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Selfishness and Self-Love

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Modern culture is pervaded by a taboo on selfishness. It teaches that to be selfish is sinful and that to love others is virtuous. To be sure, this doctrine is not only in flagrant contradiction to the practices of modern society but it also is in opposition to another set of doctrines which assumes that the most powerful and legitimate drive in man is selfishness and that each individual by following this imperative drive also does the most for the common good. The existence of this latter type of ideology does not affect the weight of the doctrines which declare that selfishness is the arch evil and love for others the main virtue. Selfishness, as it is commonly used in these ideologies, is more or less synonymous with self-love. The alternatives are either to love others which is a virtue or to love oneself which is a sin.

This principle has found its classic expression in Calvin's theology. Man is essentially bad and powerless. He can do nothing – absolutely nothing – good on the basis of his own strength or merits. „We are not our own,“ says Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1928, Book III, Chapter 7, § 1, p. 619), „therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions. We are not our own; therefore, let us not propose it as our end, to seek what may be expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own; therefore, let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours. On the contrary, we are God's; to him, therefore, let us live and die. For, as it is the most devastating pestilence which ruins people if they obey themselves, it is the only haven of salvation not to know or to want anything by oneself but to be guided by God who walks before us.“¹

¹ From „For as it is...“ the translation is mine from the Latin original (J. Calvin, 1838, p. 445). The reason for this shift is that Allen's translation slightly changes the original in the direction of softening the rigidity of Calvin's thought. Allen translates this sentence: „For as compliance with their own inclinations leads men most effectually to ruin, so to place no dependency on our own knowledge or will, but merely to follow the guidance of the Lord, is the only way of safety.“ However, the Latin *sibi ipsis obtemperant* is not equivalent to „follow one's own inclinations“ but „to obey oneself.“ To forbid following one's inclinations has the mild quality of Kantian ethics that man should suppress his natural inclinations and by doing so follow the orders of his conscience. On the other hand, forbidding to obey oneself is a denial of the auton-



Man should not only have the conviction of his absolute nothingness. He should do everything to humiliate himself. „For I do not call it humility,“ says Calvin (1928, Chapter 12, § 6, p. 681), „if you suppose that we have anything left... we cannot think of ourselves as we ought to think without utterly despising everything that may be supposed an excellence in us. This humility is unfeigned submission of a mind overwhelmed with a weighty sense of its own misery and poverty; for such is the uniform description of it in the word of God.“

This emphasis on the nothingness and wickedness of the individual implies that there is nothing he should like about himself. This doctrine is rooted in contempt and hatred for oneself. Calvin makes this point very clear; he speaks of „Self-love“ as of a „pest“ (1928, Chapter 7, §4, p. 622).

If the individual finds something in himself „on the strength of which he finds pleasure in himself,“ he betrays this sinful self-love. This fondness for himself will make him sit in judgment over others and despise them. Therefore, to be fond of oneself, to like anything about oneself is one of the greatest imaginable sins. It excludes love for others² and is identical with selfishness.³

There are fundamental differences between Calvin's theology and Kant's philosophy, yet, the basic attitude toward the problem of love for oneself has remained the same. According to Kant, it is a virtue to want the happiness of others, while to want one's own happiness is ethically „indifferent,“ since it is something which the nature of man is striving for and a natural striving cannot have positive ethical sense. (Cf. I. Kant, 1909, esp. Part I, Book I, Chapter I, § VIII, Remark II, p. 126:) Kant admits that one must not give up one's claims for happiness; under certain circumstances it can even be a duty to be concerned with one's happiness; partly because health, wealth, and the like, can be means which are necessary to fulfill one's duty, partly because the lack of happiness – poverty – can seduce a person from fulfilling his duty. (Cf. *ibid.* Part I, Book I, Chapter III, p. 186.) But love for oneself, striving for one's own happiness, can never be a virtue. As an ethical principle, the striving for one's own happiness „is the most objectionable one, not merely because it is false,... but because the springs it provides for morality are such as rather undermine it and destroy its sublimity...“ (*ibid.* – in particular *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*; second section, p. 61.) Kant differentiates in egotism, self-love, philautia – a benevolence for oneself; and arrogance – the pleasure in oneself. „Rational self-love“ must be restricted by ethical principles, the pleasure in one-

omy of man. The same subtle change of meaning is reached by translating *ita unicus est salutis portis nihil nec sapere, nec velle per se ipsum* „to place no dependence on our knowledge nor will.“ While the formulation of the original straightforwardly contradicts the motto of enlightenment philosophy: *sapere aude* – dare to know, Allen's translation warns only of a dependence on one's own knowledge, a warning which is by far less contradictory to modern thought. I mention these deviations of the translation from the original which I came across accidentally, because they offer a good illustration of the fact that the spirit of an author is „modernized“ and colored – certainly without any intention of doing so – just by translating him.

² It should be noted, however, that even love for one's neighbor, while it is one of the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament, has not been given a corresponding weight by Calvin. In blatant contradiction to the New Testament Calvin says (1928, Chapter 24, § 1, p. 531): „For what the schoolmen advance concerning the priority of charity to faith and hope, is a mere reverie of a distempered imagination...“

³ Despite Luther's emphasis on the spiritual freedom of the individual, his theology, different as it is in many ways from Calvin's, is pervaded by the same conviction of man's basic powerlessness and nothingness.



self must be battered down and the individual must come to feel humiliated in comparing himself with the sanctity of moral laws. (Ibid. – in particular Part I, Book I, Chapter III, p. 165.) The individual should find supreme happiness in the fulfillment of his duty. The realization of the moral principle – and, therefore, of the individual's happiness – is only possible in the general whole, the nation, the state. Yet, „the welfare of the state – *salus rei publicae suprema lex est* – is not identical with the welfare of the citizens and their happiness.“⁴

In spite of the fact that Kant shows a greater respect for the integrity of the individual than did Calvin or Luther, he states that even under the most tyrannical government the individual has no right to rebel and must be punished no less than with death if he threatens the sovereign. (Cf. I. Kant, 1907, p. 126.) Kant emphasizes the native propensity for evil in the nature of man (cf. I. Kant, 1934, esp. Book I), for the suppression of which the moral law, the categorical imperative, is necessary unless man should become a beast and human society should end in wild anarchy.

