

*The Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology**

by Rollo May

IN RECENT YEARS there has been a growing awareness on the part of some psychiatrists and psychologists that serious gaps exist in our way of understanding of human beings. These gaps may well seem most compelling to psychotherapists, confronted as they are in clinic and consulting room with the sheer reality of persons in crisis whose anxiety will not be quieted by theoretical formulae. But the lacunae likewise present seemingly unsurmountable difficulties in scientific research. Thus many psychiatrists and psychologists in Europe and others in this country have been asking themselves disquieting questions, and others are aware of gnawing doubts which arise from the same half-suppressed and unasked questions.

Can we be sure, one such question goes, that we are seeing the patient as he really is, knowing him in his own reality; or are we seeing merely a projection of our own theories *about* him? Every psychotherapist, to be sure, has his knowledge of patterns and mechanisms of behavior and has at his finger tips the system of concepts developed by his particular school. Such a conceptual system is entirely necessary if we are to observe scientifically. But the crucial question is always the bridge between the system and the patient—how can we be certain that our system, admirable and beautifully wrought as it may be in principle, has anything whatever to do with this specific Mr. Jones, a living, immediate reality sitting opposite us in the consulting room? May not just this particular person require another system, another quite different frame of reference? And does not this patient, or any person for that matter, evade our investigations, slip through our scientific fingers like seafoam, precisely to the extent that we rely on the logical consistency of our own system?

* I wish to thank Drs. Henri Ellenberger, Leslie Farber, Carl Rogers, Erwin Straus, Paul Tillich, and Edith Weigert for reading and making suggestions for these two chapters.

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Another such gnawing question is: How can we know whether we are seeing the patient in his real world, the world in which he "lives and moves and has his being," and which is for him unique, concrete, and different from our general theories of culture? In all probability we have never participated in his world and do not know it directly; yet we must know it and to some extent must be able to exist in it if we are to have any chance of knowing him.

Such questions were the motivations of psychiatrists and psychologists in Europe who later comprised the *Daseinsanalyse*, or existential-analytic, movement. The "existential research orientation in psychiatry," writes Ludwig Binswanger, its chief spokesman, "arose from dissatisfaction with the prevailing efforts to gain scientific understanding in psychiatry. . . . Psychology and psychotherapy as sciences are admittedly concerned with 'man,' but not at all primarily with mentally ill man, but with *man as such*. The new understanding of man, which we owe to Heidegger's analysis of existence, has its basis in the new conception that man is no longer understood in terms of some theory—be it a mechanistic, a biologic or a psychological one. . . ." ¹

I What Called Forth This Development?

Before turning to what this new conception of man is, let us note that this approach sprang up spontaneously in different parts of Europe and among different schools, and has a diverse body of researchers and creative thinkers. There were Eugene Minkowski in Paris, Erwin Straus in Germany and now in this country, V. E. von Gebattel in Germany, who represent chiefly the first, or phenomenological, stage of this movement. There were Ludwig Binswanger, A. Storch, M. Boss, G. Bally, Roland Kuhn in Switzerland, J. H. Van Den Berg and F. J. Buytendijk in Holland, and so on, representing more specifically the second, or existential, stage. These facts—namely, that the movement emerged spontaneously, without these men in some cases knowing about the remarkably similar work of their colleagues, and that, rather than being the brain-child of one leader, it owes its creation to diverse psychiatrists and psychologists—testify that it must answer a widespread need in our times in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. Von Gebattel, Boss, and Bally are Freudian analysts; Binswanger, though in Switzerland, became a member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society at Freud's recommendation when the Zurich group split off from the International. Some of the existential therapists had also been under Jungian influence.

These thoroughly experienced men became disquieted over the fact that, although they were effecting cures by the techniques they had learned, they could not, so long as they confined themselves to Freudian and Jungian as-

¹ L. Binswanger, "Existential Analysis and Psychotherapy," in *Progress in Psychotherapy*, ed. by Fromm-Reichmann and Moreno (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1956), p. 144.

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sumptions, arrive at any clear understanding of why these cures did or did not occur or what actually was happening in the patients' existence. They refused the usual methods among therapists of quieting such inner doubts—namely, of turning one's attention with redoubled efforts to perfecting the intricacies of one's own conceptual system. Another tendency among psychotherapists, when anxious or assailed by doubts as to what they are doing, is to become preoccupied with technique; perhaps the most handy anxiety-reducing agent is to abstract one's self from the issues by assuming a wholly technical emphasis. These men resisted this temptation. They likewise were unwilling to postulate unverifiable agents, such as "libido," or "censor," as Ludwig Lefebvre points out,² or the various processes lumped under "transference," to explain what was going on. And they had particularly strong doubts about using the theory of the unconscious as a *carte blanche* on which almost any explanation could be written. They were aware, as Straus puts it, that the "unconscious ideas of the patient are more often than not the conscious theories of the therapist."

It was not with specific techniques of therapy that these psychiatrists and psychologists took issue. They recognize, for example, that psychoanalysis is valid for certain types of cases, and some of them, bona fide members of the Freudian movement, employ it themselves. But they all had grave doubts about its theory of man. And they believed these difficulties and limitations in the concept of man not only seriously blocked research but would in the long run also seriously limit the effectiveness and development of therapeutic techniques. They sought to understand the particular neuroses or psychoses and, for that matter, any human being's crisis situation, not as deviations from the conceptual yardstick of this or that psychiatrist or psychologist who happened to be observing, but as deviations in the structure of that particular patient's existence, the disruption of his *condition humaine*. "A psychotherapy on existential-analytic bases investigates the life-history of the patient to be treated, . . . but it does not explain this life-history and its pathologic idiosyncrasies according to the teachings of any school of psychotherapy, or by means of its preferred categories. Instead, it *understands* this life-history as modifications of the total structure of the patient's being-in-the-world. . . ." ³ If these phrases seem confusing, we may only remark that it will be the task of these introductory chapters to make as clear as possible what this approach means in the understanding of specific persons. Most of the succeeding chapters in the book, written by the pioneers in this movement themselves, will exemplify the method in case studies.

Binswanger's own endeavor to understand how existential analysis throws light on a given case, and how it compares with other methods of under-

² Personal communication from Dr. Lefebvre, an existential psychotherapist who was a student of Jaspers and Boss.

³ L. Binswanger, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

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standing, is graphically shown in his "Ellen West."⁴ After he had completed his book on existential analysis, in 1942,⁵ Binswanger went back into the archives in the sanatorium of which he is director to select the case history of this young woman who had ultimately committed suicide. The case is rich not only in the respect that the eloquent diaries, personal notes, and poems of Ellen West were available but also in the respects that she had been treated over two periods of time by psychoanalysts before her admission to the sanatorium and, while in the sanatorium, had received consultations by Bleuler and Kraepelin. Binswanger uses this case as a basis for discussing how Ellen West was diagnosed and understood first by the psychoanalysts, then by Bleuler and Kraepelin and the authorities at the sanatorium, and finally how she would now be understood on the basis of existential analysis.

It is relevant here to note the long friendship between Binswanger and Freud, a relationship which both greatly valued. In his recent small book giving his recollections of Freud, which he published at the urging of Anna Freud, Binswanger recounts the many visits he made to Freud's home in Vienna and the visit of several days Freud made to him at his sanatorium on Lake Constance. Their relationship was the more remarkable since it was the sole instance of a lasting friendship of Freud with any colleague who differed radically with him. There is a poignant quality in a message Freud wrote to Binswanger in reply to the latter's New Year's letter: "You, quite different from so many others, have not let it happen that your intellectual development—which has taken you further and further away from my influence—should destroy our personal relations, and you do not know how much good such fineness does to one."⁶ Whether the friendship survived because the intellectual conflict between the two was like the proverbial battle between the elephant and the walrus, who never met on the same ground, or because of some diplomatic attitude on Binswanger's part (a tendency for which Freud mildly chided him at one point) or because of the depth of their respect and affection for each other, we cannot of course judge. What was certainly important, however, was the fact that Binswanger and the others in the existential movement in therapy were concerned not with arguing about specific dynamisms as such but with analyzing the underlying assumptions about human nature and arriving at a *structure* on which all specific therapeutic systems could be based.

It would be a mistake, therefore, simply to identify the existential movement in psychotherapy as another in the line of schools which have broken off from Freudianism, from Jung and Adler on down. Those previous deviating schools, although called forth by blind spots in orthodox therapy and

⁴ Included in this volume, published originally in 1945.

⁵ *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins* (Zurich: Niehans, 1942).

⁶ L. Binswanger, *Erinnerungen an Sigmund Freud*, just published in this country under the title, *Sigmund Freud: Reminiscences of a Friendship*, trans. by Norbert Guterman (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1957).

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typically emerging when orthodoxy had struck an arid plateau, were nevertheless formed under the impetus of the creative work of one seminal leader. Otto Rank's new emphasis on the *present time* in the patient's experience emerged in the early twenties when classical analysis was bogging down in unvital intellectualized discussion of the patient's past; Wilhelm Reich's *character analysis* arose in the late twenties as an answer to the special need to break through the "ego defenses" of the character armor; new *cultural approaches* developed in the 1930's through the work of Horney and, in their distinctive ways, Fromm and Sullivan, when orthodox analysis was missing the real significance of the social and interpersonal aspects of neurotic and psychotic disturbances. Now the emergence of the existential therapy movement does have one feature in common with these other schools, namely, that it was also called forth by blind spots, as we shall make clearer later, in the existing approaches to psychotherapy. But it differs from the other schools in two respects. First, it is not the creation of any one leader, but grew up spontaneously and indigenously in diverse parts of the continent. Secondly, it does not purport to found a new school as over against other schools or to give a new technique of therapy as over against other techniques. It seeks, rather, to analyze the structure of human existence—an enterprise which, if successful, should yield an understanding of the reality underlying all situations of human beings in crises.

