

## SIGMUND FREUD, PESSIMIST.

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IT WAS between trains that I made a small discovery concerning Freud which has a certain bearing on the war. The discovery some might think a truism, namely, that the genial Freud is, philosophically speaking, a pessimist. The bearing of this discovery on the war consists in the fact that Freud's lucid avowal of his philosophical pessimism is made in an article published in wartime (1915) in a special journal (*Imago*).

It was between trains on a trip to Washington that I was about to fall asleep in the great heat when Freud's little work on *War and Death* floated to the top of the war literature. I sat back contentedly and read with satisfaction the translators' preface with its amiable talk about "advancement of the cause of international understanding and good will." It was that amiable physician, Dr. A. A. Brill, and a *New Republic* contributor, Mr. A. B. Kuttner, who were to give me the end of a perfect day in their authorized translation of Freud's essay, first published in 1918.

I turned the leaves and was for the moment almost lulled to sleep by the serene breadth of sundry observations which seemed to lap England and Germany together in a sort of Freudian embrace of an almost millennial tone. I kept thinking how the international understanding and good will were going to be advanced, and I wondered how Freud could make such a terrible arraignment of Germany and survive, even though his words were written in 1915. I assumed that the "authorization" of the very pretty translation which Messrs. Brill and Kuttner had provided must have come before the American declaration of war. Yet perhaps the translators' preface had been written quite recently. Upon reflection, I could not quite convince myself that either Freud or his esteemed translators had pro-German propaganda in mind, even (as they might say) unconsciously. Evidently Freud was bringing some of the phenomena of the great war into the scope of his special views, and evidently his translators had been so astonished by the depth of the Freudian admissions concerning German immoralism (even in an essay published as early as 1915) that they felt it was high time to show how a real philosopher looked

upon these mundane happenings. This opinion of the translators seems well established by the text of their brief prefatory note, which for its propagandist value I reproduce:

"This book is offered to the American public at the present time in the hope that it may contribute something to the cause of *international understanding and good will* [*italics mine*] which has become the hope of the world."

A perusal and reperusal of the essay is well worth while, as indeed of any Freudian essay. Remarkable for its lucidity, well translated, the essay is, in sooth, an interesting and important one; but I had not advanced far in its reading when the desire for sleep forsook me and I began to rub my eyes with astonishment. For the thesis which Freud here maintains may be concisely expressed as follows:

*Those who are not selfish and cruel are hypocrites. Selfishness and cruelty are the indestructible elements in man to which, repressed by civilization, we regress under the influence of war.*

Below I shall offer quotations from a portion of Freud's essay to prove that this is Freud's thesis. But before coming to these details and before speaking of their propagandist value, I feel minded to point out that, should I be able to prove my point, Freud stands self-confessed as a philosophical pessimist of a very familiar, nay, even banal sort. I fancy indeed that Freud would himself cheerfully concede the point. He would probably say that not to proclaim oneself a pessimist, philosophically speaking, is to be a hypocrite.

Perhaps the translators are right. Conceding for the moment that Freud has been proved to be a philosophical pessimist, may we not remind ourselves that many well-known pessimists do see the "hopes of the world" in an *understanding* of the world's basic evil? Granting this, may we not give ourselves leave to doubt, however, whether the world's *good will* can ever be gained for the pessimism of philosophers. That evil exists, all concede nowadays save the Christian Scientists, who themselves have a way of putting a demon in the cathedral walls in the shape of Malicious Animal Magnetism. But the M. A. M. of Freud is far more thorough-going; for him the world is at bottom a world of selfishness and cruelty, upon which the illusion known as civilization rests like a thin and delicate film, only to be dissolved at a slight touch of reality.

But are we entitled to think of Freud as a pessimist in the same sense as we think of Voltaire, of Rousseau, and of Schopenhauer, those giant pessimists of an older generation? Or descending to a

more recent day, are we entitled to align Freud as one of the minor pessimists with v. Hartmann and Nietzsche? I know many amiable Freudians, including the medical translator of this book, and I know that in their daily lives they are cheerful souls, and some of them as merry as grigs; but so far as that goes, Voltaire and at times Schopenhauer were mirthful and gay; and it is well known that confirmed pessimists get a tolerable joy from their views, or despite them. Is, or is not, Freudism a form of pessimism? If so, and if the Freudian contentions concerning this war and the abolition of ethical restrictions" which characterizes it are correct contentions, then we must indeed look to our philosophical fundamentals to justify a continuance of this or any war.