In discussing Calvin's and Kant's systems, their emphasis on the nothingness of man has been stressed. Yet, as already suggested, they also emphasize the autonomy and dignity of the individual, and this contradiction runs through their writings. In the philosophy of the enlightenment period the individual's claims and happiness have been emphasized much more strongly by others than by Kant, for instance by Helvetius. This trend in modern philosophy has found an extreme expression by Stirner and Nietzsche. In the way that they often phrase the problem – though not necessarily in their real meaning – they share one basic premise of Calvin and Kant: that love for others and love for oneself are alternatives. But in contradiction to those authors, they denounce love for others as weakness and self-sacrifice and postulate egotism, selfishness, and self-love – they too confuse the issue by not clearly differentiating between these phenomena – as virtue. Thus Stirner says: „Here, egoism, selfishness must decide, not the principle of love, not love motives like mercy, gentleness, good-nature, or even justice and equity – for *iustitia* too is a phenomenon of love, a product of love: love knows only sacrifice and demands self-sacrifice.“ (M. Stirner, 1912, p. 339.)

The kind of love denounced by Stirner is the masochistic dependence which makes the individual a means for achieving the purposes of somebody or something outside himself. With this conception of love could he scarcely avoid a formulation which postulated ruthless egotism as a goal. The formulation is, therefore, highly polemical and overstates the point. The positive principle with which Stirner was concerned⁵ was directed against an attitude which had run through Christian theology for many centuries – and which was vivid in the German idealism which was passing in his time; namely, to

⁴ I. Kant, 1907, in particular *Der Rechtslehre Zweiter Teil*, 1. Abschnitt, § 49. p. 124. I translate from the German text, since this part is omitted in the English translation of *The Metaphysics of Ethics* by I. W. Semple, Edinburgh 1871.

⁵ One of his positive formulations, for example, is: „But how does one use life? In using it up like the candle one burns... Enjoyment of life is using life up.“ (M. Stirner, 1912, p. 426.) Engels has clearly seen the one-sidedness of Stirner's formulations and has attempted to overcome the false alternative between love for oneself and love for others. In a letter to Marx in which he discusses Stirner's book, Engels writes, „If, however, the concrete and real individual is the true basis for our 'human' man, it is self-evident that egotism – of course not only Stirner's egotism of reason, but also the egotism of the heart – is the basis for our love of man.“ (Letter dated 19. 11. 1844, in: MEGA III, 1, p. 7.)



bend the individual to submit to and find his center in a power and a principle outside of himself. To be sure, Stirner was not a philosopher of the stature of Kant or Hegel, yet he had the courage to make a radical rebellion against that side of idealistic philosophy which negated the concrete individual and thus helped the absolute state to retain its oppressive power over the individual. Although there is no comparison between the depth and scope of the two philosophers, Nietzsche's attitude in many respects is similar to that of Stirner. Nietzsche also denounces love and altruism as the expressions of weakness and self-negation. For Nietzsche, the quest for love is typical of slaves who cannot fight for what they want and, therefore, try to get it through „love.“ Altruism and love for mankind is thus a sign of degeneration. (Cf. F. Nietzsche, 1910, in particular stanza 246, 362, 369, 373 and 728.) For him, it is the essence of a good and healthy aristocracy that is ready to sacrifice countless people for its interests without having a guilty conscience. Society should be a „foundation and scaffolding by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to their higher existence.“ (F. Nietzsche, 1907, stanza 258, p. 225.) Many quotations could be added to document this spirit of sadism, contempt and brutal egotism. This side of Nietzsche has often been understood as the philosophy of Nietzsche. Is this true; is this the „real“ Nietzsche?

To answer this question would require a detailed analysis of his work which cannot be attempted here. There are various reasons which made Nietzsche express himself in the sense mentioned above. First of all, as in the case of Stirner, his philosophy is a reaction – a rebellion – against the philosophical tradition of subordinating the empirical individual to a power and a principle outside of himself. His tendency to overstatements shows this reactive quality. Second, there were traits in Nietzsche's personality, a tremendous insecurity and anxiety, which explain that, and why he had sadistic impulses which led him to those formulations. Yet, these trends in Nietzsche do not seem to me to be the „essence“ of his personality nor the corresponding views the essence of his philosophy. Finally Nietzsche shared some of the naturalistic ideas of his time as they were expressed in the materialistic-biologistic philosophy, for which the concepts of the physiological roots of psychic phenomena and the „survival of the fittest“ were characteristic. This interpretation does not do away with the fact that Nietzsche shared the view that there is a contradiction between love for others and love for oneself. Yet, it is important to notice that Nietzsche's views contain the nucleus from development of which this wrong dichotomy can be overcome. The „love“ which he attacks is one which is rooted not in one's own strength, but in one's own weakness. „Your neighbor love is your bad love for yourselves. You flee into your neighbor from yourselves and would fain make a virtue thereof. But I fathom your 'unselfishness'.“ He states explicitly, „You cannot stand yourselves and you do not love yourselves sufficiently.“ (F. Nietzsche, s.a., p. 75.) The individual has for Nietzsche „an enormously great significance“ (F. Nietzsche, 1910, stanza 785). The „strong“ individual is the one who has „true kindness, nobility, greatness of soul, which does not give in order to take, which does not want to excell by being kind; – 'waste' as type of true kindness, wealth of the person as a premise.“ (L. c., stanza 935.)

He expresses the same thought also in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* : „The one goeth to his neighbor because he seeketh himself, the other one because would he fain lose himself.“ (F. Nietzsche, s. a., p. 76.)



The essence of these views is: love is a phenomenon of abundance, its premise is the strength of the individual who can give. Love is affirmation, „it seeketh to create what is loved!“ (L. c., p. 102.) To love another person is only a virtue if it springs from this inner strength, but it is detestable if it is the expression of the basic inability to be oneself. (Cf. F. Nietzsche, 1910, stanza 820; F. Nietzsche, 1911, stanza 35; F. Nietzsche, 1991a, stanza 2; F. Nietzsche, Nachlaß, pp. 63-64.)

However, the fact remains that Nietzsche left the problem of the relationship between self-love and love for others as unsolved antinomy, even if by interpreting him one may surmise in what direction his solution would have been found. (Compare the important paper by Max Horkheimer, 1936, which deals with the problem of egotism in modern history.)

The doctrine that selfishness is the arch-evil that one has to avoid and that to love oneself excludes loving others is by no means restricted to theology and philosophy. It is one of the stock patterns used currently in home, school, church, movies, literature, and all the other instruments of social suggestion. „Don't be selfish“ is a sentence which has been impressed upon millions of children, generation after generation. It is hard to define what exactly it means. Consciously, most parents connect with it the meaning not to be egotistical, inconsiderate, without concern for others. Factually, they generally mean more than that. „Not to be selfish“ implies not to do what one wishes, to give up one's own wishes for the sake of those in authority; i.e., the parents, and later the authorities of society. „Don't be selfish,“ in the last analysis, has the same ambiguity that we have seen in Calvinism. Aside from its obvious implication, it means, „don't love yourself,“ „don't be yourself,“ but submit your life to something more important than yourself, be it an outside power or the internalization of that power as „duty.“ „Don't be selfish“ becomes one of the most powerful ideological weapons in suppressing spontaneity and the free development of personality. Under the pressure of this slogan one is asked for every sacrifice and for complete submission: only those aims are „unselfish“ which do not serve the individual for his own sake but for the sake of somebody or something outside of him.