Thus this movement purports to do more than cast light upon blind spots. When Binswanger writes, ". . . existential analysis is able to widen and deepen the basic concepts and understandings of psychoanalysis," he is on sound ground, in my judgment, not only with respect to analysis but other forms of therapy as well.

It requires no brilliance, however, to predict that this approach will encounter a good deal of resistance in this country, despite the fact that it has been rapidly growing in importance in Europe and is now reported by some observers to be the dominant movement on the continent. In the early period when they were colleagues, Freud once wrote to Jung that it was always better to identify and call forth openly the resistances of that still-Victorian culture to psychoanalysis. We shall take Freud's advice and name what we believe will be the chief resistances to this present approach.

The *first* source of resistance, of course, to this or any new contribution is the assumption that all major discoveries have been made in these fields and we need only fill in the details. This attitude is an old interloper, an uninvited guest who has been notoriously present in the battles between the schools in psychotherapy. Its name is "blind-spots-structuralized-into-dogma." And though it does not merit an answer, nor is it susceptible to any, it is unfortunately an attitude which may be more widespread in this historical period than one would like to think.

The *second* source of resistance, and one to be answered seriously, is the

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suspicion that existential analysis is an encroachment of philosophy into psychiatry, and does not have much to do with science. This attitude is partly a hang-over of the culturally inherited scars from the battle of the last of the nineteenth century when psychological science won its freedom from metaphysics. The victory then achieved was exceedingly important but, as in the aftermath of any war, there followed reactions to opposite extremes which are themselves harmful. Concerning this resistance we shall make several comments.

It is well to remember that the existential movement in psychiatry and psychology arose precisely out of a passion to be not *less* but *more* empirical. Binswanger and the others were convinced that the traditional scientific methods not only did not do justice to the data but actually tended to hide rather than reveal what was going on in the patient. The existential analysis movement is a protest against the tendency to see the patient in forms tailored to our own preconceptions or to make him over into the image of our own predilections. In this respect it stands squarely within the scientific tradition in its widest sense. But it broadens its knowledge of man by historical perspective and scholarly depth, by accepting the facts that human beings reveal themselves in art and literature and philosophy, and by profiting from the insights of the particular cultural movements which express the anxiety and conflicts of contemporary man. One has only to read the following chapters to see with what intellectual probity and scholarly discipline these students of man explore their fields. To my mind they represent a uniting of science and humanism.

It is also important here to remind ourselves that every scientific method rests upon philosophical presuppositions. These presuppositions determine not only how much reality the observer with this particular method can see—they are indeed the spectacles through which he perceives—but also whether or not what is observed is pertinent to real problems and therefore whether the scientific work will endure. It is a gross, albeit common, error to assume naïvely that one can observe facts best if he avoids all preoccupation with philosophical assumptions. All he does, then, is mirror uncritically the particular parochial doctrines of his own limited culture. The result in our day is that science gets identified with methods of *isolating* factors and observing them from an allegedly *detached base*—a particular method which arose out of the split between subject and object made in the seventeenth century in Western culture and then developed into its special compartmentalized form in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷ We in our day, of course, are no less subject to “methodolatry” than are members of any other culture. But it seems especially a misfortune that our understanding in such a crucial area as the psychological study of man, with the understand-

⁷ See p. 22.

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ing of emotional and mental health depending upon it, should be curtailed by uncritical acceptance of limited assumptions. Helen Sargent has sagely and pithily remarked, "Science offers more leeway than graduate students are permitted to realize."⁸

Is not the essence of science the assumption that *reality is lawful* and therefore understandable, and is it not an inseparable aspect of scientific integrity that any method continuously criticize its own presuppositions? The only way to widen one's "blindness" is to analyze one's philosophical assumptions. In my judgment it is very much to the credit of the psychiatrists and psychologists in this existential movement that they seek to clarify their own bases. This enables them, as Dr. Ellenberger points out in a later chapter in this book, to see their human subjects with a fresh clarity and to shed original light on many facets of psychological experience.

The *third* source of resistance, and to my mind the most crucial of all, is the tendency in this country to be preoccupied with technique and to be impatient with endeavors to search below such considerations to find the foundations upon which all techniques must be based. This tendency can be well explained in terms of our American social background, particularly our frontier history, and it can be well justified as our optimistic, activist concern for helping and changing people. Certainly our genius in the field of psychology has been in the behavioristic, clinical, and applied areas, and our special contributions in psychiatry have been in drug therapy and other technical applications. Gordon Allport has described the fact that American and British psychology (as well as general intellectual climate) has been Lockean, that is, pragmatic, a tradition fitting behaviorism, stimulus and response systems, and animal psychology. The continental tradition, in contrast, has been Leibnizian.⁹ Now it is very sobering to remind one's self that every new theoretical contribution in the field of psychotherapy which has had the originality and germinating power to lead to the developing of a new school has come from continental Europe with only two exceptions—and, of these, one was grandfired by a European-born psychiatrist.¹⁰ In this

⁸ *Methodological Problems in the Assessment of Intrapsychic Change in Psychotherapy* (to be published).

⁹ Gordon Allport, *Becoming, Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955). The Lockean tradition, Allport points out, consists of an emphasis on the mind as *tabula rasa* on which experience writes all that is later to exist therein, whereas the Leibnizian tradition views the mind as having a potentially active core of its own.

¹⁰ To see this one has only to name the originators of new theory: Freud, Adler, Jung, Rank, Stekel, Reich, Horney, Fromm, etc. The two exceptions, so far as I can see, are the schools of Harry Stack Sullivan and Carl Rogers, and the former was indirectly related to the work of the Swiss-born Adolph Meyer. Even Rogers may partly illustrate our point, for although his approach has clear and consistent theoretical implications about human nature, his focus has been on the "applied" rather than the "pure" science side, if we may make that distinction, and his theory about human nature owes much to Otto Rank. We

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country we tend to be a nation of practitioners; but the disturbing question is, where shall we get *what* we practice? In our preoccupation with technique, laudable enough in itself, we tend to overlook the fact that *technique emphasized by itself in the long run defeats even technique*. One of the reasons that European thought has been so much richer in yielding original and fresh discoveries in these fields is its tradition of broad historical and philosophical perspective in science and thought. This is abundantly clear in the specific area with which we are concerned in this book, the existential psychotherapy movement. Binswanger, Straus, Von Gebattel and the other founders of this movement, though their thought is related to real problems and patients, have the flavor of "pure" science. They search not for techniques as such but rather for an understanding of the foundations on which all technique must stand.

These resistances we have named, far from undermining the contribution of existential analysis, precisely demonstrate its potential importance to our thinking, in my judgment. Despite its difficulties—due partly to its language, partly to the complexity of its thought—we believe that it is a contribution of significance and originality meriting serious study.

II *What Is Existentialism?*

We must now remove a major stumbling block—namely, the confusion surrounding the term, "existentialism." The word is bandied about to mean

are not making a value judgment in the distinction between the "applied" science tendency in America as contrasted to the "pure" science tendencies in Europe; but we do wish to point out that a serious problem confronts us that goes far beyond the borders of psychology and psychiatry. Professor Whitehead of Harvard, in his inaugural address several years ago as Director of the Harvard School of Economics, undertook to list the twenty outstanding contributors to the intellectual scientific development of Western civilization during the last three centuries, such as Einstein, Freud; every one of them came from Europe or the Near East; not one was born in America. One cannot explain this simply on the basis of the longer time Europe has been training scientists, says Whitehead, for in America in the last four decades we have trained more scientists and engineers than in all the rest of Western civilization put together. Since the sources of "pure" science in Europe may be drying up, this predilection for "applications" presents us with a serious problem for the future.

We obviously have no desire at all to set up any "Europe vs. America" issue. We are all part of modern Western culture, and for quite understandable historical reasons certain aspects of the historical destiny of Western man fell more heavily on Europe and others on America. It is precisely in this context that the existential approach may have a particular and significant contribution. For this approach combines the basic scientific quest for understanding the underlying structure of human existence both with a suspicion of abstraction *per se* and with an emphasis on truth produced in action. It seeks theory not in the realm of abstraction but in the realm of the concrete, existing human being. Thus it has a profound, potential (though as yet unrealized) affinity for the American genius for combining thought and action (as shown so beautifully in William James). The chapters which follow, therefore, may yield important help in our finding the "pure" science bases we so sorely need in the sciences of man.

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everything—from the posturing defiant dilettantism of some members of the *avant garde* on the left bank in Paris, to a philosophy of despair advocating suicide, to a system of anti-rationalist German thought written in a language so esoteric as to exasperate any empirically minded reader. Existentialism, rather, is an expression of profound dimensions of the modern emotional and spiritual temper and is shown in almost all aspects of our culture. It is found not only in psychology and philosophy but in art, *vide* Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Picasso—and in literature, *vide* Dostoevski, Baudelaire, Kafka, and Rilke. Indeed, in many ways it is the unique and specific portrayal of the psychological predicament of contemporary Western man. This cultural movement, as we shall see later in detail, has its roots in the same historical situation and the same psychological crises which called forth psychoanalysis and other forms of psychotherapy.

Confusions about the term occur even in usually highly literate places. *The New York Times*, in a report commenting on Sartre's denunciation of, and final break with, the Russian Communists for their suppression of freedom in Hungary, identified Sartre as a leader in "existentialism, a broadly materialistic form of thought." The report illustrates two reasons for the confusion—first, the identification of existentialism in the popular mind in this country with the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. Quite apart from the fact that Sartre is known here for his dramas, movies, and novels rather than for his major, penetrating psychological analyses, it must be emphasized that he represents a nihilistic, subjectivist extreme in existentialism which invites misunderstanding, and his position is by no means the most useful introduction to the movement. But the second more serious confusion in the *Times* report is its definition of existentialism as "broadly materialistic." Nothing could be less accurate—nothing, unless it be the exact opposite, namely, describing it as an idealistic form of thinking. For the very essence of this approach is that it seeks to analyze and portray the human being—whether in art or literature or philosophy or psychology—on a level which undercuts the old dilemma of materialism versus idealism.

