People are incapable of recognizing themselves in society and society in themselves because they are alienated from each other and the totality. Their reified social relations necessarily appear to them as an 'in itself.'... [I]nner and outer life are torn apart." Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," 69-70.

underpinnings of its moral and rational individuality and prepared it psychically, in justifying extermination, to submit to its own self-destruction.

The realization that Adorno's socio-psychical methodological dialectic is modeled on a conception of this particular moment of larger historical social/psychical dialectic adds a new dimension to our understanding of his theorizing on method. First of all, Adorno's methodological contention that social theory has primacy over subjective oriented methods (empirical and psychoanalytic) is seen to be itself modeled on the perception of a comparable primacy of social reality over psychic reality: the historical perception that the structures of the social order determine the possibilities of the psyche, give it form and, in response to changes in the objective order, alter the parameters of its existence.

The primacy of the social totality, however, can be nonetheless a fairly open-ended proposition, as the first equation in a set of parallel socio-psychical equations (from the Thomas manuscript) demonstrates in the following diagram:

Primacy of Social Reality	→	*Parameters of Psychic Formation*
entrepreneur capitalism	->	ego-centered, superego-guided self: *relative autonomy*
late industrial monopolism	->	ego collapse, superego loss: *authoritarian submission*

Given this historical variation in the degree to which the social is primary, one comes to realize that within this scheme the hold of the social totality over psychic possibility is no more absolute than is the methodological primacy of social theory itself. We recall that in "Scientific Experiences" Adorno qualifies the primacy of social theory by insisting on the need for subjectively oriented research to refine, revise, and correct that theory. Otherwise, he asserted, abstract thought becomes sterile and "the supremacy of the system" replaces insight. Is there not implicit in this qualification of the primacy of social theory a larger qualification aimed at the social totality itself? A qualification that suggests some limit to the hold that the social totality has over the psyche? For as we saw in Adorno's analysis of the masochistic submission of the followers of fascism, just as theory becomes sterile and empty when it achieves absolute supremacy, so too does the social totality itself when as totalitarianism it incites the psyche to embrace "the negative sacrifice" of its own self-annihilation.

Not only "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses" but all of Adorno's sociology can be said to have been written in opposition to such stark, destitute triumphs of the social totality. In the case of the Thomas manuscript, as in his other writings on fascism, Adorno's analysis may be seen as an embittered attempt to rouse "the lost subject of society,"[11] an angry attempt

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11 Adorno's "criticism of philosophies and sociologies which had no notion of the subject or of epistemological subjectivity ... was undertaken for the sake of a subject which 'has lost its substance', which has lost its autonomy. Sociologists fail to understand their own epistemological subjectivity for the same reason that they fail to develop a satisfactory theory of the individual. Adorno gave up the proletariat as the subject-object of history, as cogniser and carrier of history, but he was devoted to locating and analyzing the fact of the individual, of the lost subject of society." Rose, *Melancholy Science*, 106.

to rouse and provoke it to resist the appeals of fascism. For although all of Adorno's writings, in fact, deplore the demise of a substantive subjectivity, both individual and collective, the very vigor of these bleak deplorations belies a buried belief in the possibility of an appeal to just such a subjectivity, however impaired, and a faint belief in the possibility of its resistance: a subjectivity emptied of substance that seeks in fascism to actively submit to its own final, total annihilation; yet as modeled in Adorno's despairing critique, a subjectivity potentially able not only to criticize but also—at least hypothetically, at least theoretically—to negate the social absolute even at the uncontested moment of its abhorrent, destructive supremacy. (See Figure 10. 2 below.)
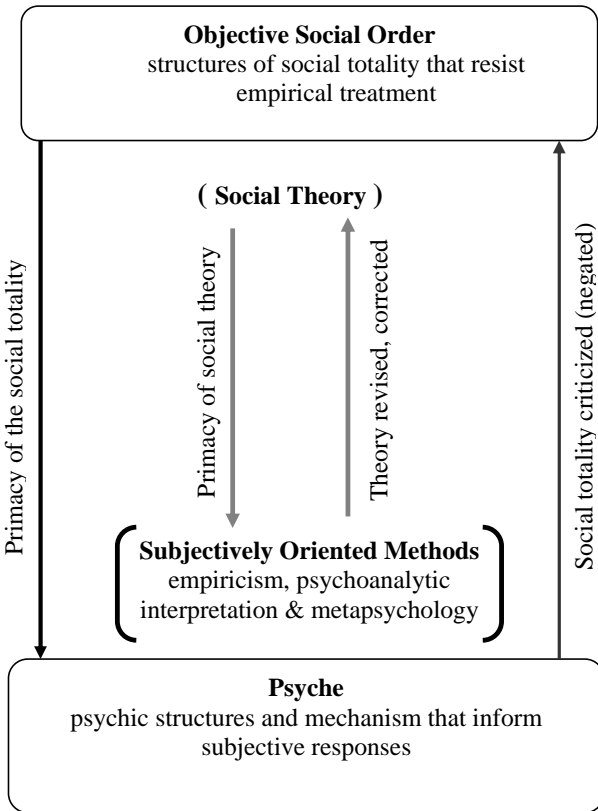
Figure 10.2 Overview of Adorno's Methodological and Sociological Dialectics
Within the inner, methodological dialectic, social theory has primacy, although this theory itself needs to be refined, revised, and corrected by empirical and psychoanalytical findings. Within the larger, outer dialectic between social and psychic realities, the objective social order has primacy, although from the position of the subject, the psyche itself may criticize and potentially negate the current formation of the social order.

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PART 4
The Historical Psyche: Norbert Elias's Historical Social Psychology

The first volume of my work is mainly concerned with particular concrete psychical processes, so the second volume deals with the concrete social processes which set the psychical in motion.... I have, to my great satisfaction, seen on my Scandinavian trip that people who read this book with no prejudice against me see immediately what my primary concern is: I wanted to find a clear method and unambiguous material which would overcome the hitherto dominant static conception of psychical phenomena. Whoever ... never loses sight of the image of clearly structured societal processes, cannot be satisfied with the kind of static conception of the psychical which currently still predominates the most modern of psychological currents. Whatever one might understand by 'dialectic', this word strives to grasp the order, the structure, the regularity of social changes. To show, that the construction of the psychical is subject to the same order, is the task of this first volume. This task has today been recognized by very few people—including, for example Erich Fromm—not to mention tackling it.... Above all I was not aiming ... at a simple collection of historical data, but at the demonstration of social-psychological structures, from which it is more unequivocally possible than ever to build the bridge to social structures.

– Norbert Elias, letter asking Walter Benjamin to review *The Civilizing Process* for Institute of Social Research's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Dated June 3, 1938

Introduction to Part 4

Something of a consensus seems to have emerged among a number of sociologists and social theorists who have offered their appraisals of Norbert Elias's masterwork, *The Civilizing Process*. It includes a refusal to take up in any serious way the book's developmental notions of a historically variable psyche, about which Anthony Giddens has concluded dismissively: "there is unlikely to be any general differences of psychic organization between oral cultures on the one hand and 'civilizations' on the other."[1] In the eyes of Christopher Lasch, Elias's psychological ideas, at least as they are advanced in this book, are "far too simple" and "superficial" to be persuasive.[2] It is fortunate, Alan Sica has added, that Elias's suspect psychology "does not make or break the book"; thus, one can still profit from its historical, social, and political analyses in spite of their connection to somewhat dubious notions about the social transformation of the psyche.[3] Even more negatively, a number of critics have judged Elias's psychology itself to be downright anti-psychological, as emptying the idea of the psyche of any inherent content. "Elias has eliminated any and all subjectivity from his theory of socialization," Andreas Wehowsky has asserted.[4] Susan Buck-Morss has seconded this appraisal: Elias's theory of "*Affekt-oekonomie*" exists, claims Buck-Morss, "in limbo in the cultural space between people, without clear connection to inner motivations," and thus it tells us "nothing of the dynamics between instinct and cultural behavior."[5] Elias's historical psychology, in the view of a significant number of critics, reduces the complexities of the interaction of society and psyche to a blanket assertion of the imposition of social constraints on the human psyche.[6]

Even among the minority who has treated with respect the book's psychological interpretations of different historical eras and its theoretical ideas about psychological change, as have several scholars closely associated with Elias—for instance, Johan Goudsblom, Stephen Mennell, and Eric Dunning—the representation of these ideas, when not outright cursory, has tended to be little more than paraphrased restatement

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1   Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 241.

2   Christopher Lasch, "Historical Sociology and the Myth of Maturity: Norbert Elias's 'Very Simple Formula,'" *Theory & Society*, 14 (1985), 714, 715.

3   Alan Sica, "Sociogenesis Versus Psychogenesis: The Unique Sociology of Norbert Elias," *Mid-American Review of Sociology*, 9 (1984), 67-68.

4   Andreas Wehowsky, "Making Ourselves More Flexible Than We Are: Reflections on Norbert Elias," *New German Critique*, 15 (1978), 70.

5   Susan Buck-Morss, "Norbert Elias. *The Civilizing Process*," *Telos*, 37 (Fall 1978), 186.

6   Stefan Breuer, "The Denouement of Civilization: Elias and Modernity," *International Social Science Journal*, 128 (1991), 408; Robert van Krieken, *Norbert Elias* (London, 1998), 128-129; Helmut Konig, "Norbert Elias und Sigmund Freud: Der Prozess der Zivilisation," cited in van Krieken, *Elias*, 128; Benjo Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians: Intellectual Backgrounds of *The Civilizing Process*," *Theory, Culture & Society* 12 (1995), 71-72. Buck-Morss, in her review cited above, advances a similar interpretation, 186-187.

of passages from Elias's text itself.[7] Amongst such treatments, one finds almost no sustained effort to treat the text's psychogenetic depictions and conceptualizations as being in themselves *psychological* engagements with human realities rather than ancillary conceptual building blocks of social theory.[8]

But are Elias's psychological ideas truly ancillary to the basic sociological and historical concepts of *The Civilizing Process?* Or, rather, when read psychologically, do we not discover that these basic concepts themselves incorporate modes of psychological analyses and theoretical conceptualization that, when understood correctly, could assist other social scientists in grappling with the complexities of the *psychological* component of the psycho-social interconnection?

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7   To some degree, this is even true of the otherwise landmark book on Elias, Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1992).

8   The one exception in this regard, at least among those writing in English, is a book by the social psychologist Ian Burkitt, *Social Selves: Theories of the Social Formation of Personality* (London, 1991). Burkett's book integrates a number of psycho-social theories, including those of George Herbert Mead, Lucien Sève, L.S. Vygotsky and Richard Lichtman, into what, for the most part, is an Eliasian-based social psychology. Some serious psychological thinking has been applied to Elias's works also by Thomas Scheff, most recently in his unpublished essay, "Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory," distributed on Scheff's web site, http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/faculty/scheff/, and "Elias, Freud and Goffman: Shame as the Master Emotion," in Steven Loyal and Stephen Quilley, eds., *The Sociology of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge, 2004).

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Chapter 11

The Genesis of Elias's Concept of the Historical Psyche

Norbert Elias arrived in England in 1935. With few contacts, the thirty-eight year old Jewish refugee faced a bleak future. Since early youth, his dream had been to become a professor in one of Germany's prestigious universities.[1] He had devoted fifteen years to the achievement of that goal, only to have the Nazi takeover in 1933 result in the virtual elimination of the sociology department at Frankfurt University just as he completed there his doctoral *Habilitation*, the second 'grand' dissertation required in Germany to qualify for a professorship.[2] As he recalled many years later, this event confronted him with "a strange dilemma," since at almost the very moment of its realization he had been robbed of the future that he had worked so long to achieve. He had been "thrown completely off [his] path in life."[3]

Pushed into exile, he had first gone to France, where, for a time, he had literally gone hungry. "The situation was hopeless," Elias later recalled, "no future."[4] Fortunately, upon his arrival in London Elias secured a small stipend from a Jewish refugee committee sufficient to rent a room and procure enough to eat. But his additional request for funds to write a book—such a project, he had told the committee, was the only way "I could get back to my career"—was rejected.[5] Nonetheless, with only

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1   Norbert Elias, *Reflections on a Life* (Oxford, 1994), 12. *Reflections* contains Elias's own account of his life and is the major source for commentaries by others on the events of his life. Other published sources of information about Elias's life, all of which are for the most part consistent with and often drawn from Elias's own account, include Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell, eds., *The Norbert Elias Reader: A Biographical Selection* (Oxford, 1998), Dennis Smith, *Norbert Elias and Modern Social Theory* (London, 2001) and van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*.

2   Goudsblom and Mennell, *Elias Reader*, 13.

3   *Reflections*, 53. Dennis Smith's observations on the impact of exile from Germany are pertinent here: "Elias experienced exit from Germany as a traumatic rupture of his persona. His life goal, to be a German university professor, was put beyond his reach." *Norbert Elias*, 52.

4   *Reflections*, 50, 51.

5   *Reflections*, 53. There seems to have never been any doubt in Elias's mind as to what his "career" and "path in life" were to be. Since a youngster, Elias's had identified his "path in life" as becoming a university professor. He recalls in *Reflections* that, as a grammar school student, he was deeply wounded when his classmates laughed at his statement that "I wanted to be a professor at the university"—"*That* career was cut off for you at birth," was the retort, a reference to the obstacles that in pre-war Germany blocked Jews in most cases from such a career (*Reflections*, 12). Smith makes the case that the security and stability of university life

this stipend, Elias searched out the British Museum and for the next several years the focus of his life consisted of getting to the Great Reading Room of the museum each morning and spending the day there in an attempt to salvage his professorial dreams. The issue of this labor was, of course, his magnum opus, *The Civilizing Process*, a book massively imposing with its fusion of methodical approaches, nuanced interpretative excursuses, and diverse conceptual formulations. In contrast to its finished complexity, however, the book's origin, at least in Elias's mind, lay in a single insight that came to him one day in the early weeks of his endeavors in the museum's reading room.

Even if his account of the occasion of this insight has a slight mythic ring about it, the fact remains that it is just *this* insight that constituted (in Elias's self-representations and self-reports[6]) the book's origin. As recorded in *Reflections on a Life*, Elias's account of the origin of *The Civilizing Process* is as follows. At first, with no clear idea of what he would write, he spent his days at the British Museum reading almost randomly. One day, by chance he came across a French book from the seventeenth century on courtly etiquette; the book, as best he could remember, was Antoine de Courtin's *Nouveau traité de civilité*.[7] Examining this book's advice on the manners appropriate for life at court, Elias suddenly saw a way to substantiate notions he had long held about the historicity of the human psyche. Filled with excitement, he had his epiphany, the breakthrough insight that opened the way for him to write *The Civilizing Process*:

> I found [Courtin's book] thoroughly exciting. It was exciting because I knew that contemporary psychologists took the view that one could only arrive at a convincing picture of human attitudes by measuring the attitudes of present-day people, while nothing … could be inferred from the standards of behaviour of people of the past. Now I suddenly had material that showed how different standards were in earlier times and allowed reliable statements to be made on how they had changed.

> So I began my book *The Civilizing Process* with a clear awareness that it would be an implicit attack on the wave of studies of attitudes and behaviour by contemporary psychologists. For academic psychologists—not the Freudians—believed strictly that one had to have someone in front of one here and now, one had to measure the persons' attitude by questionnaires and other quantitative methods, to be able to say anything certain about it. And by this method it is, of course, quite impossible to get a view of the present standard as something that has developed. They always proceed as if the results of tests with present-day people would enable them to draw direct conclusions about people in general.

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was one of its attractions for Elias, the idea of university representing for him a "safe cocoon" in a world of social disruption and war (*Norbert Elias*, 21, 38).

6   While several Eliasian scholars report almost verbatim the same basic facts of the account found in *Reflections*, they also add further details, gained, it would seem, from personal discussions either with Elias or with others who had heard Elias discuss the book's origin. See in particular, van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 29-30, and Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 18.

7   *Reflections*, 54.

I was quite sure that that was wrong, that is, was simply an attempt to apply physical or biological ways of proceeding to human beings. The whole process of the transformation of people is hidden from view. That, I would say, was my key experience.[8]

A detailed examination of this account of the "key experience" that led to the writing of *The Civilizing Process* will begin my examination of Elias's use of psychology in social analysis. Reading the account in the context of Elias's life, we will discover that it reverberates with references to issues central to the formative years of his intellectual biography and, in particular, to issues reflective of several of the major negative and positive legacies of those years. Moreover, we will see that it points to a larger intellectual self-transformation, one that enabled Elias to become the master of the type of psychologically infused sociology found in *The Civilizing Process* and a number of his latter works.

1. The Ahistorical Psyche of Academic Psychology

What is most striking about Elias's account, at least for the reader well versed in his life work, is its intense focus on academic psychology, a discipline about which Elias says nary a word elsewhere in *Reflections* and about which only a couple of paragraphs appear in his oeuvre as a whole.[9] Nothing in Elias's oeuvre would lead one to surmise that Elias's masterpiece originated with a clear awareness of it being (as Elias's account asserts) "an implicit attack" on academic psychology, or that the crucial intellectual event that made the book possible was Elias's discovery of a way to overthrow academic psychology's scientist methods and ahistoricist conception of the human mind. Thus, an unavoidable question becomes part of a nuanced reading of the passage: Why, indeed, did Elias, in his account of the origin of his magnum opus, choose to attach it so closely to a harshly negative appraisal of academic psychology?

Information from a brief methodological digression in a concluding chapter of *The Civilizing Process* enables us to take a first step toward understanding the account's preoccupation with academic psychology. From this source we learn that Elias held the view that social scientists in general, and historians and sociologists in particular, uncritically accepted academic psychology's ahistorical premises about the human mind, with the result that the psyche was eliminated from their purview as a possible subject of historical investigation.[10] (I will return to this digression and examine it more closely in section 4 of this chapter.)

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8   Ibid., 54-55.

9   Academic psychology is fleetingly touched upon in a chapter, written in either 1938 or 1939, originally intended for *The Civilizing Process* but only published later in Elias's *The Society of Individuals* (Oxford, 1991), 5-6, 39-40. The only other discussion of academic psychology in Elias's oeuvre is contained in a passage of *The Civilizing Process* cited in the next endnote.

10 *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 2000), 406-407.

But that cannot be the complete explanation. For, when we return to Elias's account, we discover within it suggestions of a more personal aspect of his opposition to academic psychology. Clearly, a rendering of the meaning of the account's assertion that "*now* I suddenly had material that ... allowed reliable statements to be made" relies on the chronological differentiation of "now" from "before now." And indeed, "before now" Elias's work, although it had exhibited an intense interest in the social attitudes of earlier historical periods, had done so in distinctly non-psychological ways. The account itself yields evidence of Elias's past frustration with his failure to challenge psychological ahistoricism, a failure that had involved an acquiescence to (as the account explicitly states) that which he nonetheless had been "quite sure ... was wrong"—a "wrong" ahistorical view of the human psyche, as well as a "wrong" method of investigation based upon the natural sciences. Only "now" were those inhibitions "suddenly" overturned by a newfound insight that enabled "reliable statements" where none were possible before.

2. The Rejection of Elias's First Insight into the Historical Psyche

Thus, the insight occasioned by the discovery of Courtin's book was not a chance event occasioning one among any number of possible intellectual insights, but rather the sudden removal of an enduring obstacle to thought and thus a major breakthrough in Elias's own intellectual life. As such, the account inevitably evokes one's own sense of the path of Elias's overall biography, and most particularly aligns it with what is probably the most foundational event in his intellectual life: an earlier occasion of a similar breakthrough, though in that case one that was thwarted.

As is well known, Elias began his academic life as a philosophy student. In the early 1920s, as a Ph.D. student in philosophy at Breslau University, Elias's dissertation sponsor was Richard Hönigswald, a neo-Kantian philosopher committed to a conception of mind that represented a philosophical version of the same ahistorical view that in its psychological form Elias would target in his later account. At Breslau, Elias began his dissertation as a Kantian, but then "painful arguments with myself" led him to question the approach's transcendental premises.[11] Becoming convinced that his professor's views were wrong, Elias submitted a dissertation that argued that mental categories are historical products of long-term intellectual development. Hönigswald refused to accept the dissertation and Elias, after a two-year standoff, was forced finally to excise major portions and resubmit "a devalued product," even though he was "quite sure" that his professor's dictate "was wrong."[12] The dispute and its outcome effectively ended Elias's advancement toward a professorship in philosophy, not only as an aspiration but also as a practical possibility.[13]

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11 *Reflections*, 91.

12 Ibid., 89, 91-92; Goudsblom and Mennell, *Elias Reader*, 5-6. The phrase "devalued product" is from Maso's translation of Elias's German, in Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians," 47. The last quoted words are those that Elias's account applied to academic psychology's similar ahistorical notions of the mental life.

13 *Reflections*, 92; van Krieken, *Norbert Elias, 15*; Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 9.

As any reader of Elias's oeuvre knows, this outcome, the thwarting of Elias's first attempt to advance "a convincing picture" of the historicity of the human mind, continued to vex him until his dying days. Not only do his insistent critiques of the Kantian a priori categories of mind reappear, sometimes almost obsessively, in his writings of the next 66 years, including the pages he was working on in the last days before his death, but also, in his later writings on the sociology of knowledge, philosophy itself became one of Elias's *bêtes noires*, repeatedly depicted as a less developed stage of knowledge destined to be superseded by sociology. Resurrecting Auguste Comte's "Law of Three Stages," these writings assign philosophy to the inferior second stage, that of metaphysical or abstract thinking, while the more advanced knowledge form, sociology, is assigned to the third and highest stage of scientific thinking.[14]

But one should not conclude that Elias's numerous critiques of Kantianism in specific, and philosophy in general (and, by extension, his critique of academic psychology for its similar ahistorical views of mental life), are nothing but the displaced product of lingering personal resentment. Elias himself represented the clash with Hönigswald as one of intellectual principles, not personalities, and in his recollections lavishly praised him.[15] Moreover, the often insightful brilliance of the various manifestations of Elias's opposition to ahistorical views argues that it was indeed the intellectual, not the personal, aspect of the dispute with Hönigswald that principally stayed with him and inspired this work.

Nonetheless, that time and again Elias engaged in harsh attacks on ahistorical views of mental life should alert us to the possibility that an unresolved discontent also fueled his engagement with these issues. A quarrelsome aspect of Elias's personality occasionally did get the better of him in his relations with colleagues, and while Elias's writings normally avoid polemic, there are moments in these attacks when this quarrelsomeness does seem to override his normally cool-headed, detached approach.[16]

I suggest that an element of this quarrelsomeness is evident in Elias's account in *Reflections.* Notice how the account's opening words locate the excitement of the discovery of Courtin's book in the fact that it provides an opportunity for intellectual combat: "I found [the book] thoroughly exciting. It was exciting *because* I knew that contemporary psychologists took the [contrary] view...." Notice, in fact, how the whole account is cast in oddly negative terms: Elias's epiphany is depicted not (as one might expect) as the "exciting" discovery of a way to demonstrate the historicity of the psyche, but rather as the "exciting" discovery of a way to "attack" and overturn a "wrong" view of the ahistoricity of the psyche, a wrong view, moreover, so dominant in the world of academic endeavor that the discipline advocating it

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14 Richard Kilminster, "Editor's Introduction," Norbert Elias, *The Symbol Theory* (London, 1991), xxi. Goudsblom and Mennell, *Elias Reader*, 6; Elias, *Symbol Theory*, 15; Elias, *Society of Individuals*, 109-110, 198; Norbert Elias, *Time: An Essay* (Oxford, 1992), 38-39, 63; Elias, *What is Sociology?* (New York, 1978), 38; Elias, "Towards a Theory of Social Processes: a Translation," *The British Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 3 (1997), 355-356.

15 *Reflections*, 92.

16 Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 286.

must itself be attacked and its key premises overturned. And although the discipline to be challenged in this case is academic psychology rather than philosophy, that discipline's major sin is the very same ahistoric view of mental life that is elsewhere in Elias's writings identified as central to his case against the discipline of philosophy.

But to view the account's assault on academic psychology as yet another example of Elias's often brilliant but also sometimes quarrelsome antagonism to views he first confronted as a philosophy student at Breslau University does not encompass the extent of the account's connection to the origin of that antagonism. For, above all else, Elias's account of his breakthrough in the London Museum is the story of a pivotal event in his own life (leading as it did to the writing of his masterwork), and, as such, it evokes this earlier confrontation not so much as a polemical repetition of an old intellectual argument, but rather, in a fuller sense, as an autobiographic repetition, on a highly abstract level, of this prior event itself. The common elements that the account of the breakthrough at the British Museum shares with the dispute at Breslau University are clear: an insight into the historicity of the human mind; an attempt to document that insight in scholarly writing; a confrontation with ahistoricist views that hold hegemonic sway over academic thought (leading to an assault on the academic discipline that advanced that view); an outcome that determines Elias's future professorial career.

Given the extent and nature of these common elements, I suggest that we view the account of Elias's breakthrough in the London Museum as a mimetic reenactment, albeit a highly abstract one, of his earlier clash with Hönigswald, but with this twist: it incorporates a reversal of that earlier event's outcome and thereby serves to signal the reparative function of the breakthrough, an overturn, both circumstantially (however delayed) and also psychologically, of that earlier event's wide-ranging negative outcome.

The circumstantial reparation of the reversal of the later event is evident. Hönigswald's rebuffing of Elias's ideas and career hopes is answered by the future acclaim of *The Civilizing Process*. Translated from philosophy to the social sciences, Elias's disregarded insight into the historicity of the human mind is at last validated in a "reliable" scholarly form, resulting in the eventual access to the professorial status that the clash with Hönigswald had denied.

But, I would argue, it is likely that the scope of the reparation impact of this reversal reached beyond such circumstantial repair and addressed the psychological effects of the first events as well. For Elias's description of the moment of insight at the British Museum, read literally, is a record of a psychic event, an event of inspiration and resolution, rather than a record of the eventual circumstantial success that issued from that event: "*Now I suddenly* had material that showed how different [attitudinal] standards were in earlier times and allowed reliable statements to be made on how they had changed." Of the sudden Elias was convinced that he had uncovered the type of empirical document that finally "allowed reliable [i.e., scholarly acceptable] statements to be made" validating his previously unstatable (in a social scientific form) and disregarded (in a philosophical form) convictions about the historicity of the human mind. Yet this "now I suddenly," this sudden overthrow of an established paradigm of mental life, remained for decades far less a public than a private determination, where (as Elias's own self-characterizations in *Reflections*

imply) it came to serve as an element of his own stubborn inner conviction that, though few attested to its worth, the insight at the heart of *The Civilizing Process* was worth a lifetime of scholarly elaboration.

To understand my point here, remember that Elias relates an event that occurred one day in the Great Reading Room of the British Museum, an event of a man sitting in a library who, upon coming across a seventeenth-century book on courtly etiquette, has a sudden insight into a way to document and conceptualize a long thwarted conviction and who, because of this insight, will spend the next three years of his life alone at a desk in that library transforming it into a book that he hopes will "get [me] back to my career." Read literally, Elias's description of what he himself calls "my key experience" does not touch upon the emotional, psychodynamic elements stirred up by the event (with the exception, as we have noted, of an intrusion of quarrelsomeness in regard to an old unresolved argument). Yet, especially given its monumental importance to Elias's career, a "key" element of the experience of the event *must* have been psychic, including, characterologically, a contribution to the inner resolution and conviction necessary to sustain the writing of the projected book. It must have contributed to Elias's belief in the authority of his own thought and in his capacity to withstand academic opposition, whether philosophical or social-scientific.

Late in life, Elias attempted to define the source of his own "remarkable self-confidence." "I never doubted what I was doing," Elias states; an absolute "certainty" had sustained him through his decades-long "fight against ... [the] silence" that had greeted his work and his ideas. Recalling the decades when this "certainty was there even when I was swimming against the tide, against all those who had power," Elias suggests that this "certainty" was itself the outcome of the unquestionable surety of his "insight" into the "connections of things": "I [was] gradually seeing something new, ... see[ing] connections." While the self-evident validity of these "insights" constituted their "certainty," the social importance of the connections they revealed imposed upon him a "duty" to devote his life explaining them to others: "I see connections that many other people do not see, and therefore have a duty to say so [that these connections exist]."[17]

I suggest that we apply these terms of Elias's own self-explanation of his "remarkable self-confidence" to our conjectures on the psychological experience of the breakthrough event of Elias's account. The first occasion of Elias's insight into the historical psyche (the writing of his philosophical dissertation at Breslau University) led neither to "certainty" nor "duty," but rather to the abandonment of a philosophy career and constituted a failure (in some regards a failure to convert insight into "reliable statements") that, I suggest, cast a shadow over the subsequent decade of his attempts to become a sociologist. It served as a reminder of the perils of challenging academic orthodoxies, especially orthodoxies concerning the nature of the human mind. Elias's insight at the British Museum seems to have emboldened him to disregard the inhibitive influence of that legacy: it appears to have had such

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17 *Reflections*, 75-76. Elias's last sentence here is ambiguous; he seems to say that he has a "duty" to "say" that "I see connections" but, probably, the correct reading is that he felt a duty to "say" what he sees.

intellectual power and consequent psychic effect that it overthrew the inhibitions that had previously held him in check.