This picture, we must repeat, is in a certain sense one-sided. Beside the doctrine that one should not be selfish, the opposite doctrine is propagandized in modern society: have your own advantage in mind, act according to what is best for you – and by doing so, you will also bring about the greatest advantage for all others. As a matter of fact, the idea that the pursuit of individual egotism is the basis for the development of general welfare is the principle on which competitive capitalism has been built. It may seem strange that two such seemingly contradictory principles could be taught side by side in one culture. Of the fact, there can be no doubt. One result of this contradiction of ideological patterns certainly is confusion in the individual. To be torn between the one and the other doctrine is a serious blockage in the process of integration of personality and has often led to neurotic character formation. (This point has been emphasized by K. Horney, 1937, and by R. S. Lynd, 1939.)

One must observe that this contradictory pair of doctrines has had an important social function. The doctrine that everybody should pursue his individual advantage obviously was a necessary stimulus for private initiative on which the modern economic structure is built. The social function of the doctrine „don't be selfish“ was an ambiguous



one. For the broad masses of those who had to live on the level of mere subsistence, it was an important aid to resignation to having wishes which were unattainable under the given socioeconomic system. It was important that this resignation should be one which was not thought of as being brought about by external pressure, since the inevitable result of such a feeling has to be a more or less conscious grudge and a defiance against society. By making this resignation a moral virtue, such a reaction could to a considerable extent be avoided. While this aspect of the social function of the taboo on selfishness is obvious, another, its effect upon the privileged minority, is somewhat more complicated. It only becomes clear if we consider further the meaning of „selfishness.“ If it means to be concerned with one's economic advantage, certainly the taboo on selfishness would have been a severe handicap to the economic initiative of business men. But what it really meant, especially in the earlier phases of English and American culture was, as has been pointed out before: don't do what you want, don't enjoy yourself, don't spend money or energy for pleasure, but feel it as your duty to work, to be successful, to be prosperous.

It is the great merit of Max Weber, to have shown that this principle of what he calls *innerweltliche Askese* [innerworldly asceticism] was an important condition for creating an attitude in which all energy could be directed toward work and the fulfillment of duty. (Cf. M. Weber, 1930.) The tremendous economic achievements of modern society would not have been possible if this kind of asceticism had not absorbed all energy to the purpose of thrift and relentless work. It would transcend the scope of this paper to enter into an analysis of the character structure of modern man as he emerged in the 16th century. Suffice it to say here, that the economic and social changes in the 15th and 16th centuries destroyed the feeling of security and „belonging“ which was typical of the members of medieval society.⁶ The socioeconomic position of the urban middle class, the peasantry and the nobility were shaken in their foundations (cf. R. Pascal, 1933; J. B. Kraus, 1930; R. H. Tawney, 1926); impoverishment, threats to traditional economic positions as well as new chances for economic success arose. Religious and spiritual ties which had established a rounded and secure world for the individual had been broken. The individual found himself completely alone in the world, paradise was lost for good, his success and failure were decided by the laws of the market; the basic relationship to everyone else had become one of merciless competition. The result of all this was a new feeling of freedom attended, however, by an increased anxiety. This anxiety, in its turn, created a readiness for new submission to religious and secular authorities even more strict than the previous ones had been.

The new individualism on the one hand, anxiety and submission to authority on the other, found their ideological expression in Protestantism and Calvinism. At the same time, these religious doctrines did much, to stimulate and increase these new attitudes. But even more important than the submission to external authorities was the fact that the authorities were internalized, that man became the slave of a master inside himself instead of one outside. This internal master drove the individual to relentless work and striving for success and never allowed him to be himself and enjoy himself. There was a spirit of distrust and hostility directed not only against the outside world, but also

⁶ Harry Stack Sullivan has given particular emphasis to the need for security as one of the basic motivating forces in man, while orthodox psychoanalytical literature has not paid sufficient attention to this factor.



toward one's own self.

This modern type of man was selfish in a twofold sense: he had little concern for others and he was anxiously concerned with his own advantage. But was this selfishness really a concern for himself as an individual, with all his intellectual and sensual potentialities? Had „he“ not become the appendix of his socioeconomic role, a cog in the economic machine, even if sometimes an important cog? Was he not the slave of this machine even if he subjectively felt as if he were following his own orders? Was his selfishness identical with self-love or was it instead rooted in the very lack of it?

We must postpone answering these questions, since we have still to finish a brief survey of the doctrine of selfishness in modern society. The taboo on selfishness has been reinforced in the authoritarian systems. One of the ideological cornerstones of National-Socialism is the principle: „Public good takes precedence over private good“ („Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz“). According to the original propaganda technique of National-Socialism, the thought was phrased in a form purposed to permit the workers to believe in the „Socialist“ part of the Nazi program. However, if we consider its meaning in the context of the whole Nazi philosophy, the implication is this: the individual should not want anything for himself; he should find his satisfaction in the elimination of his individuality and in participating as a small particle in the greater whole of the race, the state or its symbol, the leader. While Protestantism and Calvinism emphasized individual liberty and responsibility even as it emphasized the nothingness of the individual, Nazism is focused essentially on the latter. Only the „born“ leaders are an exception, and even they should feel themselves as instruments of someone higher up in the hierarchy – the supreme leader as an instrument of destiny.

The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with „selfishness,“ and that it is an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy and the pattern of daily life; it would be surprising if one would not find the same doctrine also in scientific psychology, but here as an allegedly objective statement of facts. A case in point is Freud's theory on narcissism. He says, in short, that man has a certain quantity of libido. Originally, in the infant, all this libido has as its objective the child's own person, *primary narcissism*. Later on, the libido is directed from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his „object-relationships,“ the libido is withdrawn from the object and returned to one's own person, *secondary narcissism*. According to Freud, there is an almost mechanical alternative between ego-love and object-love. The more love I turn toward the outside world the less love I have for myself, and vice versa. Freud is thus moved to describe the phenomenon of falling in love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all love is turned to an object outside of oneself. Freud's theory of narcissism expresses basically the same idea which runs through protestant religion, idealistic philosophy, and the everyday patterns of modern culture. This by itself does not indicate that he is right or wrong. Yet, this translation of the general principle into the categories of empirical psychology gives us a good basis for examining the principle.

These questions arise: Does psychological observation support the thesis that there is a basic contradiction and the state of alternation between love for oneself and love for others? Is love for oneself the same phenomenon as selfishness, is there a difference or are they in fact opposites?