Existentialism, in short, is the endeavor to understand man by cutting below the cleavage between subject and object which has bedeviled Western thought and science since shortly after the Renaissance. This cleavage Binswanger calls "the cancer of all psychology up to now . . . the cancer of the doctrine of subject-object cleavage of the world." The existential way of understanding human beings has some illustrious progenitors in Western history, such as Socrates in his dialogues, Augustine in his depth-psychological analyses of the self, Pascal in his struggle to find a place for the "heart's reasons which the reason knows not of." But it arose specifically just over a hundred years ago in Kierkegaard's violent protest against the reigning rationalism of his day, Hegel's "totalitarianism of reason," to use Maritain's phrase. Kierkegaard proclaimed that Hegel's identification of abstract truth

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with reality was an illusion and amounted to trickery. "Truth exists," wrote Kierkegaard, "only as the individual himself produces it in action." He and the existentialists following him protested firmly against the rationalists and idealists who would see man only as a subject—that is, as having reality only as a thinking being. But just as strongly they fought against the tendency to treat man as an object to be calculated and controlled, exemplified in the almost overwhelming tendencies in the Western world to make human beings into anonymous units to fit like robots into the vast industrial and political collectivisms of our day.

These thinkers sought the exact opposite of intellectualism for its own sake. They would have protested more violently than classical psychoanalysis against the use of thinking as a defense against vitality or as a substitute for immediate experience. One of the early existentialists of the sociological wing, Feuerbach, makes this appealing admonition, "Do not wish to be a philosopher in contrast to being a man . . . do not think as a thinker . . . think as a living, real being. Think in Existence."¹¹

The term "existence," coming from the root *ex-sistere*, means literally to *stand out, to emerge*. This accurately indicates what these cultural representatives sought, whether in art or philosophy or psychology—namely, to portray the human being not as a collection of static substances or mechanisms or patterns but rather as emerging and becoming, that is to say, as existing. For no matter how interesting or theoretically true is the fact that I am composed of such and such chemicals or act by such and such mechanisms or patterns, the crucial question always is that I happen to exist at this given moment in time and space, and my problem is how I am to be aware of that fact and what I shall do about it. As we shall see later, the existential psychologists and psychiatrists do not at all rule out the study of dynamisms, drives, and patterns of behavior. But they hold that these cannot be understood in any given person except in the context of the overarching fact that here is a person who happens *to exist, to be*, and if we do not keep this in mind, all else we know about this person will lose its meaning. Thus their approach is always dynamic; existence refers to coming into being, becoming. Their endeavor is to understand this becoming not as a sentimental artifact but as the fundamental structure of human existence. When the term "being" is used in the following chapters, as it often is, the reader should remember that it is not a static word but a verb form, the participle of the verb "to be." Existentialism is basically concerned with *ontology*, that is, the science of being (*ontos*, from Greek "being").

We can see more clearly the significance of the term if we recall that traditionally in Western thought "existence" has been set over against "es-

¹¹ Quoted by Paul Tillich, "Existential Philosophy," in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 5:1, 44-70, 1944.

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sence." Essence refers to the greenness of this stick of wood, let us say, and its density, weight, and other characteristics which give it substance. By and large Western thought since the Renaissance has been concerned with essences. Traditional science seeks to discover such essences or substances; it assumes an essentialist metaphysics, as Professor Wild of Harvard puts it.¹² The search for essences may indeed produce highly significant universal laws in science or brilliant abstract conceptualizations in logic or philosophy. But it can do this only by abstraction. The *existence* of the given individual thing has to be left out of the picture. For example, we can demonstrate that three apples added to three make six. But this would be just as true if we substituted unicorns for apples; it makes no difference to the mathematical truth of the proposition whether apples or unicorns actually exist or not. That is to say, a proposition can be *true* without being *real*. Perhaps just because this approach has worked so magnificently in certain areas of science, we tend to forget that it necessarily involves a detached viewpoint and that the living individual must be omitted.¹³ There remains the chasm between truth and reality. And the crucial question which confronts us in psychology and other aspects of the science of man is precisely this chasm between what is *abstractly true* and what is *existentially real* for the given living person.

Lest it seem that we are setting up an artificial, straw-man issue, let us point out that this chasm between truth and reality is openly and frankly admitted by sophisticated thinkers in behavioristic and conditioning psychology. Kenneth W. Spence, distinguished leader of one wing of behavior theory, writes, "The question of whether any particular realm of behavior phenomena is more real or closer to real life and hence should be given priority in investigation does not, or at least should not, arise for the psychologist as scientist." That is to say, it does not primarily matter whether what is being studied is real or not. What realms, then, should be selected for study? Spence gives priority to phenomena which lend themselves "to the degrees of control and analysis necessary for the formulation of abstract laws."¹⁴ Nowhere has our point been put more unabashedly and clearly—

¹² John Wild, *The Challenge of Existentialism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955). Modern physics, with Heisenberg, Bohr (see p. 26), and similar trends have changed at this point, paralleling, as we shall see later, one side of the existentialist development. We are talking above of the traditional ideas of Western science.

¹³ Reality makes a difference to the person who *has* the apples—that is the *existential side*—but it is irrelevant to the truth of the mathematical proposition. For a more serious example, that all men die is a truth; and to say that such and such a percentage die at such and such ages gives a statistical accuracy to the proposition. But neither of these statements says anything about the fact which really matters most to each of us, namely, that you and I must alone face the fact that at some unknown moment in the future we shall die. In contrast to the essentialist propositions, these latter are *existential facts*.

¹⁴ Kenneth W. Spence, *Behavior Theory and Conditioning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).

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what can be reduced to *abstract laws* is selected, and whether what you are studying has reality or not is irrelevant to this goal. On the basis of this approach many an impressive system in psychology has been erected, with abstraction piled high upon abstraction—the authors succumbing, as we intellectuals are wont, to their “edifice complex”—until an admirable and imposing structure is built. The only trouble is that the edifice has more often than not been separated from human reality in its very foundations. Now the thinkers in the existential tradition hold the exact opposite to Spence’s view, and so do the psychiatrists and psychologists in the existential psychotherapy movement. They insist that it is necessary and possible to have a science of man which studies human beings in their reality.

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and those who followed them accurately foresaw this growing split between truth and reality in Western culture, and they endeavored to call Western man back from the delusion that reality can be comprehended in an abstracted, detached way. But though they protested vehemently against arid intellectualism, they were by no means simple activists. Nor were they anti-rational. Anti-intellectualism and other movements in our day which make thinking subordinate to acting must not at all be confused with existentialism. Either alternative—making man subject *or* object—results in losing the living, existing person. Kierkegaard and the existential thinkers appealed to a reality *underlying both subjectivity and objectivity*. We must not only study a person’s experience as such, they held, but even more we must study the man to whom the experience is happening, the one who is doing the experiencing. They insist, as Tillich puts it, that “Reality or Being is not the object of cognitive experience, but is rather ‘existence,’ is Reality as immediately experienced, with the accent on the inner, personal character of man’s immediate experience.”¹⁵ This comment, as well as several above, will indicate to the reader how close the existentialists are to present-day depth-psychology. It is by no means accidental that the greatest of them in the nineteenth century, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, happen also to be among the most remarkable psychologists (in the dynamic sense) of all time and that one of the contemporary leaders of this school, Karl Jaspers, was originally a psychiatrist and wrote a notable text on psychopathology. When one reads Kierkegaard’s profound analyses of anxiety and despair or Nietzsche’s amazingly acute insights into the dynamics of resentment and the guilt and hostility which accompany repressed emotional powers, one must pinch himself to realize that he is reading works written seventy-five and a hundred years ago and not some new contemporary psychological analysis. The existentialists are centrally concerned with rediscovering the living person amid the compartmentalization and dehumanization of modern culture, and in order to do this they engage in depth psychological analysis. Their concern is not with isolated psychological reactions in themselves

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, *op. cit.*

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but rather with the psychological being of the living man who is doing the experiencing. That is to say, they use psychological terms with an ontological meaning.¹⁶

Martin Heidegger is generally taken as the fountainhead of present-day existential thought. His seminal work, *Being and Time*, was of radical importance in giving Binswanger and other existential psychiatrists and psychologists the deep and broad basis they sought for understanding man. Heidegger's thought is rigorous, logically incisive, and "scientific" in the European sense of pursuing with unrelenting vigor and thoroughness whatever implications his inquiries led him to. But his work is almost impossible

¹⁶ For readers who wish more historical background, we append this note. In the winter of 1841, Schelling gave his famous series of lectures at the University of Berlin before a distinguished audience including Kierkegaard, Burckhardt, Engels, Bakunin. Schelling set out to overthrow Hegel, whose vast rationalist system, including, as we have said, the identification of abstract truth with reality and the bringing of all of history into an "absolute whole," held immense and dominant popularity in the Europe of the middle of the nineteenth century. Though many of Schelling's listeners were bitterly disappointed in his answers to Hegel, the existential movement may be said to have begun there. Kierkegaard went back to Denmark and in 1844 published his *Philosophical Fragments*, and two years later he wrote the declaration of independence of existentialism, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Also in 1844 there appeared the second edition of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, a work important in the new movement because of its central emphasis on vitality, "will," along with "idea." Two related works were written by Karl Marx in 1844-45. The early Marx is significant in this movement in his attack upon abstract truth as "ideology," again using Hegel as his whipping boy. Marx' dynamic view of history as the arena in which men and groups bring truth into being and his meaningful fragments pointing out how the money economy of modern industrialism tends to turn people into things and works toward the dehumanization of modern man are likewise significant in the existentialist approach. Both Marx and Kierkegaard took over Hegel's dialectical method but used it for quite different purposes. More existential elements were latently present in Hegel, it may be noted, than his antagonists acknowledged.

In the following decades the movement subsided. Kierkegaard remained completely unknown, Schelling's work was contemptuously buried, and Marx and Feuerbach were interpreted as dogmatic materialists. Then a new impetus came in the 1880's with the work of Dilthey, and particularly with Friedrich Nietzsche, the "philosophy of life" movement, and the work of Bergson.