I am thus suggesting that we read the account of sudden insight at the British Museum as referencing a critical turning point in the history of Elias's own "remarkable self-confidence," marking a validation not only of his earlier insight into the historicity of the human mind but also of his own emerging self-regard as a fearlessly independent elucidator of "reality-congruent knowledge." Remember, this insight came at a time of personal crisis for Elias. As depicted in this chapter's opening pages, the thirty-eight year old nascent scholar who spent his days at the British Museum was a near destitute refugee, an academic "outsider" in the extreme— exiled from German academic life by the Nazi take over of his country, unable to find a post in France, with no prospects in England, a person "thrown completely off [his] path in life." These accumulating misfortunes must have in themselves entailed significant psychological costs; also, they must have in some ways stoked negative psychic flames originally ignited by Hönigswald's rejection. From all of this Elias must have felt that he had broken free with his sudden insight into "connections" that whole academic disciplines "did not see," an insight that inspired him with such a degree of "certainty" that he knew he would never again bow to orthodoxies he held to be "wrong."

Earlier I argued that, given that the discussion of the subject of academic psychology appears nowhere else in his *Reflections* (and almost nowhere else in Elias's entire oeuvre), a careful reading of Elias's account requires questioning why it is so focused upon the overthrowing of key premises of academic psychology. Our exploration of Elias's earlier dispute with his professor at Breslau University brings us to the recognition that the account's opposition to academic psychology is but one aspect of a much wider opposition to all ahistorical theories of mental life. This exploration suggests, in addition, that the harsh invective of the account's attack on academic psychology is overdetermined: it reflects not only a principled opposition to ahistoricist conceptions of the human mind, but also an element of Elias's own personal history of that opposition, with academic psychology here serving as a stand-in for, on the one hand, the Kantian philosophy that Hönigswald had held over Elias to force the "truncation" of his philosophy dissertation, and, on the other hand, the hegemonic social-scientific acceptance of an ahistorical view of the human personality that had prevented him from attempting to incorporate his own historicist convictions into his early sociological writings.

This last point leads to an additional conclusion. At one level, Elias's invective in this account is directed at the academic upholders of a hegemonic ahistorical psychology ("Contemporary psychologists took the view...." "Academic psychologists ... believed strictly that...." "They always proceed as if...."). But at another level, his target extends to broader institutional embodiments of European academic power, "all those who had power" in the academic and intellectual worlds that Elias had experienced as the adversarial "tide" against which he had had to "swim" for so many years. Indeed, a significant thread of Elias's later work is devoted to investigations of how the particular institutional dynamics of status and

power competition within the academic world hold sway over the determination of "scientific knowledge."[18]

3. From Academic Psychology to "the Freudians"

Of course, "academic psychology" serves not only as a stand-in for these various wider issues and more extensive disciplinary concerns; it also exists in its own right as a distinct type of psychology, a distinct institutionally organized discipline of scholarly knowledge. Moreover, as Elias's wording makes clear, this particular psychology, although it no doubt claims to be, is not the only psychology of possible scholarly use; in fact, the account's placement of the parenthetical phrase "not the Freudians" in opposition to "academic psychology" signals Elias's own decision to embrace another type of psychology, the predominantly non-academic psychology of psychoanalysis, which (as any reader of Elias knows) supplied Elias in the writing of *The Civilizing Process* with a perspective on the psyche that academic psychology had previously denied him.

The passage's opposition of the Freudians to academic psychology also reaches beyond this allusion to the psychological methods employed in Elias's masterpiece. The placement of the opposition within the context of Elias's account of the genesis of *The Civilizing Process* invites us to consider the way that this opposition played itself out in Elias's own intellectual development, with the account's depicted moment of sudden insight in the library of the British Museum being the moment in which a suddenly realized historical psychology derived from "the Freudians" finally broke academic psychology's hold on Elias's thinking.

Normally overlooked in discussions of his college years at Breslau University is the fact that Elias supplemented his dedication to philosophy with a parallel one to the very psychology he would later attack. In fact, Elias's 1924 doctorate was granted in philosophy *and academic psychology*.[19] Elias's expert knowledge of academic psychology no doubt stayed with him after he abandoned philosophy and, in 1925, took up the study of sociology at Heidelberg University. I suggest that, reinforced by his new field's deference to this psychology's views of the psyche, this expert knowledge took the position in his mind previously held by the Kantian philosophy he had come to reject: that is, it now served as the most appropriate scholarly framework for the study of the human mind. Thus, it would seem, not only did the intellectual consensus of his new discipline of study prohibit considerations of the psyche other than those of academic psychology, in Elias's case the strength of this prohibition was compounded, with his own expert knowledge of the methods and findings of academic psychology strengthening this consensus's power to inhibit any move within his new historically framed sociological endeavors to incorporate alternative historical psychological approaches.

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18 Elias, "Scientific Establishments," in *Scientific Establishments and Hierarchies*, eds. Norbert Elias, Herminio Martins, and Richard Whitley (Boston, 1982), 3-69; Elias, "The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present," 181.

19 Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 9.

The early record of Elias's sociological views certainly indicates that his new field of study did not bring with it an ability to incorporate historical psychological ideas. For instance, while it is true that Elias's address at the 1928 Congress of German Sociologists advances the notion that human consciousness is historically contingent, its discussion is limited to abstract epistemological categories, its conception of consciousness remaining strikingly similar to that exhibited by the philosophy dissertation he wrote for Hönigswald some six years earlier, and it totally ignores the emotional and psychic dynamics that take center stage seven years later in the writing of *The Civilizing Process*.[20] In fact, all of Elias's pre-1935 published writings share the same distinctly non-psychological approach to human mentality.

That this decade-long lack of a psychological dimension to Elias's emerging historical sociology served as the prelude to the complex and astute sociological integration of psychology in *The Civilizing Process*, and that the proximate prerequisite of this integration is (as Elias's account of the book's origin itself records) a concerted assault on academic psychology, lead me to offer an additional explanation of why Elias's recollection of the intellectual breakthrough is so focused on this psychology. I suggest that the account registers the final overthrow in Elias's own mind of the inhibitive intellectual premises of academic psychology, his own expert knowledge of which had for a decade reinforced the authority of sociological orthodoxies in keeping any notion of a historical psyche out of his sociology.

But if this is so, we must deal with the fact that Elias had himself become well acquainted with alternative psychologies a good five years before he made this definitive break with academic psychology. For it was in 1930 that Elias was introduced to psychologies that broke free from the narrow constrictions of academic psychology. This was the year that he moved to Frankfurt University to work with the director of its new sociology department, Karl Mannheim. (Elias served as academic assistant to Mannheim, who in turn sponsored Elias's *Habilitation.*) Occurring itself some five years after he had first "gone over to sociology"[21] (years spent at Heidelberg University, where for a time he studied under the tutelage of Alfred Weber), Elias's move to Frankfurt brought him for the first time into contact with faculty and students who were interested in psychologies radically different from the academic psychology dominant at the time in other German universities.

Elias learned of Gestalt psychology in one of Mannheim's seminars from Max Wertheimer, whose unique method of conceptualization would come to infuse aspects of his future work.[22] More importantly, he gained firsthand knowledge of "the Freudians," then attracting much attention at Frankfurt University, partially it seems in response to the great acclaim that had greeted the 1930 publication of the one book by Sigmund Freud that Elias himself would later cite as having had a great impact on him, *Civilization and its Discontents*.[23] (The book's "astonishing

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20 Norbert Elias, "Contribution to the debate on Karl Mannheim, 'The importance of competition in the intellectual field,'" in Norbert Elias, *Early Writings* (Dublin, 2006), 67-70.

21 *Reflections*, 85.

22 Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 19.

23 Van Krieken states that "Elias himself referred to the impact of Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*." Ibid., 19.

popularity," especially among sections of the German intelligentsia, led it to sell out its exceptionally large first edition within that first year.[24]) Also in the same year, Frankfurt University itself openly acknowledged Freud's newly won standing among elements of its faculty and students by awarding him its Goethe Prize. This event followed shortly after the university had established the first institutional connection between a German university and psychoanalysis by opening the Institute of Psychoanalysis (where Erich Fromm lectured), its offices located in the same building that housed both Mannheim's newly formed sociology department and the Institute of Social Research (where its director, Max Horkheimer, was himself beginning to advocate the integration of psychoanalysis into social analysis).[25]

There can be no doubt that, with his move to Frankfurt, Elias suddenly found himself in an intellectual environment that welcomed alternative psychologies, especially psychoanalytic psychology. He himself recalled the person who, apparently sometime in 1930, first acquainted him with the ideas of psychoanalysis: it was Sigmund Heinz Foulkes, a practicing psychoanalyst with connections to both Mannheim and Horkheimer (Foulkes taught classes at the Institute of Social Research).[26] Foulkes would remain Elias's friend and sometime collaborator for the rest of his life; in fact, upon completion of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias contemplated co-authoring with Foulkes a book on psychoanalysis and sociology; and a decade later he joined with Foulkes to set up the Group Analysis Society in London.[27]

Elias's growing interest in psychoanalysis was also stimulated by Mannheim, with whom he worked so closely during his three years at Frankfurt. For at the time, in an endeavor sparked in part by his wife, Julia Mannheim-Lang, who would later become a practicing psychoanalyst, Mannheim had himself begun his own exploration of psychoanalysis, although it was probably not until after leaving Frankfurt in 1933 that he found a way to incorporate some of its concepts into his sociological writing.[28] That Elias felt a particular indebtedness to Mannheim and to his wife, perhaps specifically in regard to their role in encouraging his interest in psychoanalysis, is suggested by the dedication to both of them that appears at the head of a 1936 typescript of the first volume of *The Civilizing Process*, the volume dominated by a Freudian-influenced analysis of the etiquette books of Courtin and others.[29]

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24 Gay, *Freud*, 552.

25 Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, 54.

26 Dennis Brown, "Conversation with Norbert Elias," *Group Analysis* 30 (1997), 516. According to Reinhart Blomert, Elias "took sessions with" Foulkes at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research. Blomert's comments are contained in an internet exchange dated November 22, 2001 located at "Elias-I@NIC>SURFET>NF."

27 Elizabeth Foulkes, "Some Personal Recollections of Norbert Elias," *Group Analysis* 30 (1997), 527. According to Reinhart Blomert, late in her life Foulkes' wife reported that Elias had originally wanted Foulkes to write the psychoanalytic sections of *The Civilizing Process*. Blomert, "Elias-I@NIC>SURFET>NF" Nov. 22, 2001.

28 Dennis Brown, "Conversation with Norbert Elias," 516.

29 Richard Kilminster, "Elias and Mannheim: Closeness and Distance," *Theory, Culture & Society* 10 (1993), 83.

But in spite of the varied evidence of the formative impact on his thinking of the theories of psychoanalysis—including, most pointedly, his own declaration that "probably Freud's ideas had a greater influence on my thinking than those of any theoretical sociologist"[30]—all indications are that while at Frankfurt University Elias failed to find a role for this new psychology in his own sociological work. For example, the analysis of competitive status display in French court society in his *Habilitation*, completed in 1933, contained no hint of the psychoanalytic approaches he would utilize in his writing just two years later on the same subject in *The Civilizing Process*.[31] In fact, just as none of Elias's pre-1935 writings contains references to Antoine de Courtin's book on courtly etiquette, none of them contains a reference to Freud or to psychoanalysis.

Strange as it may seem, it appears that Elias's recognition of Freud's pertinence to his sociology had to await the chance discovery of Courtin's book at the British Museum. For although one might at first read Elias's account as asserting that, on its own, Courtin's book overthrew the doctrines of academic psychology, this book could not have actually provided the conceptual bedrock of such an accomplishment. The overthrow of the premises of academic psychology may have begun with the discovery of Courtin's book, but insight limited to the terms of Courtin's book could never have brought it to completion: the book contains nothing of an explicit psychological nature, consisting as it does of a gathering of precepts on the manners appropriate for life at the court of Louis XIV. Elias's account makes sense only if we understand that what suddenly replaced academic psychology was not Courtin's precepts but rather a new psychology that these precepts suddenly brought to the fore. The account makes sense, that is, because we understand that the insight it records must have incorporated the sudden envisioning of a way to use "the Freudians" in conjunction with Courtin's precepts. It makes sense because we understand that it was this new psychology that enabled Elias suddenly to see that "reliable [statements] could be *inferred*" from the "material" of Courtin's book and to conclude that from such historical documents "one could ... *arrive* at a convincing picture of human attitudes." The account's very pronouncements presume the standard theory-data distinction between the *theoretical concepts* that guide analysis and the *empirical material* of analysis, the distinction whereby a conceptual framework, in this case, a new psychology based on Freudianism, enables "reliable statements" to be "inferred" and "arrived at" from empirical data, which, in this case, consisted of Courtin's book.

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30 Johan Goudsblom, "Responses to Norbert Elias's work in England, Germany, the Netherlands and France," in P. Gleichmann, J. Goudsblom and H. Korte, Eds, *Human Figurations* (Amsterdam, 1977), 78.

31 Although in the late 1960s Elias expanded the text of his *Habilitation* and issued it under the title *The Court Society*, this book clearly remains a product born of Elias's earlier pre-Freudian period. Its few passages informed by psychoanalytically influenced insights are additions from Elias's rewrite of the late 1960s, as is evidenced by the fact that these few passages partake of the conceptual apparatus specific to Elias's theoretical work of the 1960s (dealing with established-outsider social relationships and involvement-detachment experiential distinctions).

To identify Freudianism as the new psychology of Elias's insight is, however, somewhat misleading. The new psychology that emerged from this insight consists in *The Civilizing Process* of a unique blend of two distinct types of thought. Firstly, this psychology, strictly speaking, is not Freudianism at all (not at least in its more clinical rendering), but rather a historicized and sociologized version of a select subset of Freud's major conceptions (which we will examine more fully in the following chapters). Secondly, this psychology takes the form in *The Civilizing Process* of an innovative empirical-theoretical mode of analysis and theory making, a methodological fusion of detailed historical micro interpretation and broadly based macro social theory, each, in its own way, psychoanalytically informed. This second characterization has a special relevance to our discussion of Elias's account of the "key experience" of the book's origin, for this account is itself an exemplum of the empirical-theoretical, micro-macro fusion that Elias employs in the writing of *The Civilizing Process*: an interaction of theory making (in this case, the overthrow of one psychology and the envisioning of another) derived from a psycho-social interpretation of a single, unique historical document (Courtin's book). Elias's account allows us to envision the process by which his new psychology emerged from this complex coupling of micro interpretation and macro theory, to see it as the outcome of a unique marriage of one particular historical document and a broadly based, historicized revision of Freud's psychoanalytic psychology. Courtin's precepts overturned academic psychology by inspiring a sudden recognition of the historical applicability of psychoanalytic psychology; Freud's psychology, the lens through which Elias read Courtin's precepts, was thus transformed into a historical social psychology which, in turn, validated Elias's own long thwarted convictions concerning the historicity of the human psyche.

4. Psychogenetics

I will now turn to *The Civilizing Process* itself and to the passage from it that I relied upon earlier in developing my argument that the account's assault on academic psychology was based, in part, upon Elias's perception that the social sciences were unduly influenced by this psychology's ahistorical views of the psyche. The passage in question, from *The Civilizing Process*'s concluding Part IV, is a brief methodological digression located within a larger exposition on the rise of modern rationalism.

This methodological digression begins when Elias steps back from an exploration of the role that court society played in the rise of what he calls "the rationalization process" to raise a question about how best to conceptualize the psychological dimension of such a process. "The historical process of rationalization," he asserts, "is a prime example of a kind of process" that cannot be adequately "grasped" by any of the contemporary social sciences, blinded as these sciences are by the rigid

disciplinary boundaries that divide them.[32] One might think, he adds, that given these disciplinary divisions, the creation of new hybrid social sciences is called for:

> It [i.e., the study of a social process such as rationalization] belongs—*if we adhere to the traditional pattern of academic disciplines*—to a science that does not yet exist, historical psychology [italics added].[33]

Such a call for the creation of a new academic discipline of "historical psychology," however, is not what Elias has in mind, although the above sentence has been so read by a number of commentators.[34] As the wording of the sentence itself suggests, the condition placed upon such a creation—"*if* we adhere to the traditional pattern" of disciplinary division—is not one that Elias is himself disposed to accept. In fact, he openly dismisses it elsewhere: in the preface of *The Civilizing Process*, Elias proclaims that the book's aim is to promote "the *co-operation* of different branches of scholarship, ... psychology, philology, ethnology and anthropology no less than sociology or the different special branches of historical research."[35] Rather, Elias has another aim in mind: encouraging historical sociology to cross the disciplinary divide that has excluded it from psychological matters and that, as a consequence, has led it to unquestioningly accept academic psychology's conception of the ahistorical psyche.

Given "the sharp dividing line" that separates "the work of the historian and of the psychologist," Elias's digression charges, "the psychologist thinks unhistorically," while the historian "avoids psychological problems." As a result, the historically inclined sociologist "accepts entirely the dividing line drawn by the historian between the seemingly immutable psychological structure of humans [the determination of which, the text makes clear, is given entirely over to the psychologist] and its different manifestations in the form of arts, ideas or whatever [that, detached from psychological consideration, become the historical sociologist's subject]."[36] Thus, as a result of these divisions, the psyche is itself doubly excluded from the "branches

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32 *Civilizing Process*, 406. As the context of Elias's argument makes clear, this is true of the civilizing process itself. This process can only be "grasped" by an interdisciplinary fusion of methods, a fusion of historical, sociological, and psychological approaches.

33 Ibid.

34 Smith, *Norbert Elias*, 39; Robert Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Oxford, 1988), 91. However, Elias does use the label "historical psychology" to identity his method in a letters he wrote to Walter Benjamin in 1938, in which he refers to *The Civilizing Process* as an "attempt at a historical psychology." Detlev Schöttker, "Norbert Elias and Walter Benjamin: an Exchange of Letters and its Context." *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no 2 (1998), 57.

35 *Civilizing Process*, xiv (italics added). In the chapter originally intended for *The Civilizing Process* but only published later in *Society of Individuals*, Elias argues against "dividing human beings up into various ... domains, for example, the psychologist, the historians, the sociologists. The structure of the human psyche, the structures of human society and the structures of human history ... can only be studied in conjunction with each other. They do not exist ... with the degree of isolation assumed by current research. They form, with other structures, the subject matter of the single human science" (36).

36 *Civilizing Process*, 406-407.

of historical research": firstly, by the historian's and sociologist's acceptance of the disciplinary divide that assigns all research of the psychic to the psychologist, and, secondly, by the assumption, which is derived from the psychologist's findings, that the psyche itself is "immutable" and therefore of no historical interest.

But, the digression continues, the ahistorical findings of academic psychology are in themselves wrong. In terms closely paralleling those he later used in his account of his book's origin, Elias's digression associates academic psychology's ahistoricism with a narrow methodological positivism that restricts it to (as his account in *Reflections* put it) "tests with present-day people." The only type of people, the digression asserts, that is thought to be "accessible to psychological investigation" are living subjects, "only Western people living at present, or at most also so-called primitive peoples living today." Given these methodological restrictions, the psychologist is prevented from considering evidence from the past and thus necessarily "approaches the psychological structures of present-day people as if they were something without development or change"[37] (the version in *Reflections'* account is "by this method it is, of course, quite impossible to get a view of the present standard as something that has developed").

The digression then narrows the focuses to Elias's own field of historical sociology and to a discussion of the ways his present book has broken with this field's deference to academic psychology. Historical sociologists, it begins, have been led by academic psychology's view of the human psyche as "immutable" to leave the psyche out of their social history (in the same way, as we found in the previous section, that it had led Elias himself to leave it out of his own pre-*Civilizing Process* writings). Moreover, their refusal to cross the academic disciplinary boundaries that divide up the various "manifestations of social beings" into insulated fields of study has blocked them from recognizing

> that an *historical social psychology*, a study at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic, is needed to draw the connections between all these different [historical, sociological, and psychological] manifestations of social beings.[38]

There can be no doubt that Elias, in his use in this passage of the generic term "historical social psychology," is speaking of the distinct mode of psycho-social thought that his book has introduced: a mode at once historical, sociological, and psychological.[39] But what exactly does Elias mean by "an historical social

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37 Ibid., 406.

38 Ibid., 407 (italics added).

39 That the term "historical social psychology" appears only this one time in all of Elias's writings need not deter us from adopting it here as a covering term for his psychologically infused sociological endeavors. The appropriateness of "historical social psychology" is evidenced by the fact that its twin qualifiers—"at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic"—repeatedly appear in tandem in *The Civilizing Process* in statements defining the book's mixture of psychology and sociology, as they do in a number of Elias's later writings as well. For example, see Norbert Elias's "Introduction" to Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in The Civilizing Process* (Oxford, 1986), 40; Norbert Elias, "The Civilizing of Parents," in *Elias Reader*, 199.

psychology, at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic"? Given the phrase's textual placement, its most immediate referent is undoubtedly the very combination of historical research, sociological analysis, and psychological examination embodied by the empirically based psycho-social investigation of "the rationalization process" that Elias's methodological digression has interrupted. At the beginning of the digression itself, Elias explains that the rationalization process "cannot be separated from the historical change in the structure of interpersonal relationships.... It is both psychological and social."[40] Also, the phrase clearly refers to the similar combination of approaches utilized elsewhere in *The Civilizing Process* to investigate other aspects of the civilizing process.

That what Elias has in mind is this very combination of approaches is made explicitly clear as his digression proceeds; he offers, for instance, the following broad methodological definition:

> In order to understand and explain civilizing processes [such as manifested in the rationalization process] one needs to investigate ... the transformation of both the *personality structure* and the entire *social structure*. This task demands ... *psychogenetic* investigation aimed at grasping the whole field of individual psychological energies, the structure and form of the more drive impulsive no less than of the more conscious self-steering functions ... [and] demands *sociogenetic* investigations of the overall structure, with a long-term perspective, ... of the social field formed by a specific group of interdependent societies, and of the sequential order in which it changes.[41]

As this passage makes clear, Elias's "historical social psychology" is above all a method of historic examination ("with a long-term perspective ... of the sequential order in which it changes") of social development ("of ... the entire social structure, ... of the social field formed by a specific group") and psychological development ("of ... the personality structure ... grasping the whole field of individual psychological energies"). It is a method whereby two distinct types of investigation are combined: "psychogenetic" (the study of the historical development of the psyche) and "sociogenetic" (the study of the historical development of society).

Elias's method thus posits a fusion ("at once") of these two investigative genetic approaches. Yet, given our goal of gaining an understanding of *one* of these approaches in specific—Elias's use of psychology in his sociology—it is also important to note that even if Elias combines a historical psychology (psychogenetics) with a historical sociology (sociogenetics), we still can separate them analytically. We can extract from this fusion of genetic approaches a set of psychological theoretical concepts and interpretative empirical findings dealing with the history and nature of psychic makeup and emotional responsiveness. Remaining aware that these concepts and findings exist within a psycho-social fusion and are but one half of the approach utilized by *The Civilizing Process* to "understand and explain civilizing processes," we can nonetheless also scrutinize these concepts and findings on their own terms as *psychological* engagements with human realities. We will do just this in the following chapters.

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40 *Civilizing Process*, 407.
41 Ibid., 411 (italics added).

Moreover, as we shall see in these chapters, it is this psychology, constructed (as this particular methodological digression makes clear) from a Freudianism stripped of its 'ahistorical' biases—its tendency, for example, to hypostasize "an id without history"[42]—that allowed Elias to develop a psychogenetic theory of "the whole field of individual psychological energies," however much this "whole field" is also contingent sociogenetically.

5. A Reconceptualization of Psychology

It is helpful to remember that well before the day of Elias's chance discovery of Antoine de Courtin's *Nouveau traité de civilité*, the sociological component of what came to be Elias's historical social psychology ("at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic") was already in place. Elias's *Habilitation* of 1933 had already exhibited a "sociogenetic" approach to European political and social development, although limited to the case of the French court of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Well before that fateful day in the British Museum's Great Reading Room, Elias had become a historical sociologist; what occurred on that day was that he became a historical social psychologist as well.

But it is also helpful to remember that Elias's account of that day is itself of a distant memory; his recollections in *Reflections* were recorded in 1984, some fifty-one years after the actual event. No doubt Elias's memory of the event, through a mental process somewhat along the lines of Freud's condensation mechanism, gathered within it allusions to other events (as I have argued in the previous pages), and discarded peripheral details of the event itself. There is no reason, however, to doubt the factual accuracy of what he does recall (the major elements of which reappear in accounts written by scholars who knew him well and who were not adverse to questioning other aspect of Elias's reflections). What memory preserves, especially of a turning point in a person's life, is normally a fairly accurate subset of basic facts, but this subset also tends to absorb and come to symbolize references and meanings that reach well beyond their original mundane facticity.

In this case, an essential aspect of the event is vouched for by several recently discovered letters that Elias wrote to Walter Benjamin in 1938, asking him to write a review of the first volume of *The Civilizing Process* for the Institute of Social Research's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Although never explicitly mentioning academic psychology, in these letters Elias refers to non-historical views of "the most modern of psychological currents" that dominated contemporary thought, and repeatedly identifies as the purpose of his book the overturning of such views:

> I have posed myself a rather considerable task with this book. Behind all the many materials and examples [in the book]… stands the idea that we never understand the relation between the social process and the 'psychical' as long as we see in the psychical only something static and unchangeable, so long as we do not also see the psychical as 'in process.'… Before us stands the more positive task of making the rules of the historical

change in the psychical accessible to our understanding. This is the contribution which the first volume [of the *Civilizing Process*] seeks to make….

The first volume is mainly concerned with particular concrete psychical processes…. My primary concern is: I wanted to find a clear method and unambiguous material which would overcome the hitherto dominant static conception of psychical phenomena. Whoever, like you and I myself, never loses sight of the image of clearly structured societal processes, cannot be satisfied with the kind of static conception of the psychical which currently still predominates the most modern of psychological currents.... To show that the construction of the psychical is subject to the same order [of processual change], is the task of this first volume [of *The Civilizing Process*].[43]

These letters could not be more explicit: "The task"—also, the "considerable task" and "more positive task"—is to overturn the dominant idea of the psyche as "static and unchangeable" and to "mak[e] the rules of the historical change in the psychical accessible to our understanding." They clearly state the nature of his "primary concern" and what the book, and especially its first volume, "is mainly concerned with": "to find a clear method and unambiguous material [beginning, as we have seen, with Courtin's book of precepts] which would overcome the hitherto dominant static conception of psychical phenomena." "This is *the* contribution [the volume] seeks to make."

Thus, Elias's recently discovered letters of 1938 quite explicitly verify that during the time Elias wrote *The Civilizing Process* he considered the "primary concern" and "the task" of the book, and in particular of its first volume (the writing of which is most closely tied to the discovery of the manner books of Courtin and others), to be the same as reflected in his memory of the book's origin a half century later. The "primary aim" and "the task" were to overcome ideas of the ahistorical psyche and to advance a "convincing picture" of the historical psyche.

Yet the question asked several times earlier in this chapter, in part, remains: Why was Elias's fifty-one year old account so specifically and so concentratedly focused on an assault on academic psychology? We remember Elias's words:

I suddenly had material that ... allowed reliable statements to be made on how [attitudinal standards] had changed. *So* I began my book *The Civilizing Process* with a clear awareness that it would be an implicit attack on the wave of studies of attitudes and behaviour by contemporary psychologists. For academic psychologists—not the Freudians—believe strictly that … one had to measure the persons' attitude by questionnaires and other quantitative methods … [making it] quite impossible to get a view of the present standard as something that has developed.

The causative adverb "so" locks the first two sentences together here in a determinant logical succession, insight producing assault—an assault, moreover, which is projected (as it is in Elias's letters to Benjamin) on *The Civilizing Process* as a whole, constituting therein a characterization of the book that few of its readers

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43 Detlev Schöttker, "Norbert Elias and Walter Benjamin," 55-58.

and none of its commentators have even advanced (at least in print).[44] But to take Elias's recollection seriously is to take this characterization of purpose seriously as well. And to read his masterpiece with the awareness that what set its writing into motion was an aggressive act of psychological reconceptualization is to read it with an awareness of just how integral this act is to the book's varied representations of the civilizing process.

To read *The Civilizing Process* thusly, is, however, also to read it as being, in a fundamental way, a complex symbolic action: a final clearing away of a long series of obstacles to a historical conception of the psyche; and a radical conceptualization of the historical psyche and its insertion within a history of a millennium of European social development. Viewed in a similar manner, Elias's account in *Reflections* of the "basic experience" of the sudden insight which gave birth to his magnum opus emerges as a depiction of the initial act within this larger symbolic action. For to have envisioned that a historicized revision of the new non-academic psychology of "the Freudians" would take central place in his projected book, which represented in his mind, moreover, perhaps his last chance to "get back to my career," must have seemed to Elias only tenable if his new psychology could break the hegemonic hold over social scientific thinking of academic psychology's concept of the ahistorical psyche. Furthermore, given his own biography, it makes sense that Elias envisioned that his book would be an assault on academic psychology; as the previous pages have shown, there were a number of reasons, some quite personal, that the insight's end product, that is, *The Civilizing Process*, had to attack, and *successfully attack*, just this psychology and the particulars which (both academically and personally) it exemplified.

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44 For instance, both Mennell (*Norbert Elias*, 18) and van Krieken (*Norbert Elias*, 30) report Elias's characterization of *The Civilizing Process* as an implicit attack on academic psychology, but neither makes anything of this characterization beyond noting it.