Before we turn to the discussion of the empirical side of the problem, it may be



noted that from a philosophical viewpoint, the notion that love for others and love for oneself are contradictory is untenable. If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, why must not I love myself too? A principle which proclaims love for man but which taboos love for myself, exempts me from all other human beings. The deepest experience of human existence, however, is to have this experience with regard to oneself. There is no solidarity of man in which I myself am not included. A doctrine which proclaims such an exclusion proves its objective insincerity by this very fact.⁷

We have come here to the psychological premises on which the conclusions of this paper are built. Generally, these premises are: not only others, but also we ourselves are the „object“ of our feelings and attitudes; the attitude towards others and toward ourselves, far from being contradictory, runs basically parallel. (This viewpoint has been emphasized by K. Horney, 1939, esp. Chapters 5 and 7). With regard to the problem under discussion this means: Love for others and love for ourselves are not alternatives. Neither are hate for others and hate for ourselves alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love for themselves will be found in those who are at least capable of loving others. Hatred against oneself is inseparable from hatred against others, even if on the surface the opposite seems to be the case. In other words, love and hatred, in principle, are indivisible as far as the difference between „objects“ and one's own self is concerned.

To clarify this thesis, it is necessary to discuss the problem of hatred and love. With regard to hatred one can differentiate between „reactive hatred“ and „character conditioned hatred.“ By reactive hatred I mean a hatred which is essentially a reaction to an attack on one's life, security, or ideals or on some other person that one loves and identifies oneself with. Its premise is one's positive attitude toward one's life, toward other persons and toward ideals. If there is a strong affirmation of life, a strong hatred necessarily is aroused if life is attacked. If there is love, hatred must be aroused if the loved one is attacked. There is no passionate striving for anything which does not necessitate hatred if the object of this striving is attacked. Such hatred is the counterpoint of life. It is aroused by a specific situation, its aim is the destruction of the attacker and, in principle, it ends when the attacker is defeated. (F. Nietzsche, 1911a, Stanza 2, has emphasized the creative function of destruction.)

Character-conditioned hatred is different. To be sure, the hatred rooted in the character structure once arose a reaction to certain experiences undergone by the individual in his childhood. It then became a character trait of the person; he is hostile. His basic hostility is observable even when it is not giving rise to manifest hatred. There is something in the facial expression, gestures, tone of voice, kind of jokes, little unintentional reactions which impress the observer as indications of the fundamental hostility, which also could be described as a continuous *readiness* to hate. It is the basis from which reactive hatred springs if and when it is aroused by a specific stimulus. This hate reaction can be perfectly rational; as much so, as a matter of fact, as is the case in the situations which were described as arousing reactive hatred. There is, however, a fundamental difference. In the case of reactive hatred it is the situation which creates the hatred. In the case of

⁷ This thought is expressed in the biblical: „Love thy neighbor as thyself!“ The implication is that respect of one's own integrity and uniqueness, love for and understanding of one's own self, can not be separated from respect, love and understanding with regard to another individual. The discovery of my own self is inseparably connected with the discovery of any other self.



character-conditioned hatred an „idling“ hostility is actualized by the situation. In the case where the basic hatred is aroused, the person involved appears to have something like a feeling of relief, as though he were happy to have found the rational opportunity to express his lingering hostility. He shows a particular kind of satisfaction and pleasure in his hatred which is missing in the case of an essentially reactive hatred.

In the case of a proportionality between hate reaction and external situation, we speak of a „normal“ reaction, even if it is the actualization of character-conditioned hatred. From this normal reaction to an „irrational“ reaction found in the neurotic or psychotic person, there are innumerable transitions and no sharp demarcation line can be drawn. In the irrational hate-reaction, the emotion seems disproportionate to the actual situation. Let me illustrate by referring to a reaction which psychoanalysts have ample opportunity to observe; an analysand has to wait ten minutes because the analyst is delayed. The analysand enters the room, wild with rage at the offense done to him by the analyst. Extreme cases can be observed more clearly in psychotic persons; in those the disproportionality is still more striking. Psychotic hatred will be aroused by something which from the standpoint of reality is not at all offensive. Yet, from the standpoint of his own feeling it is offensive, and thus the irrational reaction is irrational only from the standpoint of external objective reality, not from the subjective premises of the person involved.

The lingering hostility can also be purposely aroused and turned into manifest hatred by social suggestion; that is, propaganda. If such propaganda which wants to instill people with hatred toward certain objects is to be effectual, it must build upon the character-conditioned hostility in the personality structure of the members of the groups to which it appeals. A case in point is the appeal of Nazism to the group which formed its nucleus, the lower middle class. Latent hostility was peculiarly the lot of the members of this group long before it was actualized by Nazi propaganda and that is why they were such fertile soil for this propaganda.

Psychoanalysis offers ample opportunity to observe the conditions responsible for the existence of hatred in the character structure.

The decisive factors for arousing character-conditioned hatred may be stated to be all the different ways by which spontaneity, freedom, emotional and physical expansiveness, the development of the „self“ of the child are blocked or destroyed.⁸ The means of doing this are manifold; they vary from open, intimidating hostility and terror, to a subtle and „sweet“ kind of „anonymous authority,“ which does not overtly forbid anything but says: „know you will or will not like this or that.“

⁸ In recent years, a number of psychologists were interested in the problem of uncovering the hostility, consciously or unconsciously, present in children. Some of them were very successful in demonstrating the presence of strong hostility in very young children. A method which proved to be particularly fruitful was to arrange play situations in which the children expressed their hostility very clearly. According to Laurette Bender and Paul Schilder (1936), the younger the children were the more directly they expressed hostility, while with the older ones the hate-reaction was already repressed but could be clearly observed in a play situation. Compare also D. M. Levy. 1937. L. Murphey and G. Lerner have found normal children who seem quite conventionally adjusted to the nursery-school play group, revealing intense aggression in a free play situation, alone with one adult. J. L. Despert (1940) has come to similar conclusions. A. Hartoch and E. Schachtel have found expression of strong aggressiveness in Rorschach tests in two to four year old children who did not show proportionate amount of manifest aggressiveness in their behavior.



Simple frustration of instinctual impulses does not create deep seated hostility; it only creates a reactive hate reaction. Yet, this was Freud's assumption and his concept of the Oedipus Complex is based on it; it implies that the frustration of sexual wishes directed toward the father or the mother creates hatred which in its turn leads to anxiety and submission. To be sure, frustration often appears as a symptom of something which does create hostility: not taking the child seriously, blocking his expansiveness, not allowing him to be free. But the real issue is not isolated frustration but the fight of the child against those forces which tend to suppress his freedom and spontaneity. There are many forms in which the fight for freedom is fought and many ways in which the defeat is disguised. The child may be ready to internalize the external authority and be „good,“ it may overtly rebel and yet remain dependent. It may feel that it „belongs“ by completely conforming to the given cultural patterns at the expense of the loss of its individual self – the result is always a lesser or greater degree of inner emptiness, the feeling of nothingness, anxiety and resulting from all that a chronic hatred, and *ressentiment*, which Nietzsche characterized very well as *Lebensneid*, envy of life.