The third and contemporary phase of existentialism came after the shock to the Western world caused by World War I. Kierkegaard and the early Marx were rediscovered, and the serious challenges to the spiritual and psychological bases of Western society given by Nietzsche could no longer be covered over by Victorian self-satisfied placidity. The specific form of this third phase owes much to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, which gave to Heidegger, Jaspers, and the others the tool they needed to undercut the subject-object cleavage which had been such a stumbling-block in science as well as philosophy. There is an obvious similarity between existentialism, in its emphasis on truth as produced in action, with the process philosophies, such as Whitehead's, and American pragmatism, particularly as in William James.

Those who wish to know more about the existential movement as such are referred to Paul Tillich's classical paper, "Existential Philosophy." For most of the above historical material I am indebted to Tillich's paper.

We may add that part of the confusion in this field is due to the misleading titles which books are given. Wahl's *A Short History of Existentialism* is short but by no means a history of existentialism, just as the book by Sartre published under the title of *Existential Psychoanalysis* has very little to do with psychoanalysis or, for that matter, existential therapy.

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to translate. Only a few essays are available in English.¹⁷ Jean-Paul Sartre's best contribution to our subject are his phenomenological descriptions of psychological processes. In addition to Jaspers, other prominent existential thinkers are Gabriel Marcel in France, Nicolas Berdyaev, originally Russian but until his recent death a resident of Paris, and Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno in Spain. Paul Tillich shows the existential approach in his work, and in many ways his book *The Courage to Be* is the best and most cogent presentation of existentialism as an approach to actual living available in English.¹⁸

The novels of Kafka portray the despairing, dehumanized situation in modern culture from which and to which existentialism speaks. *The Stranger* and *The Plague*, by Albert Camus, represent excellent examples in modern literature in which existentialism is partially self-conscious. But perhaps the most vivid of all portrayals of the meaning of existentialism is to be found in modern art, partly because it is articulated symbolically rather than as self-conscious thought and partly because art always reveals with special clarity the underlying spiritual and emotional temper of the culture. We shall frequently refer to the relation of modern art and existentialism in the following pages. Here let us only note that some of the common elements in the work of such outstanding representatives of the modern movement as Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Picasso are, *first*, a revolt against the hypocritical academic tradition of the late nineteenth century, *second*, an endeavor to pierce below surfaces to grasp a new relation to the reality of nature, *third*,

¹⁷ Published, along with an introduction and a summary of "Being and Time," by Werner Brock, in *Existence and Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1949). Heidegger disclaimed the title "existentialist" after it became identified with the work of Sartre. He would call himself, strictly speaking, a philologist or ontologist. But in any case, we must be existential enough not to get twisted up in controversies over titles and to take the meaning and spirit of each man's work rather than the letter. Martin Buber likewise is not happy at being called an existentialist, although his work has clear affinities with this movement. The reader who has difficulty with the terms in this field is indeed in good company!

¹⁸ *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952) is existential as a living approach to crises in contrast to books *about* existentialism. Tillich, like most of the thinkers mentioned above, is not to be tagged as *merely* an existentialist, for existentialism is a way of approaching problems and does not in itself give answers or norms. Tillich has both rational norms—the structure of reason is always prominent in his analyses—and religious norms. Some readers will not find themselves in agreement with the religious elements in *The Courage to Be*. It is important to note the very significant point, however, that these religious ideas, whether one agrees with them or not, do illustrate an authentic existential approach. This is seen in Tillich's concept of "the God beyond God" and "absolute faith" as faith not *in* some content or somebody but as a state of being, a way of relating to reality characterized by courage, acceptance, full commitment, etc. The theistic arguments for the "existence of God" are not only beside the point but exemplify the most deteriorated aspect of the Western habit of thinking in terms of God as a substance or object, existing in a world of objects and in relation to whom we are subjects. This is "bad theology," Tillich points out, and results in "the God Nietzsche said had to be killed because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control" (p. 185).

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an endeavor to recover vitality and honest, direct aesthetic experience, and, *fourth*, the desperate attempt to express the immediate underlying meaning of the modern human situation, even though this means portraying despair and emptiness. Tillich, for example, holds that Picasso's painting "Guernica" gives the most gripping and revealing portrayal of the atomistic, fragmented condition of European society which preceded World War II and "shows what is now in the souls of many Americans as disruptiveness, existential doubt, emptiness and meaninglessness."¹⁹

The fact that the existential approach arose as an indigenous and spontaneous answer to crises in modern culture is shown not only in the fact that it emerged in art and literature but also in the fact that different philosophers in diverse parts of Europe often developed these ideas without conscious relation to each other. Though Heidegger's main work, *Being and Time*, was published in 1927, Ortega y Gasset already in 1924 had developed and partially published strikingly similar ideas without any direct knowledge of Heidegger's work.²⁰

It is true, of course, that existentialism had its birth in a time of cultural crisis, and it is always found in our day on the sharp revolutionary edge of modern art, literature, and thought. To my mind this fact speaks for the validity of its insights rather than the reverse. When a culture is caught in the profound convulsions of a transitional period, the individuals in the society understandably suffer spiritual and emotional upheaval; and finding that the accepted mores and ways of thought no longer yield security, they tend either to sink into dogmatism and conformism, giving up awareness, or are forced to strive for a heightened self-consciousness by which to become aware of their existence with new conviction and on new bases. This is one of the most important affinities of the existential movement with psychotherapy—both are concerned with individuals in crisis. And far from saying that the insights of a crisis period are "simply the product of anxiety and despair," we are more likely to find, as we do time and again in psychoanalysis, that a crisis is exactly what is required to shock people out of unaware dependence upon external dogma and to force them to unravel layers of pretense to reveal naked truth about themselves which, however unpleasant, will at least be solid. Existentialism is an attitude which accepts man as always becoming, which means potentially in crisis. But this does not mean it will be despairing. Socrates, whose dialectical search for truth in the individual is the prototype of existentialism, was optimistic. But this approach is understandably more apt to appear in ages of transition, when one age is dying and the new one not yet born, and the individual is either homeless

¹⁹ "Existential Aspects of Modern Art," in *Christianity and the Existentialists*, edited by Carl Michalson (New York: Scribners, 1956), p. 138.

²⁰ Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art, and Other Writings on Art and Culture* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), pp. 135-137.

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and lost or achieves a new self-consciousness. In the period of transition from Medievalism to the Renaissance, a moment of radical upheaval in Western culture, Pascal describes powerfully the experience the existentialists later were to call *Dasein*: "When I consider the brief span of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and behind it, the small space that I fill, or even see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces which I know not, and which know not me, I am afraid, and wonder to see myself here rather than there; for there is no reason why I should be here rather than there, now rather than then. . . ." ²¹ Rarely has the existential problem been put more simply or beautifully. In this passage we see, first, the profound realization of the contingency of human life which existentialists call "thrownness." Second, we see Pascal facing unflinchingly the question of *being there* or more accurately "being where?" Third, we see the realization that one cannot take refuge in some superficial explanation of time and space, which Pascal, scientist that he was, could well know; and lastly, the deep shaking anxiety arising from this stark awareness of existence in such a universe.²²

It remains, finally, in this orientation section to note the relation between existentialism and oriental thought as shown in the writings of Laotzu and Zen Buddhism. The similarities are striking. One sees this immediately in glancing at some quotations from Laotzu's *The Way of Life*: "Existence is beyond the power of words to define: terms may be used but none of them is absolute." "Existence, by nothing bred, breeds everything, parent of the universe." "Existence is infinite, not to be defined; and though it seem but a bit of wood in your hand, to carve as you please, it is not to be lightly played with and laid down." "The way to do is to be." "Rather abide at the center of your being; for the more you leave it, the less you learn." ²³

One gets the same shock of similarity in Zen Buddhism.²⁴ The likenesses between these Eastern philosophies and existentialism go much deeper than the chance similarity of words. Both are concerned with ontology, the study of being. Both seek a relation to reality which cuts below the cleavage between subject and object. Both would insist that the Western absorption in

²¹ *Pensées of Pascal* (New York: Peter Pauper Press, 1946), p. 36. *Dasein* is defined on page 41.

²² It is not surprising, thus, that this approach to life would speak particularly to many modern citizens who are aware of the emotional and spiritual dilemmas in which we find ourselves. Norbert Wiener, for example, though the actual implications of his scientific work may be radically different from the emphases of the existentialists, has stated in his autobiography that his scientific activity has led him personally to a "positive" existentialism. "We are not fighting for a definitive victory in the indefinite future," he writes. "It is the greatest possible victory to be, and to have been. [ITALICS MINE.] No defeat can deprive us of the success of having existed for some moment of time in a universe that seems indifferent to us." *I Am a Mathematician* (New York: Doubleday).

²³ Witter Bynner, *The Way of Life, according to Laotzu, an American version* (New York: John Day Company, 1946).

²⁴ See William Barrett, ed., *Zen Buddhism, the Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), Introduction, p. xi.

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conquering and gaining power over nature has resulted not only in the estrangement of man from nature but also indirectly in the estrangement of man from himself. The basic reason for these similarities is that Eastern thought never suffered the radical split between subject and object that has characterized Western thought, and this dichotomy is exactly what existentialism seeks to overcome.

The two approaches are not at all to be identified, of course; they are on different levels. Existentialism is not a comprehensive philosophy or way of life, but an endeavor to grasp reality. The chief specific difference between the two, for our purposes, is that existentialism is immersed in and arises directly out of Western man's anxiety, estrangement, and conflicts and is indigenous to our culture. Like psychoanalysis, existentialism seeks not to bring in answers from other cultures but to utilize these very conflicts in contemporary personality as avenues to the more profound self-understanding of Western man and to find the solutions to our problems in direct relation to the historical and cultural crises which gave the problems birth. In this respect, the particular value of Eastern thought is not that it can be transferred, ready-born like Athena, to the Western mind, but rather that it serves as a corrective to our biases and highlights the erroneous assumptions that have led Western development to its present problems. The present widespread interest in oriental thought in the Western world is, to my mind, a reflection of the same cultural crises, the same sense of estrangement, the same hunger to get beyond the vicious circle of dichotomies which called forth the existentialist movement.