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Chapter 12

Psychology and History in the Diverse Parts of *The Civilizing Process*

As the previous chapter has shown, the insight that led to the writing of *The Civilizing Process* consisted, at its most basic level, of a radical reconceptualization of psychology, a reconceptualization that opened the way for the integration of a history of psychic transformation into a wider social-political account of (what Elias termed) "the rise of the West."[1]

However, while the most widely read part of *The Civilizing Process*, its study of changes in elite social manners (Part II, "Civilization as a Specific Transformation of Human Behaviour"), fully exemplifies Elias's 'historical social psychology, at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic,' over half of the book consists of explorations that are almost exclusively *sociogenetic*, with only a scattering of psychogenetic asides: the relatively short first essay on the differences between French and German ideas of social and cultural refinement (Part I) and the book's longest section, its political examination of the feudalization of Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire and the subsequent rise of Western state formations (Part III). Only the book's brief Preface and its concluding Synopsis (Part IV) fully integrate major themes from the *sociogenetic* examinations of Parts I and III with Part II's *psychogenetic* examinations of changes in elite etiquette and behavioral standards.

1. The Non-Psychological Parts of *The Civilizing Process*

The key elements in Elias's account of the book's origin—the discovery of Courtin's book, the overthrow of academic psychology's "picture of human attitudes," the sudden insight into a way to explore and make evident the historical psyche—are

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1   In *The Civilizing Process* Elias uses the phrase "the rise of the West" (225), as well as "the transformation of the West" (228) and other similar phrases, in describing the unique characteristics of European development; he also uses the phrases "the West" and "Western societies" to denote his subject matter and to distinguish Europe (beginning in early Feudalism) from the societies of antiquity (in particular, Roman civilization) and from far eastern societies (in particular, China). See *Civilizing Process*, 221, 222, 226) 225, 226, 379, 380, 381, 386. Johann Arnason draws particular attention to the various ways *The Civilizing Process* serves as an account of the rise of the European civilization, and he argues that "Elias has developed an explanation of 'the rise of the West', as well as a less detailed but highly distinctive account of the Westernization of the world." Arnason, "Civilization, Culture and Power: Reflections on Norbert Elias' Genealogy of the West," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 24 (1989), 45, 52-55.

only fully manifested in the Preface and Parts II and IV. Even the very names of the two figures most closely tied to Elias's insight—Antoine de Courtin and Sigmund Freud—only appear in Parts II and IV.

Perhaps this is as we should expect, for there is strong evidence that major portions of the relatively non-psychological Parts I and III not only reflect Elias's mindset as it existed well before the event that he locates as the book's origin, but also that their writing was actually begun well before that event (Stephen Mennell and Johan Goudsblom believe, for instance, that Elias started writing sections of his future book several years earlier during his stay in France). Indeed, the conceptual framework of the cultural analyses of Part I was first broached in a student paper Elias wrote in 1922 for a seminar taught by Karl Jaspers.[2] Moreover, the political explorations of Part III have clear affinities with Mannheim's worldview of the late 1920s, especially his positing of the concept of competition as key to the understanding of social existence.[3] In this latter regard, we note that Elias's address at the 1928 Congress of German Sociologists was explicitly in defense of Mannheim's seminal paper on "Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon," a paper that the non-psychological Part III cites and makes capital use of.[4] Moreover, the book's only other direct reference to Mannheim's work is found in Part I. Part III also directly expands upon a number of insights originally elaborated in Elias's *Habilitation* of 1933 (for instance, the analysis of the "royal mechanism"[5]).

But I would argue that, even if not fully present in the book's cultural and political historical sections (Parts I and III), Elias's reconceptualization of psychology, his historical social psychology, still lies at the heart of the book as a whole. Such is the perception of a significant number of the book's readers, many of whom skip much of the non-psychological sections—in part because of the laboriousness of the historical narrative of Part III, but also because in the early translations of the book Part III was either truncated (the French translation[6]) or published some years after Parts I and II under a separate title (the English translation[7]). More importantly, such was Elias's perception as well: he felt that his historical social psychology was at the center of his accomplishment, as his comments on the book's origin in *Reflections*, his recently discovered letters of 1938 to Walter Benjamin, and a number of other comments on the book make abundantly evident.[8]

To view Elias's masterpiece from a perspective informed by this recognition of the centrality of his reconceptualization of psychology has a number of advantages.

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2   *Reflections*, 102-103.

3   Kilminster, "Norbert Elias and Karl Mannheim," 94.

4   *Civilizing Process*, 304.

5   *The Court Society* (New York, 1983), 117ff.

6   Rod Aya, "Norbert Elias and '*The Civilizing Process*," *Theory and Society* 5 (1978), 220, 225. The first 122 pages of Part III of *The Civilizing Process* were omitted and the volume re-entitled "La Dynamique de l'Occident."

7   Norbert Elias, *Power and Civility. The Civilizing Process: Volume II* (New York, 1982). Volume I was published as Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners. The Civilizing Process: Volume 1* (New York, 1978).

8   For instance, see the opening pages of Elias's "Postscript" to *The Civilizing Process*, written in 1968. Elias's letters to Benjamin are discussed in the previous chapter.

It alerts us to the central role that psychology as a form of theory and analysis plays in the theoretical design that underlines the book as a conceptual whole; after all, the very concept of the civilizing process, while uniting sociogenetic and psychogenetic explanation, is above all a psychological concept of psychic change, a product of Elias's historical social psychology (the ultimate judgment of civility itself being a measure of the level and type of control exerted by the psyche upon behavior, attitude, and impulse). And it reminds us of just how dependent the completed book is upon the effectiveness by which it works out various implications of the psychological insight that Elias placed at its origin: an insight into the possibility of "inferring" (as the book's Preface states) "the whole process of [psychic] transformation of people" from changes in the standards of etiquette, an insight that makes possible an exploration of a number of patterned psycho-social linkages that tie political and social historical change to psychic change.

2. The Periodization of History

Also unifying the various sections of *The Civilizing Process* is a consistent conception of historical development. The non-psychological cultural and political analyses of the book contained in Parts I and III, the psychologically attuned examination of changing behavioral standards of Part II, and the integrated social-psychological analyses of the book's concluding Synopsis in Part IV all rely on the same historical periodization, which breaks European history into a number of developmentally interconnected eras, each of which manifests distinct political, military, and social structures. In order to explore the depiction in *The Civilizing Process* of the historicity of the human psyche, I need to present a schematic overview of this historical periodization. Once this overview is established, I will then be able to show in the following two chapters how crucial stages of development of the historical psyche are aligned with the social-political developments of corresponding historical periods.

Although the conceptualization of these separate historical eras is often processual rather than static—Elias's text refers as readily to "feudalization" as it does to "feudalism" and to "monopolization" as often as it refers to "monopoly"—*The Civilizing Process* relies on the historicist device of viewing history as consisting of a series of what it interchangeably terms "periods," "phases" or "stages." It refers, for instance, to the contemporary era as "a *period* of transition" and the era of absolutist court society as "the early modern *period*," while it calls bourgeois society "a new *phase* ... in the civilizing process"; it characterizes a particular behavioral pattern as corresponding to a certain "*stage* of a civilizing process" and a particular set of social relations as embodying a certain society's "*stage* of development."[9]

Moreover, Elias frames his understanding of these distinct historical periods in a manner similar to that used by the social theorists whose influence on him is most evident (Comte, Marx, Weber): that is, the understanding of these historical periods is framed by the conception of a relatively enduring set of modes of organization, be they

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9   *Civilizing Process*, 440, 191, 426, xi, 432. "Stage of development" also appears on 88; "stage of social development" appears on 88, 409, 410.

cultural, political, or economic. In Elias's case, the most fundamental of the modes of organization that make a historical period distinct from other periods is the particular pattern by which social conflict is organized—specifically the pattern of competitive tensions between, on the one hand, members within a society's elite and, on the other hand, the elite as a whole and social groups of lower social standing ("tensions between different strata and groups"; the "equilibrium of tensions" between social classes; "the social differences [in court society] between nobility and bourgeoisie" [10]). Framed by a perspective that posits conflict as central to social organization (a "system of tensions within the society at large"), Elias's characterization of a historical period focuses on the various means (military prowess, refinement of etiquette, capital accumulation) by which high-ranking individuals and groupings work to maintain or advance their advantages of power and privilege against other competing individuals or groups.[11]

When discussing Elias's description of different historical periods, scholarly commentaries often focus on just three of these periods: feudal pre-state knightly court society, absolutist state court society, and modern professional (or, more accurately translated, "working" [12]) bourgeois society. As often, such discussions focus on the distinct standards of behavior and the distinct types of psychic make-up that Elias associates with these particular three periods: the crude social standards of "courtoisie," which promoted an elementary control over bodily impulses in the great feudal courts of the late Middle Ages; the increasingly refined standards of "civilité," which compelled courtiers in absolutist court society to becomes masters of an ego-centered self-regulation; and the stringently repressive standards of "civilization," which nineteenth-century bourgeois society forced upon the psyche in the form of internalized superego imperatives of embarrassment and shame. Often overlooked, however, are the book's briefer depictions of two other major social formations that antedate and postdate these three periods: the slave-based civilization of antiquity; and the globalized society of the future which, if it comes to fruition, will emerge (as Elias's text suggests) following a series of horrific world wars and result in the rule of a monopolistic administration of bureaucrats in control of the world's means of military violence and in conflict with its citizenry.[13]

Also often overlooked is the book's inclusion of a series of historical periods that provide links between each of the above five major social formations, four periods that Elias identifies as being "transitional."[14] Characterized by the destabilization

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10 Ibid., 444, 337.

11 Ibid., 316, 438.

12 Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 293.

13 *Civilizing Process*, 437, 445-446. Also see Breuer, "The Denouements of Civilization," 402. My choice of words perhaps unfairly highlights the dystopic implications of Elias's description of future governmental forms, "the next stage" which will manifest "tensions between the upper and middle functionaries of the monopoly administration, between the 'bureaucracy' on the one hand and the rest of society on the other" (446); Elias's prophecy of a series of future world wars, the first (but not, he makes clear, the last) of which he sees on the immediate horizon, is contained on pages 436-437, 445-446.

14 Ibid., 61, 63, 68, 221, 440. For a discussion of Elias's conception of transitional historical periods, see Arpád Szakolczai, "Norbert Elias and Franz Borkenau: Intertwined

of social and political hierarchies, which brings in its wake various degrees of normative uncertainty, these transitional periods are: the simple warrior society of the early Middle Ages (the focus of an extremely important chapter in *The Civilizing Process* on the psychogenesis and sociogenesis of physical aggressiveness, a chapter that I shall shortly examine in detail); the European Renaissance (the subject of several other chapters in *The Civilizing Process*, highlighted by Elias's brilliant analyses of Erasmus's writings); the brief period of bourgeois revolutions which overturned the absolute monarchies of Europe (the text deals with this period only in passing[15]); and the crisis-ridden, "informalizing" society of Europe following the first World War (Elias scatters his text with numerous asides and digressions about his contemporary social-political world, along with a major analysis of it in the first pages of the book's last chapter).

A schematic representation of Elias's periodization, incorporating brief descriptions of all nine of these historical periods, is contained in Table 12.1 (see page 202). In examining this Table, the reader will notice two distinct patterns of alternation between historical periods. The first of these patterns is the chronological alternation between major periods of stable hegemonic social-political formation and transitional periods of changing and unstable social-political formation. The movement of history, in Elias's periodization schema, cycles between "phases with large possibilities of social improvement and expansion"—that is, phases of shifting structures of stratification and thus significant social mobility—and "those offering diminished satisfaction to these needs, in which the relatively deprived are sealed off" from advancement by structures of rigid hegemonic stratification.[16] This alternation between hegemonic and transitional periods is explicitly discussed in a number of places in *The Civilizing Process.* For instance, the Renaissance is described as having been a "relatively brief phase of relaxation between two great epochs that were characterized by more inflexible social hierarchies," a "transitional period after the loosening of the medieval social hierarchy and before the stabilizing of the modern [absolutist court] one," a period in which "individuals of different social origins were thrown together. The social circulation of ascending and descending groups and individuals sped up. Then, slowly in the course of the sixteenth century, ... a more rigid social hierarchy began to establish itself once more."[17] And, as we shall see shortly, the book views the simple warrior society of early feudalism as another transitional period, one that existed before the later hegemonic period of "medieval social hierarchy." The early feudal period was "a more mobile phase with relatively large opportunities for expansion and social betterment for the individual," a period that was brought to an end by the "phase [of medieval court society] with [its] increasingly closed positions, in which everyone tried to retain and consolidate what he had."[18]

Life-Works," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17, no. 2 (2000), 45-60.

    15 For Elias's brief discussion of the period of bourgeois revolutions, which he refers to as a "great transitional phase," see *Civilizing Process*, 433, 438-439.

    16 Ibid., 231.

    17 Ibid., 66, 63, 68.

    18 Ibid., 237.

Table 12.1 The Periodization of History in *The Civilizing Process*

Hegemonic social-political periods (stable social hierarchies)	Transitional formations of social-political instability (shifts in structure of social hierarchies)
slave-based civilization of antiquity • distinct civilizing process of a thousand years, brought to end by anarchy of tribal and feudal warrior societies	
	simple warrior society of early feudalism *9th-12th centuries* • de-civilizing process: barbarism
feudal knightly court society 13th-15th centuries • emergence of new civilizing process in pre-state great feudal courts: crude etiquette standard of "courtoisie" promotes elementary control of bodily impulses	
	European Renaissance *15th-16th centuries* • *social mobility for some elements of secular bourgeoisie (Erasmus)*
absolutist state court society 16th-18th centuries • state monopolization of violence compels "courtization" of warriors, a civilizing spiral of increasingly refined standards of "civilité," calling for ego-centered management of the self	
	bourgeois revolutions *18th-19th centuries* • *overthrow of old ruling order*
professional 'working' bourgeois society rising class in 13th-18th centuries, bourgeoisie dominates 19th century imperialist era • civilizing process of rigid unconscious superego standards of shame which, when bourgeoisie becomes ruling class, spread downward to masses & outward to colonies	
	contemporary Europe *post WWI* • *"informalization" of civilizing process moderates bourgeois shame standards; eruptions of de-civilizing violence (fascism)*
world society precipitated by future world wars • pacification of global society ruled by a bureaucracy monopolizing worldwide means of violence	

The second pattern of chronological alternation evident in Table 12.1 is between civilizing and decivilizing processes.[19] To understand this latter pattern and the distinction it entails, one needs to bring together sociogenetic and psychogenetic perspectives. Sociogenetically, the distinction between civilizing and decivilizing processes refers to (as Elias states) "two main directions in the structural changes of societies": specifically, long-term structural changes "tending towards increased differentiation and integration and those tending toward decreased differentiation and integration." Psychogenetically, the distinction between these two processes refers to two main directions of "change in human affect and control structures taking place over a large number of generations," this direction being either an increase or decrease in the "tightening and differentiation of [impulse] controls," a distinction registered as an increase or decrease of psychic structural integration and differentiation.[20] References to this distinction between periods of increasing or decreasing social and psychic integration and differentiation appear repeatedly in the pages of *The Civilizing Process*. An example is contained in the following passage from a brief summarization of an earlier historical description:

> It was shown earlier how and why, when the division of functions was low, the central organs of society of a certain size were relatively unstable and liable to disintegration [*decreased integration*]. It has been shown how, through specific figurational pressures, centrifugal tendencies [*decreased integration*] ... were slowly neutralized ... and a more stable central organization and a firmer monopolization of physical force were established [*increased integration*]. The peculiar stability of the apparatus of psychological self-restraint [*increased impulse control*] which emerges as a decisive trait built into the habitus of every 'civilized' human being, stands in the closest relationship to the monopolization of physical force and the growing stability of the central organs of society [*increased integration*]. Only with the formation of this kind of relatively stable monopoly institution [*increased integration*] do societies acquire those characteristics as a result of which the individuals forming them get attuned, from infancy, to a highly regulated and differentiated pattern of self-restraint [*increased impulse control*].[21]

Whether social and psychic integration and differentiation is on the increase or decrease is thus a key to the distinction between civilizing and decivilizing periods. This distinction is manifested in the Table by its inclusion of *two* separate advances of civilizing processes, the first separated from the second by a period dominated by a decivilizing advance. The first civilizing upsurge is identified with the period of Roman civilization of antiquity, which in Elias's scheme represents (as he describes it elsewhere) "the apex of an integrative movement."[22] The second upsurge begins in thirteenth-century Europe, and includes all subsequent periods of "the rise of the West." The decivilizing period separating these two quite distinct civilizing

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19 Elias does not employ the term "decivilizing process" in *The Civilizing Process* although he clearly does advance such a notion in its descriptions of the simple warrior society of early feudalism. Elias's later work contains a number of explicit discussions of decivilizing processes.

20 Ibid., 450.

21 Ibid., 369.

22 Letter from Elias to Gerhard Schmied, quoted in van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 68.

movements is that of the simple warrior society of early European feudalism, which Elias's text represents (as we shall shortly see) as the barbaric apex of a "centrifugal," disintegrative movement. Moreover, the book's repeated discussions of ancient Roman society in Part III make clear that, although this society represented a great civilizing advance, it was driven by a different principle of social differentiation— slave labor—and a different principle of social integration—a militaristic absolutism so tightly tied to the landed aristocracy that integrative market sectors were gravely retarded. Thus it manifested a different configuration of the civilizing process than that which emerged later in Western Europe. And these discussions make evident that Roman society's distinctly different structural patterns of social differentiation and integration were registered psychogenetically as differences in the civilized Roman psyche: "it is only against the background of these different patterns that the special nature of the Western structure can be fully appreciated," Elias asserts; "the division of labour, the interweaving of people, the mutual dependence of upper and lower classes, and concomitantly, the drive economy of both classes develop[ed] differently."[23]

This overview of Elias's periodization of European history provides a schematic framework that I will rely upon in my analyses of Elias's account of the historical psyche and its place in the social-political history of the West. Elias's processual orientation is so inherently comparative that his depiction of the specific psycho-social configuration of a historical period almost inevitably leads to comparisons with the configurations of earlier or later periods. And thus, as we shall see, ideas about the differences between historical periods often provides the conceptual wherewithal by which he elaborates distinctions and posits definitions of the specific psychogenetic and sociogenetic configurations. My next two chapters will focus on the ways in which Elias's text depicts the characteristics of distinct periods of European history. Chapter 13 will examine his depiction of the decivilizing of the psyche in the historical period that separated Roman civilization from the later civilizing upsurge of the West—the simple warrior society of early European feudalism. Chapter 14 will examine two major periods in which the psyche was gradually re-civilized— absolutist court society and professional bourgeois society. By focusing on the distinct psychic formation and the social-political structure associated with these three periods, I will, of necessity, leave out much of the detail of Elias's overall account of the other periods of the Western psyche and of the social-political development of the West. But by focusing on these three periods, I will be able to offer a fairly straightforward account of Elias's depiction of the history of the psyche as it advanced from a condition of relative decivilization to one of relative civilization.

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23 *Civilizing Process*, 226-227.

Chapter 13

The Decivilized Psyche, *Fremdzwänge* and the Constitution of Human Drives

Elias's account of the social-political composition of early medieval warrior society can be summarized as follows.

In the wake of the onslaught of "the Great Migrations," which saw the territories of the Roman Empire overrun by Germanic tribal groups, the early feudal era completed Europe's break with social structures of antiquity which, had they remained in place, would have blocked the rise of the West.[1] The era created a "starting point" not only for the political transformation that would lead later to the emergence of modern European states, but also for the psychological transformations that would lead later to "the changes ... in which conduct and drive structure were altered in the direction of 'civilization.'"[2] It opened the way for the emergence of social and psychological processes that would come to "stamp," with all their later permutations, the history of the West as "a single unified epoch, a great Middle Age"—a unified and unique historical developmental formation that, Elias reiterated in the last years of his life, as "late barbarians" we still live in today.[3]

Elias grounds his depiction of the early feudal era in a detailed socio-political narrative of early western Frankish history, beginning with the reign of Charlemagne and the subsequent collapse of the Carolingian Empire and ending with the initial stirrings in the twelfth century of what would later emerge as the state formations of the West. In a summary of this narrative, Elias characterizes the period as a "mighty disintegration":

> the western Frankish territory disintegrated in the tenth and eleventh centuries into a multitude of smaller and smaller dominions. Every baron, every viscount, every seigneur controlled his estate or estates from his castle or castles, like a ruler over his state.... The disintegration of property, the passing of land from the control of the king to the various gradations of the warrior society as a whole—and this and nothing else is 'feudalization'—had reached its utmost limit.[4]

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1   *Civilizing Process*, 162, also 208ff, 232. Elias makes clear that the destruction of dominant social formations of the Roman Empire constituted a necessary "precondition" for what he calls, on more than one occasion, "the rise of the West." "From the start," he asserts, "the whole development of Western society ... was ... set on a different course than in Roman antiquity. It was subjected to different regularities" (228).

2   Ibid., 204-205.

3   Ibid., 230, 221; Elias's usage of the phrase "late barbarism" is quoted in van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 9.

4   *Civilizing Process*, 236.

Dominated by "centrifugal" structural forces leading to social atomization, the early feudal era is the first of the transitional stages of development in Elias's schema of periodization; in contradistinction to non-transitional societies, which are dominated by a "system of closed opportunities," the era's very instability created a situation in which "neither kings nor dukes nor any of the ranks below them were able to prevent their servants becoming independent owners of the fief."[5]

Early feudal Europe consisted of an ever shifting field of competing autarkic agrarian estates, each in a state of war with the other. Pacified social spaces were transient at best; "war was the normal state."[6] Violence not only characterized the relations amongst estates; it also characterized the social relations within them, physical violence being "the strongest functional dependence between people." The social power of an estate's ruler was directly based on his physical strength and skills in battle; his material well-being resulted from violence, with "the sword a frequent and indispensable instrument for acquiring means of production, and the threat of violence an indispensable means of production."[7]

Elias's account of the impact of these militaristic social relations on the psyche of the era's elite, the warrior knights, serves as the foundation upon which he constructs essential parts of the theoretical edifice of *The Civilizing Process*. Once established in the book's early chapter on medieval violence, this account of the warrior psyche is drawn upon in explanations of the psychogenesis of later stages of development. It serves as the "starting point" of the book's wide-ranging exploration of changes in human aggressiveness in the history of the West. In particular, it serves as the base point in the book's account of the transformation of aggressiveness by absolutist court society from physical to social combat ("courtization"), and of the psychic internalization of aggressiveness by bourgeois professional society ("the battlefield is moved within").[8]

In the following pages I will explore Elias's conception of the medieval warrior psyche, beginning with it's depiction as a relatively decivilized psyche in *The Civilizing Process*'s descriptive historical sketches, mostly found in this early chapter, "On Changes in Aggressiveness." In the process of this exploration, related issues will emerge and need to be dealt with, principally, Elias's psycho-social conception of the constitution of human drives and the contribution of social structure to that constitution.

1. The Social Determination of the Psyche

As presented in the historical descriptions of Elias's chapter on medieval aggressiveness, the medieval warrior psyche exhibited two interrelated qualities: a lust for attack and extreme emotional volatility. Physical violence, the basis of the era's social relations, was not just an external condition of life; it entered directly

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5   Ibid., 231, 235.

6   Ibid., 164. This sentence is a quotation taken from the work of Achille Luchaire. See also 169, 225.

7   Ibid., 253, 234, 303.

8   Ibid., 162, 387-397, 375.

into the core of the psyche. Since "rapine, pillage and murder" were the only means by which the warrior could maintain his social position and, in real terms, his physical survival, "vital necessity" dictated a "permanent readiness to fight." And since the warrior "had to fight"—"the structure and tensions of this society made this an inescapable condition for individuals"—survival itself was served by a motivational "savagery of feeling" that energized combat with a "joy of killing and destruction." The knight came to surmount fear of combat by converting violence itself into a pleasure: "rapine, battle, hunting of people and animals ... formed part of the pleasures of life." For us to judge even exceptionally cruel expressions of this savage joy as "pathological' degeneration" is to see them from the perspective of "later phases of social development": "People behaved in a socially useful way and took pleasure in doing so."[9] Elias's use in his German text of the term *Angriffslust* (which literally means 'lust for attack' or 'pleasure in attacking,' but in the book's English translation is rendered as "aggressiveness") suggests the profundity of the knight's drive investment in the violent activities necessitated by the structures of his social relations.

Beyond the internalization of its violent tenor, social life had another marked effect on the psyche. The centrifugal forces at work within the social order had a direct structural effect on the "structure of affects." The "permanent precariousness of ... social life" registered psychically as an inner uncertainty: "little could be predicted.... 'The chronic form which war was wont to take ... nourished *a feeling of universal uncertainty*.'" The result was a psychic volatility characterized by rapid swings between intense moods and affects. Rage alternated with gaiety, the joy of killing with abject fear; "a moment ago they were joking, now they mock each other, one word leads to another, and suddenly from the midst of laughter they find themselves in the fiercest feud." The knight's "rapid changes of mood" and "contradictory" shifts of emotions, which "oscillate[d] ... violently between extremes," were "symptoms of one and the same structure of the emotional life."[10]

But what exactly is the underlying psycho-social logic of Elias's portrayal of these two qualities of psychic formation, each paired with a matching quality of social life—the knight's 'lust for attack' matched with the era's savage violence, his emotional volatility with the endemic instability of feudal social relationships?

An examination of the language of these depictions reveals the existence of two distinct types of structural relationship that connect the psyche and the social: a *correspondence* between social and psychic life; a social *determinism* of psychic life. However, unlike passages in other chapters of *The Civilizing Process*, in which the first type of structural relationship appears quite frequently (in these chapters the relationship of the psyche to the social is referred to explicitly as a "correspondence" at least ten times[11]), Elias's chapter on medieval aggressiveness contains but a single example. As is true in all cases, when Elias describes the existence of a correspondence between social and psychic conditions, he explicitly asserts no more than an affinity

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9 Ibid., 162, 163, 164, 166.

10 Ibid., 164, 168, 169, 180.

11 Ibid., 54, 58, 59, 153, 251, 253, 254, 367, 374, 409. The phrase "in accordance with" functions in a similar manner on pages 156, 375, 402.

between these conditions, yet often something more than mere similarity is implied. Although it does not literally employ the word "correspondence," notice how this chapter's single example utilizes the parallel adverbial conjunctives "just as" and "so" to link statements about social and psychic conditions, thereby suggesting the existence of a correspondence between them:

> The victor of today was defeated tomorrow by some accident, captured and imperilled. In the midst of these perpetual ups and downs, ... little could be predicted.... And *just as* people's fate could change abruptly, *so* their joy could turn into fear and this fear, in its turn, could give way, equally abruptly, to submission to some new pleasure.[12]

The passage's assertion of an affinity between social instability and psychic volatility leaves undefined the exact nature of the connection; nothing more is explicitly asserted than a correspondence between psychic and social life ("just as"). Elias's wording, however, does not rule out, and in fact hints at, some degree of social determinism, the allusion of the opening sentence to life's unpredictability adding to the conjunctions "just as" and "so" a slight causal overtone.

With this one partial exception, the depictions of psycho-social linkage in Elias's chapter on medieval aggression explicitly present it as embodying a significant element of social determinism. Notice in the next passage how social structure determines psychic response. Explaining why the knight's "structure of affects was different from our own," this passage states that

> [in] an existence without security, with only minimal thought for the future[,] whoever did not love or hate to the utmost, ... whoever could not stand their ground in the play of passions, could go into a monastery; in worldly life they were ... lost.... In these cases, it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control.[13]

This passage not only flatly asserts the social determination of psychic life, but also offers an explanation of how that determinism works. Referring to a social mechanism that in later work Elias entitles "the survival function,"[14] the passage declares that the structure of society set the parameters of personal survival in such a manner that intense volatility became a necessary adaptation to endemic social disintegration ("[in] an existence without security ... whoever did not love or hate to the utmost ... w[as] lost").

Similar descriptions are found throughout the chapter. Indeed, on five separate occasions the chapter's text explicitly utilizes the words "necessitated" or "required" (or their cognates) in sentences that suggest that socially structured conditions of survival demanded certain behaviors and certain psychic states. "Rapine, battle, hunting of people ... were vital *necessities*, which, in accordance with the structure of society, were visible to all." "The social structure even pushed its members in [the] direction [of outbursts of cruelty], making it seem *necessary* and partially

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12 Ibid., 164.
13 Ibid., 169.
14 Elias, *What is Sociology?* 139; *Society of Individuals*, 170.

advantageous." "The stronger affectivity of behaviour was to a certain degree socially *necessary* [to achieve victory over an enemy]." "This permanent readiness to fight, weapon in hand, was a vital *necessity.*" "The structure of society ... *required* [extreme hatred and love]."[15]

But even such explicit attribution of social determinism needs to be read carefully. What exactly do these statements assert is determined? To state, as does the passage quoted above, that the knights' ability to survive physically ("stand their ground") required a certain socially generated "standard of emotional control" would appear to be quite different from stating that the emotions controlled by this standard were themselves also socially determined. That is, one might read the passage's last sentence—"In these cases, it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control"—as explicitly attributing social determination only to this standard of control and not to the emotions controlled by the standard ("love ... hate ... the play of passions").