There is a slight difference, however, between hatred and this envy of life. The aim of hatred is in the last analysis the destruction of the object outside of my self. By destroying it I attain strength in relative, although not in absolute terms. In envy of life, the begrudging attitude aims at the destruction of others too; not, however, in order to gain relative strength, but to have the satisfaction that others are being denied the enjoyment of things which – for external or reasons – I cannot enjoy myself. It aims at removing the pain, rooted in my own inability for happiness, by having nobody else who by his very existence demonstrates what I am lacking.⁹

In principle, the same factors condition the development of chronic hatred in a group. The difference here as in general between individual psychology and social psychology is only to be found in this: while in individual psychology, we are looking for the individual and accidental conditions which are responsible for those character traits by which one individual varies from other members of his group, in social psychology we are interested in the character structure as far as it is common to and, therefore, typical of the majority of the members of that group. As to the conditions, we are not looking for accidental individual conditions like an overstrict father or the sudden death of a beloved sister, but for those conditions of life which are a common experience for the group as such. This does not mean the one or the other isolated trait in the whole mode of life, but the total structure of basic life experiences as they are essentially conditioned by the socio-economic situation of a particular group. (Cf. E. Fromm, 1932a.)

The child is imbued with the „spirit“ of a society long before it makes the direct acquaintance with it in school. The parents represent in their own character structure the spirit prevalent in their society and class and transmit this atmosphere to the child from the day of his birth onward. The family thus is the „psychic agency“ of society.

The bearing on our problem of the differentiation in hatred will have become clear

⁹ It should be noted that sadism has to be differentiated from hatred. As I see it, the aim of sadism is not destruction of the subject, but a seeking to have absolute power over it, to make it an instrument of oneself. Sadism can be blended with hatred; in this case it will have the cruelty usually implied in the notion of sadism. It can also be blended with sympathy in which case the impulse is to have the object as an instrument and, at the same time, to further him in any way excepting in one: letting him be free.



by now. While in the case of reactive hatred the stimulus which is at the same time the object, constitutes the „cause“ for the hatred; in the case of character-conditioned hatred, the basic attitude, the readiness for hatred, exists regardless of an object and before a stimulus makes the chronic hostility turn into manifest hatred. As has been indicated, originally, in childhood, this basic hatred was brought into existence by certain people, but later it has become part of the personality structure and objects play but a secondary rôle. Therefore, in its case, there is, in principle, no difference between objects outside of myself and my own self. The idling hostility is always there; its outside objects change according to circumstances and it but depends on certain factors whether I myself become one of the objects of my hostility. If one wants to understand why a certain person is hated in one case, why I myself am hated in another case, one has to know the specific factors in the situation which make others or myself the object of manifest hatred. What interests us in this context, however, is the general principle that character-conditioned hatred is something radiating from an individual and like a searchlight focussing sometimes on this and sometimes on that object, among them myself.

The strength of basic hatred is one of the major problems of our culture. In the beginning of this paper, it has been shown how Calvinism and Protestantism pictured man as essentially evil and contemptible. Luther's hatred against the revolting peasants is of extraordinary intensity.

Max Weber has emphasized the distrust for and hostility toward others which runs through the Puritan literature replete with warnings against having any confidence in the help and friendliness of our fellow men. Deep distrust even toward one's closest friend is recommended by Baxter. Th. Adams says: „He – the 'knowing' man – is blind in no man's cause but best sighted in his own. He confines himself to the circle of his own affairs and thrusts not his fingers in needless fires... He sees the falseness of it [the world] and, therefore, learns to trust himself ever, others so far as not to be damaged by their disappointments.“ (*Work of the Puritan Divines*, quoted by M. Weber, 1930, p. 222.)

Hobbes assumed that man's nature was that of a predatory animal, filled with hostility, set to kill and rob. Only by the consensus of all, submitting to the authority of the state, could peace and order be created. Kant's opinion of man's nature is not too distant from Hobbes, he too thought that man's nature had a fundamental propensity for evil. Among psychologists, chronic hatred as an inherent part of human nature has been a frequent assumption. William James considered it as being so strong that he took for granted that we all feel a natural repulsion against physical contact with other persons. (Cf. W. James, 1893, esp. vol. 2, p. 348.) Freud, in his theory of the death instinct, assumed that for biological reasons, we all are driven by an irresistible force to destroy either others or ourselves.

Although some of the philosophers of the enlightenment period believed that the nature of man was good and that his hostility was the product of the circumstances under which he lives, the assumption of hostility as an inherent part of man's nature runs through the ideas of representative thinkers of the modern era from Luther up to our days. We need not discuss whether this assumption is tenable. At any rate, the philosophers and psychologists who held this belief were good observers of man within their own culture, even though they made the mistake of believing that modern man in his essence is not a historical product but is as nature made him to be.



While important thinkers clearly saw the strength of hostility in modern man, popular ideologies and the convictions of the average man tend to ignore the phenomenon. Only a relatively small number of people have an awareness of their fundamental dislike of others. Many have only a feeling of just having little interest or feeling for others. The majority are completely unaware of the intensity of the chronic hatred in themselves as well as in others. They have adopted the feeling that they know they are supposed to have: to like people, to find them nice, unless or until they have actually committed an act of aggression. The very indiscriminateness of this „liking people“ shows its thinness or rather its compensatory quality a basic lack of fondness.

While the frequency of un(ier)lyng distrust and dislike for others is known to many observers of our social scene, the dislike for oneself is a less clearly recognized phenomenon. Yet, this self-hatred may be considered rare only so long as we think of cases in which people quite overtly hate or dislike themselves. Mostly, this self-dislike is concealed in various ways. One of the most frequent indirect expressions of self-dislike are the inferiority feelings so widespread in our culture. Consciously, these persons do not feel that they dislike themselves: what they do feel is only that they are inferior to others, that they are stupid, unattractive or whatever the particular content of the inferiority feelings is.¹⁰

To be sure, the dynamics of inferiority feelings are complex and there are factors other than the one with which we are dealing. Yet, this factor is never missing and dislike for oneself or at least a lack of fondness for one's own person is always present and is dynamically an important factor.

A still more subtle form of self-dislike is the tendency toward constant self-criticism. These people do not feel inferior but if they make one mistake, discover something in themselves which should not be so, their self-criticism is entirely out of proportion to the significance of the mistake or the shortcoming. They must either be perfect according to their own standards, or at least perfect enough according to the standards of the people around them so that they get affection and approval. If they feel that what they did was perfect or if they succeed in winning other people's approval, they feel at ease. But whenever this is missing they feel overwhelmed by an otherwise repressed inferiority feeling. Here again, the basic lack of fondness for themselves is one source from which the attitude springs. This becomes more evident if we compare this attitude toward oneself with the corresponding one toward others. If, for example, a man who believes that he loves a woman should feel if she makes any mistake that she is no good, or if his feeling about her is entirely dependent on whether others criticize or praise her, we cannot doubt that there is a fundamental lack of love for her. It is the person who hates who seizes every opportunity to criticize another person and who does not miss any blunder.