III How Existentialism and Psychoanalysis Arose Out of the Same Cultural Situation

We shall now look at the remarkable parallel between the problems of modern man to which the existentialists on one hand and psychoanalysis on the other devote themselves. From different perspectives and on different levels, both analyze anxiety, despair, alienation of man from himself and his society.

Freud describes the neurotic personality of the late nineteenth century as one suffering from fragmentation, that is, from repression of instinctual drives, blocking off of awareness, loss of autonomy, weakness and passivity of the ego, together with the various neurotic symptoms which result from this fragmentation. Kierkegaard—who wrote the only known book before Freud specifically devoted to the problem of anxiety—analyzes not only anxiety but particularly the depression and despair which result from the individual's self-estrangement, an estrangement he proceeds to classify in its different forms and degrees of severity.²⁵ Nietzsche proclaims, ten years before Freud's

²⁵ Sören Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. by Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1954).

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first book, that the disease of contemporary man is that "his soul had gone stale," he is "fed up," and that all about there is "a bad smell . . . the smell of failure. . . . The leveling and diminution of European man is our greatest danger." He then proceeds to describe, in terms which remarkably predict the later psychoanalytic concepts, how blocked instinctual powers turn within the individual into resentment, self-hatred, hostility, and aggression. Freud did not know Kierkegaard's work, but he regarded Nietzsche as one of the authentically great men of all time.

What is the relation between these three giants of the nineteenth century, none of whom directly influenced either of the others? And what is the relation between the two approaches to human nature they originated—existentialism and psychoanalysis—probably the two most important to have shaken, and indeed toppled, the traditional concepts of man? To answer these questions we must inquire into the cultural situation of the middle and late nineteenth century out of which both approaches to man arose and to which both sought to give answers. The real meaning of a way of understanding human beings, such as existentialism or psychoanalysis, can never be seen *in abstracto*, detached from its world, but only in the context of the historical situation which gave it birth. Thus the historical discussions to follow in this chapter are not at all detours from our central aim. Indeed, it is precisely this historical approach which may throw light on our chief question, namely, how the specific scientific techniques that Freud developed for the investigation of the fragmentation of the individual in the Victorian period are related to the understanding of man and his crises to which Kierkegaard and Nietzsche contributed so much and which later provided a broad and deep base for existential psychotherapy.

Compartmentalization and Inner Breakdown in the Nineteenth Century

The chief characteristic of the last half of the nineteenth century was the breaking up of personality into fragments. These fragmentations, as we shall see, were symptoms of the emotional, psychological, and spiritual disintegration occurring in the culture and in the individual. One can see this splitting up of the individual personality not only in the psychology and the science of the period but in almost every aspect of late nineteenth-century culture. One can observe the fragmentation in family life, vividly portrayed and attacked in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. The respectable citizen who keeps his wife and family in one compartment and his business and other worlds in others is making his home a doll's house and preparing its collapse. One can likewise see the compartmentalization in the separation of art from the realities of life, the use of art in its prettified, romantic, academic forms as a hypocritical escape from existence and nature, the art as *artificiality* against

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which Cezanne, Van Gogh, the impressionists, and other modern art movements so vigorously protested. One can furthermore see the fragmentation in the separating of religion from weekday existence, making it an affair of Sundays and special observances, and the divorce of ethics from business. The segmentation was occurring also in philosophy and psychology—when Kierkegaard fought so passionately against the enthronement of an arid, abstract reason and pleaded for a return to reality, he was by no means tilting at windmills. The Victorian man saw himself as segmented into reason, will, and emotions and found the picture good. His reason was supposed to tell him *what* to do, then voluntaristic will was supposed to give him the means to do it, and emotions—well, emotions could best be channeled into compulsive business drive and rigidly structuralized in Victorian mores; and the emotions which would really have upset the formal segmentation, such as sex and hostility, were to be stanchly repressed or let out only in orgies of patriotism or on well-contained week-end “binges” in Bohemia in order that one might, like a steam engine which has let off surplus pressure, work more effectively on returning to his desk Monday morning. Naturally, this kind of man had to put great stress on “rationality.” Indeed, the very term “irrational” means a thing not to be spoken of or thought of; and Victorian man’s repressing, or compartmentalizing, what was not to be thought of was a precondition for the apparent stability of the culture. Schachtel has pointed out how the citizen of the Victorian period so needed to persuade himself of his own rationality that he denied the fact that he had ever been a child or had a child’s irrationality and lack of control; hence the radical split between the adult and the child, which was portentous for Freud’s investigations.²⁶

This compartmentalization went hand in hand with the developing industrialism, as both cause and effect. A man who can keep the different segments of his life entirely separated, who can punch the clock every day at exactly the same moment, whose actions are always predictable, who is never troubled by irrational urges or poetic visions, who indeed can manipulate himself the same way he would the machine whose levers he pulls, is of course the most profitable worker not only on the assembly line but even on many of the higher levels of production. As Marx and Nietzsche pointed out, the corollary is likewise true: the very success of the industrial system, with its accumulation of money as a validation of personal worth entirely separate from the actual product of a man’s hands, had a reciprocal depersonalizing and dehumanizing effect upon man in his relation to others and himself. It was against these dehumanizing tendencies to make man into a machine, to make him over in the image of the industrial system for which he labored, that the early existentialists fought so strongly. And they were aware that the most serious threat of all was that reason would join mechanics in sapping

²⁶ Ernest Schachtel, *On Affect, Anxiety and the Pleasure Principle*, paper to be published.

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the individual's vitality and decisiveness. *Reason*, they predicted, *was becoming reduced to a new kind of technique.*

Scientists in our day are often not aware that this compartmentalization, finally, was also characteristic of the sciences of the century of which we are heirs. This nineteenth century was the era of the "autonomous sciences," as Ernest Cassirer phrases it. Each science developed in its own direction; there was no unifying principle, particularly with relation to man. The views of man in the period were supported by empirical evidence amassed by the advancing sciences, but "each theory became a Procrustean bed on which the empirical facts were stretched to fit a preconceived pattern. . . . Owing to this development our modern theory of man lost its intellectual center. We acquired instead a complete anarchy of thought. . . . Theologians, scientists, politicians, sociologists, biologists, psychologists, ethnologists, economists all approached the problem from their own viewpoints . . . every author seems in the last count to be led by his own conception and evaluation of human life."²⁷ It is no wonder that Max Scheler declared, "In no other period of human knowledge has man ever become more problematic to himself than in our own days. We have a scientific, a philosophical, and a theological anthropology that know nothing of each other. Therefore we no longer possess any clear and consistent idea of man. The ever-growing multiplicity of the particular sciences that are engaged in the study of men has much more confused and obscured than elucidated our concept of man."²⁸

On the surface, of course, the Victorian period appeared placid, contented, ordered; but this placidity was purchased at the price of widespread, profound, and increasingly brittle repression. As in the case of an individual neurotic, the compartmentalization became more and more rigid as it approached the point—August 1, 1914—when it was to collapse altogether.

Now it is to be noted that the compartmentalization of the culture had its *psychological parallel in radical repression within the individual personality.* Freud's genius was in developing scientific techniques for understanding, and mayhap curing, this fragmentized individual personality; but he did not see—or until much later, when he reacted to the fact with pessimism and some detached despair²⁹—that the neurotic illness in the individual was only one side of disintegrating forces which affected the whole of society. Kierkegaard, for his part, foresaw the results of this disintegration upon the inner emotional and spiritual life of the individual: endemic anxiety, loneliness, estrangement of one man from another, and finally the condition that would lead to ultimate despair, man's alienation from himself. But it remained for Nietzsche to paint most graphically the approaching

²⁷ Ernest Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 21.

²⁸ Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (Darmstadt: Reichl, 1928), pp. 13f.

²⁹ Cf. *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

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situation: "We live in a period of atoms, of atomic chaos," and out of this chaos he foresaw, in a vivid prediction of collectivism in the twentieth century, "the terrible apparition . . . the Nation State . . . and the hunt for happiness will never be greater than when it must be caught between today and tomorrow; because the day after tomorrow all hunting time may have come to an end altogether. . . ." ³⁰ Freud saw this fragmentation of personality in the light of natural science and was concerned with formulating its technical aspects. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche did not underestimate the importance of the specific psychological analysis; but they were much more concerned with understanding *man as the being who represses*, the being who surrenders self-awareness as a protection against reality and then suffers the neurotic consequences. The strange question is: What does it mean that man, the being-in-the-world who can be conscious that he exists and can know his existence, should choose or be forced to choose to block off this consciousness and should suffer anxiety, compulsions for self-destruction, and despair? Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were keenly aware that the "sickness of soul" of Western man was a deeper and more extensive morbidity than could be explained by the specific individual or social problems. Something was radically wrong in man's relation to himself; man had become fundamentally problematic to himself. "This is Europe's true predicament," declared Nietzsche; "together with the fear of man we have lost the love of man, confidence in man, indeed, *the will to man.*"

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud

We turn now to a more detailed comparison of the approach to understanding Western man given by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, with the hope of seeing more clearly their interrelationship with the insights and methods of Freud.

Kierkegaard's penetrating analysis of anxiety—which we have summarized in another volume ³¹—would alone assure him of a position among the psychological geniuses of all time. His insights into the significance of self-consciousness, his analysis of inner conflicts, loss of the self, and even psychosomatic problems are the more surprising since they antedate Nietzsche by four decades and Freud by half a century. This indicates in Kierkegaard a re-

³⁰ Walter A. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, AntiChrist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 140.