This reading is, in fact, consistent with the views of those commentators who have concluded that Elias's psychology divides the psyche itself into a socialized part (controls) and an unsocialized part (innate drives). In a well-regarded critical overview of Elias's work, Robert van Krieken reports both that such a view is fairly widely held and that it serves as the basis of some of the most penetrating critiques of *The Civilizing Process*:

> in the body of [Elias's] analysis of European social history, ... we remain with a Hobbesian opposition between nature and society.... Many of the criticisms [of *The Civilizing Process*] appear to arise in response to Elias's persistent use of the concepts of 'restraint' and 'constraint'. Elias's own theoretical position is that human habitus is social constituted, but the notion of restraint, emanating from either outside or within an individual, implies the existence of some presocial 'nature' which requires restraining.[16]

The most outspoken advocate of this view is Benjo Maso, who bases his critique on the portrait of the aggressiveness of medieval knights depicted in the chapter in *The Civilizing Process* which we have been examining. Elias, Maso charges,

> endorsed the Freudian notion that people are born with 'wild, untamed drives' [that] they have to learn to control and restrict.... The notion that 'drives' are to a large extent innate was one of the foundations of [Elias's] civilization theory.[17]

Maso adds that Elias portrays the knights of the Middle Ages as living under conditions of relatively little or no "drive-regulation" and "affect-controls," and that he also portrays their "untamed pleasure of attacking" as the "release" of the innate "aggressive affects" of the human drive to aggression.[18] Thus, in contradiction to the descriptions cited above which characterize the warriors' emotional intensity as in

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15 *Civilizing Process*, 162, 163, 164, 166, 169.

16 Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 129, 133.

17 Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians," 71-72.

18 Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians," 72; Benjo Maso, "the Different Theoretical Layers of *The Civilizing Process*: A Response to Goudsblom and Kilminster and Wouters," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 12 (1995), 142.

itself a socially determined requirement of survival, Maso's reading has it that the knights' expressions of affect were the "spontaneous" release of "wild, untamed drives," and that the point of Elias's portrait of medieval knights is to illustrate the "natural," unsocialized behavior of humans who have not yet learned to constrain the fury of their innate drives.[19]

Contentions such as Maso's seem to have some merit. Elias actually does speak of the warriors' aggressivity as a "*release* of affect"[20] and a "*discharge* of affects,"[21] phrasing that easily suggests that the knights' aggressivity and emotional volatility are analogous to the earth's volcanic 'release' of exploding molten lava or to a mechanical boiler's 'discharge' of expanding heated vapor: that is, the expression of the primal excitation of natural drives. The book also characterizes the medieval warrior as having a psyche that "gave way to drives and feelings incomparably more easily, quickly, spontaneously and openly than today"; and it depicts medieval emotionality as an expression of drives which in the civilized psyche are "bound," "confined and tamed," "transformed" "'refined'" (in another translation, "'sublimated'"), "'civilized,'" "repressed," "contained," "restrained."[22] What was so freely expressed in the knights' aggressivity, the text asserts, is banished today in a psychic underground, where it lurks in the "hidden desires" of unconscious conflict, isolated outbursts of dreams, and "the socially permitted expressions" of sublimated belligerence in sports contests.[23] In addition, the book's concluding Synopsis repeatedly states that the warriors' mode of drive expression was "direct," as if, in the period of early feudalism, this expression was unhindered by any social or psychic interference and issued straight from a pristine source: the knights experienced "*direct* pleasure, *direct* and open fear" and "*directly* satisf[ied] their drives and passions; their "drives [and their] passionate affects ... *directly* manifest[ed] themselves in the relationships between people" in which "affect *directly* engag[ed] affect."[24]

2. *Fremdzwänge*, the Pressures Which People Exert on One Another

We can address this issue by returning to the above passage's concluding sentence: "In these cases, it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control." Can we really read this sentence, as Maso and others would, as contraposing *control* (and with it, "standard") as a social effect in opposition to *emotion* as an expression of primal drive?

To answer this question, we need a more precise understanding of how these two terms, *control* and *emotion*, function in Elias's text. Let us begin with an examination of *control*.

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19 Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians," 72.

20 *Civilizing Process*, 162.

21 Ibid., 169.

22 Ibid., 180, 161, 170, 168, 171, 172. Elias changed "refined" to "sublimated" in his revision of his chapter on aggressiveness, published as "On Transformations of Aggressiveness," *Theory and Society* 5, 2 (1978), 230.

23 *Civilizing Process*, 172, 162, 170.

24 Ibid., 384, 375, 375, 399.

In order to grasp the full meaning of 'control,' we need first to establish the precise meaning of the word 'standard,' given that the phrase "standard of emotional control" literally makes the meaning of 'control' dependent on that of 'standard.' In the passage in which it appears, the immediate referent of 'standard' is "love or hate *to the utmost*," that is, the 'standard of control' is itself equated with what appears to be uncontrolled: an extreme ('to the utmost') expression of libidinal and aggressive drives that was demanded as the price of physical survival by the violent and volatile pressures of the era's social structures. The term 'standard' thus serves primarily as a descriptive measure ('the *standard* behavior') rather than an evaluative measure of status-graded manners ('the *standard* of esteemed behavior')—a descriptive measure of the level of drive expression required literally under the pain of death. This distinction between descriptive and status standards will prove to be of relevance in our discussion of absolutist court society, in which 'standard' refers to articulated hierarchical codes of a type of battle different from the medieval warrior's battle for physical survival—the courtier's 'civilized' battles for social survival.

However, with the 'standard' of control functioning as a descriptor of the uncontrolled emotional excess demanded by the interpersonal requirements of physical survival, 'control' itself is denied both an evaluative principle other than physical survival and a basis of agency other than that which 'standard' itself reflects: the unmediated pressure of social structure. That is, just as control's 'standard' is determined by a social structure of violent and volatile interpersonal relations, so necessarily also is 'control' itself—a psycho-social confluence in which the source of the knight's drive control can be said to be actually located outside his own psyche, in the immediate pressures of his social relations. Lacking a culturally articulated or psychologically effective basis of mediation between social pressure and drive expression, 'control' is, as the book's Synopsis repeatedly asserts, a "direct" translation of social pressure into psychic expression: "the life of the warriors ... is threatened continually and *directly* by acts of physical violence," and thus "the control of conduct which [this type of] society imposes on its members [comes from] ... the *direct* fear of one person for others"; given a life dominated by **"**the *direct* threat to one man from the affects of another," the knight's controlling fears came from "*direct* external physical threat."[25]

To conceptually signify this "direct" interaction of the warrior's psyche with the structure of his social relations, Elias invented for his German text a compound word, *Fremdzwang.* The first half of this compound, *Fremd*, literally means 'alien,' 'stranger,' and 'external,' and in Elias's text it is used to denote 'other people,' or, more precisely, 'socially interdependent other people.' The second half, *Zwang*, brings to the compound a meaning not only of 'constraint' and 'control' but also of 'compulsion,' 'pressure,' and 'coercion.' Putting the meaning of these two words together, *Fremdzwang* functions in the conceptual world of *The Civilizing Process* to describe the constraints, controls, and compulsions imposed upon the psyche by the pressures of external circumstances, in particular the pressures exerted by people interconnected to one another in social relations. In the book's English translation, the compound is rendered variously as "constraints which people exert on one another,"

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25 Ibid., 370, 441-442, 371, 373.

"'alien' constraints," "external constraints," "external pressure and compulsion," and "constraint through others." Other variants include "external compulsion," "interpersonal external compulsions" "direct compulsion from outside," and "controls through others."[26]

As we shall see, these variations in the rendition of *Fremdzwang* signify a fairly wide range of distinct interactions between sociogenetic and psychogenetic configurations, a fact too often ignored by those who would reduce Elias's psychology to the opposition of 'constraint' to 'impulse.' In particular, an insensitivity to the breadth of meaning of the second term of Elias's compound (ranging from 'control' to 'compulsion') can blind the reader to the nuances of Elias's distinctions between different historical variations of the social determination of psychic states. For instance, it can blind the reader to the distinction between those emotions "compelled" by the social structures of the Middle Ages and those emotions "constrained" by the social structures of court society—in both cases, psychic states produced under the demands of *Fremdzwang*. Moreover, a failure to grasp this historical variability undermines one's ability to appreciate Elias's avoidance of the all-too-common sociological practice of treating 'social structure' as a reified entity or supra-human agent endowed with an existence distinct from human interaction and the experiences of the psyche. 'Social structure' in Elias's writing is a pattern of pressures exerted upon people by their relationships with others upon whom they are functionally dependent either directly or indirectly; it is a historically specific "system of pressures exerted by living people on living people."[27] In other words, while the psychic states produced under the demands of 'social structure' constitute the psychogenetic side of *Fremdzwang*, 'social structure' itself is *Fremdzwang*'s sociogenetic side. And in this regard, the concept of *Fremdzwang* partakes of the twin characteristics Elias attributes to historical social psychology in general; it is "at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic."

While a fundamental premise of the entire Eliasian project is the universality of the constitutive role played by *Fremdzwang* in the formation of the human personality, the character of this constitution varies radically from one historical period to another. When associated with social-political developments of post-feudal society, *Fremdzwang* embodies a pattern of external pressures exerted by people upon one another that increasingly civilizes the psyche by compelling it to develop strong, stable, and all pervasive *Selbstzwang*. *Selbstzwang*, another of Elias's invented German compounds, is most frequently rendered in English as "self-constraint" and "self-control," and less frequently as "self-compulsion" and

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26 Ibid., 442, 381, 531, xv (and 109, 133, 382), 106, 365 (and 382), 381, 478, 583. The last translation is taken from the first English-language edition of *The Civilizing Process* (*Power and Civility*, 317), which in the second edition was altered to read "constraints through others" (*Civilizing Process*, 435). Other renditions include "external social constraints" (383), "constraint by others" (396), "constraints exerted by one person on another" (374), "constraints exerted on people by their relations to others" (375), "constraints between people" (375).

27 *Society of Individuals*, 48. Although the literal subject of the sentence from which this quotation is taken is "history," the implicit subject of the entire paragraph is 'social structural development'; in this sentence, "history" functions as a synonym for a notion of the pattern of development (i.e., its 'structure') as it is exhibited over the history of various societies.

"internal compulsion."[28] In the psycho-structural terms appropriated by Elias from Freud, *Selbstzwang* most often designates the rational self-regulations of the ego and the shame/embarrassment constraints of the superego.

But in the case at hand, when associated with early feudal society, *Fremdzwang* embodies the disintegrative patterns of external pressures exerted by people upon one another that led to a decivilizing of the psyche. As we have seen in the previous pages, feudal *Fremdzwang* resulted in a volatile and savage psyche, attuned to the unpredictability and brutality of social relations among warriors. Rather than compelling the development of strong ego and superego controls (in a process alluded to by the title of the opening chapter of the book's concluding theoretical Synopsis, "The Social Constraint *towards* Self-Constraint"), the medieval structure of *Fremdzwang* worked *against* the development of "those forms of [social] dependency which lead to the regulation of the affects in the form of self-control." For, in most regards, the medieval structure of *Fremdzwang* lacked "the kinds of external compulsions that are transformed into individual self-restraints." In this regard, medieval *Fremdzwang* shared the qualities of all social structures in which "the compulsions ... are predominantly of a direct, physical kind, the threat of physical pain or annihilation by the sword, poverty or hunger ... [and, as such, it embodied that] type of pressure ... [which] does not induce a stable transformation of constraints through others, or 'external' constraints, into 'self'-restraints."[29]

Thus, Elias's text repeatedly asserts that "the incurable unrest" of medieval life did not contain the type of social pressures that lead to the development of a strong and stable superego: "little in their conditioning forced them to develop what might be called a strict and stable superego, as a function of dependence and compulsions stemming from others [*Fremdzwänge*] transformed into self-restraints [*Selbstzwänge*]." But, the book's concluding Synopsis asserts, it was not the case that the medieval knights had no superegos at all: they did not constitute a "zero-point" before "which one could say that hitherto there was no ... self-constraints and no 'super-ego' and now, in this century, they are suddenly there." In no form of society, from the most primitive to the most developed, have humans ever been totally bereft of some element of *Selbstzwang* or self-control, although its "form and degree among simple herdsmen or in a warrior class [is] different" from that of people who live in more complex societies.[30] In fact, a society in which the member's only agency of impulse control is psychically *external*, entirely lodged in the actions of other people, is a psychological as well as sociological impossibility: as Elias suggests in *The Germans*, a book published in the late 1980s, even when the behavioral and psychic controls and compulsions of *Fremdzwang* appear to be all-embracing, the integrity of the social group and of the individual psyche simply requires some presence of self-agency and thus of some version of *Selbstzwang* as well.[31]

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28 *Civilizing Process*, 368 (and 369, 435 478), 96 (and 99, 157, 368, 367, 369, 373, 434, 435), 367 (and 531), 478.

29 Ibid., 157, 381, 382.

30 Ibid., 241, 403.

31 *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1996), 33.

Accordingly, the Synopsis of *The Civilizing Process* argues that the warriors of the early feudal era exhibited some degree of *Selbstzwang*, but that their psychic capacity to control, constrain, and compel their impulses was "diffuse, unstable, only a slight barrier to violent emotional outbursts," leading at best to "extreme forms of asceticism ... and renunciation, contrasting to a no less extreme indulgence of pleasure in others ... and frequently enough ... sudden switches from one attitude to the other in the life of an individual person."[32]

It is not an accident that the forms of the warriors' superego control or *Selbstzwang*—diffuse, unstable, resulting in oscillating extremes of self-abnegation and self indulgence—closely resemble the disintegrative structure of feudal social relations and thus the feudal structure of *Fremdzwang*. The Synopsis explains this resemblance by utilizing the two alternative formulations of the psycho-social interconnection discussed earlier: it is the result of a psycho-social affinity, a *correspondence* between social and psychic structures; or alternatively, it is the result of the *social determination* of psychic structures. Utilizing the formulation of a psycho-social correspondence, the Synopsis asserts that "to the structure of this [feudal] society with its extreme polarization, its continuous uncertainties, *corresponds* the [psychic] structure of the individuals who form it," including by implication that structure's balance of controls and impulses.[33] Utilizing the formulation of social determinism, it portrays the structure of medieval *Fremdzwang* as 'directly' producing the medieval *Selbstzwang*:

> This is not to say that every form of self-control [*Selbstzwang*] was entirely lacking in medieval warrior society.... The agency of individual self-control [*Selbstzwang*], the super-ego, the conscience or whatever we call it, is *instilled*, *imposed and maintained* in such warrior societies only in *direct relation* to acts of physical violence; its form *matches* this life in its greater contrasts and more abrupt transitions."[34]

Both types of explanation are actually contained in this last passage. For not only is the medieval superego said to be directly determined by the characteristics of those relations, being "instilled, imposed and maintained ... only in direct relation to acts of physical violence," its characteristic form "matches" (that is, corresponds to) the contradictory and unpredictable structures of medieval social relations ("its greater contrasts and more abrupt transitions"). Also, the wording of the above passage suggests something else about the type of superego produced by the unpredictable social structures of early feudalism. For to say that the superego is "imposed and maintained ... *only*" when under "direct" threat of violence is to say that at other times, when the threat is either in immediate abeyance or only implied ('indirect'), the superego is, in fact, lacking.

Selbstzwang has only an occasional role in Elias's account of early feudal warrior society. In discussions of the warrior's psyche, it seems to be an afterthought, the very notion appearing explicitly only in the concluding Synopsis. Conceptualized there as the medieval superego, *Selbstzwang* is seen at best as a secondary psychic

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32 *Civilizing Process*, 403.
33 Ibid., 371.
34 Ibid., 373.

response to the periods' violent, volatile social relations, which, as made explicit in his chapter on medieval aggressivity, had their major impact on the psyche in the form of unmediated, direct external compulsion. As we have seen in our previous analysis of the sentence from that chapter—"In these cases, it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control"—most of the book's descriptions of the warrior elite depicts their extreme expression of libidinal and aggressive drives ('love or hate to the utmost') as both compelled by the "control" (*Zwang*) of feudal social structure and a "direct" reflection of that structure (that is, a "direct" reflection of *Fremdzwang*).

But Elias's brief discussion in the Synopsis of the medieval superego suggests that in the writing of the book's conclusion he came to envision the external controls of *Fremdzwang* as supported from within the psyche as well as compelled from without. Yet given the depiction in the Synopsis of the medieval superego as being itself "imposed" and "maintained" *only* so long as the "direct" pressures of physical violence were at play, one is led to conclude that in Elias's conception the warrior's superego served for the most part as a relay-station of these external pressures themselves. Such a notion would resemble Freud's concept of an externalized superego, which (as we saw in this book's earlier chapters on Freud) his writings on civilization attributed to pre-bourgeois and other less developed populations: a very limited form of self-control activated only in circumstances of immediate external coercion. The internalization of external coercion as a permanent and relatively autonomous self-agency, which Elias (following Freud) associates only with the civilized superego, had yet to take place.

3. The Constitution of Human Drives

We have determined the signification of "control" in the sentence "In these cases, it was the structure of society that required and generated a specific standard of emotional control." "Control" in the "standard of emotional *control*," we have discovered, refers to the social pressures of the early feudal era, with these pressures conceptualized as operating for the most part directly as *Fremdzwang*, but also as supplemented by the erratic internal reinforcements of *Selbstzwang*. We need now to determine this term's connection the civilizing process to which it is linked (and, according to Maso and others, contraposed): the "emotion" of "*emotional* control."

Could it be that Elias viewed the drive excitations of libido and aggression, the emotions manifested in the warrior's "love or hate to the utmost," to be in themselves as much products of social pressures as are their "control"? In fact, does not Elias's text depict these excitations as being products of exactly this control (i.e., of the 'external pressure and compulsion' of *Fremdzwang*)? Or, on the contrary (and as Maso and others commentators maintain), does the text actually depict these emotions, in contradiction to their socially embodied control, as being the uncontrolled "discharge" or "release" of what are in themselves essentially natural innate drives? An examination of another passage from Elias's chapter on medieval aggressiveness may help us begin to answer these questions.

Elias describes the exploits of a knight and his wife whose savagery was exceptional even by the standards of the age: the knight delighted in plundering churches and mutilating the occupants, his wife in hacking off the breasts of women. Elias then states:

> [Such] outbursts of cruelty did not exclude one from social life. They were not outlawed. The pleasure in killing and torturing others was great, and it was a socially permitted pleasure. *To a certain extent* [italics added], the social structure even pushed its members in this direction, making it seem necessary and practically advantageous to behave in this way.[35]

As noted by commentators who have discussed this particular passage,[36] Elias's adverbial phrase "to a certain extent" places here a limit on the degree that the knight and his wife's exceptional sadism could be attributed to the demands of social structure. *To a certain extent*, the passage suggests, such excess was the product of social determination ("social structure even *pushed* its members in this direction"); but *to a certain extent* this excess was the product of something other than social demand—specifically, the psychic dynamics of sadism ("the *pleasure* in killing and torturing"). These sadistic excesses were only "socially *permitted*," a step beyond the "love or hate to the utmost" said to have been "socially *required*" of all knights in the previously examined passage; they were not, in themselves, the product of social determination.

And, as suggested several sentences later by a related assertion of divided psycho-social determination, while egregious in this particular case, the 'lust for attack,' the 'pleasure in attacking,' also infused less notorious behaviors of knightly life. For instance, the text states, given the military advantages of killing prisoners and destroying fields, "the stronger affectivity [the sadistic 'lust for attack'] of behaviour was *to a certain degree* socially necessary."[37] That is, *to a certain degree* it was the expediencies of war that produced the sadism that energized such strategically useful killing and destruction; but again *to a certain degree* something within this affectivity itself also pushed in this direction.

Indications such as these, in which *Fremdzwänge*, the compulsions of social relations, explain aggressive affect "to a certain extent," might seem to be evidence for the view that Elias's psychology splits the psyche into two parts—a social part consisting of *psycho-social constraints* and a non-social part consisting of *innate drives.* Major problems, however, arise if one attempts to read the above examples in this manner. First of all, in these examples, the so-called social part of the psyche is depicted not as a constraint opposed to a drive, but rather as a socially compelled intense expression of a drive. The knights' extreme affectivity is represented as being *to a certain extent* necessitated by the militarized conditions of social life; it is depicted as compelled ("pushed") by *Fremdzwang* and thus to this extent socially

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35 Ibid., 163 (italics added).

36 Maso, "The Different Theoretical Layers," 142; Robert van Krieken, "Violence, Self-Discipline and Modernity: Beyond the 'Civilizing Process,'" *The Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1989), 204; Kilminster and Wouters, "From Philosophy to Sociology," 112.

37 *Civilizing Process*, 164.

'produced,' not socially 'released.' In fact, to this extent the sadism associated with the militarily advantageous killing of prisoners has a status similar to the affectivity expressed by the knights in the earlier example who were compelled to "love or hate to the utmost." To this extent, the sadism was socially "required"—or, as the passage itself clearly declares, "socially *necessary.*" But what about the additional element of "stronger affectivity" said to exceed that needed to meet the demands of military exigency? To the extent that the warriors' aggressivity included an element of sadism in excess of that which was socially required, this additional element might be considered to be the release of innate drive, but for the fact that this surplus is itself depicted as having been prompted by feudal social structures of life-threatening violence. The surplus itself was not pristine innate drive untouched by social processes, but rather an overflow (an 'excess') of an already extremely heightened condition of socially produced cruelty.

Thus, it is difficult to conclude from a reading of these particular textual passages that the drive expressions depicted, even the expressions of sadism that exceeded "to a certain extent" the requirements of social demands, were simply the "spontaneous" release of "wild, untamed drives," as Maso would have it. Moreover, it is difficult to interpret any of the other passages about knightly excesses in the chapter on medieval aggressiveness in such a manner, especially since Elias never explicitly asserts that the knights' "stronger affectivity" represented impulses that were pre-social or innate. And, in fact, Elias unmistakably asserts the opposite of such an interpretation in the book's concluding Synopsis. Drives, he states there, are "*always already socially processed.*" "In other words," he adds, drives are "sociogenetically transformed in their function and structure."

> Nowhere, except perhaps in the case of madmen, do people in their encounter with each other find themselves face to face with psychological functions in their pristine state, in a state of nature that is not patterned by social learning, by a person's experience of other persons who satisfy or frustrate his or her needs in accordance with specific social settings.[38]

This and other statements in the Synopsis of *The Civilizing Process* are unequivocal in their dismissal of essentialist and naturalist notions of the pre-sociality of drives. To the extent that they explicitly advance a theory of drives, this theory is that drives, while containing natural (i.e., physiological) "raw materials" and "elementary energies," are from an individual's birth onward "sociogenetically transformed" by social relations into what we, as social beings, experience as "drives," that is, impulses that are "always already socially processed."[39]

When Elias's chapter on medieval aggressivity is read with these statements from the book's theoretical summation in mind, it becomes particularly untenable, I believe, to view the excesses of knightly hate and love portrayed there as being in themselves not "sociogenetically transformed." For these statements explicitly pertain to the constitution of the psyche in civilizing and decivilizing societies alike: thus they attribute to the knights' love and hate a sociogenetic transformation, just

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38 Ibid., 409 (italics added).
39 Ibid.

as they attribute such transformation to the more civilized drive expressions of the noble men and ladies of Louis XIV's Versailles and the matrons and gentlemen of the Victorian bourgeoisie described in later chapters of *The Civilizing Process*, however much the knights' stronger affects differ in other regards from the latter's more sublimated expressions. From the perspective of these theoretical statements (a perspective consistent, by the way, with most contemporary psychoanalytic theory), the fact that an individual's drive expression is not sublimated or refined or partially repressed does not mean that it is an expression untransformed socially by that individual's history of interpersonal relations.

But, one might respond, does not Elias's repeated characterization of these stronger affects as "released" and "discharged" suggest that these impulses issue from natural and primal innate drives? A little exercise in self-reflection should disabuse the questioner of this interpretation. For to state that an affect itself is 'released' or 'discharged' does not, in fact, indicate that the affect is socially unprocessed. The entry into the consciousness of the sensations of psycho-somatic excitations, whether these be crudely brutal or subtly refined, is always experienced as involving a pressure for 'release' and 'discharge,' and among the experiential references of the word 'impulse' is just this internal experience of the involuntary pressure of embodied excitation seeking release.

Moreover, when in his chapter on medieval aggressivity Elias attributes a divided psycho-social determination of the knights' militaristic cruelty—a "certain extent" compelled by social necessity and another "certain extent" engendered by the psychic dynamics of sadism—this second 'extent' should not be read as being in any less degree "always already socially processed" than the first. In the language of another passage from Elias's Synopsis, the knights' 'lust for attack,' even when not required by military expedience, cannot be attributed to "an 'id' without history," for, as this passage asserts, the id is always already historical; that is, one should never view the impulses of a drive as expressing "a form and structure of its own, independently of the figurational destiny of the individual, the changing fortunes of his relationships with others throughout his life."[40]

Thus, the book's Synopsis provides a useful corrective to interpretations of Elias's chapter on knightly aggressivity that find there a depiction of pre-socialized, pristine drive. Such an interpretation is precluded by theoretical statements in the Synopsis, along with a number of the historical depictions in the chapter itself (as shown by my examinations of them in this and the previous sections of this chapter). But if not "natural" and "innate," what exactly, from Elias's perspective, are human drives? How exactly are we to understand a notion of drives that maintains that they are "always already socially processed"? A normally overlooked passage of theoretical statements that introduces the chapter on medieval aggressiveness itself leads us toward an answer to these questions.

The chapter, with the title "On Changes in Aggressiveness," has the following formal structure. At its head is a short introduction, separated from and followed by a series of numbered subsections. These subsections, from which the examples of knightly excesses examined above have been taken, consist of empirically based

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40 Ibid.

descriptions and interpretations of medieval aggression. The chapter's introduction, on the other hand, is a theoretical abstract on the constitution of human drives. It explicitly includes in its purview the whole range of drives covered in Part II of *The Civilizing Process*, the "different drives" of "hunger and the need to spit, of the sexual drive and of aggressive impulses."[41] But it focuses on the aggressive drive, and thus is clearly meant to serve as the theoretical framework and the guide for the reading of the descriptive and interpretative discussions of medieval aggressiveness in the subsections that follow.

Significantly, this theoretical introduction includes key aspects of a theory of drives that (as we will see) Elias further amplified in both the omitted theoretical chapter written for *The Civilizing Process* but published only later in *The Society of Individuals*, and in later works as well. It presents aspects of a theory that is ignored by those (including Maso) who attempt to find in the descriptive and interpretative subsections that follow a psychology of innate drives. Drives, the introduction makes clear, are constituted by processes identified with three separate but related fields, each of which contributes its own regularities "to a certain extent" to this constitution: the processual fields of the soma, the psyche, and society.

3.1 The Somatic and Psychical Constitution of Drives

Drives are not separable, isolatable fixed entities, the introduction to the chapter on medieval aggression argues. "*Angriffslust* [lust for attack], which will be the subject of this chapter," is not a separate, unchanging "drive." Nor is it the product of an innate "death instinct" (an allusion to Freud's formulation). "Aggressiveness … is not a separable *species* of drive" at all—"species" here serving as a reference to the type of a priori categorical explanation that Elias had opposed since his college days at Breslau University. Nor does the psyche consist of "a whole bundle of different drives ... as if they were different chemical *substances*"[42]—the term "substance," as the following short digression shows, again denoting Elias's rejection of a priori conceptions of fixed drives.

The term "substance" frequently appears in Elias's writing in the 1930s. It refers to a dispute then raging in some European academic circles between, on the one hand, traditionalists who, like Elias's philosophy teacher Hönigswald, insisted on explaining phenomena in terms of determinate metaphysical substrata (i.e., "substances") and, on the other hand, contemporary relationalistic thinkers who sought such determination in the empirically evident interdependent patterns of the phenomena themselves.[43] In the process of becoming a sociologist, Elias had aligned himself with the latter group, and, along with his *Habilitation* sponsor, Mannheim, had consciously sought to develop a sociological approach that rejected

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41 Ibid., 161.

42 Ibid.

43 For extensive analysis and debate concerning Elias's rejection of substantialistic theory and his embrace of relationalistic approaches, see Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Kantians" and "The Different Theoretical Layers of *The Civilizing Process*"; and Kilminster and Wouters, "From Philosophy to Sociology."

the traditionalists' reliance on metaphysical concepts of single, isolated "substances" to explain phenomena which, they believed, were better understood as processes, relationships, and functional interdependencies. At the time of writing *The Civilizing Process*, Elias further expanded this critique of "models based upon substances" to psychology, drawing on Gestalt psychology for assistance. For instance, in the omitted theoretical chapter to *The Civilizing Process* he dismissed essentialist psychologies as leading one to "imagine the human being ... as having a number of psychical compartments, ... giv[ing] the impression of *substances* rather than functions."[44]

Thus, when in the chapter's introduction Elias insists that drives are not separate "substances," he is suggesting that the concept of drives as isolatable and unchanging is based upon an erroneous metaphysics. In doing this, however, he refuses to include in the sweep of his rejection the very concept of drives or the essential role that the body plays in the constitution of drives. That is, he refuses to embrace a position that some of his recent critics wish he had embraced: a sociologistic or 'social constructionist' alternative to drive theory.[45] Revising, rather than dismissing, the concept of drives, he utilizes the chapter's theoretical introduction to offer aspects of a drive theory that begins with the somatic and excitatory capacities of the human biological organism, but then expands to include realms beyond the physiological.