The most widespread expression of the lack of fondness for oneself, however, is the way in which people treat themselves. People are their own slave drivers; instead of being the slaves of a master outside of themselves, they have put the master within. This master is harsh and cruel. He does not give them a moment's rest, he forbids them the enjoyment of any pleasure, does not allow them to do what they want. If they do so,

¹⁰ Industry, for instance, capitalizes the unconscious self-dislike by terrorizing people with the threat of „body odor.“ The unconscious dislike the average person has for himself makes him an easy prey for this suggestion.



they do it furtively and at the expense of a guilty conscience. Even the pursuit of pleasure is as compulsory as is work. It does not lead them away from the continual restlessness which pervades their lives. For the most part, they are not even aware of this. There are some exceptions. Thus, the banker, James Stillman, who, when in the prime of life, had attained wealth, prestige and power reached only by but few people said: I never in my life have done what I wanted and never shall do so. (Cf. A. Robeson, 1927.)

The rôle of „conscience“ as the internalization of external authorities and as the bearer of deep seated hostility against oneself has been seen clearly by Freud in the formulation of his concept of the Super-Ego. He assumed that the Super-Ego contains a great deal of the basic destructiveness inherent in man and turns it against him in terms of duty and moral obligation. In spite of objections to Freud's Super-Ego theory, which cannot be presented here (see my discussion of the Super-Ego in E. Fromm, 1936a), Freud undoubtedly has sensed keenly the hostility and cruelty contained in the „conscience“ as it was conceived in the modern era.

What holds true of hostility and hatred holds also true of love. Yet, love for others and self-love is by far a more difficult problem to discuss; and this for two reasons. One is the fact that while hatred is a phenomenon to be found everywhere in our society and, therefore, an easy object for empirical observation and analysis, love is a comparatively rare phenomenon, which lends itself to empirical observation only under difficulties; any discussion of love, therefore, implies the danger of being unempirical and merely speculative. The other difficulty is perhaps even greater. There is no word in our language which has been so much misused and prostituted as the word „love.“ It has been preached by those who were ready to condone every cruelty if it served their purpose; it has been used as a disguise under which to force people into sacrificing their own happiness, into submitting their whole self to those who profited from this surrender. It has been used as the moral basis for unjustified demands. It has been made so empty that for many people love may mean no more than that two people have lived together for 20 years just without fighting more often than once a week. It is dangerous and somewhat embarrassing to use such a word. Yet a psychologist may not properly succumb to this embarrassment. To preach love is at best bad taste. But to make a cool and critical analysis of the phenomenon of love and to unmask pseudo-love – tasks which cannot be separated from each other – is an obligation that the psychologist has no right to avoid.

It goes without saying that this paper will not attempt to give an analysis of love. Even to describe the psychological phenomena which are conventionally covered by the term „love“ would require a good part of a book. One must attempt, however, the presentation necessary to the main trend of thought of this paper.

Two phenomena closely connected with each other are frequently presented as love – the masochistic and sadistic love. In the case of *masochistic* love, one gives up one's self, one's initiative and integrity in order to become submerged entirely in another person who is felt to be stronger. Because of deep anxieties which give rise to the feeling that one cannot stand on one's own feet, one wants to be rid of one's own individual self and to become part of another being, thus becoming secure and finding a center which one misses in oneself. This surrender of one's own self has often been praised as



the example of „the great love.“ It is actually a form of idolatry, and also an annihilation of the self. The fact that it has been conceived as love has made it the more seductive and dangerous.

The *sadistic* love on the other hand springs from the desire to swallow its object to make him a will-less instrument in one's own hands. This drive is also rooted in a deep anxiety and an inability to stand alone, but instead of finding increased strength by being swallowed, strength and security are found in having a limited power over the other person. The masochistic as well as the sadistic kind of love are expressions of one basic need which springs from a basic inability to be independent. Using a biological term, this basic need may be called a „need for symbiosis.“ The sadistic love is frequently the kind of love that parents have for their children. Whether the domination is overtly authoritarian or subtly „modern“ makes no essential difference. In either case, it tends to undermine the strength of the self of the child and leads in later years to the development in him of the very same symbiotic tendencies. The sadistic love is not infrequent among adults. Often in relationships of long duration, the respective roles are permanent, one partner representing the sadistic, the other one the masochistic pole of the symbiotic relationship. Often the rôles change constantly – a continuous struggle for dominance and submission being conceived as love.

It appears from what has been said that love cannot be separated from freedom and independence. In contradiction to the symbiotic pseudo-love, the basic premise of love is freedom and equality. Its premise is the strength, independence, integrity of the self, which can stand alone and bear solitude. This premise holds true for the loving as well as for the loved person. Love is a spontaneous act, and spontaneity means – also literally – the ability to act of one's own free volition. If anxiety and weakness of the self makes it impossible for the individual to be rooted in himself, he cannot love.

This fact can be fully understood only if we consider what love is directed toward. It is the opposite of hatred. Hatred is a passionate wish for destruction; love is a passionate affirmation of its „object“.¹¹ That means that love is not an „affect“ but an active striving, the aim of which is the happiness, development, and freedom of its „object.“ This passionate affirmation is not possible if one's own self is crippled, since genuine affirmation is always rooted in strength. The person whose self is thwarted, can only love in an ambivalent way; that is, with the strong part of his self he can love, with the crippled part he must hate.¹²

The term *passionate affirmation* easily leads to misunderstanding; it does not mean intellectual affirmation in the sense of purely rational judgment. It implies a much deeper affirmation, in which one's personality takes part as a whole: one's intellect, emotion and senses. One's eyes, ears and nose are often as good or better organs of affirmation than one's brain. If it is a deep and passionate one, the affirmation is related to the essence of the „object,“ not merely toward partial qualities. There is no stronger ex-

¹¹ Object is put into quotation marks because in a love relationship the „object“ ceases to be an object; that is, something opposite to and separated from the subject. Not accidentally do „object“ and „objection“ have the same root.