³¹ *The Meaning of Anxiety* (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), pp. 31–35. Those pages may be recommended as a short survey of the importance of Kierkegaard's ideas for the psychologically minded reader. His two most important psychological books are *The Concept of Anxiety* (translated into English as *The Concept of Dread*, a term which may in literary terms be closer to the meaning but is not psychologically), and *The Sickness Unto Death*. For further acquaintance with Kierkegaard, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. by Bretall, is recommended.

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markable sensitivity to what was going on under the surface of Western man's consciousness in his day, to erupt only half a century later. He died just over a hundred years ago at the early age of forty-four, after an intense, passionate, and lonely period of creativity in which he wrote almost two dozen books in the space of fifteen years. Secure in the knowledge that he would become important in decades to come, he had no illusions about his discoveries and insights being welcomed in his day. "The present writer," he says in one satirical passage about himself, "is nothing of a philosopher; he is . . . an amateur writer who neither writes the System nor promises the System nor ascribes anything to it. . . . He can easily foresee his fate in an age when passion has been obliterated in favor of learning, in an age when an author who wants to have readers must take care to write in such a way that the book can easily be perused during the afternoon nap. . . . He foresees his fate, that he will be entirely ignored." True to his prediction, he was almost unknown in his day—except for satirical lampooning in *Corsair*, the humor magazine of Copenhagen. For half a century he remained forgotten and was then rediscovered in the second decade of this century, not only to have a profound effect on philosophy and religion but also to yield specific and important contributions to depth-psychology. Binswanger, for example, states in his paper on Ellen West that she "suffered from that sickness of the mind which Kierkegaard, with the keen insight of genius, described and illuminated from all possible aspects under the name of 'Sickness Unto Death.' I know of no document which could more greatly advance the existential-analytic interpretation of schizophrenia than that. One might say that in this document Kierkegaard had recognized with intuitive genius the coming of schizophrenia. . . ." Binswanger goes on to remark that the psychiatrist or psychologist who does not concur in Kierkegaard's religious interpretations nevertheless remains "deeply indebted to this work of Kierkegaard."⁸²

Kierkegaard, like Nietzsche, did not set out to write philosophy or psychology. He sought only to understand, to uncover, to disclose human existence. With Freud and Nietzsche he shared a significant fact: all three of them based their knowledge chiefly on the analysis of one case, namely, themselves. Freud's germinal books, such as *Interpretation of Dreams*, were based almost entirely on his own experience and his own dreams; he wrote in so many words to Fliess that the case he struggled with and analyzed continually was himself. Every system of thought, remarked Nietzsche, "says only: this is a picture of all life, and from it learn the meaning of your life. And conversely; read only your life and understand from it the hieroglyphics of universal life."⁸³

The central psychological endeavor of Kierkegaard may be summed up under the heading of the question he pursued relentlessly—how can you

⁸² Chap. IX.

⁸³ Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

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become an individual? The individual was being swallowed up on the rational side by Hegel's vast logical "absolute Whole," on the economic side by the increasing objectification of the person, and on the moral and spiritual side by the soft and vapid religion of his day. Europe was ill, and was to become more so, not because knowledge or techniques were lacking but because of the want of *passion, commitment*.³⁴ "Away from Speculation, away from the System," he called, "and back to reality!" He was convinced not only that the goal of "pure objectivity" is impossible but that even if it were possible it would be undesirable. And from another angle it is immoral: we are so involved in each other and the world that we cannot be content to view truth disinterestedly. Like all the existentialists, he took the term "interest" (inter-est) seriously.³⁵ Every question is the "question for the Single One," that is, for the alive and self-aware individual; and if we don't start with the human being there, we shall have spawned, with all our technical prowess, a collectivism of robots who will end up not just in emptiness but in self-destructive despair.

One of the most radical contributions of Kierkegaard to later dynamic psychology is his formulation of truth-as-relationship. In the book which was later to become the manifesto for existentialism, he writes:

- When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, however, but upon the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. *When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth, even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true.*³⁶

³⁴ Thus the very increase of truth may leave human beings less secure, if they let the objective increase of truth act as a substitute for their own commitment, their own relating to the truth in their own experience. He "who has observed the contemporary generation," wrote Kierkegaard, "will surely not deny that the incongruity in it and the reason for its anxiety and restlessness is this, that in one direction truth increases in extent, in mass, partly also in abstract clarity, whereas certitude steadily decreases."

³⁵ See Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942).

³⁶ Quoted from the "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Robert Bretall, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 210-211. (Kierkegaard has the whole passage in italics; we have limited them, for purposes of contrast, to the new element, namely, the subjective relation to truth.) It is highly interesting that the example Kierkegaard goes on to cite, after the above sentences, is the knowledge of God, and points out—a consideration that would have saved endless confusions and futile bickerings—that the endeavor to prove God as an "object" is entirely fruitless, and that truth rather lies in the nature of the relationship ("even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true"!). It should certainly be self-evident that Kierkegaard is not in the slightest implying that whether or not something is objectively true doesn't matter. That would be absurd. He is referring, as he phrases it in a footnote, to "the truth which is essentially related to existence."

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It would be hard to exaggerate how revolutionary these sentences were and still are for modern culture as a whole and for psychology in particular. Here is the radical, original statement of *relational truth*. Here is the fountainhead of the emphasis in existential thought on truth as *inwardness* or, as Heidegger puts it, truth as freedom.³⁷ Here, too, is the prediction of what was later to appear in twentieth-century physics, namely, the reversal of the principle of Copernicus that one discovered truth most fully by detaching man, the observer. Kierkegaard foretells the viewpoint of Bohr, Heisenberg, and other contemporary physicists that the Copernican view that nature can be separated from man is no longer tenable. The "ideal of a science which is completely independent of man [*i.e.*, completely objective] is an illusion," in Heisenberg's words.³⁸ Here is, in Kierkegaard's paragraph, the forerunner of relativity and the other viewpoints which affirm that the human being who is engaged in studying the natural phenomena is in a particular and significant relationship to the objects studied and he must make himself part of his equation. That is to say, the *subject*, man, can never be separated from the *object* which he observes. It is clear that the cancer of Western thought, the subject-object split, received a decisive attack in this analysis of Kierkegaard's.

But the implications of this landmark are even more specific and more incisive in psychology. It releases us from bondage to the dogma that truth can be understood only in terms of external *objects*. It opens up the vast provinces of inner, subjective reality and indicates that such reality may be true even though it contradicts objective fact. This was the discovery Freud was later to make when, somewhat to his chagrin, he learned that the "childhood rape" memories so many of his patients confessed were generally lies from a factual point of view, the rape never having in fact occurred. But it turned out that the experience of rape was as potent even if it *existed only in phantasy*, and that in any case the crucial question was how the patient *reacted to* the rape rather than whether it was true or false in fact. We have, thus, the opening of a continent of new knowledge about inner dynamics when we take the approach that the *relation to* a fact or person or situation is what is significant for the patient or person we are studying and the question of whether or not something objectively occurred is on a quite different level. Let us, to avoid misunderstanding, emphasize even at the price of repetition that this truth-as-relationship principle does not in the slightest imply a sloughing off of the importance of whether or not something is objectively true. This is not the point. Kierkegaard is not to be confused with the subjectivists or idealists; he opens up the subjective world without losing

³⁷ See the essay "On the Essence of Truth" in *Existence and Being*, by Martin Heidegger, edited by Werner Brock, *op. cit.*

³⁸ From mimeographed address by Werner Heisenberg, Washington University, St. Louis, Oct. 1954.

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objectivity. Certainly one has to deal with the real objective world; Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and their ilk took nature more seriously than many who call themselves naturalists. The point rather is that the meaning for the person of the objective fact (or phantasied one) depends on how he relates to it; there is no existential truth which can omit the relationship. An objective discussion of sex, for example, may be interesting and instructive; but once one is concerned with a given person, the objective truth depends for its meaning upon the relationship between that person and the sexual partner and to omit this factor not only constitutes an evasion but cuts us off from seeing reality.

The approach stated in Kierkegaard's sentences is, furthermore, the forerunner of concepts of "participant observation" of Sullivan and the other emphases upon the significance of the therapist in the relationship with the patient. The fact that the therapist participates in a real way in the relationship and is an inseparable part of the "field" does not, thus, impair the soundness of his scientific observations. Indeed, can we not assert that unless the therapist is a real participant in the relationship and consciously recognizes this fact, he will *not* be able to discern with clarity what is in fact going on? The implication of this "manifesto" of Kierkegaard is that we are freed from the traditional doctrine, so limiting, self-contradictory, and indeed often so destructive in psychology, *that the less we are involved in a given situation, the more clearly we can observe the truth*. The implication of that doctrine was, obviously enough, that there is an inverse relation between involvement and our capacity to observe without bias. And the doctrine became so well-enshrined that we overlooked another one of its clear implications, namely, that he will most successfully discover truth who is not the slightest bit interested in it! No one, of course, would argue against the obvious fact that *disruptive* emotions interfere with one's perception. In this sense it is self-evident that anyone in a therapeutic relationship, or any person observing others, for that matter, must clarify very well what his particular emotions and involvement are in the situation. But the problem cannot be solved by detachment and abstraction. That way we end up with a handful of sea foam; and the reality of the person has evaporated before our eyes. The clarification of the pole in the relationship represented by the therapist can only be accomplished by a fuller awareness of the existential situation, that is, the real, living relationship.³⁹ When we are dealing with human beings, no truth has reality by itself; it is always dependent upon the reality of the immediate relationship.

³⁹ It should be possible to demonstrate—possibly it has already been done—in perception experiments that the interest and involvement of the observer increase the accuracy of his perception. There are indications already in Rorschach responses that in the cards where the subject becomes emotionally involved, his perception of form becomes more, not less, sharp and accurate. (I am of course speaking not of neurotic emotion; that introduces quite different factors.)