In order to fully grasp how he includes both the body and the psyche in his conception of drive constitution, one must understand Elias's use of the term "function." When particular behaviors and emotions lead one to speak of a "drive," such as "aggressiveness," the introduction asserts, what the term 'drive' refers to is, on one level, "a particular bodily function within the totality of an organism," and, on a second level, a "bodily function" so integral to the entire psyche that "changes in this function indicate changes in the personality structure as a whole."[46] "Function" works in this explanation, as it does in all of Elias's writings, to denote not a unified, equilibrium-maintaining system (as in Parsonian structural functionalism), but rather a reciprocal interaction between elements in a relationships that directly affects the individual constitution of the elements (this holds whether that relationship is, as in this case, between constituent elements of a drive, or, as in Elias's theories of social structure, between a number of people within a social configuration). "The concept of function must be understood as a concept of relationships," Elias writes in *What is Sociology?*; the term "functions," he adds, refers to "the reciprocity, the bi-polarity or multi-polarity" between elements in relationships.[47]

The chapter's introduction's repeated employment of "function" brings this notion of reciprocal relationality to the concept of the constitution of drives. A drive is a particular pattern of organic energetic excitation (in this case, "aggressiveness") that takes its form from the reciprocating interactions of various organic components of the body ("a bodily function within the totality of an organism"). At the same time, a drive also takes its form from the reciprocal interaction between this organic

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44 *Society of Individuals*, 33-34 (italics added); see also 4, 16-17, 19 and 59.

45 Van Krieken, *Norbert Elias*, 129; Maso, "Elias and the Neo-Freudians," 70-71; Maso, "The Different Theoretical Layers of *The Civilizing Process*," 141-144.

46 *Civilizing Process*, 161.

47 *What is Sociology?* 77-78. See also Arnason, "Civilization, Culture and Power," 51.

excitation (this "bodily function") and the separate psychodynamic functions of the psyche (a reciprocal interaction between organic functions within the bodily and psychical functions that exist within "the personality as a whole").

Drives thus are constituted in a "functional" reciprocity of body and mind, a somatic excitation that takes on an intra-psychic manifestation within the personality. Body and psyche each make its own contribution to this constitution. But what specifically does the psyche itself bring to this process of drive constitution? Some might read the passage in the omitted section of *The Civilizing Process* that characterizes the discipline of psychology as "the bridge between the natural sciences and the social sciences" as suggesting that, in the constitution of drives, the role of the psyche (psychology's subject) is merely to be a 'bridge' between the body and the social world.[48] But this would be an incorrect reading of Elias's psychology. For, embedded in his interpretative descriptions of typical historical behaviors and in his more abstract theoretical musings, is the notion that the psyche is not merely a "bridge" that aligns and thereby connects the "natural processes" of drives with the structural demands of historically specific social formations (*Fremdzwänge*), but rather that the psyche, in its mediation between body and society, also partially transforms both natural process and social demand by filtering each through its own particular set of processes and demands. In Elias's view, when bodily functions interact with social functions, this interaction is mediated by psychic functions, principally psychodynamic mechanisms and psychic structures.

Elias's introduction to his chapter on knightly aggressiveness offers a partial look at his conception of psychic mediation. Suggesting a conception of psychodynamics that combines basic ideas from both Gestalt and Freudian psychologies, the first paragraph of the introduction begins with a portrait, rendered in highly metaphoric language, of the contribution of the psyche to drive constitution. The psyche, it states, should be seen as functioning like a circuit of elementary energy in which each drive manifestation is influenced *intra-psychically* by its interaction with other drive manifestations:

> The affect-structure of human beings is a whole [a "gestalt"]. We may call particular drives by different names according to their different directions and functions ... but in life these different drives are no more separable than the heart from the stomach or the blood in the brain from the blood in the genitalia. [These drives] complement and in part supersede each other, transform themselves within certain limits and compensate each other; a disturbance here manifests itself there. In short, they form a kind of circuit in the human being.... This is not to deny that observations of these different drives in individuals may be extremely fruitful and instructive. But the categories by which these observations are classified must remain powerless in the face of their living objects if they fail to express the unity and totality of the life of drives, and the connection of each particular drive to this totality.... At most, one may speak of the "aggressive impulses" only if one remains aware ... that changes in this function indicate changes in the personality structure as a whole.[49]

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48 *Society of Individuals*, 40.
49 *Civilizing Process*, 161.

The excitatory energy of drives, it is suggested here, flows through the psyche like the blood animating the body's separate organs or electricity empowering a circuit's separate devices; in each case, the vitality imparted (the excitation of a drive, the animation of an organ, the charge of an electrode) takes its form from the interaction of all the interrelated units (the drive formations within a personality, the organs within a body, the electrodes within a circuit). That is, when the organic intensity of excitation of one drive enters the field of the psyche, it is transformed by the psychodynamic regularities of the psyche, in distinction to the organic regularities of the body. Emerging into the psyche, a drive manifestation may serve to "complement" another manifestation ("hate to the utmost" serving to promote "love … to the utmost," to draw from the earlier cited example). Or in an exchange of excitation one drive may quickly "supersede" another ("a moment ago they were joking, ... and suddenly from the midst of laughter they find themselves in the fiercest feud," as another earlier cited example put it). Or blocked by an incompatible impulse, a thwarted drive's excitation may be displaced onto another ("a disturbance here manifests itself there"), its aims altered ("transform[ed] ... within certain limits"), its weakness overcome by its alignment with another ("compensate each other").

3.2 The Social Constitution of Drives; Elias's Object-Relational Psychology

Thus, drives are constituted in a reciprocity of two separate but related dynamic processes: a somatic excitation operating within a field of interrelated somatic excitations, and a psychodynamic formation constituted by the complementary and contradictory pressures of these excitations within the personality. But, as the theoretical introduction of the chapter on knightly aggressiveness suggests, drives, like the personality they infuse, necessarily also interact reciprocally with social and historical processes. The various drives, the introduction states, has a "socially imprinted form [which] is of decisive importance for the functioning of a society [and] of the individuals within it."[50] That is, drives are socially processed ("stamped") by the dynamics of a society, and, moreover, they are socially processed in such a way that they contribute decisively to the "functioning" both of society as a whole and of its various members as psychically formed individual personalities.

In fact, an implicit tenet of most of the chapters of Part II of *The Civilizing Process* is that when the "bodily functions" of drives (whether these be aggressive, libidinal, oral, or anal drives) invest the field of the social with excitations of both a somatic and psychical nature, these drives affectively attach persons to one another, becoming thereby ensnared in, and taking their socially "imprinted form" from, the historically specific positive and negative patterns that structure these social attachments. But while the theoretically explicit statements of the chapter's introduction make clear that it is psychic drives themselves that are socially "imprinted" by these encounters, they do not go beyond the generality of the Synopsis's assertion that drives are "always already socially processed." For a more thorough explanation of what Elias has in mind here, one needs to look at the theoretical chapter originally written for *The Civilizing Process* but only published later in *The Society of Individuals*.

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50 Ibid.

The various aspects of the psyche, this chapter asserts, are "directed constantly towards other people." In particular, it states, the psyche "continuously directs *valencies* … towards other people." "Valencies" serves here, as elsewhere in Elias's writings, to denote the object-seeking quality inherent in the psycho-somatic energies of drives, their inner impulse to forge connections binding persons to one another.[51] (The term 'valence' is taken from biology and chemistry, where it refers to the combining property that causes related entities to cohere together, such as atoms, radicals, or antigens.) And in a further assertion of the object-seeking quality of drives, the chapter, employing the Eliasian term for reciprocal relationality, 'function,' declares: "the *functional* character of what we call the 'psyche'" lies in the "specific *functions* of the human organism," and these "*functions* ... [are] *directed* constantly *towards other people*."

Elias's text continues as follows:

> Even in psychoanalytic literature one sometimes finds statements to the effect that the 'id' or the drives are unchanging if one disregards changes in their direction. But how is it possible to disregard this directedness in something as *fundamentally directed* at something else as human drives? *What we call 'drives'* ... is also a particular form of self-regulation in *relation to other peoples* and things.... [And] what we refer to as ... the 'psyche' is in reality nothing but the *structure formed by ... relation-functions.* The human being is ... a vector, which *continuously directs valencies* of the most diverse kinds *towards other people* and things, *valencies* which are temporarily saturated and ever anew unsaturated. He or she is made up by nature as to be ... *obliged … to enter into relationships* with other people and things.[52]

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51 *Society of Individuals*, 34-35 (italics added). Elsewhere, Elias explicitly identifies "valencies" with "libido," and explains his preference of his own term:

> It may have been noticed that my conception of valencies bears some kinship to the Freudian term 'libido'. In fact I could have spoken of libidinal valencies instead of using the more general term affective valencies. But in his theoretical studies Freud was not very interested in the fact that libido, as he described it, was in many of its aspects directed from one human being to another (Norbert Elias, "Sociology and Psychiatry," in *Psychiatry in a Changing Society*, ed. S. H. Foulkes [London, 1969], 137).

In his listserve entry cited above, Reinhart Blomert asserts that Elias substituted "valence" for the Freudian concept of 'cathexis' (rather than, as he does in the above quotation, for 'libido'). Blomert's point is well taken, however, since Elias's own explanation of his preference for 'valence'—that the Freudian conception of libido tends to downplay its relational quality—makes clear that what he has mind is the cathectic nature of libido. Blomert, "Elias I@NIC>SURFET>NF," Nov. 22, 2001.

52 *Society of Individuals*, 34-35 (italics added). I have corrected the English translation of this passage, re-translating *Trieb* as "drive" instead of "instinct"; this correction reflects the practice followed by the editors of the revised edition of *The Civilizing Process*. Elias's use of *Trieb*, instead of *Instinkt*, served to advance the idea of the sociality of psychic energies—for, in comparison to *Instinkt*, *Trieb* carries with it notions of a lack of internal completeness or innate fixity, of a malleable internal pressure that seeks satisfaction through interaction with objects. Elias himself points to these very qualities by explicitly drawing a distinction between *Trieb* and *Instinkt* in several places in the omitted section of *The Civilizing Process*:

Although cloaked in the unfamiliar terms of Elias's conceptual lexicon, the meaning of this passage is unmistakable. What Elias is asserting here, restated in contemporary psychoanalytic terms, is that both the drives and the psyche as a whole are *object-related*. References to this object-relational characteristic of drives are scattered throughout the passage. Drives are "valencies" that are not only "directed constantly towards other people"; they also take on an internally ordered "form" by which the psyche organizes its "relation to other people." And the "psyche" itself is not only a "structure formed by … [the] relation-functions" of drives and thus a medium (or "vector") that gives "direction" to these "relation-functions"; the psyche itself is also "made up by *nature* [i.e., the somatic foundations of drives] as to be … obliged to enter into [social] relationships."[53]

The rather off-putting conceptual vocabulary by which this passage articulates the object-relational aspects of the psyche and its drives may be one reason why it was omitted from the final draft of *The Civilizing Process*. In later years Elias himself devised ways to present these same ideas in a somewhat more straightforward manner, although even then certain of his own terms were retained. For instance, in an essay written in the 1960s for a book edited by his friend Foulkes, Elias utilizes a common term of object-relational psychology, "attachment," to define the object-relationality of drives, although he also retains his own idiosyncratic term, "valence." Society is shaped by "man's almost permanent readiness for *attachment* to others," Elias asserts in this essay; and then adds, "the ever present character of free *valencies*" infuses humans with "a variety of strivings directed towards dovetailing with those of other human beings and thus binding them to each other affectively through love or hatred, positive or negative feelings, or both."[54] Whether Elias makes use of terms of his own invention, as he tended to do at the time of the writing of *The Civilizing Process*, or of current psychoanalytic nomenclature, as he more frequently did in this and other later works, all his writings touching on psychology, beginning with *The Civilizing Process*, can be found to espouse some aspect of an object-relational social psychology.[55]

The close resemblance of his psychology of drives to ideas central to British object-relational psychoanalytical theory raises an interesting question about Elias's

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"What shapes and binds the individual within this human cosmos ... is not the reflexes of his animal nature [*Instinkt*] but the ineradicable connection between his desires [i.e., *Trieb*] ... and those of other people." *Society of Individuals*, 43; see also 41, 60.

53 Elias's characterizations of drives and psyche can easily be restated in more traditional language of object-relational psychoanalysis, which for some readers should make them more accessible. Drives are somatic-psychical excitations that are inherently object-relational and object-seeking ("relation-functions"). The psyche continuously directs excitations both of 'libido' (a psychoanalytic term Elias explicitly identifies with "positive valencies") and of aggressiveness ("negative valencies") toward other people, with the aim of binding them into various types of cathected relationships ("valencies ... temporarily saturated and ever anew unsaturated"). Elias's formulation especially reminds one of Ronald Fairbairn's various statements that libido is fundamentally object-seeking rather than pleasure-seeking.

54 Norbert Elias, "Sociology and Psychiatry," 132.

55 An example of Elias's later writing that that advances an object-relational psychology is "On Human Beings and their Emotions," *Theory, Culture & Society* 4 (1987).

intellectual biography.[56] It is unlikely to be pure coincidence that Elias first developed this psychology during the very same years in which significant figures within the closely-knit circle of psychoanalysts in London first began advancing remarkably similar ideas. In working out early ideas of his "group analytic" psychology, Foulkes's formulations were quite similar to Elias's, as are some of the ideas then appearing in the preliminary efforts of the theorists of the British school of "object relations" psychoanalytic psychology.[57] (Foulkes first essay written in English was published in 1937; the founding British "object-relationalists" published their first notable essays during this same period: Michael Balint in 1935, W. R. D. Fairbairn in 1939, and Donald Winnicott in 1936.) Elias must have been aware of this turn to an interpersonal and socially attuned orientation among English-based psychoanalysts in the mid 1930s, given his deep interest in psychoanalytic thought and, in particular, his close personal relationship with Foulkes. I suggest that the psychological inventiveness evidenced in the writing he did for *The Civilizing Process* drew upon, if only indirectly, this new psychoanalytical thought emerging in London at the time, especially its exploration of the social connectedness of the psyche.

Yet we must note an important distinction between the ideas of these London-based psychoanalytical theorists and Elias's own psychological ideas. From the first, Elias's psychology existed as an integral part of a broadly-based sociological theory. Thus, the object-relationality of drives is for Elias not only a psychological concept (a concept of the inherent directedness of drives toward social relationships) but also, more importantly, a sociological one (a concept of the social processing of drives by the relatively autonomous historical dynamics that structure those social relationships). In Elias's conception, moreover, while both psychic and social processes play their part in the shaping of human drives, the social processes have a degree of dominance over the psychic processes. Drives develop their specific social forms as a result of the "saturation" and "unsaturation" of their "valencies" as they energize social relationships, but the very range of these saturated and unsaturated social relationships, and thus the range of drive formations infusing them, are determined by structural configurations specific to the particular historical era.

The basic asymmetry at work here can be easily seen when the relationship of psychic and social processes is viewed in the terms of the selective processes of "survival" that Elias's historical descriptions often implicitly rely upon. As we saw

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56 Anthony Elliott's introductory comments on object-relations theory, in his *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1994), uncannily reveal some of the ways this theory mirrors ideas found in Elias's work, although expressed in radically different language. Elliot defines object-relations theory as "rooting self-organization and development in socially situated engagement with other people.... The upshot of this is that the internal structuring of the psyche is seen as an outcome of interpersonal activity, reciprocity, and emotional exchange.... Relational needs are primary, ... [and] the psychic economy is object-seeking.... It is claimed that we should see the quality of interpersonal relations as structuring and transforming the libidinal drives themselves." (22-23)

57 In the 1930s, Elias may have influenced Foulkes as much as he was influenced by him. See S. H. Foulkes, *Introduction to Group Analytic Psychotherapy* (London, 1948), 10, 13-14. For an overview of the overlap of Elias's and Foulkes's ideas, see Farhad Dalal, *Taking the Group Seriously: Towards a Post-Foulkesian Group Analytic Theory* (London, 1998).

in the case of the medieval knights whose social structural position demanded that they "love or hate to the utmost," an individual's specific structural position within any society sets the parameters of his or her physical and social survival; and thus it sets as well the requirements of the drive formations needed to support the attitudes and behaviors necessary for survival in that position. In the essay for Foulkes's book, Elias makes the basic asymmetry between the psyche and social structure in drive constitution clear in a theoretical fashion. He examines the interplay of two distinct configurations: "the personal configuration of valencies" originating in the individual, and the "overall structure" of the "social configurations" of a society. And he argues that, while psychoanalytic thought focuses only on "the *Homo psychiatricus*" (that is, the first configuration), one should realize that "the personal configuration of valencies that the individual members of a society hold out towards each other" exists within "the configuration that that society, by virtue of its overall structure, requires individuals to form with each other."[58] And it is this second configuration, the "social configuration," that establishes the range of possible interactions of personal drive attachments and, thus, the "personal configuration of valencies."

3.3 A Hierarchy of Relative Determination

In Elias's conception, therefore, while the three processual fields (soma, psyche, social) join forces in the constitution of human drives, their separate contributions in this constitution are dissimilar in a number of ways. Insight into Elias's conception of these dissimilarities can be gained by looking at a passage in his book *What is Sociology?* "Even today," the passage states, "attempts are still made to reduce the structure of social processes to biology or psychology," but in reality each of these processes is "relatively autonomous" from the other and thus not reducible one to the other. In "the study of human societies," we need to recognize that the separate contributions to social life of the biological, the psychological, and the sociological fields represent "differing levels of integration," each with its own "regularities" and "limitations." In studying these separate contributions, our concern must be with different "types of relationships, structures and regularities, [which] are encountered on every level [and] which cannot be explained or understood in terms of those on the preceding level of integration."[59]

Moreover, given that the formations of social life encompass different fields of integrative processes, social scientists can gain "the greatest help in understanding the relationship between the fields" from an "intellectual model" first advanced in the biological sciences. Utilizing this model, biologists have discovered

> specific types of organization, within which a hierarchy of interdependent levels of coordination and integration functions in such a way that relationships at the more complex levels of coordination and integration are relatively autonomous with respect to the less comprehensive levels.[60]

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58 "Sociology and Psychiatry," 123, 124, 132.

59 *What is Sociology?* 45, 46; see also 47, 133. See also Elias, *Involvement and Detachment* (Oxford, 1987), 133, and Symbol *Theory*, 33.

60 *What is Sociology?* 46.

This model is applicable to social life as well, for, as "the functioning of the human [biological] organism cannot be explained or understood only in terms of the physical-chemical characteristics of its component atoms," so neither can "the functioning of a state, a factory or a family be understood just in terms of the biological and psychological characteristics of individual members."[61] Elias's point here is that these social formations need also to be seen as "specific types of organization" constituted by "a hierarchy of interdependent levels of coordination and integration," these levels in this case being biological, psychological, and social. Social formations such as the state, factory, or family need to be seen as being constituted within a hierarchy of these three levels, formations organized "in such a way that relationships at the more complex levels of coordination and integration are relatively autonomous with respect to the less comprehensive levels"—that is, formations organized in such a way that the highest level of coordinated and integrated processes, the social, has a relatively greater autonomy vis-à-vis the next lower level, the psyche, than the reverse, and, in turn, the psyche, as a distinct level of coordination and integration processes, has a similar greater autonomy vis-à-vis the even lower level, the bodily organism, than the reverse.

Just as Elias here views the state, the factory, and the family in terms of this hierarchical model of integrative fields, so does he view the constitution of human drives. For, as we have seen, human drives are also a "specific type of organization," constituted by the interactions of three relatively interdependent fields, the somatic, the psychic and the social, a type of organization in which a hierarchy of relative determination is clearly apparent. Explicitly in his later writings on psychological processes, and implicitly in many of his descriptive depictions in *The Civilizing Process*, we find a view of these interaction of fields in which the social encompasses a coordinative and integrative breadth greater than that of either the psyche or the excitational functions of the body and thus a view of the social as "relatively autonomous with respect to [these] less comprehensive levels" in the determination of the specific configurations of drives.

Elements of the hierarchical model are evident in the specific theoretical articulations of a theory of drives in *The Civilizing Process*. For example, an explicit reference to the model's division of somatic, psychic, and social fields appears in a theoretical aside in the Synopsis's chapter on "Courtization." With the radical reduction of unpredictable physical violence in daily life that followed the rise of absolute court society, Elias states, the elites of western Europe began to embrace an "orientation to experience" that enabled them to observe the "immanent regularities" and "relatively autonomous nexus of events" of three implicitly related fields of reality: "nature"; "human beings" (as manifested in the courtier's new ability to observe "what we would today call a 'psychological' human self-image"); and "history and society"—that is, the worlds of the natural sciences (including those of the body), of psychology, and of the sciences of society.[62]

One finds in *The Civilizing Process*, furthermore, the theoretical beginnings of the notion that the interrelationships between these three fields of biology, psychology,

61 Ibid., 47.
62 *Civilizing Process*, 400.

and society exist within a hierarchy of relative determination. In a passage in the pages preceding the chapter on knightly aggressiveness, Elias explicitly asserts that drives embody "at once *natural* and *historical* processes." Thus, the passage adds, drives are "manifestations of human nature *under* specific social conditions," an interaction that has two aspects. On the one hand, drives possess "specific regularities that may be called 'natural,'" regularities that restrict "within these limits" the possible range of historical change in social formation.[63] On the other hand, the "natural processes" of drives are so closely tied to "the historical process" that historical change is registered not only in the psychical composition of drives but also (within the limits of nature) in their organic composition as well. This notion that the organic composition of drives registers historical changes in social formation is even more explicitly advanced in the book's concluding Synopsis, where Elias writes that changes in people's personality structures are "by no means confined to what we generally distinguish as the 'psychological' from the 'physiological.' The 'physis,' too, [is] indissolubly linked to what we call the 'psyche.'" As the historical organization of "the relationships between people" changes, so does the psyche, and with it, the human physiology.[64]

Thus, *The Civilizing Process* speaks not only of the "indissoluble link" between the physis and the psyche and the "ineradicable connection" between drives and social relations; it also suggests in its theoretical discussions, and repeatedly represents in its interpretative descriptions of specific historical materials (as detailed in my earlier discussions of the ways *Fremdzwang* socially determined both the "standards" and "emotions" of medieval aggressivity), that social structure exerts a major determinate influence over the psyche in general and that, in turn, the psyche exerts a major determinate influence over the bodily functions of the organism. In fact, many of Elias's chapters in Part II of *The Civilizing Process* detail how the changes that the civilizing of the West brought to the structures of society at the same time compelled the psyche to place a broad range of its functions under the management of strong internal agencies of *Selbstzwang*, or self-control, and how in turn these psychic agencies gradually not only reshaped but also (at least for the new civilized elite) virtually eliminated a whole series of bodily imperatives, including the body's previously uncontrollable needs to frequently spit and fart.[65]

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63 Ibid., 135.

64 Ibid., 402.

65 For Elias's marvelous studies of the history of the repression of farting and spitting, see *Civilizing Process*, 109-121, 129-135.

The Civilizing of the Psyche, Social Competition and Social Fears

The Civilizing Process is concerned, conceptually, with only six emotions: fear, anxiety, delicacy (*délicatesse*), embarrassment, repugnance, shame. Only these six emotions play significant roles in the book's theoretical and descriptive considerations of the emotions associated with human behavior and psychic life.

As used in Elias's text, the terms 'delicacy,' 'embarrassment,' and 'repugnance' each refer to specific shades of affective distress that a person feels in response to the behavior of other people. 'Shame' refers to an affective distress that a person feels in response to his or her own behavior. 'Fear' and 'anxiety' function interchangeably, with 'fear' often serving as the master term; together both refer to a state of psychic distress that a person feels in response to either his or her own behavior or the behavior of others.

As higher-level synthetic terms, 'fear' and 'anxiety' also indicate a common quality shared by the other four emotions: a psychodynamic reaction of alarm. Thus, in Elias's accounts of the psychological components of civilizational changes (advances or reversals), the terms 'fear' and 'anxiety' serve as self-evident motivational explanations of those changes; that is, in these accounts, 'fear' and 'anxiety' indicate the presence of an alarm reaction that irresistibly presses for psychical and social response and change. Furthermore, several related ideas implicitly underlie many of these same accounts: that human beings, when threatened, are innately predisposed to respond with feeling states of fear and anxiety (experienced either directly or in socially altered forms, such as delicacy, embarrassment, repugnance, or shame); that these feeling states compel an adjustment of behavior or attitude in ways that overcome (or at least address) the threats that serve as the source of distress; and that when these threats form a pattern over a period of time, the consequent accumulation of human adjustments will result in a patterned transformation of overall behavior and psychological make-up.

In addition, in Elias's text the conception of the emotions of fear implicitly incorporates (in a manner similar to his conception of human drives) the three processual fields of soma, psyche, and society. His descriptions of these emotions contain references to bodily excitations, psychodynamic processes, and social triggers, and thus suggest a view that in a later work Elias made explicit: "broadly speaking emotions have three components, a somatic, a behavioral [social] and a feeling component [psychological]."[1] Moreover, Elias's accounts in *The Civilizing*

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1   "On Human Beings and Their Emotions," 353. As an instance of the way the basic components of this explicit conception of emotions are already present in *The Civilizing*

Process offer hints of a view of the particular emotions of fear and anxiety also found in his later works: that fear and anxiety are socially instigated, psychically registered expressions of a physiological fight-flight reaction, the latter an alarm reflex that is biologically innate in humans as well as in many other species.[2]

In the following sections I will examine how the emotions of fear, their social triggers, and their broader psychic structural effects function in *The Civilizing Process*.

1. Social Fears

Fear plays a crucial role in civilizational change. In no other place in *The Civilizing Process* does Elias advance this idea in such a straightforward way, and in such general theoretical manner, as he does in the book's Preface and Conclusion. Hence I will begin by looking at these two sections of the book, reserving for later an examination of the way their statements about fear reflect what we find in the book's descriptive expositions of Parts I, II, and III, and in various earlier chapters of Part IV (Synopsis).

Preface. A preview of the main concerns of *The Civilizing Process*, the book's Preface is quite specific about the fundamental psychological dynamic that underlies the historical processes examined by the book's individual parts.

Part II's examination of the history of social manners "shows ... the decisive role played ... by a very specific change in the feelings of shame and delicacy," two emotions which, the Preface makes clear, need to be thought of as socially generated forms of fear. Part II, moreover, shows that when the standard of behavior changes, so does "the threshold of socially instilled displeasure and fear," and thus it raises "one of the central problems of the civilizing process": *the question of sociogenic fears*."[3]

Process, notice how in the following passage the emotion of fear is characterized as being constituted physiologically, psychologically, and sociologically (as well as historically): "The possibility of feeling fear, just like that of feeling joy, is an unalterable part of human nature. But the strength, kind and structure of the fears and anxieties that smoulder or flare in the [consciousness or psyche of the] individual never depend solely on his or her own 'nature'.... They are always determined, finally, by the history and the actual structure of his or her relations to other people, by the structure of society; and they change with it." *Civilizing Process*, 442.

2   Concerning the fight-flight reaction, Elias writes: "The body reacts to dangerous experience with an automatic adaptation which prepares it for intensive movements of skeletal muscles, especially for fight or flight." *Germans*, 460-461. In "On Human Beings and Their Emotions," Elias describes the "the fight- and flight-reaction" in the following terms: "the experience of danger elicits a more or less automatic reaction pattern which puts the whole organism into a different gear. It has an obvious survival value" (353). At times, in *The Civilizing Process*, Elias seems quite close to invoking in explicit terms the concept of the physiological alarm reaction, as when he refers to "inbuilt fears" and says that the possibility of experiencing these fears is "an unalterable part of human nature" (442).

3   Ibid., x-xi (italics added).

Part III's examination of state formation makes evident the centrality of fear to the "mechanics" of political change by demonstrating that when "the exercise of force [which in feudalism] was the privilege of a host of rival warriors" became monopolized by the absolutist state, a decisive change also occurred to "the whole apparatus which shapes individuals," and "*above all [to] the kinds of fear* that play a part in their lives."[4]

The book's theoretical Synopsis (Part IV) openly states "much of what could only be hinted at earlier": that is, this "theoretical summing-up" offers "a short sketch of the structure of the fears experienced as shame and delicacy" and "an explanation of precisely *why fears of this kind play an especially important role in the advance of the civilizing process*."[5]

Synopsis's Conclusion. In its effort to "penetrate the wealth of facts" presented in the previous chapters and thus to establish "a firm framework of processes into which the scattered facts can be fitted," the book's Conclusion finds that fear is at the motivational center of the civilizing process:

> The degree of anxiety ... is different in every society, in every class and historical phase. To understand the control of conduct which a society imposes on its members, ... we must trace to their source the fears which induce the members of this society ... to control conduct in this way. We therefore only gain a better understanding of the changes of conduct and sentiment in a civilizing direction if we are aware of the changes in the structure of inbuilt fears to which they are connected. The direction of this change was sketched earlier: the direct fear of one person for others diminishes; indirect or internalized fears increase proportionately....

> Here as everywhere, the structure of fears and anxieties is nothing other than the psychological counterpart of the constraints which people exert on one another through the intertwining of their activities.... The child and adolescent would never learn to control their behaviour without the fears instilled by other people....