¹² Sullivan has approached this formulation in his lectures. He states that that the era of preadolescence is characterized by the appearance of impulses in interpersonal relations which make for a new type of satisfaction in the pleasure of the other person (the chum). Love, according to him, is a situation in which the satisfaction of the loved one is exactly as significant and desirable as that of the lover.



pression of God's love for man in the Old Testament than the saying at the end of each day of creation: „And God saw that it was good.“

There is another possible misunderstanding which should particularly be avoided. From what has been said, one might come to the conclusion that every affirmation is love, regardless of the worthiness of the object to be loved. This would mean that love is a purely subjective feeling of affirmation and that the problem of objective values does not enter into it. The question arises: Can one love the evil? We come here to one of the most difficult problems of psychology and philosophy, a discussion of which can scarcely be attempted here. I must repeat, however, that affirmation in the sense here used is not something entirely subjective. Love is affirmation of life, growth, joy, freedom and by definition, therefore, the evil which is negation, death, compulsion cannot be loved. Certainly, the subjective feeling can be a pleasurable excitement, consciously conceived in the conventional term of love. The person is apt to believe that he loves, but analysis of his mental content reveals a state very different from what I have discussed as love.

Much the same question arises with regard to certain other problems in psychology, for instance, the problem as to whether happiness is an entirely subjective phenomenon or whether it includes an objective factor. Is a person who feels „happy“ in dependence and self-surrender happy because he feels to be so, or is happiness always dependent on certain values like freedom and integrity? One has always used the argument that the people concerned are „happy“ to justify their suppression. This is a poor defense. Happiness cannot be separated from certain values, and is not simply a subjective feeling of satisfaction. A case in point is masochism. A person can be satisfied with submission, with torture, or even with death, but there is no happiness in submission, torture or death. Such considerations seem to leave the ground of psychology and to belong to the field of philosophy or religion. I do not believe that this is so. A sufficiently refined psychological analysis, which is aware of the difference in the qualities of feelings according to the underlying personality structure, can show the difference between *satisfaction and happiness*. Yet, psychology can be aware of these problems only if it does not try to separate itself from the problem of values. And, in the end does not shrink from the question of the goal and purpose of human existence.

Love, like character-conditioned hatred, is rooted in a basic attitude which is constantly present; a readiness to love, a *basic* sympathy as one might call it. It is started, but not caused, by a particular object. The ability and readiness to love is a character trait just as is the readiness to hate.¹³ It is difficult to say what the conditions favoring the development of this basic sympathy are. It seems that there are two main conditions, a positive and a negative one. The positive one is simply to have experienced love from others as a child. While conventionally, parents are supposed to love their children as a matter of course, this is rather the exception than the rule. This positive condition is, therefore, frequently absent. The negative condition is the absence of all those factors, discussed above, which make for the existence of a chronic hatred. The observer of childhood experiences may well doubt that the absence of these conditions is frequent.

From the premise that actual love is rooted in a *basic* sympathy there follows an

¹³ It would be most unfortunate to assume that these respective readinesses are characteristics of different personalities. Many people present concomitant readinesses of both varieties.



important conclusion with regard to the objects of love. The conclusion is, in principle, the same as was stated with regard to the objects of chronic hatred: the objects of love do not have the quality of exclusiveness. To be sure, it is not accidental that a certain person becomes the object of manifest love. The factors conditioning such a specific choice are too numerous and too complex to be discussed here.

The important point, however, is that love for a particular *object* is only the actualization and concentration of lingering love with regard to one person; it is not, as the idea of romantic love would have it, that there is only the one person in the world whom one could love, that it is the great chance of one's life to find that person, and that love for him or her results in a withdrawal from all others. The kind of love which can only be experienced with regard to one person demonstrates by this very fact that it is not love, but a symbiotic attachment. The basic affirmation contained in love is directed toward the beloved person as an incarnation of essentially human qualities.

Love for one person implies love for man as such. The kind of „division of labor“ as William James calls it – namely, to love one's family, but to be without feeling for the „stranger,“ is a sign of a basic inability to love. Love for man as such is not, as it is frequently supposed to be, an abstraction coming „after“ the love for a specific person, or an enlargement of the experience with a specific *object*; it is its premise, although, genetically, it is acquired in the contact with concrete individuals.

From this, it follows that my own self, in principle, is as much an object of my love as another person. The affirmation of my own life, happiness, growth, freedom is rooted in the presence of the basic readiness of and ability for such an affirmation. If an individual has this readiness, he has it also toward himself; if he can only love others, he cannot love at all. In one word, love is as indivisible as hatred with regard to its *objects*.

The principle which has been pointed out here, that hatred and love are actualizations of a constant readiness, holds true for other psychic phenomena. Sensuality, for instance, is not simply a reaction to a stimulus. The sensual or as one may say, the erotic person, has a basically erotic *attitude* toward the world. This does not mean that he is constantly excited sexually. It means that there is an erotic atmosphere which is actualized by a certain object, but which is there underneath before the stimulus appears. What is meant here is not the physiologically given ability to be sexually excited, but an atmosphere of erotic readiness, which under a magnifying glass could be observed also when the person is not in a state of actual sexual excitement. On the other hand, there are persons in whom this erotic readiness is lacking. In them, sexual excitement is essentially caused by a stimulus operating on the sexual instinct. Their threshold of stimulation can vary between wide limits, but there is a common quality in this type of sexual excitement; namely, its separateness from the whole personality in its intellectual and emotional qualities.

Another illustration of the same principle is the sense of beauty. There is a type of personality who has a readiness to see beauty. Again, that does not mean that he is constantly looking at beautiful pictures, or people, or scenery; yet, when he sees them a continuously present readiness is actualized, and his sense of beauty is not simply aroused by the object. Here too, a very refined observation shows that this type of person has a different way of looking at the world, even when he looks at objects which do not stimulate an acute perception of beauty. We could give many more examples for



the same principle, if space permitted. The principle should already be clear: While many psychological schools¹⁴ have thought of human reactions in terms of stimulus-response, the principle presented here is that character is a structure of numerous readi-nesses of the kind mentioned, which are constantly present and are actualized but not caused by an outside stimulus. This view is essential for such a dynamic psychology as psychoanalysis is.

Freud assumed that all these readi-nesses are rooted in biologically given instincts. It is here assumed that although this holds true for some of them, many others have arisen as a reaction to the individual and social experiences of the individual.

One last question remains to be discussed. Granted that love for oneself and for others in principle runs parallel, how do we explain the kind of *selfishness* which obviously is in contradiction to any genuine concern for others. The selfish person is only interested in himself, wants everything for himself, is unable to give with any pleasure but is only anxious to take; the world outside himself is conceived only from the standpoint of what he can get out of it; he lacks interest in the needs of others, or respect for their dignity and integrity. He sees only himself, judges everyone and everything from the standpoint of its usefulness to him, is basically unable to love. This selfishness can be manifest or disguised by all sorts of unselfish gestures; dynamically it is exactly the same. It seems obvious that with this type of personality there is a contradiction between the enormous concern for oneself and the lack of concern for others. Do we not have the proof here that there exists an alternative between concern for others and concern for oneself? This would certainly be the case if selfishness and self-love were identical. But this assumption is the very fallacy which has led to so many mistaken conclusions with regard to our problem. Selfishness and self-love far from being identical, actually are opposites.