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A second important contribution of Kierkegaard to dynamic psychology lies in his emphasis upon the necessity of commitment. This follows from the points already made above. Truth becomes reality only as the individual produces it in action, which includes producing it in his own consciousness. Kierkegaard's point has the radical implication that we cannot even *see* a particular truth unless we already have some commitment to it. It is well known to every therapist that patients can talk theoretically and academically from now till doomsday about their problems and not really be affected; indeed, particularly in cases of intellectual and professional patients, this very talking, though it may masquerade under the cloak of unbiased and unprejudiced inquiry into what is going on, is often the defense against seeing the truth and against committing one's self, a defense indeed against one's own vitality. The patient's talking will not help him to get to the reality until he can experience something or some issue in which he has an immediate and absolute stake. This is often expressed under the rubric of "the necessity of arousing anxiety in the patient." I believe, however, that this puts the matter too simply and partially. Is not the more fundamental principle that the patient must find or discover some point in his existence where he can commit himself before he can permit himself even to see the truth of what he is doing? This is what Kierkegaard means by "passion" and "commitment" as over against objective disinterested observation. One corollary of this need for commitment is the commonly accepted phenomenon that we cannot get to the underlying levels of a person's problems by laboratory experimentation; only when the person himself has some hope of getting relief from his suffering and despair and of receiving some help in his problems will he undertake the painful process of investigating his illusions and uncovering his defenses and rationalizations.

We turn now to Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). He was very different from Kierkegaard in temperament, and, living four decades later, he reflected nineteenth-century culture at a different stage. He never read Kierkegaard; his friend Brandes called his attention to the Dane two years before Nietzsche's death, too late for Nietzsche to know the works of his predecessor, who was superficially so different but in many essentials so alike. Both represent in fundamental ways the emergence of the existential approach to human life. Both are often cited together as the thinkers who discerned most profoundly and predicted most accurately the psychological and spiritual state of Western man in the twentieth century. Like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche was not anti-rational, nor is he to be confused with the "philosophers of feeling" or the "back to nature" evangelists. He attacked not reason but *mere* reason, and he attacked it in the arid, fragmentized rationalistic form it assumed in his day. He sought to push reflection—again like Kierkegaard—to its uttermost limits to find the reality which underlies *both* reason and unreason. For reflection is, after all, a turning in on itself, a

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mirroring, and the issue for the living existential person is *what* he is reflecting; otherwise reflecting empties the person of vitality.⁴⁰ Like the depth psychologists to follow him, Nietzsche sought to bring into the scope of existence the unconscious, irrational sources of man's power and greatness as well as his morbidity and self-destructiveness.

Another significant relationship between these two figures and depth psychology is that they both developed a great intensity of self-consciousness. They were well aware that the most devastating loss in their objectivating culture was the individual's consciousness of himself—a loss to be expressed later in Freud's symbol of the ego as weak and passive, "lived by the Id," having lost its own self-directive powers.⁴¹ Kierkegaard had written, "the more consciousness, the more self," a statement which Sullivan was to make in a different context a century later and which is implied in Freud's description of the aim of his technique as the increasing of the sphere of consciousness: "Where Id was, there ego shall be." But Kierkegaard and Nietzsche could not escape, in their special historical situations, the tragic consequences of their own intensity of self-consciousness. Both were lonely, anti-conformist in the extreme, and knew the deepest agonies of anxiety, despair, isolation. Hence they could speak from an immediate personal knowledge of these ultimate psychological crises.⁴²

Nietzsche held that one should experiment on all truth not simply in the laboratory but in one's own experience; every truth should be faced with the question, "Can one live it?" "All truths," he put it, "are bloody truths for me." Hence his famous phrase, "error is cowardice." In taking religious leaders to task for their being alien to intellectual integrity, he charges that

⁴⁰ Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche knew that "man cannot sink back into unreflective immediacy without losing himself; but he can go this way to the end, not destroying reflection, but rather coming to the basis in himself in which reflection is rooted." Thus speaks Karl Jaspers in his enlightening discussion of the similarities of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, whom he regards as the two greatest figures of the nineteenth century. See his book, *Reason and Existence*, Chapter I, "Origin of the Contemporary Philosophic Situation (the Historical Meaning of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche)" (The Noonday Press, 1955, trans. from the German edition of 1935 by William Earle). This chapter is reprinted in the paper-bound Meridian book, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Walter Kaufmann, ed., 1956.

⁴¹ The existential thinkers as a whole take this loss of consciousness as the centrally tragic problem of our day, not at all to be limited to the psychological context of neurosis. Jaspers indeed believes that the forces which destroy personal consciousness in our time, the juggernaut processes of conformity and collectivism, may well lead to a more radical loss of individual consciousness on the part of modern man.

⁴² Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche also share the dubious honor of being dismissed in some allegedly scientific circles as pathological! I assume this fruitless issue needs no longer to be discussed: Binswanger quotes Marcel in a following paper concerning those who dismiss Nietzsche because of his ultimate psychosis, "One is free to learn nothing if one wishes." A more fruitful line of inquiry, if we wish to consider the psychological crises of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, is to ask whether any human being can support an intensity of self-consciousness beyond a certain point, and whether the creativity (which is one manifestation of this self-consciousness) is not paid for by psychological upheaval?

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they never make "their experiences a matter of conscience for knowledge. 'What have I really experienced? What happened then in me and around me? Was my reason bright enough? Was my will turned against all deceptions . . . ?' thus none of them questioned. . . . We, however, we others who thirst for reason want to look our experiences in the eye as severely as at a scientific experiment . . . ! We ourselves want to be our experiments and guinea-pigs!"⁴³ Neither Kierkegaard nor Nietzsche had the slightest interest in starting a movement—or a new System, a thought which would indeed have offended them. Both proclaimed, in Nietzsche's phrase, "Follow not me, but you!"

Both were aware that the psychological and emotional disintegration which they described as endemic, if still underground, in their periods was related to man's loss of faith in his essential dignity and humanity. Here they expressed a "diagnosis" to which very little attention was paid among the schools of psychotherapy until the past decade, when man's loss of faith in his own dignity began to be seen as a real and serious aspect of modern problems. This loss, in turn, was related to the breakdown of the convincing and compelling power of the two central traditions which had given a basis for values in Western society, namely the Hebrew-Christian and the humanistic. Such is the presupposition of Nietzsche's powerful parable, "God Is Dead." Kierkegaard had passionately denounced, with almost nobody listening, the softened, vapid, and anemic trends in Christianity; by Nietzsche's time the deteriorated forms of theism and emotionally dishonest religious practices had become part of the illness and had to die.⁴⁴ Roughly speaking, Kierkegaard speaks out of a time when God is dying, Nietzsche when God is dead. Both were radically devoted to the nobility of man and both sought some basis on which this dignity and humanity could be re-established. This is the meaning of Nietzsche's "man of power" and Kierkegaard's "true individual."

One of the reasons Nietzsche's influence upon psychology and psychiatry has so far been unsystematic, limited to a chance quotation of an aphorism here and there, is precisely that his mind is so unbelievably fertile, leaping incredibly from insight to flashing insight. The reader must take care not to be carried away in uncritical admiration or, on the other hand, to overlook Nietzsche's real importance because the richness of his thought beggars all our tidy categories. Hence we shall here endeavor briefly to clarify more systematically some of his central points.

His concept of "will to power" implies the self-realization of the individual in the fullest sense. It requires the courageous living out of the individual's potentialities in his own particular existence. Like all existential-

⁴³ Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁴⁴ See Paul Tillich's reference to Nietzsche's "God Is Dead," footnote, p. 16.

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ists, Nietzsche is not using psychological terms to describe psychological attributes or faculties or a simple pattern of behavior, such as aggression or power over someone. Will to power rather is an ontological category, that is to say, an inseparable aspect of being. It does not mean aggression or competitive striving or any such mechanism; it is the individual affirming his existence and his potentialities as a being in his own right; it is "the courage to be as an individual," as Tillich remarks in his discussion of Nietzsche. The word "power" is used by Nietzsche in the classical sense of *potentia*, *dynamis*. Kaufmann succinctly summarizes Nietzsche's belief at this point:

Man's task is simple: he should cease letting his "existence" be "a thoughtless accident." Not only the use of the word *Existenz*, but the thought which is at stake, suggests that [this essay] is particularly close to what is today called *Existenz-philosophie*. Man's fundamental problem is to achieve true "existence" instead of letting his life be no more than just another accident. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche hits on a formulation which brings out the essential paradox of any distinction between self and true self: "What does your conscience say?—*You shall become who you are.*" Nietzsche maintains this conception-until the end, and the full title of his last work is *Ecce Homo, Wie man wird, was man ist*—how one becomes what one is.⁴⁵

In an infinite variety of ways, Nietzsche holds that this power, this expansion, growing, bringing one's inner potentialities into birth in action is the central dynamic and need of life. His work here relates directly to the problem in psychology of what the fundamental drive of organisms is, the blocking of which leads to neurosis: it is not urge for pleasure or reduction of libidinal tension or equilibrium or adaptation. The fundamental drive rather is to live out one's *potentia*. "Not for pleasure does man strive," holds Nietzsche, "but for power."⁴⁶ Indeed, happiness is not absence of pain but "the most alive feeling of power,"⁴⁷ and joy is a "*plus-feeling* of power."⁴⁸ Health, also, he sees as a by-product of the use of power, power here specifically described as the ability to overcome disease and suffering.⁴⁹

Nietzsche was a naturalist in the sense that he sought at all times to relate every expression of life to the broad context of all of nature, but it is precisely at this point that he makes clear that human psychology is always more than biology. One of his most crucial existential emphases is his insistence that the values of human life never come about automatically. The human being *can lose his own being by his own choices*, as a tree or stone cannot. Affirming one's own being creates the values of life. "Individuality, worth and dignity are not *gegeben*, i.e., given us as data by nature, but

⁴⁵ Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴⁹ Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

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aufgegeben—i.e., given or assigned to us as a task which we ourselves must solve.”⁵⁰ This is an emphasis which likewise comes out in Tillich’s belief that courage opens the way to being: if you do not have “courage to be,” you lose your own being. And it similarly appears in extreme form in Sartre’s contention, you *are* your choices.