> No such control is possible unless people exert constraints on one another and all constraint is converted in the person on whom it is imposed into fear of one kind or another. We should not deceive ourselves: the constant production and reproduction of human fears by people is inevitable and indispensable wherever people live together, wherever the desires and actions of a number of people interact together, whether at work, in leisure or in love-making.[6]

In these few sentences, Elias brings together ideas developed earlier in his book and shows how each is linked to notions of the centrality of fear. We find here a suggestion of a concept discussed in my previous chapter, the concept of the double-sided nature (psychic and social) of *Fremdzwang*. As we remember from the earlier discussion of this concept, *Fremdzwang* is the personal experience of social structure as "a system of pressures exerted by living people on living people," or, in the words of the above passage, the experience of social structure as "the constraints which

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4   Ibid., xiii (italics added).
5   Ibid (italics added).
6   Ibid., 441-443.

people exert on one another through the intertwining of their activities." The above passage links this concept of *Fremdzwang* to a psychology of fear and in doing so makes clear that the social constraints of *Fremdzwang* work only because they instill fear. *Fremdzwang* works because "wherever people live together, wherever the desires and actions of a number of people interact together, whether at work, in leisure or in love-making," their interactions give rise to "the constant production and reproduction of human fears."

This explicit alignment of a conception of social structure with a psychology of fear/anxiety leads to what might seem to many a series of astonishing statements concerning the centrality of fear both to human sociality and to the constitution of the human psyche:

"All constraint is converted into fear."

If constraint is not so converted, "no such control [of human impulses] is possible."

Children "would never learn to control their behavior without the fears instilled by other people."

The psycho-social implications of Elias's views on the centrality of fear are quite broad: the psyche becomes socialized, takes on its specific class and historical social characteristics, by registering a specific class and historical "structure of fears and anxieties," this structure being "different in every society, in every class and historical phase."

But can Elias really mean what he asserts here: that fears generated by social interactions (what Elias calls "social fears") are the central motive force compelling humans to regulate their emotional and drive impulses in ways necessary for social existence?

To answer this question, it is helpful to follow the lead Elias offers in the passage quoted above: "we must trace to their source the fears which induce the members of this society ... to control conduct." In this chapter, I will search for the source of Elias's views of the centrality of fear in human affairs by examining the historical investigations presented in the main portions of his text itself. This search will lead to a perception of *The Civilizing Process* that most readers of the book tend to miss: although Elias's text indicates in passing that love, hate, and other emotions contribute to the constraints that people impose upon one another (and although his later works focus on the ways these emotions shape social relations[7]), in *The Civilizing Process* it is social fear alone that is depicted as the emotional agent of psycho-social constraint and consequently of psychic formation itself. Although the book's Conclusion states that "fears form *one* of the channels—and *one* of the most important—through which the structure of society is transmitted to individual psychological functions" (that is, recognizes that these fears constitute only *one* of the "channels" through which the

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7   In *Mozart: Portrait of a Genius* (Berkeley, 1993), Elias places great emphasis on Mozart's need for love and in "On Human Beings and Their Emotions" he refers to the innate predisposition of the human child to engage others in "love and learn" relationships" (346). Also, in *The Loneliness of the Dying* (Oxford, 1985), Elias finds a role for both hate and love in his depiction of the social relations of the dying.

demands of social structure are registered psychically), these fears prove to be the *only* such psycho-social channel that Elias's book holds up to view.[8]

2. Violence

When we consider *The Civilizing Process* in its entirety, we cannot avoid one obvious source of social fear: violence. Major sections of the book are devoted to the study of three socially structured forms of violence: disintegrative knightly violence (sections of Part II and Part IV), state-formative violence (Part III), and state monopolized violence (sections of Parts II, III and IV).

As we saw in the previous chapter, the explanatory (as well as chronological) starting point of Elias's account of the rise of the civilizing process in the West is located in a description of a society in which the physical violence of the landed elite served as the basic functional mode of social relations: the simple warrior society of early European feudalism. The last chapter's discussion of this period focused on the feudal warrior's embrace of violence as a psycho-social necessity in a disintegrating world. What it focused less upon was the fact that, as the knight's physical survival was regularly put to the test in a world in which "war was the normal state," an essential component of his psychic life was an intense survival fear, which was experienced as a "direct and open fear." As Elias repeatedly asserts in the Synopsis (Part IV), fear of other people was integral to the knights' lust for attack: "the life of the warriors ... is threatened continually and directly by acts of physical violence," and thus "the control of [their] conduct [came from] the direct fear of one person for others."[9] That a psychology of fear is central to Elias's overall conception of feudal social disintegration is perhaps captured best in the ideal-typical "image" of the feudal knight presented in the book's Synopsis:

> Think for example of the country roads of a simple warrior society ...; the main danger which a person here has to fear from others is an attack by soldiers or thieves. When people look around them scanning the trees and hills or the road itself, they do so primarily because they must always be prepared for armed attack.... Life on the main roads of this society demands a constant readiness to fight, and free play of the emotions in defence of one's life or possessions from physical attack.[10]

Elias's Synopsis adds: "Medieval conceptions of hell give us an idea of how strong [the] fear between person and person was."[11]

Clearly, the fear of violence is central to Elias's overall view of the psycho-social life of the medieval warrior. But what about Elias's accounts of life in later historical periods? Some commentators on Elias's work identify the civilizing process itself with the diminution of violence and thus with the diminution of the social fear of violence. Christopher Lasch, for example, asserts that Elias "equates the civilizing

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8   *Civilizing Process*, 442.
9   Ibid., 374, 370, 441-442 (italics added).
10 Ibid., 368.
11 Ibid., 374.

process ... with the substitution of peaceful social controls for violence," a view, he adds, that offers an "essentially untroubled view of civilization" that owes much "to nineteenth-century ideas of social progress."[12]

Read selectively and piecemeal (no doubt a relatively common practice of time-pressed scholars and critics such as Lasch), Elias's text can be made to yield up just this view. After all, the book repeatedly argues that, with the state's monopolization of violence, the structure of social relations (*Fremdzwang*) no longer compels an unrestrained violent impulsivity—the hallmark of a decivilizing process—but rather leads to the internalization of various self-restraints (*Selbstzwänge*) that hold such impulsivity in check—the hallmark of a civilizing process. One passage, for instance, argues that where "the decisive danger" once came "from direct external physical threat" that rendered a stable self-control "neither necessary, possible nor useful," with the civilizational advances of state society danger comes "from failure or relaxation of self-control" in situations of interpersonal sociality rather than in situations of direct physical conflict.[13]

In spite of statements like these, a thorough reading of *The Civilizing Process* argues against equating (as Lasch and others do) civilizational advancement with the elimination of violence. Rather, when Elias's book is examined as a whole, one discovers that violence and the fear associated with it are no less present in his conception of the civilized advances of state society—and in particular contemporary state society—than they are in his conception of the decivilized conditions of the pre-state warrior society of feudal knights. Scattered across Elias's text are a number of passages that link the advancement of the civilizing process to post-feudal and especially modern violence, or rather particular forms of that violence. Generally, these passages, while not directly contradicting the association of civilizational advancement with the reduction of experiences of physical assault, make clear that the key to this advancement is the *transformation*, not elimination, of violence, and that in relatively civilized conditions, violence, although taking new forms, retains its determinant role in social and psychic life. Indeed, the book's Synopsis itself concludes that in all types of societies, not just in pre-state societies, "physical violence and the threat emanating from it have a determining influence on individuals in society, whether they know it or not."[14]

In Elias's view, the formation of states leads to advances of the civilizing process in a number of ways, but all these advances follow from the fundamental fact that for states to exist, they must monopolize their territory's means of physical violence. To assert that states monopolize the country's means of physical violence, however, is not to assert that they eliminate physical violence. In fact, Elias's presentation repeatedly demonstrates the opposite: that, as the civilizing process in the West works to create ever larger internal social spaces of security and peace, it also produces ever more barbaric external conflicts between states. Elias's dialectic of civilization, thus, connects war and civility in a perverse embrace. As the summary last pages of the book's Conclusion declare: "war ... is not the opposite of peace.... Wars between

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12 Lasch, "Historical Sociology and the Myth of Maturity," 713.
13 *Civilizing Process*, 373.
14 Ibid., 372.

smaller units have been … instruments in the pacification of larger ones [a condition of civilizational advance]…. In our day, just as in earlier times, the dynamics of increasing interdependence [a socio-political effect of the civilizing process] are impelling the figuration of state societies towards such conflicts."[15]

Moreover, while inter-state violence operates to secure intra-state social spaces of peace, the citizens who live in these social spaces, and the very composition of their civility, are shaped by other forms of the states' command of the means of violence. For those who reside within the states' pacified internal territories, this means that, while physical violence is "stored behind the scene of everyday life," the armed might of the state (its police and repressive forces) remains an indirect but persistent presence, a presence that its citizens experience as a "continuous uniform pressure [that] is exerted on individual life ... [as] a pressure totally familiar and hardly perceived." The logic behind Elias's point here functions as a perfect example of his conception of the ways *Fremdzwänge* (the external controls of social structure), when structured in a civilizing direction, come to produce psychic structures with *Selbstzwang* (self-control). The structure of the state's command of violence (a structure of *Fremdzwang*) serves, Elias adds here, "as an agency of control" in the daily life of its citizens by being at every moment "potentially present in society," a continuous pressure of "calculable," and thus predictable (that is, rationalized), violence. Sequestered, state violence thus controls the citizen no longer by "constraining the individual by a direct threat," but rather through his or her own internal self-agency of control (*Selbstzwang*), the person's "conduct and drive economy having been adjusted from earliest youth to this social structure": "The actual compulsion is one that the individual exerts on himself or herself." That is, the structure of the state's command of violence leads to a transformation of psychic structure, causing the individual to contain within himself or herself agencies of self-compulsion and self-control (*Selbstzwang*) which issue both from the individual's conscious foresight (the fear of the state's "calculable" violence itself serving as a crucial element in the constitution of the ego's rationality) and from the individual's unconscious dictates of their superego (fear-ridden dictates internalized in childhood from "gestures of adults" that embody these adults' own fear of state violence).[16]

As the discussion above makes clear, Elias associates alterations in the structure of physical violence, rather than its elimination, with the civilizing of the psyche. Civilizing effects are produced when the state exports physical violence abroad, channeling it externally into inter-state conflict; such effects are also produced when the state sequesters violence behind the scenes, transforming it into a rationalized pressure internalized in the psyches of its own citizens. In the first case, we may speak of the civilizing consequences of *direct* physical violence; in the second case, of such consequences from *indirect* physical violence.

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15 Ibid., 445. One needs to be careful in interpreting this passage, since it appears at that point in the book's Conclusion when Elias has begun to openly make a distinction between civilization as a positive humanist goal (which in Part I he identifies with the Enlightenment ideal of civilization) and the far more blemished actual achievements of the civilizing process.

16 Ibid., 372-373.

Other passages from the book's Synopsis point to the civilizing effects produced by the historical emergence of another type of structural transformation of violence: the differentiation of violence into *physical* and *non-physical* forms. In medieval society, "forms of non-physical violence ... mingled or fused with physical force," while today in bourgeois society these forms of "non-physical violence... are now separated [from the physical forms and] persist in a changed form." The most prominent of the forms of non-physical violence in bourgeois society is "economic violence"; another is the coercive power gained though the control of the means of social assets other than capital (knowledge, for instance) that "enable people as groups or individuals to enforce their will upon others."[17] These forms of "non-physical violence" are deeply embodied in the day-to-day activities of pacified societies, and, paradoxically, some of these forms have a civilizing effect, marked by the civilized transformation of fear itself: "the direct fear of one person for others diminishes; indirect or internalized fears increase proportionately."[18]

Thus, as these examples show, Elias views the historical transformation of the psyche in a civilizing direction, with its prerequisite increase in the internalization and differentiation of impulse controls (*Selbstzwänge*), as the product not of the elimination of violence and the fear it produces, but rather as the product of a varied set of transformations in the structures of violence and fear, transformations in which the nature of the dangers that threaten the individual's well-being change from the unpredictable, sporadic, and impulsive to the predictable, continuous, and rational, while the individual's consciousness of these dangers changes from an uneasy alertness into something either unacknowledged or displaced onto foreign enemies. To indicate the psychic transformations that follow from these structural transformations of violence, Elias repeatedly utilizes the metaphor of a change in the nature of a burning fire (with the fire symbolizing the fear that results from social conflict), a change in which a volatile flame prone to explosive flare-ups is transformed into the hidden but continuous "fiery circle of inner anxiety" eating away at the modern human psyche:

> As long as control of the instruments of physical violence—weapons and troops—is not very highly centralized, social tensions lead again and again to warlike actions.... The fears aroused in this structure of social tensions can still be discharged easily and frequently in military action and direct physical force. With the gradual consolidation of power monopolies ... they [come to] express themselves in a continuous pressure.... Social fears slowly cease to resemble flames that flare rapidly, burn intensely and are quickly extinguished, only to be rekindled just as quickly, becoming instead like a permanently smouldering fire whose flame is hidden and seldom breaks out directly.[19]

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17 Ibid., 369-370. See also 304, 369, 372, 374, 545.
18 Ibid., 442.
19 Ibid., 423.

3. Competition

The denotative range of the word "violence" as it appears in *The Civilizing Process* springs, in part, from the fact that *Gewalt*, the word used in the original German text, denotes not only "physical violence," but also "force," "the executive power of the state," and "coercion."[20] But these variations in meaning also spring from something more fundamental than the ambiguity of the German word. For all of the forms of "violence" depicted in the text constitute but a subset of a broader concept that dominates the book's social vision: the concept of the competition. The contrasts drawn between the direct physical violence characteristic of feudal warrior society (*Gewalt* as "physical violence") and the indirect physical violence and the non-physical violence characteristic of court and bourgeois societies (*Gewalt* as "coercion" and "state power") exist within a broader theoretical framework that views social life as being in itself inherently competitive. In this view, even the most brutal act of the warrior is but an instance (although at times with an added psychodynamic ingredient of sadism) of the competitive dynamics that in Elias's world-view characterize not only all human social relations, but, indeed, the relationships of all biologically living matter.[21]

All the historical formations examined in *The Civilizing Process* are depicted as being structured by what the book's Synopsis characterizes as "the competitive struggles that keep [a society's] whole web of interdependence in motion." As the Synopsis adds, "competitive pressure ... permeates ... [these social] networks, affecting directly or indirectly *every single individual act*."[22] Separately, the book's historical studies of interpersonal manners (Part II), feudalization (Parts II and III), state formation (Part III), and court and bourgeois society (Parts II, III, and IV) make clear that in each case the social dynamics under study embody historically specific structures of social competition. Beginning with, but extending far beyond, the direct, physical violence of feudal society, the social dynamics examined in these studies are all, at root, manifestations of attempts by groups and individuals to secure and maintain an advantage over other groups and individuals. Competition, thus, is the other side of social fear; at base, it is *the* social source of the fears that shape the behavior of the members of a society.

Readers may wonder at this privileging of "competition," the application of the term to all aspects of social and even (as we will see) psychic existence. Why did Elias choose "competition" as a master term of his analyses rather than the seemingly equally appropriate and sociologically more common master concept of "conflict"?

"Conflict" is a struggle *of* differences (a clash of interests, an opposition of claims); "competition" is a specific type of conflict, a struggle specifically *for* something. For sociologists of Elias's mold, "competition" contains within its

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20 Fletcher, *Violence and Civilization: An Introduction to the Work of Norbert Elias* (Oxford, 1997), 47.

21 Elias, "Reflections on the Great Evolution," in *Involvement and Detachment*, 165.

22 *Civilizing Process*, 379 (italics added). In this passage Elias is specifically speaking of modern complex social formations, but his numerous depictions of warrior society and court society make clear that its point applies equally to these earlier and simpler social formations.

denotative range references to a specific kind of social interaction: a contest *for* limited resources, whether these be material, cultural, or psychic. "Competition" also refers to a motive force that compels movement within and alteration to the very organization of this type of social interaction: the motivational need to secure advantages in the arrangement of the distribution of limited resources. In addition, "competition" refers to the process by which the direction of this movement and these changes is determined, a process often designated in classical sociology as "selection," "social selection," or "survival," and, even in contemporary historical sociology, a process of determination often viewed as central to the explanation of historical change.[23]

In *The Civilizing Process*, we find a utilization of all of these denotations of "competition," including the interconnection of competitive processes with those of social selection. It is true that, in his discussion of the specific competitive social formations, Elias uses the term "social selection" only once and "survival" only twice (the latter appears more frequently in his later works), but the term "elimination contests" serves in their stead in a number of places.[24] Even more pointedly, in Elias's depictions of historically specific forms of social life, we find a consistent view that these forms emerge and are altered as a consequence of social competition, their determination linked to processes that, as we saw in the previous chapter, in his later work he calls "the survival function."

Elias's theoretical ideas concerning social competition resemble those found in the works of the two social theorists whose influence he explicitly cites in his discussion of the role of the competitive processes associated with state formation: Max Weber and Karl Mannheim.[25] In Weber's discussion of the "modes of competition" in the opening theoretical section of *Economy and Society*, he explicitly subordinates "social selection" to "competition," and finds both to be the key determinants of the allocation of "social success" to individuals, groups, and societies in "even the most strictly pacific order." "Social selection" and "competition," Weber asserts, determine historical outcomes and, as a consequence, determine the overall direction of historical development at large (his examples range from suitors competing for a woman's love to feudal armies fighting to the death).[26] Mannheim's 1928 paper on

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23 In *The Rise of Historical Sociology* (Philadelphia, 1991), Dennis Smith aligns the conception of "competitive selection" with one of the four basic "strategies of explanation" utilized by historical sociologists to explain social development (13, 131-136, 168-170). See also Randal Collins and Michael Makowsky, *The Discovery of Society*, (New York, 1989), 89.

24 *Civilizing Process*, 363 ("social selection"); 382, 436 ("survival"); 263, 264, 276, 277 ("elimination contests"). For instances of the use of "survival" in later works, see *Society of Individuals*, 90, 164, 167, 168, 169, 170, 176, 178.

25 *Civilizing Process*, xiii, 540 (268), 541 (304).

26 Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 38-40. In this section of "Basic Sociological Terms," entitled "Conflict, Competition, Selection," Weber states that "social selection ... means ... that certain types of behavior and possibly of the corresponding personal qualities, lead more easily to success in the role of 'lover,' 'husband,' 'member of parliament,' 'official,' 'contractor,' 'managing director,' 'successful business man,' and so on." Weber extends this conceptual model of competition and selection to the structures of social relations as well,

"Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon" places the "competition" in an even wider context: "the method of Life, the process through which the existentially-determined positions of thinking subjects became amalgamated, is, once again, *competition*, which ... operates to *select* out the impulses that are to be retained."[27]

In a manner conceptually similar to Weber and Manheim, Elias utilizes "competition" in *The Civilizing Process* as a principle governing both the initiation and outcome of human activities, whether registered in the life history of an individual or the long-term history of a society. In Elias's particular case, moreover, two other master terms of his social theory, "integration" and "differentiation," are placed within a framework of ideas concerning "competition." Repeatedly, Elias depicts situations in which attempts to achieve competitive advantage serve as the driving force in the development of both social integration and social differentiation. In fact, at least four different times in *The Civilizing Process* such developments are explicitly asserted to occur "*under the pressures of competition.*"[28]

Also, Elias links the key concept of his entire project, 'the civilizing process,' to ideas of social competition. He depicts competition as the driving force behind differences in civilizing processes, determining, for instance, their very direction (whether an advancement or reversal). Moreover, he depicts various advancements of the civilizing process as themselves serving as instruments of competitive struggle, as assets in conflicts over access to valued resources. Indeed, Elias asserts at one point that the civilizing process itself is "a weapon" that elites utilize not only in their intra-strata competition but also in the maintenance of their privileges in "the clashes between different social strata." The civilizing process, he states here, "can give one group a significant advantage over another," for instance, "habituation to a higher degree of foresight and greater restraint of momentary affects—to recall only these two facets [of the civilizing process]."[29]

4. Social Competition and Historical Structures of Fear and Psychic Formation

To begin to grasp exactly how the conception of competition and its resulting social fears is integrated in Elias's text's wide-ranging historical portraits of different stages

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speaking of "the different probabilities of survival of social relationships" such as states and professions (Weber's examples here range from the destruction of states to alterations in the relational condition of class and individual opportunities).

27 Karl Mannheim, "Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon," in *From Karl Mannheim*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, 1993), 419 (italics added).

28 This phrase, or variants of it ("under competitive pressures," "under pressures of competition"), appears in discussions of integrative and differentiational processes on pages 264, 367, 378, 433. In Elias's "use of the concepts of differentiation and integration[,] he avoids the teleological connotation which they have acquired in Parsonian systems theory by linking them closely with processes of competition and monopolization.... The development of integrative functions is no less affected by competition than is the corresponding process of differentiation." Arnason, "Civilization, Culture and Power," 48.

29 *Civilizing Process*, 407.

of psycho-social development, I encourage readers to use Table 14.1 (on page 241) as a guide to their reading of this and the following section. The table represents a snapshot of the underlying schematic structure of my understanding of Elias's theory of social competition and of its role in the determination of social and psychic structures of different historical periods.

As the table indicates, this schema singles out three specific historical periods from Elias's more encompassing depiction of the West's civilizational rise: simple warrior society, absolutist court society, and bourgeois society. Examining Table 14.1, the reader will notice that each of these periods is associated with a specific set of sociogenetic characteristics (the mode, field, and means of competitive struggle) and a specific set of resulting psychogenetic characteristics (the structures of fear and of psychic formation). In the sociogenetic categories, the first column indicates the mode and social field of competitive struggle that characterize the life of the elite in each of these periods: the competitive struggle for physical survival in a disintegrative social world of antagonistic knights and warrior fiefdoms (early feudalism); the competitive struggle for social survival in a sophisticated scene of courtiers maneuvering to secure prestige and royal favor (court society); and the competitive struggle for economic survival in the highly differentiated world of capitalist relations in which the members of the elite strive to secure professional position and control of capital (bourgeois society). The next column indicates the particular means of power required in each period's dominant competitive struggle: the means of physical violence (warrior society), of refined etiquette (court society), and of profession and money (bourgeois society).[30] In the psychogenetic categories, the third column indicates the impact of each period's mode, field, and means of competition on the structure of fears: fears structured as impulsive physicality (warrior society), as court rationality and the anxieties of delicacy and repugnance (court society), and as superego-based counter-impulses of embarrassment and shame (bourgeois society). The last column indicates the effect of these fears on the structure of the psyche itself: the interpenetration of ego and id (warrior society), the mastery of a rationalized ego over id impulses (court society), and the domination of superego fears over a neurotic and divided psyche (bourgeois society).

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30 Elias's conception of social competition is closely associated with his conception of social power. For Elias, power is a structural characteristic of all social relationships, manifested as a relational imbalance in which one individual or social group maintains a privileged access to social resources (military, political, cultural, economic, or psychological) and uses these resources to impose that individual's or group's will upon (or in more equal relationships, gain benefits from) other individuals or groups. Although all social relationships embody such a distribution of power, the balance of power between those in the relationship vary from situations of extreme inequality to more or less equality, although historically most social relationships have been markedly unequal. In this regard, Elias writes in *What is Sociology?*: "During the whole development of human societies power ratios have usually been extremely unequal; people or groups of people with relatively great power chances used to exercise those power change to the full, often very brutally" (74).

Table 14.1 Schematic Overview of Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Characteristics of Three Historical Periods

	Dominant mode & field of competition	Predominant means of power struggle	Structures of fears & anxieties	Resulting psychic structure
Feudal warrior society	Physical survival in disintegrative society of competing knights & antagonistic agrarian warrior fiefdoms	Direct physical assault: physical existence dependent on military dominance derived from gaining control of land and, with it, armed followers	Fears directly triggered by & expressed through impulsive physicality	Fears impel id impulses to permeate ego, allowing immediate release of socially nutured 'savage' impulsivity
Court society	Social survival in increasingly sophisticated social scene of courtiers competing amongst themselves for royal favors & against rising bourgeoisie	Refined etiquette: social existence dependent on gaining prestige & royal favor by displaying superior refinement amongst courtiers & maintaining status distinctions of hereditary aristocracy against challenge of bourgeoisie	Fears take form of conscious ego-based 'court rationality' & of partially unconscious superego anxieties of status-based *délicatesse*, both directed at meeting intra-class & inter-class challenges to status & hereditary privileges	Fears strengthen & differentiate ego from id & motivate ego's rational foresight & psychological reflexivity; anxieties take form of superego shame & repugnance selectively triggered by status inappropriate transgressions
Bourgeois society	Economic survival in differentiated networks of 'working' bourgeoisie competing for intra-class access to professional position & capital accumulation; and against increasing power of lower working strata	Profession & money: economic existence (& consequently social status) dependent on maintaining competitive edge in intra-strata struggles for position & wealth and hereditary advantages over lower strata	Fears internalized as unconscious superego counter-impulses of anxiety (shame & embarrassment) directed at id impulses; survival fears impel ego-directed economic rationalism	Fears split psyche into rigidly separate agencies of control; superego fears automatically repress & divert impulses, leading frequently to unfavourable pleasure balance & neurotic collisions with social reality

Elias's text depicts the psychological repercussions of changes in the structure of social competition in a number of ways. The previous chapter on medieval warrior society extensively detailed the psychological manifestations of the competitive order of early feudalism—the violent impulsivity required for survival in a world of disintegrative social relations. The following discussion will focus on his depiction of civilizing advances that occurred in subsequent historical periods. From among the various psychological developments associated there with the competitive order of these periods, I will select two for close examination: ego rationality in court society and the bourgeois superego in modern capitalist society.

4.1 Absolutist Court Society; the Rational Ego

In Elias's account of European history, the emergence of absolutist court society represented a crucial shift in the dominant structures of social competition. Although recently pacified aristocrats might have thought of their life in terms of physical battle—Elias quotes an observer of the French court who described life there metaphorically as "'a serious, melancholy game, which requires of us that we arrange our pieces and our batteries, have a plan, follow it, foil that of our adversary'"— in reality their "competition for prestige and royal favour" presented challenges of a distinctly different nature than those "fought out with weapons in one's hand." In exerting "force on each other," courtiers now relied on other weapons: "the sword ... [was] replaced by intrigue" and competitive success was now determined by "conflicts ... contested with words."[31] "The danger zone by which the conduct of the individual is regulated and moulded" had been radically altered: formative threats to the nobleman's "physical existence" had become threats to his "social existence" within the new competitive order of the courts.[32]

The competitive order of warrior society had been erratic in nature, as were the fears elicited: dangers arose "suddenly and incalculably," and "just as people's fate could change abruptly, so their joy could turn into fear and this fear ... abruptly ... to some new pleasure."[33] The order of court society was of a different nature: ever-present, "demand[ing] of each participant a *constant* foresight."[34] The challenges of this order elicited a different sort of fears, which "express themselves in a *continuous* pressure that each individual member of the nobility must absorb within him or herself."[35]

The nature of the interconnection between social threat and social response changed as warrior society became court society. "The whole social structure," along with "the modes of conduct," became, "a rationalization." "In the preceding phases when warriors could compete more freely with each other," they were led "to give way directly to impulses and not to take thought of the further consequences." Given their "social function," the dangers they faced were not "long foreseeable," nor

31 *Civilizing Process*, 397, 398.
32 Ibid., 418.
33 Ibid., 164. 371.
34 Ibid., 398 (italics added).
35 Ibid., 423 (italics added).

could "the effects of particular actions ... be considered three or four links ahead."[36] In court society, the competitive structures were rationalized; they produced "an extension of mental space beyond the moment into the past and future, the habit of connecting events in terms of chains of cause and effect."[37] Thus, when courtiers interacted with one another, "calculation meshe[d] with calculation." Those who were unable to foresee the full extent of the repercussions of their acts were at the mercy of those who could, as "the different structure of society now punished ... actions lacking the appropriate forethought with certain ruin."[38]

The survival function of courtly competition required a fundamental change in psychic constitution; a socially necessary, ego-dictated rationality replaced an earlier era's equally socially necessary id-dictated impulsivity. "Court rationality," the determinant mode of courtly social conduct, relied upon ego processes of "continuous reflection, foresight, and calculation, self-control, precise and articulate regulation of one's own affects, knowledge of the whole terrain." These new ego characteristics became the "elementary prerequisites for the preservation of one's social position," the "indispensable preconditions of social success." In the rationalized "tensions and struggles" of court society, reflection, foresight and the rational regulation of emotion each became a highly valued "weapon," giving a person or a group "significant advantage."[39]

But the rational ego did not emerge solely as a response to changes in the nature of the threats that one nobleman represented to another. The "royal mechanism" of monarchical absolutist rule broadened the elite's field of competition to include a new, non-elite competitor: the rising class of urban burghers. The emerging challenge of the middle class, with its independent base of economic power, induced in the nobility new fears, and thus additional motives for the civilizing advances that they spearheaded. The aristocracy's increasing "social fear" of the bourgeoisie became an integral part of "the vigilance with which members of court aristocratic society observe and polish everything that distinguishes them from people of lower rank."[40]

Thus, a crucial step in the civilizing of the West (the rationalization of ego functions) was an outcome of a social-political transformation in which an intra-class survival contest also became an inter-class survival contest. "The increased competition for the favour of the most powerful within the courtly stratum" *and* the challenge represented by the rising bourgeoisie *together* produced within the "members of the threatened upper class ... permanently smouldering social fear" that made up, as Elias categorically states, "the motor which ... drives forward the civilizing transformation of the nobility."[41]

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36 Ibid., 371, 405, 412.