Selfishness is one kind of greediness. (The German word *Selbstsucht* (addiction to self) very adequately expresses this quality common to all Sucht.) Like all greediness, it contains an insatiability, as a consequence of which there is never any real satisfaction. Greed is a bottomless pit which exhausts the person in an endless effort to satisfy the need without ever reaching satisfaction. This leads to the crucial point: close observation shows that while the selfish person is always anxiously concerned with himself, he is never satisfied, is always restless, always driven by the fear of not getting enough, of missing something, of being deprived of something. He is filled with burning envy of anyone who might have more. If we observe still closer, especially the unconscious dynamics, we find that this type of person is basically not fond of himself but deeply dislikes himself. The puzzle in this seeming contradiction is easy to solve. The selfishness is rooted in this very lack of fondness for oneself. The person who is not fond of himself, who does not approve of himself, is in a constant anxiety concerning his own self. He has not the inner security which can exist only on the basis of genuine fondness and affirmation. He must be concerned about himself, greedy to get everything for himself,

¹⁴ Although the reflexological viewpoint seems to be similar to the one taken here, this similarity is only a superficial one. The reflexological viewpoint means a pre-formed readiness of neurones to react in a certain way to a certain stimulus. Our viewpoint is not concerned with these physical conditions and, what is more important, by *readiness* we mean an actually present but only lingering, or idling attitude, which makes for a basic atmosphere or Grundstimmung.



since basically his own self lacks security and satisfaction. The same holds true with the so-called narcissistic person, who is not so much overconcerned with getting things for himself as with admiring himself. While on the surface it seems that these persons are very much in love with themselves, they actually are not fond of themselves, and their narcissism – like selfishness – is an overcompensation for the basic lack of self-love. Freud has pointed out that the narcissistic person has withdrawn his love from others and turned it toward his own person. While the first part of this statement is true, the second one is a fallacy. He neither loves others nor himself.

It is easier to understand this mechanism when we compare it with overconcern and overprotectiveness for others. Whether it is an oversolicitous mother or an overconcerned husband, sufficiently deep observation shows always one fact: While these persons consciously believe that they are particularly fond of the child or husband, there actually is a deep repressed hostility toward the very objects of their concern. They are overconcerned because they have to compensate not only for a lack of fondness but for an actual hostility.

The problem of selfishness has still another aspect. Is not the sacrifice of one's own person the extreme expression of unselfishness, and, on the other hand, could a person who loves himself make that supreme sacrifice? The answer depends entirely on the kind of sacrifice that is meant. There is one *sacrifice*, as it has been particularly emphasized in recent years by Fascist philosophy. The individual should give himself up for something outside of himself which is greater and more valuable; the Leader, the race. The individual by himself is nothing and by the very act of self-annihilation for the sake of the higher power finds his destiny. In this concept, sacrificing oneself for something or someone greater than oneself is in itself the greatest attainable virtue. If love for oneself as well as for another person means basic affirmation and respect, this concept is in sharp contrast to self-love. But there is another kind of sacrifice: if it should be necessary to give one's life for the preservation of an idea which has become part of oneself or for a person whom one loves, the sacrifice may be the extreme expression of self-affirmation. Not, of course, an affirmation of one's physical self, but of the self in the sense of the kernel of one's total personality. In this case the sacrifice in itself is not the goal; it is the price to be paid for the realization and affirmation of one's own self. While in this latter case, the sacrifice is rooted in self-affirmation, in the case of what one might call the masochistic sacrifice, it is rooted in the lack of self-love and self-respect; it is essentially nihilistic.

The problem of selfishness has a particular bearing on psychotherapy. The neurotic individual often is *selfish* in the sense that he is blocked in his relationship to others or overanxious about himself. This is to be expected since to be neurotic means that the integration of a strong self has not been achieved successfully. To be normal certainly does not mean that it has. It means, for the majority of well-adapted individuals that they have lost their own self at an early age and replaced it completely by a social self offered to them by society. They have no neurotic conflicts because they themselves, and, therefore, the discrepancy between their selves and the outside world has disappeared. Often the neurotic person is particularly unselfish, lacking in self-assertion and blocked in following his own aims. The reason for this unselfishness is essentially the same as for the selfishness. What he is practically always lacking is self-love. This is what he needs to be-



come well. If the neurotic becomes well, he does not become normal in the sense of the conforming social self. He succeeds in realizing his self, which never had been completely lost and for the preservation of which he was struggling by his neurotic symptoms. A theory, therefore, as Freud's on narcissism which rationalizes the cultural pattern of denouncing self-love by identifying it with selfishness, can have but devastating effects therapeutically. It increases the taboo on self-love. Its effects can only be called positive if the aim of psychotherapy is not to help the individual to be himself; that is, free, spontaneous and creative – qualities conventionally reserved for artists – but to give up the fight for his self and conform to the cultural pattern peacefully and without the noise of a neurosis.

In the present era, the tendency to make of the individual a powerless atom is increasing. The authoritarian systems tend to reduce the individual to a will-less and feelingless instrument in the hands of those who hold the reins; they batter him down by terror, cynicism, the power of the state, large demonstrations, fierce orators and all other means of suggestion. When finally he feels too weak to stand alone, they offer him satisfaction by letting him participate in the strength and glory of the greater whole, whose powerless part he is. The authoritarian propaganda uses the argument that the individual of the democratic state is *selfish* and that that he should become unselfish and socially minded. This is a lie. Nazism substituted the most brutal selfishness of the leading bureaucracy and of the state for the selfishness of the average man. The appeal for unselfishness is the weapon to make the average individual still more ready to submit or to renounce.

The criticism of democratic society should not be that people are too selfish; this is true but it is only a consequence of something else. What democracy has not succeeded in is to make the individual love himself; that is, to have a deep sense of affirmation for his individual self, with all his intellectual, emotional, and sensual potentialities. A puritan-protestant inheritance of self-denial, the necessity of subordinating the individual to the demands of production and profit, have made for conditions from which Fascism could spring. The readiness for submission, the pervert *courage* which is attracted by the image of war and self-annihilation, is only possible on the basis of a – largely unconscious – desperation, stifled by martial songs and shouts for the Führer. The individual who has ceased to love himself is ready to die as well as to kill. The problem of our culture, if it is not to become a fascist one, is not that there is too much selfishness but that there is no self-love. The aim must be to create those conditions which make it possible for the individual to realize his freedom, not only in a formal sense, but by asserting his total personality in his intellectual, emotional, sensual qualities. This freedom is not the rule of one part of the personality over another part – conscience over nature, Super-Ego over Id – but the integration of the whole personality and the factual expression of all the potentialities of this integrated personality.

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