At almost any point at which one opens Nietzsche, one finds psychological insights which are not only penetrating and astute in themselves but amazingly parallel to the psychoanalytic mechanisms Freud was to formulate a decade and more later. For example, turning to the *Genealogy of Morals*, written in 1887, we find, “All instincts that are not allowed free play turn inward. This is what I call man’s *interiorization*.”⁵¹ One looks twice, noting the curiously close prediction of the later Freudian concept of repression. Nietzsche’s eternal theme was the unmasking of self-deception. Throughout the whole essay mentioned above he develops the thesis that altruism and morality are the results of repressed hostility and resentment, that when the individual’s *potentia* are turned inward, bad conscience is the result. He gives a vivid description of the “impotent” people “who are full of bottled-up aggressions: their happiness is purely passive and takes the form of drugged tranquillity, stretching and yawning, peace, ‘sabbath,’ emotional slackness.”⁵² This in-turned aggression breaks out in sadistic demands on others—the process which later was to be designated in psychoanalysis as symptom-formation. And the demands clothe themselves as morality—the process which Freud later called reaction-formation. “In its earliest phase,” Nietzsche writes, “bad conscience is nothing other than the instinct of freedom forced to become latent, driven underground, and forced to vent its energy upon itself.” At other points we find staring us in the face striking formulations of sublimation, a concept which Nietzsche specifically developed. Speaking of the connection between a person’s artistic energy and sexuality, he says that it “may well be that the emergence of the aesthetic condition does not suspend sensuality, as Schopenhauer believed, but merely *transmutes it in such a way that it is no longer experienced as a sexual incentive*.”⁵³

What, then, are we to conclude from this remarkable parallel between Nietzsche’s ideas and Freud’s? The similarity was known to the circle around Freud. One evening in 1908 the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society had as its program a discussion of Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*. Freud mentioned that he had tried to read Nietzsche, but found his thought so rich he renounced the attempt. He then stated that “Nietzsche had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵¹ *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 217.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

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ever likely to live."⁵⁴ This judgment, repeated on several occasions, was, as Jones remarks, no small compliment from the inventor of psychoanalysis. Freud always had a strong but ambivalent interest in philosophy; he distrusted and even feared it.⁵⁵ Jones points out that this distrust was on personal as well as intellectual grounds. One of the reasons was his suspicion of arid intellectual speculation—a point on which Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and the other existentialists would have enthusiastically agreed with him. In any case, Freud felt that his own potential proclivity for philosophy "needed to be sternly checked, and for that purpose he chose the most effective agency—scientific discipline."⁵⁶ At another point Jones remarks, "The ultimate questions of philosophy were very near to him in spite of his endeavor to keep them at a distance and of distrusting his capacity to solve them."⁵⁷

Nietzsche's works may not have had a direct, but most certainly had an indirect, influence on Freud. It is clear that the ideas which were later to be formulated in psychoanalysis were "in the air" in the Europe of the end of the nineteenth century. The fact that Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud all dealt with the same problems of anxiety, despair, fragmentalized personality, and the symptoms of these bears out our earlier thesis that psychoanalysis and the existential approach to human crises were called forth by, and were answers to, the same problems. It does not detract, of course, from the genius of Freud to point out that probably almost all of the specific ideas which later appeared in psychoanalysis could be found in Nietzsche in greater breadth and in Kierkegaard in greater depth.

But the particular genius of Freud lies in his translating these depth-psychological insights into the natural scientific framework of his day. For this task he was admirably fitted—in temperament highly objective and rationally controlled, indefatigable, and capable of taking the infinite pains necessary for his systematic work. He did accomplish something new under the sun, namely, the transmuting into the scientific stream of Western culture the new psychological concepts, where they could be studied with some objectivity, built upon, and within certain limits rendered teachable.

⁵⁴ *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, by Ernest Jones, Basic Books, Inc., Vol. II, p. 344. Dr. Ellenberger, commenting on the affinities of Nietzsche with psychoanalysis, adds, "In fact, the analogies are so striking that I can hardly believe that Freud never read him, as he contended. Either he must have forgotten that he read him, or perhaps he must have read him in indirect form. Nietzsche was so much discussed everywhere at that time, quoted thousands of times in books, magazines, newspapers, and in conversations in everyday life, that it is almost impossible that Freud could not have absorbed his thought in one way or another." Whatever one may assume at this point, Freud did read Edward von Hartmann (Kris points out), who wrote a book, *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*. Both Von Hartmann and Nietzsche got their ideas of the unconscious from Schopenhauer, most of whose work also falls in the existential line.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 344.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 295.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 432.

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But is not the very genius of Freud and of psychoanalysis likewise also its greatest danger and most serious shortcoming? For the translation of depth-psychological insights into objectivated science had results which could have been foreseen. One such result has been the limiting of the sphere of investigation in man to what fits this sphere of science. In one of the succeeding chapters in this book, Binswanger points out that Freud deals only with the *homo natura* and that, whereas his methods admirably fitted him for exploring the *Umwelt*, the world of man in his biological environment, they by the same token prevented him from comprehending fully the *Mitwelt*, man in personal relations with fellowmen, and the *Eigenwelt*, the sphere of man in relation to himself.⁵⁸ Another more serious practical result has been, as we shall indicate later in our discussion of the concepts of determinism and passivity of the ego, a new tendency to objectivate personality and to contribute to the very developments in modern culture which caused the difficulties in the first place.

We now come to a very important problem, and in order to understand it we need to make one more preliminary distinction. That is between "reason" as the term was used in the seventeenth century and the enlightenment and "technical reason" today. Freud held a concept of reason which came directly from the enlightenment, namely, "ecstatic reason." And he equated this with science. This use of reason involves, as seen in Spinoza and the other thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a confidence that reason can by itself comprehend all problems. But those thinkers were using reason as including the capacity to transcend the immediate situation, to grasp the whole, and such functions as intuition, insight, poetic perception were not rigidly excluded. The concept also embraced ethics: reason in the enlightenment meant justice. Much, in other words, that is "irrational" was included in their idea of reason. This accounts for the tremendous and enthusiastic faith they could lodge in it. But by the end of the nineteenth century, as Tillich demonstrates most cogently, this ecstatic character had been lost. Reason had become "technical reason": reason married to techniques, reason as functioning best when devoted to isolated problems, reason as an adjunct and subordinate to technical industrial progress, reason as separated off from emotion and will, reason indeed as opposed to existence—the reason finally which Kierkegaard and Nietzsche so strongly attacked.

Now, part of the time Freud uses the concept of reason in the ecstatic form, as when he speaks of reason as "our salvation," reason as our "only recourse," and so on. Here one gets the anachronistic feeling that his sentences are directly out of Spinoza or some writer of the enlightenment. Thus

⁵⁸ The point that Freud deals with *homo natura* was centrally made by Binswanger in the address he was invited to give in Vienna on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Freud.

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he tried on one hand to preserve the ecstatic concept, tried to save the view of man and reason which transcends techniques. But, on the other hand, in equating reason with science, Freud makes it technical reason. His great contribution was his effort to overcome the fragmentation of man by bringing man's irrational tendencies into the light, bringing unconscious, split off, and repressed aspects of personality into consciousness and acceptance. But the other side of his emphasis, namely, the identification of psychoanalysis with technical reason, is an expression of the precise fragmentation which he sought to cure. It is not unfair to say that the prevailing trend in the development of psychoanalysis in late decades, particularly after the death of Freud, has been to reject his efforts to save reason in its ecstatic form and to accept exclusively the latter—namely, reason in its technical form. This trend is generally unnoticed, since it fits in so well with dominant trends in our whole culture. But we have already noted that seeing man and his functions in their technical form is one of the central factors in the compartmentalization of contemporary man. Thus a critical and serious dilemma faces us. On the theoretical side, psychoanalysis (and other forms of psychology to the extent that they are wedded to technical reason) themselves add to the chaos in our theory of man, both scientific and philosophical, of which Cassirer and Scheler spoke above.⁵⁹ On the practical side, there is considerable danger that psychoanalysis, as well as other forms of psychotherapy and adjustment psychology, will become new representations of the fragmentation of man, that they will exemplify the loss of the individual's vitality and significance, rather than the reverse, that the new techniques will assist in standardizing and giving cultural sanction to man's alienation from himself rather than solving it, that they will become expressions of the new mechanization of man, now calculated and controlled with greater psychological precision and on the vaster scale of unconscious and depth dimensions—that psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in general will become part of the neurosis of our day rather than part of the cure. This would indeed be a supreme irony of history. It is not alarmism nor showing unseemly fervor to point out these tendencies, some of which are already upon us; it is simply to look directly at our historical situation and to draw unflinchingly the implications.

We are now in a position to see the crucial significance of the existential psychotherapy movement. It is precisely the movement that protests against the tendency to identify psychotherapy with technical reason. It stands for basing psychotherapy on an understanding of what makes man the *human* being; it stands for defining neurosis in terms of what destroys man's capacity to fulfill his own being. We have seen that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as well as the representatives of the existential cultural movement following them, not only contributed far-reaching and penetrating

⁵⁹ See p. 22.

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psychological insights, which in themselves form a significant contribution to anyone seeking scientifically to understand modern psychological problems, but also did something else—they placed these insights on an ontological basis, namely, the study of *man as the being who has* these particular problems. They believed that it was absolutely necessary that this be done, and they feared that the subordination of reason to technical problems would ultimately mean the making of man over in the image of the machine. Science, Nietzsche had warned, is becoming a factory, and the result will be ethical nihilism.

Existential psychotherapy is the movement which, although standing on one side on the scientific analysis owed chiefly to the genius of Freud, also brings back into the picture the understanding of man on the deeper and broader level—man as the being who is human. It is based on the assumption that it is possible to have a science of man which does not fragmentize man and destroy his humanity at the same moment as it studies him. It unites science and ontology. It is not too much to say, thus, that we are here not merely discussing a new method as over against other methods, to be taken or left or to be absorbed into some vague catch-all eclecticism. The issues raised in the chapters in this volume strike much deeper into our contemporary historical situation.