37 Ibid., 370.

38 Ibid., 370, 371, 405

39 Ibid., 398, 400, 407.

40 Ibid., 424.

41 Ibid., 424-425 (italics added). While the ellipsis in this quotation brings together clauses from sentences with some separation between them, I do not believe I have altered Elias's basic meaning in any way.

The aristocracy's vanguard role in the rationalizing of the Western psyche existed as a part of a larger process. "One should not deduce ... that the court aristocracy was the social 'originator' of this spurt of rationalization," Elias points out, for

> the very transformation of the whole social structure, in the course of which these figurations of bourgeois and nobles come into being, is itself, considered from a certain aspect, a rationalization.... What is rationalized is, primarily, the modes of conduct of certain groups of people.... Changes of this kind, however, did not 'originate' in one class or another, but arise in conjunction with the tensions *between* different functional groups in a social field and *between* the competing people within them.[42]

In other words, the rationalization of the social competition, including its psychic manifestation (ego rationality), came into being as an outcome of the larger transformation of European society. A consequence of the rise of absolutist states, this was a transformation that brought into being two types of increasingly rationalized competition: the intra-class individual competition that existed in distinct forms in the separate social worlds of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy; and the inter-class group competition that existed between these two classes within the social totality—this latter competition being an "elimination contest," as we know from hindsight, in which one social class eventually vanquished the other.

4.2 Modern Class Contradictions; Social Fears and the Bourgeois Superego

With the triumph of the bourgeois social order, the nature of elite competition is changed. Competitive struggles no longer center on the "social existence" of a non-working elite living off unearned income; rather, the members of the new elite, the upper and middle sectors of the 'working' bourgeoisie, now face a different kind of daily challenge.[43] The competition for capital accumulation and professional position now assumes "primary significance for success or failure in [elite] status and power struggles." "Occupational skills, adeptness in the competitive struggle for economic chances, in the acquisition or control of capital wealth," are now the means by which the members of the leading strata seek to give their lives meaning, value, and continuity.[44]

As was the case in absolutist court society, two types of class struggle structure the competition order in bourgeois society: intra-class and inter-class competition. The individual members of the new bourgeois elite are continuously "engaged in competitive struggles among themselves"; but they also act together

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42 Ibid., 412-413.

43 While the English version of *The Civilizing Process* often translates Elias's term for this social formation as "professional bourgeoisie," his qualifying German term is *Beruflich*, which has broader connotations than the English "professional," bringing with it not only 'calling,' but also 'career' and 'occupation.' Hence, a better translation is "working bourgeoisie" and, for modern capitalist society dominated by this class, "working bourgeois society." See Mennell, *Norbert Elias*, 293. One effect of linking 'working' as a prefix to 'bourgeoisie' is to heighten the contrast between this class and the 'non-working' aristocracy.

44 *Civilizing Process*, 425.

in inter-class competitive struggles against "the broad masses of outsiders," including "the lower agrarian and urban strata." Moreover, it is these latter struggles that present, in however disguised a form, the more determinant challenge, for, as we shall see, they involve, both directly and indirectly, an assault on the monopolistic hold that the bourgeoisie as a class has over the control of "power chances" and "opportunities chances" within the society.[45]

Although both types of competition constitute challenges to the individual members of the bourgeoisie, the inter-class struggle alone represents a challenge to the very bases of elite privilege, and, as such, it imbues the intra-class struggle between these members with an extra intensity and uncertainty. For it challenges the "hereditary character of monopolized chances and of social prestige" that, in one form or another, has throughout history always provided the structural bases of the social organization of a society's elite.[46] (In Elias's work, phrases such as "hereditary character of monopolized chances and of social prestige," "instruments of monopoly as a hereditary possession," and "control of opportunities [as] the hereditary and private preserver of an established upper stratum" refer to what he came to call "sociological inheritance": the transmission "from one generation to the other of sources of power which ... a group can monopolize to a fairly high degree and from which those who belong to other groups are correspondingly excluded." It should also be noted that, in Elias's conception, the various sources of power that are inter-generationally transmitted include inherited property, caste and status privileges, access to political power and professional position, and advantageous psychological dispositions and behavioral standards.[47])

The fundamental reason that *inter*-class competition represents such a sweeping challenge to elite privilege is that at the heart of the bourgeois competitive order is a contradictory "structural regularity" that both promotes and undermines the class's access to monopolized advantages. On the one hand, the continued viability of the bourgeois social order itself is founded upon the "increasing division of functions [which occurs] under the pressure of competition." On the other hand, this very process of functional differentiation compels "the tendency to more equal dependence of all on all, which in the long run allows no group greater social power than others and nullifies hereditary privileges."[48] The fundamental driving force of bourgeois society, the structural compulsion to incessantly expand social differentiation, thus entails, as its consequence, a structural assault on the social institutions and practices that support "hereditary privileges" (the allocation of advantages of social and dispositional distinction according to the continuities of position, family, race, and class) that are the very basis of any elite's continued existence as the society's ruling

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45 Ibid., 271, 381, 445, 446.

46 Ibid., 445.

47 Ibid., 448, 446. For other references to the characteristics of elite privilege, see 269 ("closed opportunities"), 271 ("the private accumulation of power chances"), 272 ("'private' power over monopolized resources"). For Elias's use of the term "sociological inheritance," see Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson. *The Established and the Outsiders: A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*, 2nd ed. (London, 1994), 151.

48 *Civilizing Process*, 433.

strata. In Elias's lexicon, the term for the class-leveling tendency of this structural regularity is "functional democratization": a structural tendency that, as a consequence of social differentiation, presses for "the narrowing of power differentials and [the] development towards a less uneven distribution of power chances."[49]

In Elias's conceptualization of historical development, all periods of socio-political integration contain some forces that press toward class leveling, that is, some element, however limited, of "functional democratization." Bourgeois socio-political integration, however, departs from all earlier forms, because the unique inclusiveness and complexity of the advances in social differentiation, while the source of the elite's monopolized wealth and power, also press in increasingly effective ways toward the permanent elimination of hereditary elite control, at least within European society. (But with Europe's colonization of the third world, Elias suggests, Europe's masses have moved toward becoming a new elite in relation to the rest of the world, as they share in the material and other advantages denied the colonized.[50])

In all previous social periods, when tensions emerged between those with hereditary control of monopolized opportunities and those who are "excluded from such control and ... dependent on opportunities distributed by the monopoly," these tensions remained manageable as long as "differentiation [was] low and, particularly, when the upper class consist[ed] of warriors."[51] With the rise of bourgeois society, however, the pressures of the inter-class tensions have come to assume such intensity that they pervade the entire society, for in modern society "every monopoly opportunity restricted by heredity to particular families leads to specific tensions and disproportions in the society concerned ... [because] societies with a highly developed division of functions are far more sensitive to the disproportions and malfunctions caused by such tensions." Moreover, these specific tensions and disproportions "are permanently felt throughout the whole society."[52] That is, with the rise of bourgeois society, the contradictions embodied in these inter-class tensions—in structural terms, the contradictions between a highly productive form of social differentiation (the elite's source of its monopolized power) and a consequence of this differentiation, the dependence of all on all (the masses' source of social power)—become so severe that these tensions are registered not only in the form of social functional disturbances ("distortions and malfunctions in the society")

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49 In *The Germans*, Elias defines "functional democratization" as "the thrust towards diminishing the power gradient between rulers and ruled, between the entire state establishment and the great mass of outsiders" (30). Although the term itself only appears once in *The Civilizing Process* (425), the leveling of elite privilege as a result of the pressures of lower strata underlies Elias's depiction of the monopolization mechanism in all its social forms: in feudalism, where this pressure is least and therefore easily managed (177); in absolutist society, where it becomes "one of the strongest driving forces ... of ... civilized refinement" (424); and in bourgeois society, where it is an even more powerful force against elite privilege (423). See also *What is Sociology?* 69.

50 *Civilizing Process*, 381, 385.

51 Ibid., 439.

52 Ibid. (italics added).

but also in the form, as we shall see shortly, of affective disturbances "permanently felt throughout the whole society."

That Elias seems here to echo Karl Marx's conceptualization of the basic structural contradiction of class society—that is, the contradiction between the *relations* of production (the elite's privileged access to a society's resources and opportunities) and the *forces* of production (the highly differentiated labor force)—is probably not altogether coincidental. Elsewhere Elias refers to "Marx's great discovery" of the economic contradictions that play such a major part in the generation of tensions and conflicts within modern societies.[53] Elias's notions of social power and social structure are much more inclusive than the economistic ones of classical Marxism, but in several important ways his version of the structural contradictions of modern society follows Marx's. The contradiction between the monopolization of control over power resources and the process of social differentiation that produces those resources assumes such severity in bourgeois society, he asserts, that the direction toward which they press is one that transcends the very terms of the contradiction, that is, transcends the entire history of human social development in which, at each and every stage, a small elite has held undue control over the society's resources.[54] Elias even offers a glimpse (somewhat like Marx) of this future social transcendence, this break of elite control of monopolized social resources. Although "the exact course ... is not predictable ... [the] direction alone is clear," he states: the direction is toward "the change in human relationships by which control of opportunities gradually ceases to be the hereditary and private preserve of an established upper stratum and becomes a function under social and public control." This will be a society, he adds, in which "distinction" is gained through one's "own achievement[,] which in moderation is justified," rather than "through the monopolistic appropriation of power chances the access to which is blocked for other interdependent groups."[55]

Where Elias's conceptualization of the contradictions of social competition differs most significantly from Marx's is the attention it gives to the psychic dimension of these contractions. For, placed within the framework of a theory of historical change that is "at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic," the "tensions" produced by these contradictions are envisioned as being in themselves both *social* and *psychic.* While a few written commentaries on Elias's work have grappled with his depiction of the structural contradictions that inhere in the processes of modern social-political differentiation, not one has considered the way this depiction is linked to an analysis of the contradictions of the bourgeois psyche. The standard account of Elias's ideas in this regard is that it is the sheer complexities of social differentiation, the multiple and dense chains of social interdependence, that produce the stresses and divisions that plague the bourgeois psyche. My contention is that one cannot understand Elias's depiction of the disabling intensity of fears that afflict this psyche without understanding that these fears are a product of a figuration of social contradictions

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53 *Established and Outsiders*, xxxi-xxxiii. In his recollections on his life, Elias indicates his reading of the works of "the colossal figure of Karl Marx" was a central formative sociological experience. *Reflections*, 35-36, 95.

54 *Civilizing Process*, 439.

55 Ibid., 446.

that constitutes an increasingly powerful assault on the very basis of hereditary privilege.

Let us examine Elias's discussion of the bourgeois superego found in the last five pages of the Conclusion of *The Civilizing Process*; we find here some of Elias's most explicit descriptions of the fears that disturb the bourgeois psyche and of the way these fears are produced by the contradictions of bourgeois competition.

This discussion begins by implicitly posing the following question: What is the social source of the codes of the bourgeois superego and of the fears that motivate them? And it quickly answers: these fears and resulting superego codes are products of "the structure of our society *just discussed*," that is, "*just discussed*" in the preceding section of the Conclusion, the section that serves as a principle source of my presentation above of Elias's conception of the structural contradictions of bourgeois society.

> Our codes of conduct are as riddled with contradictions and as full of disproportions as are the forms of our social life, as is the structure of our society. The constraints to which the individual is subjected today, and the fears corresponding to them, are in their character, their strength and structure decisively determined by the particular forces engendered by *the structure of our society just discussed*: by its power and other differentials and the immense tension created by them. It is clear in what turmoils and dangers we live, and the interweaving forces determining their direction have been discussed. It is these forces, far more than the simple constraints of working together [i.e., the constraints of social interdependence], it is tensions and entanglements of this kind which at present constantly expose the individual to fear and anxiety.[56]

From these opening sentences of Elias's discussion of the bourgeois superego, we learn several things. Although "contradictions" and "disproportions" characterize equally "our codes of conduct," our "fears," and "the structure of our society," one of these spheres has causal priority over the others. The "structure" of our bourgeois codes and related fears are "*decisively determined*" by "particular forces engendered by the structure of our society." These "particular forces" are themselves further defined here as consisting, first of all, of the society's "power and other differentials," and, secondly, of "the immense tension created by them" [i.e., these differentials]— that is, these forces are defined in terms of structural attributes "just discussed" in the preceding section: power differentials embodied in the elite's hold on monopolized opportunities; tensions that emerge as differentiation and functional democratization undermine that hold.

As Elias's discussion continues he refers back a number of times to social-structural concepts developed in this earlier section. He repeats the earlier section's notion that "the structure of our society" consists of two types of social competition—intra-class and inter-class competition—and adds that it is these two types of competition that specifically give rise to our fears and codes of conduct:

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56 Ibid., 443 (italics added).

> The uncontrollable, monopoly-free competition between people of the same stratum on the one hand, and the tensions between different strata and groups on the other, ... give rise, for the individual, to continuous anxiety and particular prohibitions or restrictions.[57]

From this and subsequent sentences we learn that the particular placement of individuals within these two orders of competition determines not only the nature of their fears, but also the degree to which these fears are transformed into the anxieties of the superego. Individuals of the "lower strata" are racked by fears that derive from the particular economic and political vulnerabilities of their social position: "fears of dismissal, of unpredictable exposure to those in power, of falling below the subsistence level." These fears are experienced in a more "direct" manner than elite fears and hence they are less prone to internalization as superego commandments. Individuals within "the middle and upper strata" are besieged by fears derived from a different set of insecurities: those associated with the difficulties that individuals face in trying to maintain their elite position. Unlike fears of the lower strata, these fears "are particularly disposed to internalization," that is, disposed to take up residence in a psychic agency, the superego.[58]

Moreover, for these individuals of the middle and upper strata, both intra-class competition and inter-class competition

> engender their own specific fears: ... the fears of social degradation, of the reduction of possessions or independence, of loss of prestige and status.... It is precisely fears and anxieties of this kind, fears of the loss of distinguishing hereditary prestige ... that have had to this day a decisive part in shaping the [superego's] prevailing code of conduct.[59]

In this particular description, we discover a perfect example of what Elias means by the term "*social fears*": affective states of alarm caused by external social threats. The fears of the bourgeois elite are caused by social threats to its control over privileged resources, listed here as "possessions" (private property, investments), economic "independence," and the "prestige and status" that are associated with these resources. And that these fears are said to be of a singular "kind"—to be the "kind" of fears concerned with the "loss of distinguishing *hereditary* prestige"—points to a common denominator: they are all, at base, responses to social challenges to a crucial prerogative of past and present social elites, what shortly following the sentences quoted above is termed "the hereditary character of monopolized chances," and a page later is described as the "control of opportunities" within "the hereditary and private preserve of an established upper stratum."[60]

Elias's text goes on to depict the fears of loss of hereditary privileges as defining the nature of the bourgeois superego in a number of ways. About the fundamental social nature of the bourgeois superego itself, Elias is quite clear. Many of its rules of conduct, he states, have one function only: the reinforcement of the social elite's exclusive claims to "power chances" and "status superiority." "They [the rules

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57 Ibid.. 444.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 445, 446.

of the superego] help members of these groups to such distinction ... through the monopolistic appropriation of power chances the access to which is blocked for other interdependent groups."[61] The text makes clear that the bourgeois superego serves as the psychological counterpart of the elite's social-structural attempts to maintain the institutions of "sociological inheritance" that perpetuate its "monopolistic appropriation of power chances."

We might be tempted to read this last statement as suggesting that the bourgeois superego reflects, in a rather straightforward, perhaps even rational way, elite status and class interests. But we need to remember that Elias's discussion of the bourgeois superego begins by stating that its codes of conduct are "as riddled with contradictions and as full of disproportions as ... is the structure of our society." In fact, in a number of places in this discussion Elias calls attention to the fundamentally contradictory and disproportional nature of these codes of conduct and of the bourgeois superego itself. For instance, he offers the following example of the way the bourgeois superego registers threats to elite standing by imposing upon the psyche levels of sexual repression that we know Elias viewed as pathological:[62]

> Even the rules imposed on sexual life, and the automatic anxieties now surrounding it to such a high degree ... have their origins to a considerable extent in the pressures and tensions in which the upper and particularly the middle strata of our society live. They too are very closely related to the fear of losing opportunities or possessions and prestige, of social degradation, of reduced chances in the harsh struggle for life.[63]

For the middle and upper strata, sexual release is experienced as a threat to social privileges ("opportunities," "possessions," and "prestige"), and, as a consequence, fears surround the superego with unconscious, compulsive ("automatic") anxieties that thwart any direct expression of the sexual drive.

Elias's conception of the contradictions and disproportions of the superego is most thoroughly illustrated in his account of the way this psychic agency is developmentally formed in the early childhood of the bourgeois individual.[64] In contrast to previous historical periods, in bourgeois society the task of socializing the child is assigned to parents, in whom the structural insecurities of their social position are "only partly conscious ... and partly already automatic" and thus "transmitted to the child as much by gestures as by words." Thus, rather than a matter of rational suasion—as in court society, where (as depicted in Part II of *The Civilizing Process*) the motivational insecurities of social competition were inculcated in aristocratic adolescents principally by tutors and teachers—the motivational insecurities of social competition in bourgeois society are transmitted not as reasons but as affects, the emotions of fear being the essential medium by which these insecurities are conveyed to the child:

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61 Ibid., 444.

62 Norbert Elias, "The Civilizing Process Revised: Interview with Norbert Elias," interview by Stanislas Fontaine. *Theory and Society* 5, no. 2 (1978), 250, 252-253.

63 *Civilizing Process*, 444.

64 Ibid., 444-445. These pages are the source of all the quoted text in my next three paragraphs.

the continuous concern of parents ... [is] whether [their child] will maintain or increase the prestige of the family [and] hold its own in the competition within their own stratum. Fears of this kind surround the child from its earliest years.... Fears of this kind play a considerably part in the control to which the child is subject from the beginning.

The social fears particular to the bourgeois elite are thus "rooted in the individual members of such strata through their upbringing," and, being the type of fears that are "particularly disposed to *internalization*," it is these fears that constitute the psychic foundation of the elite's notably "strong" super-egos. Given the irrational nature of both the method of socialization and of the resulting superego, however, a process that aims at restraining "the behavior and feelings of the growing child permanently within definite limits" sometimes results in bringing "about precisely what they are supposed to prevent"—that is, the child is "made incapable, by such blindly instilled automatic anxieties, of succeeding in the struggle of life and attaining social prestige," his or her mental health undermined by historically specific bourgeois neuroses, including obsessive compulsiveness, depression, impulse atrophy, and hysteria.[65]

Whether or not the parents' transmission of the fears specific to their social strata succeeds in securing the continuance of the family's social standing, the social content of their fears is the same. These fears are products of "the tensions of their society," and it is these tensions that are "projected by the parental gestures, prohibitions and fears on to the child," Moreover, at the heart of these tensions is "the hereditary *character* of monopolized chances and of social prestige [which] finds direct expression in the parents' attitude to their child; and so the child is made to feel the dangers threatening these chances and this prestige." (That is, what the parents convey to their child is "the hereditary *character*" of the monopolized chances and of the social prestige that they wish to pass on to the child, and it is this *character* that makes the child feel that these monopolized advantages are endangered.)

Thus, what the parents compulsively transmit to their child includes far more than the idiosyncrasies of their own emotional makeup. What is transmitted is the tensions of the social order as experienced from a specific position within that order, tensions that, in this particular psycho-social instance, center on the child's uncertain hold on an essential prerequisite of his claim to that position: the "sociological inheritance" of monopolized material, cultural, and psychic advantage. "The child is made ... to feel *the entire tensions of his society*, even before he or she knows anything about them," and it is in this experience that the bourgeois superego is born, a psychic agency that registers, at its very origin, the particular configuration of a competitive social order that threatens the social elite's hold on the structural underpinnings of monopolized psycho-social privilege.

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65 See Ibid., 375-378, where the symptoms of these neuroses are briefly described.

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Conclusion

Two aims guide the interpretative reading of texts presented in the previous fourteen chapters. The first aim is exegetical: to present a psychologically nuanced appraisal of how these texts theoretically and analytically interconnect the psyche and the social. The second aim is pragmatic: to unearth from these texts theories and analytical practices that may assist those social scientists of today who remain open to, or are actually engaged in, the exploration of the role of the psyche in social reality.

In furtherance of these two aims, in the above chapters I have concentrated on closely examining specific passages from each of these texts, often subjecting them to detailed explication. I have also attempted to structure these examinations in such a way that the reader is left not only with a series of psycho-social interpretations of a text's various passages but also with an understanding of the underlying psycho-social paradigms that unite these various passages, with their particular details, into a larger coherent analytical and theoretical whole. But, given that textual interpretation, by its very nature, is an inductive process, at times the characterization of these psycho-social paradigms has occurred in a piecemeal manner. Therefore, this concluding chapter will focus on these psycho-social paradigms themselves. By placing summations of these paradigms side by side, the stage is set for a consideration of a number of basic principles that all five paradigms share, as well as a consideration of ways in which these paradigms, and the theories and analyses they structure, offer possible assistance to those of us who today wish to advance the sociological understanding of the psychological qualities inherent in much of social reality.

1. Five Psycho-Social Paradigms

Freud: The Imposition of Civilization upon the Psyche

As shown in Part One, Sigmund Freud produced two great books on the relationship between civilization and the psyche: *The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and its Discontents*. Although these books are often viewed as complementing each other theoretically, a close examination reveals that they are structured by radically distinct psycho-social paradigms.

In the first book, *The Future of an Illusion*, civilization is the oppositional 'other' of instinct. It is a social order imposed on an anti-social instinctual anarchy. Moreover, it favors the privileged classes at the expense of the unprivileged classes. Civilization represses, sublimates, and re-distributes instinctual wishes and pleasures along class lines, imposing a surplus of instinctual "privations" on the unprivileged and transferring a surplus of instinctual rewards to the privileged.[1]

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1   *Future of an Illusion*, 14-15.

Two psychological processes support this inequitable social imposition: superego formation and the psychodynamics of religious illusion. Superego formation is an achievement of only those classes that most benefit from the social order's arrangement of material and instinctual distribution. The "introjection" of a civilized moral code, resulting in an internal consent to its dictates, "applies only to certain classes of society"; among the lower classes "in all present-day cultures," the oppressive conditions are so adverse that incentives for superego formation do not exist.[2] For these unprivileged classes, civilization's tools are religious illusion and "the externalized super-ego" of the priesthood. Through these mechanisms, the reigning social order gains the necessary submission from the masses who otherwise would threaten it with the anarchy of unsublimated instinctuality.

In this analysis, the psycho-social divide is crossed in two ways. On the one hand, the social order is seen as dominant in its relation to the psyche; it imposes its own class-based mechanisms (social control, privation, surplus, estrangement) upon the psyche in such a way that the different classes develop differently structured psyches: the psyche of the privileged classes is governed by an internalized superego and structured by sublimated instinctuality; the psyche of the underprivileged laboring classes is governed by illusion and structured by unsublimated instinctuality.

On the other hand, however, although the inequities of class society are social in their origin, they are best understood by shifting the focus of analytical delineation to the psychic effects of these inequities. As Freud shows, a measure of class differences within the material economy is best derived from a measure of differences in the psychic economy.

Freud: The Social Psychism

Freud's thinking in his second book, *Civilization and its Discontents*, is grounded upon an antithetical paradigm of civilization's relationship to the psyche. Civilization is portrayed here not as an oppositional 'other' to instinct, but rather as its direct manifestation. Civilization is the product of Eros's "cultural urge" to "unite separate individuals into communities bound together."[3] The book posits that the psyche and the social are interrelated at their roots, with the social world itself the outcome of a chain of instinctual affinities connecting protoplasm, psyche, and civilization, the latter conceptualized as a higher-level "psychism" in itself.

At its definitional base, this expansion occurs analogically—"the development of civilization is a special process, comparable to the normal maturation of the individual."[4] But, taking the form of a social concept, this analogical expansion also marks the "mental processes" of the social with clear differences from those of the individual. Civilization exhibits its own distinct embodiments of psychodynamic processes that differ from the versions operating in the psyche of the individual. For example, a "communal neurosis" is not the same thing as a community of individuals who happen to separately suffer from the same neurosis. Rather than originating within

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2 Ibid., 15.
3 *Civilization and its Discontents*, 104-105.
4 Ibid., 52.

the psyche of a particular individual in response to unique childhood dependencies, a communal neurosis originates from trans-individual stresses and immaturities that rack the larger society as a collective. "Under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilization ... have become 'neurotic.'" Unlike an individual neurosis, a communal neurosis neither distorts the individual's orientation to his or her society nor reveals its abnormalities when placed against a background of societal "normalcy." For a communal neurosis, "no such [contrasting] background could exist"; the background is itself the distortion.[5] Moreover, given this characteristic, a community neurosis may operate as the antithesis of a personal neurosis. To Freud, religion is a communal neurosis *par excellence*, and, as such, religion "succeeds in sparing many people an individual neurosis."[6] A society may be severely neurotic, even if most of its individual members remain psychically quite healthy.

The presentations in *Civilization and its Discontents* of such socially embodied mental processes are each structured by a conceptual paradigm in which dynamics similar to those that operate within the individual psyche are envisioned as also independently operating within social and cultural domains. Unlike its conception in *The Future of an Illusion*, here the social order, while it remains sociologically characterizable in such terms as communal, national, and sometimes class structures, is also psychologically characterizable. But Freud's social psychism is not what some have made it out to be; it is not a metaphysical construct, a concept of a group mind. Rather, it is a sociological conception of emergent attributes and dynamics that operate at a trans-individual level of cultural representation, a domain of psychodynamically infused collective myths, norms, and schemas that each individual experiences as an external existence, not a creation of his or her own individual mind.

Weber: The Mediation of the Psyche in Social Action

The generally accepted sociological view is that Max Weber dismissed psychology as a tool of social analysis, a view in part derived, as shown in chapters 4 and 5, from a misreading of his numerous critical comments directed at a contemporary German academic movement known as "psychologism." In fact, as shown in chapters 5, 6, and 7, Weber incorporated psychological concepts and methods in his analyses of the meaning of certain types of social actions, those in which irrational states mediate between social-cultural conditions and individual behavior. As made clear in chapter 5, the psycho-social paradigm structuring these analyses places irrational psychological conditions (affects, personality formations, and national character formations) within a model of social action of the following form: *idea → psychology → action*. An *idea* (in this case, a religious belief) causes a *psychological* response, which in turn mediates the impact of the *idea* on a person's social behavior, transforming that impact psychologically into a motivation for *action* often quite different from what the ideas themselves dictate.

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5   Ibid., 100.
6   Ibid., 36.

It is this paradigm that structures Weber's analysis of the effect of religion on behavior in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. As shown in chapter 5, repeatedly Weber's presentation explicitly draws attention to the paradigmatic role of the psyche as a mediating force between ideas and behavior. For example, a major argument of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is set up when Weber states that his book "may ... contribut[e] to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history"—the "ideas" in question being those of Protestant asceticism and the "effective forces in history" being those of early modern capitalism.[7] Weber then proceeds to clearly identify the nature of the special quality by which the ideas of Puritan asceticism became the historical force that brought modern capitalism to Europe. He asserts that at the heart of his argument lies a fundamental distinction between ethical injunction and psychological motive in the determination of conduct:

> We are naturally not concerned with question of what was theoretically and officially taught in the ethical compendia of the time.... We are interested rather in something entirely different: the influence of those *psychological sanctions* which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individual to it.[8]

It was not "what was theoretically and officially taught in the ethical compendia of the time" that inspired the rise of modern capitalism. Rather the "effective historical forces" of early modern capitalist behavior emerged from "psychological sanctions" (or "psychological impulses," as Weber's German is rendered in another translation[9]) incited by religious belief and practice.

And as Weber makes clear elsewhere in the book, the "psychological consequences of … [Puritan] religious ideas" were often quite different from "the logical" consequences of the ideas; "fatalism," for example, "is, of course, the only logical consequence of predestination, but [for Calvinists] … the *psychological* result was precisely the opposite," leading instead to a methodical economic activism. "The point of this whole essay," in fact, is that "the spirit of capitalism" did not arise from "the doctrine of the theologians," nor did it arise from a pragmatic, rational appraisal of economic conditions. The impetus behind the rise of modern capitalism had neither a religious doctrinal character nor an "economic character"; rather, the impetus was a particular configuration of irrational psychological reactions to a particular set of religious ideas, a psychologically motivated or sanctioned mindset which led to a historical development (secular modern industrial capitalism) which took a form diametrically opposed to the intense religiosity of the original ideas.[10]

As shown in chapter 6, aspects of this same paradigm also appear in several of Weber's methodological works, most explicitly in an early version of the opening chapters of *Economy and Society*, published originally as "Some Categories of

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7   *Protestant Ethic.*, 90.

8   Ibid., 97 (italics added).

9   Bendix, *Max Weber*, 273.

10   *Protestant Ethic*, 197, 232 (italics added). The last point is made particularly clear in the book's closing pages, 180-183.

Interpretative Sociology." Here Weber explicitly argues that for social analysis to gain a full understanding of the meaning of any social action containing elements of irrationality, the analyst must differentiate between its irrational and rational components and then apply psychological interpretative methods in order to bring to light those elements of meaning that are "only psychologically explicable." He also insists here that this psychological explication be sophisticated enough to take account both of changes in psychic structure and of the workings of unconscious mechanism—among which he explicitly lists ambivalence, disavowal, repression, sublimation, and rationalization.[11]

Adorno: Power and the Psyche

As shown in chapter 9, Theodor Adorno recalled in a late retrospective essay how he first came to grasp the nature of the dialectical relationship between the "objectivity" of the social totality and the "subjectivity" of the individual psyche. It was in his early sociological writings, he states, that he discovered that correct sociological understanding is modeled on a correct understanding of the interaction between the two terms of this relationship: the first term, the objective social totality, is both primary and nonetheless extremely dependent upon the second, the subjective psyche. As an illustration, Adorno recalls that his first monograph of fascism, "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses," showed "that agitators on the 'lunatic fringe'" were in themselves not the most important

> factor promoting a fascistically inclined mentality among the masses. This susceptibility reaches deep into the structure of society itself and is generated by society before demagogues deliberately come to its aid.[12]

The logic of this passage succinctly exemplifies the mixture of objectivity and subjectivity that follows from Adorno's psycho-social dialectic. Fascist demagogues, the passage states, do not create the affinity for fascism in the "mentality among the masses." Rather, this psychological predisposition toward fascism originates deep within "the structures of society." The mental "susceptibility" toward fascism (a matter of the *subjective* order of psychology) extends "deep into the structures of society" (a matter of the *objective* order of sociology); such conditions of the psyche (*subjective* order) are "generated by society" (*objective* order).

As shown in chapter 8, Adorno's early monograph on fascist agitation helps us to understand how his analytical practices came to embody this psycho-social dialectic. Most importantly, we discover that the monograph's analytic focus is directed less at the social totality that is said to "generate" fascist subjectivity than at the particularities of that subjectivity itself. For instance, Adorno depicts the rise of monopoly capitalism as spelling the end of the liberal entrepreneur and of his psychological embodiment, the liberal self. He frames his explanation sociologically, but quickly his focus (and one might say his "proof") is located in psychological analysis. The social totality no longer supports the creation of "a unified, integrated

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11 "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology," 154-156.
12 "Scientific Experiences," 364.

personality." Increasingly, the person "ceases to be an ego, a 'self.'" The social totality deconstructs the liberal self's ego rationality and inner-directed patriarchal superego. People "cease to be individuals in the traditional sense of self-sustaining and self-controlled unity."[13]

For Adorno, the principal appeal of psychology was that it provided relatively accessible empirical evidence of the deformations of the social order. That is, his premises about the social totality responsible for fascism are explicated not in terms of a careful empirical study of fascism's social constitution, but rather in terms of its psychodynamic ramifications; the emergence of the monopolistic entities of late capitalist societies are explicated not by a presentation of detailed evidence of economic, cultural and political concentration, but rather by the interpretation of evidence of its effect on the psyche, of ego loss and superego collapse.

Elias: The Historical Psyche

As chapter 13 reports, Norbert Elias created a compound term from two simple German words: *Fremd* and *Zwang*. *Fremd* (literally 'alien' or 'external') refers to (and is translated in English as) 'other people,' or more precisely, 'socially interdependent other people.' And *Zwang* signifies in German (and is translated in English as) 'constraint,' 'control,' 'compulsion,' and 'coercion.' Thus, *Fremdzwang* refers to (and is translated as) "constraints which people exert on one another," "external pressure and compulsion" and "controls through others."[14] For Elias, *Fremdzwang* signifies what sociologists normally call "social structure," conceptualized here as the pattern of external compulsions and constraints exerted upon persons by their relationships with other persons. In addition, *Fremdzwang* signifies what psychologists call "psychic structure," this latter understood as the internal structures that the psyche develops in direct response to the external pressures of the social world. Thus, *Fremdzwang* signifies both "social structure" and "psychic structure"; more specifically, *Fremdzwang* signifies particular configurations of the interface between these two structures.

In *The Civilizing Process*, *Fremdzwang* often functions simultaneously as both a sociological and psychological concept, thereby exhibiting a key quality of Elias's method of "historical social psychology"—a method that is "*at once* psychogenetic and sociogenetic."[15] In its sociological capacity—that is, as a concept that locates the structures of society in the actual relations, dependencies, and interactions that exist between people—*Fremdzwang* highlights certain social attributes that, in addition to their sociological import, have a related psychic import. In Elias's work, social relations are inherently hierarchical arrangements of power and status, arrangements that favor some individuals and groups over others, and thus always contain a degree of competitive contestation. This broader view of social relations serves as the framework of most of the case studies presented in *The Civilizing Process*. These case studies are constructed to illuminate specific historical figurations of

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13 "Psychological Technique," 19, 20, 27.
14 *Civilizing Process*, 106, 442.
15 Ibid., 407 (italics added).

status and power contests, and to show how these figurational contests of "socially interdependent other people" generated the "external pressures and compulsions" (*Fremdzwänge*) that gave historically specific shape to the psyche.

Moreover, *Fremdzwang*, in its parallel role as a psychological concept—that is, a concept of the psychic response to the "pressures and compulsions" generated by these contestations for status and power—highlights certain psychic attributes that register the social changes specific to a historical era. In *The Civilizing Process*, one set of emotions plays a central role: fear and its emotional derivatives. As shown in chapter 14, when the variations of specific historical contestation triggers within the psyche historical specific shades of fear—distinguishable as anxiety, delicacy, repugnance, embarrassment, and shame—these historical variations of fear are "nothing other than the psychological counterpart" of specific historical forms of contestation, embodied as they always are in "the constraints which people exert on one another through the intertwining of their activities [*Fremdzwänge*]."[16] Utilizing a psychology heavily indebted to Freudian theory, Elias's case studies repeatedly focus on the manner by which these various forms of fear give historically specific shape to the structures of psyches, drives, and emotions.

Fremdzwang is thus also a historical concept. A fundamental premise of the entire Eliasian project is that as the structures of the constraints, compulsions, and controls embodied in social relations change, so also do the structures of fear and, as a consequence, of the psyche itself. In fact, the major concern of *The Civilizing Process* is the presentation of a developmental history of such interrelated social and psychic change, a presentation that focuses on three historical eras: feudal warrior society, absolutist court society, and bourgeois society.

As discussed in chapter 13, the structure of *Fremdzwänge* specific to feudal warrior society consisted both of the volatile social pressures exerted by warring peoples upon one another and of the volatile psychic structures developed to successfully respond to these pressures. For the elite of the era, one's psyche's "survival function" required that its structure be one in which id impulses permeated the ego, ever ready for quick release, and that mental activities detrimental to the immediacy of release, such as rational reflection or the repression of impulsivity, remain undeveloped.

As chapter 14 detailed, the rise of court society associated with absolutist monarchal states entailed a fundamental change of this structure of social relations, and with it, also a change in the structures of fear and of the psyche. For the elite, competitive threats to one's "social existence" rather than to one's "physical existence" now constituted the principal "danger zone." As "the sword ... [became] replaced by intrigue," this new configuration of *Fremdzwang* compelled the development of *Selbstzwang*—another of Elias's invented German compounds, rendered in English as "self-constraint," "self-control," and "self-compulsion."[17] In psycho-structural terms, the developments of *Selbstzwang* entailed the emergence of a strong and stable ego, sharply differentiated from id impulse, an ego that placed one's impulses and behavior under the command of rational foresight and reflexive self-control.

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16 Ibid., 441-443.
17 Ibid., 398.

With the triumph of the bourgeois social order in the nineteenth century, the structure of elite power contestation was altered again, centering on "adeptness in the competitive struggle for economic chances."[18] New, market-driven insecurities of "external pressures and compulsions" (of *Fremdzwang*) were such that they entailed a new form of *Selbstzwang*: the bourgeois superego, which served, above all else, as a psychic agency of defense against the loss of privilege, distinction, and property. The bourgeois superego took a form so severe, in fact, that it split the psyche in two, as "inner fears" compelled superego to combat id, resulting in a new historically specific set of civilizational neuroses: compulsive disorders, obsessional neuroses, depression, impulse atrophy, and hysteria.[19]

2. A Paradigm of Paradigms

Although the above five paradigms differ from one another in a number of major ways, at their core they also share elements of a common viewpoint about the interconnection of the psyche and the social. I will here attempt to bring to the surface several principles shared by these five paradigms. To the extent that these interrelated principles point to the underlying unity of all five paradigms, we may say that they constitute elements of a 'paradigm of paradigms'—interrelated assertions about the basic psycho-social viewpoint shared by all five paradigms. To a similar extent, they also may be seen as offering a synoptic summation of the previous chapters of this book or, at least, of some of their main theoretical findings.

First Principle: Some sociological questions require psychological answers

In their scientific investigations of the social world (if not in their non-scientific lived experiences of that world), many sociologists assume that the proper understanding of the social world is markedly incompatible with considerations of the psyche. All four of the authors whose works we have examined share a contrasting assumption: that bridging the psycho-social divide assists in illuminating the social world. As we have seen, the psycho-social paradigms that structure these authors' texts often interlock the analyses of social structure and the individual, culture and the person, social behavior and psychic motivation, and they do so in ways such that consideration of the one benefits from consideration of the other.

This is most clearly seen in three cases: Freud's paradigm of the imposition of social structures on the psyche, Adorno's dialectic psycho-social paradigm, and Elias's paradigm of the historical psyche. All three of these paradigms connect analyses of the social and the psyche so closely that investigation of the one almost inevitably necessitates investigation of the other. For instance, Freud's depiction of class exploitation frequently grounds an evaluation of the social facts of economic class structure in a psychological analysis of instinctual estrangement and sublimation. Adorno's psycho-social dialectic follows almost the same tack.

18 Ibid., 425.
19 Ibid., 419, 410, 420, 375-378.

Although this paradigm grants primacy to "the social totality," it requires that the social manifestations of this primacy (for instance, the various aspects of the social, political, and cultural monopolization of late industrial society) be explicated in terms of its effect upon the psyche (in this instance, the destruction of ego and superego structures). Similarly, Elias's paradigmatic use of the concept of *Fremdzwang* requires that the analysis of the social-structural compulsions of a historical era be tied to an analysis of the ways those compulsions give shape to the structures of the psyche. The compulsions of *Fremdzwang* are, in fact, at once the external pressures of social structure and the internal realignments of psychodynamic response.

Freud's paradigm of the social psychism and Weber's paradigm of psychic mediation intermix psychic and social investigation in somewhat different ways. In the case of Freud's social psychism, it may appear that the psycho-social divide is totally obliterated, for this paradigm dictates that the social (or cultural) realm be viewed as embodying psychological dynamics. However, Freud's paradigm actually calls for the divide to be bridged, not obliterated. Freud's social psychism remains analytically (and theoretically) an aspect of the social domain and thus distinct from the individual psyche. It is this very conceptual separation of social psychism from the individual psyche that structures Freud's portrayal of the paradoxes of their interrelation, as illustrated by his assertion that a collective neurosis may infect an entire community while at the same time it "succeeds in sparing many people an individual neurosis." In such cases, the analysis of the social realm (including the social psychism) remains both distinct from, yet also linked to, the analysis of the individual psyche.

In Weber's case, the social-psyche divide is bridged by his paradigm of religiously inspired social action, which, by placing the psychic response to religious ideas in a mediating position between those ideas and consequent social action, requires that a psychologically attuned analysis be a part of the interpretation of the meaning of the action itself. Moreover, the same requirement exists for the interpretation of all cases of non-rational, meaningful social action (not just those actions mediated by religiously inspired affects), as well as for the interpretation of the social structures that result from this action—the analysis of salvation anxiety motivating the behavior of the Puritan entrepreneur forms a crucial part, after all, of the Weberian understanding of the rise of modern capitalism.

All five paradigms, then, require analysis to bridge the psycho-social divide. In all of the above examples, these paradigms press sociological investigation to cross the divide in order to seek psychological assistance. But, in other passages in the same texts, the crossing also occurs in the opposite direction. One can find instances in the works structured by all five paradigms in which a passage of psychological thought turns to, and benefits from, sociological assistance. For example, Freud's analysis of the modern psyche gains a valuable dimension when tied to an account of modern structures of social discord—specifically, to class oppression (*The Future of an Illusion*) and national conflict (*Civilization and its Discontents*). Adorno's analysis of ego loss among the masses gains its urgency (and its evaluative weight) from its linkage to a theory of political and cultural authoritarianism. The brilliance of Weber's nuanced psychological portrait of the Protestant 'personality' only becomes fully evident when viewed from within the framework of his wider sociological

examination of the Protestant ethic's cultural origin (Calvinism) and its social consequence (modern capitalism). And Elias's depiction of the various neuroses of the bourgeois psyche (a depiction that in itself is little more than a conventional listing of Freudian ailments) gains its import because of its connection to an analysis of the ways that "functional democratization" undermines the bourgeois claim to, and hold on, hereditary class privileges.

Second Principle: The psyche dynamically alters that which society imposes upon it

In contemporary sociological endeavors, there often exists an implicit assumption that a society's cultural representations are reproduced in a fairly straightforward fashion in the psyches of a population and, hence, that one need only examine the former to grasp the mood and perceptions of the latter. Thus, in most cases actual psychological analysis is thought unnecessary. When an explicit conceptualization is offered of the psychological process by which cultural ideas influence the individual psyches of a population, this process tends to be depicted in a manner somewhat similar to the simplified presentation of superego internalization found in the first pages of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*. However, even though the term "internalization" may appear, overt references to either Freud or the superego are usually missing (the concept of the superego, in fact, has almost totally disappeared from today's sociological literature). But Freud's warning in *The Future of an Illusion* still stands: the notion of a straightforward psychic internalization of socially imposed ideas is inherently "unpsychological."

The contrast between these contemporary approaches and those embodied in the texts examined in this book could not be more stark. Not only do these works explicitly present accounts of the psychic response to social pressures, but the response itself is depicted as altering that which is imposed, not simply as absorbing it. For central to all five paradigms is the understanding that the psyche responds to societal pressures—whether these be cultural, economic, or political—in distinctly psychodynamic ways.

Weber's paradigm of psychological mediation is a perfect example of this understanding. As we have seen, a fundamental thesis of *The Protestant Ethic* is that "the psychological consequences … of religious ideas" are often radically different from the "logical" consequences of these cultural ideas. Weber's text portrays the Protestant psyche as translating doctrinal ideas concerning the uncertainty of salvation into anxieties and personality formations, the character of which differ quite significantly from the original tenor of these ideas. Adorno's dialectical paradigm is premised upon the same understanding. For instance, a central thesis of "Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses" is that late industrial society's reign of instrumental rationality produces within the psyche both an upsurge of irrational and self-destructive id impulses and a collapse of ego rationalism. That is, the psychodynamic response to the rationalization of society is the de-rationalization of the psyche. Similarly, in Elias's depiction of the civilizing process the psyche responds to the historically specific configurations of status and power contestation through the medium of various structures of fear. It is the mediating dynamics of these fears, not the structure of the contestations themselves,

that give their shape to the historical psyche. In the case of the bourgeois psyche, for instance, the social-structural contradictions that undermine bourgeois privilege are registered psychically in the form of status fears of such intensity that they split the psyche itself into an inner battlefield in which "the fears of one sector of the personality" wage war on the other sectors.

And, of course, Freud's two psycho-social paradigms incorporate distinctly Freudian (that is, psychodynamic) notions of the psyche's response to social influences. Although *The Future of an Illusion*'s paradigm is formed around ideas of the imposition of social facts upon the individual psyche, it also leads to the portrayal of the psyche's response to this imposition as being, for the most part, distinctly psychodynamic. For instance, the class-based economic privations and rewards imposed upon a population are depicted as activating not only distinct psychic processes (sublimations among the privileged; primal lusts among the unprivileged) but also different psychic ailments (neuroses among the privileged; perversions among the unprivileged). And although *Civilization and its Discontents*' paradigm leads to a conception of society as being in itself infused with psychic processes, the psychodynamics of the individual psyche's response often take a different form from that which the psychism of the society imposes upon it. For example, Freud's concept of "the narcissism of minor differences" is structured around a distinction between libidinal dynamics operating on a group level and aggressive dynamics operating on an individual level. That is, as Eros works at the level of the group to draw its members together, the "natural aggressive instinct" that lies within each of its individual members is diverted away from fellow members and toward neighboring out-groups.

Third Principle: The psyche mediates the human interactions that constitute the social world.

In the texts structured by these paradigms, the social not only has a determinate effect on the psyche, but the psyche in turn has such an effect on the social. Not only are psyches shaped in common by similar structures of the social world; in common these same psyches also energize, motivate and give shape to the human actions and interactions that shape that world.

One might question whether such a bidirectional crossing of the psycho-social divide is actually characteristic of all five paradigms. For instance, Freud's paradigm of social imposition tends to reify the social world and thus to view it as a prior social facticity that exists in some regards ontologically prior to its encounter with the psyche, and thus as not in itself psychologically mediated. If *The Future of an Illusion* were to maintain this viewpoint consistently, it would preclude a notion of psychic involvement in the constitution of the social world. However, the text's later chapters offer a psychologistic antidote to the sociologistic determinism presented in the opening chapters. For Freud advances there the notion that not only religion but also science, high culture, the state, and the family may all be the outcome of primitive psychic wishes. In addition, even the more sociologistic opening chapters make psychological sense only because they include a number of anti-sociologistic suggestions of ways that the psyche contributes to the character of the social system

imposed upon it. For instance, readers clearly understand that the failure of superego formation among the unpriveleged classes is a result of economic privation, and, furthermore, we understand that it is this psychic failure that shapes major aspects (as Freud sees it) of the Catholic Church. Thus, the social institution of the Church—its authoritarian ideology and its influential confessional in which the priest serves as an "external superego"—are results (and not just causes) of the masses' own psychic needs, needs which in this case spring from the masses' lack of internal psychic instinctual controls.

In a somewhat similar manner, Adorno's paradigm might be seen as granting ontological priority to the social domain in its relation to the psyche. Adorno's concept of the "social totality" includes the notion that the dynamics of modern monopolization are beyond human control—the social order having become, in a literal sense, a total reification. Thus, while Adorno's paradigm positions the "social totality" as the cause of psychic alterations (ego loss and the upsurge of destructive impulsivity), the possibility of granting the psyche a role in the constitution of that totality seems to be precluded. However, in "The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses," Adorno's elucidatory explorations throw out numerous suggestions of ways that these psychic alterations, while leading the masses to seek solace in political and cultural authoritarianism, also serve to alter the character of the authoritarianism itself. For instance, in Adorno's account, psychic destabilization unleashes in the masses sado-masochistic longings that impel the authoritarian movement itself toward its own self-annihilation. As the masses capitulate to the "social totality," they contribute their own negative psychodynamic response (the urge for "destruction as such").

In contrast to the above two paradigms, there is no question that the remaining three paradigms structure the psycho-social interconnection in ways that include notions of psychic inputs to the social order. Freud's paradigm of the social psychism does this in a manner different from either Elias's or Weber's paradigms. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, we remember, the psychic dimension of civilization itself is "a process which mankind undergoes." The text clearly distinguishes the mental processes of the social psychism that shape nations and communities from inputs of the individual psyche. In descriptions of the impact of these socially embodied mental processes, the focus tends to be on the alterations they cause to the psychic make-up of individuals. However, the text also suggests that individuals contribute to the interchange. One example of such a contribution is evident in Freud's account of the way that the "personality" of a great leader becomes embodied within the social psychism as "the cultural superego" of an epoch of civilization.

Neither Elias nor Weber imputes psychodynamic qualities to cultural or social formations as Freud does. As we have seen, Elias's paradigm situates historically specific formations of social competition for power, prestige, and privilege as the determinate cause of an era's dominant structure of fear. This structure of fear in turn alters the psychic structure of the individuals of the era. And this psychic structure, together with its associated structures of fear, provides the motivational energy for, and the shape of, the specific behavior and specific character of the various social formations of the era. Similarly, Weber's paradigm places at the center of his argument the mediation of the psyche in the shaping of social behaviors that

altered the nature of the social world. *The Protestant Ethic* pivots on the role that psychodynamic responses to certain religious ideas—as distinct from the logical responses to those ideas—played in the rise of modern capitalism.

Fourth Principle: a reciprocal alignment of sociological and psychological analyses requires that they occur at similar levels of abstraction

In the texts shaped by the five paradigms, the conceptualization of the social domain occurs at a relatively high level of abstraction. As a consequence, the focus of sociological analysis is primarily on those social factors common to a population group of similarly situated individuals. Psychological conceptualization is similarly rendered, since it is focused on psychic factors common to the same population group. When particular individuals appear as objects of analysis, they usually serve as exemplars of social group characteristics, often in the form of ideal-type constructs that facilitate the larger analysis. Unique psychical details peculiar to a single individual (due to idiosyncrasies of temperament, upbringing, or social location) are seldom highlighted. And when they are, these particular elements are normally portrayed as exaggerations or aberrations that actually serve to assist the analysis of common characteristics of the group. Thus, whether the subject of sociological or psychological analysis (or an intermix of both), the portrayal of particularized individuals functions to further relatively similar levels of abstract social or psychic conceptualization.

It is not incidental that both sociological and psychological analyses are pitched at similar levels of abstraction. As we have seen, the basic premise of the first principle—that sociological queries often require psychological answers—leads to such a symmetry of focus, as queries and answers necessarily concern not only the same psycho-social population group, but also require a conceptual alignment of various factors involved in the psycho-social interconnection. Similarly, the bidirectionality of psycho-social influences inherent in the third principle demands a similar analytical alignment, since this principle's basic premise is that the social interactions that constitute a particular social world are in themselves psychically mediated.

However, if only the second principle applied—that is, if the interconnection between sociological and psychological analyses only followed from the perception of an imposition of a social formation upon the psyche—such a similarity in analytical levels would not be necessary. In such cases, an analysis of broadly conceived social characteristics of a social grouping might be followed by an analysis of singularly conceived psychic characteristics of a unique individual. A good illustration of the consequences of such an approach is provided by Jeffrey Prager's *Presenting the Past*, in which the author relates his attempt, and ultimate failure, to fully interconnect his separate professional roles of sociologist and psychoanalyst, since, as he defines these roles, "doing sociology" is to deal with "impersonal and broadly based social forces," while "doing psychoanalysis" is to deal with "individual uniqueness and

idiosyncrasy."[20] Prager does find (in line with the second principle) that cultural forces of the wider society profoundly impact and mediate his patients' self-understanding, but otherwise his conclusion, which follows from the asymmetry that exists between the analytic levels of his conceptualization (a sociology focused on broadly conceived cultural formations, a psychology focused on internal processes unique to an individual), is that other elements of the psycho-social interconnection simply "do not calibrate."[21]

3. Final Lessons

Both the common principles shared by each of the five psycho-social paradigms and separately each paradigm, as well as the theories and analyses they structure, offer lessons to those of us engaged in contemporary efforts to explore the psycho-social connection. I present here a set of final reflections upon these lessons and conclude with a note on various ways to comprehend their usefulness.

Freud. Freud's works on civilization point those who are engaged in the exploration of the sociological use of psychoanalysis in two opposing directions. One direction leads to the assertion of a radical opposition between the individual psyche and society, an opposition that, to the degree it is explicitly psychological, directs analysis to an exploration of the impact of social structures and practices on psychic formation, an impact that can itself be construed either narrowly or broadly. Viewed narrowly, the impact results in the internalization of social representations (on the model of superego internalization); viewed broadly, the impact gives shape to the structure of the psyche (or to aspects of it, such as the structures of emotions and drives). The psycho-social paradigms of Adorno and Elias directly follow this broader approach, as does Weber's indirectly. As we have seen, their paradigms not only posit a degree of social (or, in Weber's case, cultural) determination on psychic formation, but they also incorporate Freudian concepts (or, in Weber's case, concepts similar to Freud's) in their characterization of the psychodynamic processes that mediate that determination.

The other direction pointed to by Freud's works leads to the assertion that the social itself embodies psychodynamic characteristics, whether these be located in the symbolic order of culture or directly in the structures of social organization. As realized in the work of cultural sociologists and anthropologists, this approach also leads to empirically based investigations of emergent attributes that distinguish various cultures and various cultural domains.

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20 Jeffrey Prager, *Presenting the Past: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Misremembering* (Cambridge, 1998), 2.

21 Ibid., 3. For another example of this same lack of calibration, see Tony Jefferson's "For a Psychosocial Criminology," in Kerry Carrington and Russell Hogg, eds., *Critical Criminology: Issues, Debates, Challenges* (Cullomopton, 2002). Jefferson's attempt at finding connections between psychosocial variations in fear of crime and neighborhood location is frustrated by an approach that focuses psychological inquiry on the unique psychobiographies of individuals rather than on more broadly conceptualized psychological processes.

Weber. That psychological states play a role in irrational social behavior is implicitly recognized by almost all sociologists who investigate such behavior. However, this recognition often leads to a treatment of these irrational states as non-analyzed empirical givens, and thus to a failure to examine the processes by which irrational states actually influence behavior. Few today follow Weber's insistence that to understand the meaning of such behavior (and of the social structures constituted by this behavior), at the minimum one must be willing to examine the psychological content within that meaning. Fewer still follow Weber in rigorously developing ideal-typical depictions of the psychological elements of such irrational social behavior. And even fewer construct personality typologies as a means to assist the analysis of the psychic make-up of particular social groupings or historical eras.

Thus, many sociologists, perhaps in particular those influenced by rational choice theory, might benefit from a careful reading of "Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology," in which Weber argues that the inquiry into the meaning of social interaction gains from a careful separation of irrational from rational components of that interaction and from a careful psychological examination of the former, an examination necessarily attuned to irrational psychic mechanisms. On the other hand, those of us eager to engage in psychologically attuned social analysis need to remember Weber's corrective to "psychologism," a corrective that demonstrates that numerous aspects of society are irreducible to psychology.

Adorno. Similarly, Adorno's psycho-social dialectic puts us on notice that, when integrating psychology into social analysis, we need to be as keenly aware of the differences between social and psychic processes as we are of their interaction. Adorno speaks, for instance, of the developmental logic of capitalism as the radical other of psychic development. He insists that this alienation of "the social totality" from the human psyche results in a "split between the living subject and the objectivity that governs the subjects and yet derives from them.... [I]nner and outer life are torn apart."[22] But, paradoxically, even his examination of this radically social otherness is focused on evidence of the psyche.

Elias. The notion that the social, although a powerful determinant of the psyche, is nonetheless the radical other of the psyche is crucial not only to Adorno's paradigm, but also to Freud's paradigm in *The Future of the Illusion*, and, in a modified form, it also exists as a factor contributing to Weber's critique of psychologism. However, as an analytical approach to the investigation of human reality, this bifurcation, this tearing apart of inner and outer life, has a certain artificiality about it. I dare say that in our daily lives we seldom experience the social and the psyche in such states of absolute ontological opposition. Perhaps Elias's more thorough integration of the psyche and the social, his historical social psychology, "at once psychogenetic and sociogenetic," contains a corrective to such tendencies to totally sever the psyche from the social. For example, although Freud, Weber, and Adorno share Elias's view of the social order as inherently conflictual, only Elias consistently depicts the

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22 Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," 69-70.

psyche as located psychodynamically within, and as an integral part of, the broader social, political, and economic dynamics of that conflict.

On the Usefulness of the Past Masterworks. It is not a straightforward task to look to seminal works of the past for assistance in the work of the present, for all past works contain traces of the biases and blind spots that mark them as products of historically specific mindsets distinctly different from that of the present. In all the works examined in the chapters above, one obvious blind spot follows from the masculine orientation of analysis evidenced: although the fate of whole societies are their subject matter, women socially and psychically are largely missing from these examinations. One might also argue that key components of their major conceptualizations evidence other types of biases and blind spots: for example, Freud's stereotypical denigrative conception of the Catholic working-class psyche as lacking inner self-directive controls; Weber's equally negative conception of the pre-capitalist, Catholic psyche as being shaped by the unrestrained impulsivity of "the natural man"; and Adorno's identification of psychic autonomy with the social position of the entrepreneurial patriarch. Elias's problematic choice of the word "civilizing" as a master category of analysis is perhaps another case in point.

Simply stated, the task demands that we separate insight from blind spot, useful analytical structures from those distorted by outmoded passions, and that we not dismiss wholesale the approach of a past work solely because it exhibits biases that we today are predisposed so easily to reject. But there is also a value in understanding how the circumstances of such work, the specific historical situatedness of its writing, contributed to it in ways that predisposed its author to particular types of insight, as well as particular types of blindness. Such an understanding should sensitize us to the ways the contemporary circumstances of our own work shape not only our insight but also our own special blindness.

In particular, I contend that the study of the conceptual practices of the past masters of psycho-social analyses (such as this study of texts by Freud, Weber, Adorno, and Elias) has this additional value: it can sensitize us to the ways our own contemporary analytical practices embody specific disciplinary biases which, for all their power to illuminate, also curtail our ability to fully investigate our world. For although we personally experience our world as a psycho-social conglomeration, contemporary analytical paradigms artificially separate our experience into rigidly distinct domains of the social and the psyche, the one disconnected from the other theoretically and analytically. In fact, in our contemporary sociological worlds there are no widely-acknowledged paradigms that do otherwise. No vibrant contemporary sociological school of thought presents us with current examples of psycho-social analyses exhibiting the assuredness and breadth of view contained in works we have examined in the chapters above. We lack contemporary examples of conceptual paradigms that (as did those studied in the preceding chapters) lead analytical and theoretical thought, as a matter of course, to cross the psycho-social divide and thus to interlock investigation of social realities with investigation of psychodynamic psychological realities, the one enabling further illumination of the other.

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