After reading this book, in short, we may very possibly understand the war better, but we surely cannot like it any better. I am reminded here of a celebrated remark by (that contradiction of terms!) an *English Hegelian*, Mr. F. H. Bradley, to be found in the preface of his metaphysical work on *Appearance and Reality*. Mr. Bradley had resurrected a note from his commonplace book and put it in the preface:

"Where all is rotten, it is a man's work to cry stinking fish!"

In his apology for the great war, Freud may have done a man's work, but it is a little trying to have the stench cry to the heaven of our good will!

But are not Messrs. Brill and Kuttner right in their hope, and am I not wrong in believing Freud a philosophical pessimist? And, secondly, even if Freud is a pessimist philosophically speaking, is Freud not right, and will not "the cause of international understanding" be forwarded by our acknowledgment that Freud is right? It will be profitable to separate these questions.

Is, or is not, Freud a pessimist? I cast him above, along with v. Hartmann and Nietzsche, for the part of a minor pessimist. I mean no disrespect by the term *minor*: but surely all three of these philosophers are yet remembered by too many men for their mere personalities to allow us to add them to the heroes of philosophy. Moreover, being a minor pessimist is consistent enough with being a major contributor of something else to the world. Thus, v. Hartmann stood for at least one of the many varieties of the *Unconscious* which he defined clearly enough. And Nietzsche got up the *Will to Power*, which (though Nietzsche castigated Germany in the best possible German style) is thought by some to express best of all the present aims of

Germany. Again, Freud appears to have added *dream-study* to the technique of psychopathological analysis, and this contribution may well stand forever as an important one, when his pan-devilish Unconscious, his erotic symbolism, and his homuncular mechanisms have shrunk to minor proportions or to nil. Let us hand to Freud, what assuredly belongs not to Nietzsche, the palm of clarity.

But is or is not Freud a pessimist? As hinted above, I fancy that Freud would himself grant that he is a philosophical pessimist. As for the Freudians, I find that they do not always go the whole way, and I do not know quite what they will declare. Freud himself certainly plumps for what he plumps for, whether it be sex or the Censor, dreams or Germany.

I want now to recall some of the well-known facts concerning the history of pessimism that might apply to Freud. But in order to hold his thesis in mind and test it by comparison with the outstanding pessimism of the past, let us listen to some of Freud's remarks. I paraphrase from an early point in the essay:<sup>1</sup>

*Civilization is an illusion dashed to pieces by collision with a bit of reality.*

Again:<sup>2</sup>

*"States and races" have in the war "abolished their mutual ethical restrictions," so that they have been observed "to withdraw from the pressure of civilization."*

Again:<sup>3</sup>

*"Our conscience is not the inexorable judge that teachers of ethics say it is; it has its origin in nothing but 'social fear'."*

Again,<sup>4</sup> we find

*"Civilization built upon hypocrisy."*

Again,<sup>5</sup>

*One is a hypocrite who "reacts continually to precepts that are not expressions of impulses."*

I shall below try to give some idea of the logical connection between these statements, but before doing so, let us get in mind the philosophical pessimism of history. The following parallel columns give a rough idea of the history of these developments down through the great names of Hegel, as optimist, and Schopenhauer as pessimist.

<sup>1</sup>Page 16-17.

<sup>2</sup>Page 30.

<sup>3</sup>Page 15.

<sup>4</sup>Page 28.

<sup>5</sup>Page 28.

Note that some names, as Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Darwin, appear in both columns, either because their points of view were double or because their conclusions have been used by both parties.

### MAJOR OPTIMISTS

PLATO  
STOICS  
LEIBNITZ  
ROUSSEAU  
KANT  
HEGEL  
DARWIN

### MAJOR PESSIMISTS

PLATO  
EPICUREANS  
VOLTAIRE  
ROUSSEAU  
KANT  
SCHOPENHAUER  
DARWIN

My suggestion now is that we can offer a list as follows of

### MINOR PESSIMISTS

V. HARTMANN  
NIETZSCHE  
FREUD

As to pessimism, like most things philosophical, the historians carry it back to the arch optimist Plato. Plato thought that, on account of the connection man had with his material body and with the world of sense, the life of man had evil thrust upon it. The eternal good of Plato was accordingly limited by this material element of "non-being." The Epicureans and the Skeptics took up this pessimistic factor in the Platonic account and, dwelling upon the actual bulk of pain and evil in the world, thought to confute the ethics of the Stoics, who had followed the more optimistic main line of the Platonic conception. In fact, the Epicureans were more empirical than philosophical in their pessimism. The man of the world acknowledges the existence of pain and evil; the Epicurean simply found that pain and evil bulked larger in the world than the goodness of it and hence were obliged to be empirical pessimists.

No great contribution to the philosophy of pessimism appears to have been made from the time of Plato's pessimism, as expressed, for example, in Book X of the *Republic*, until quite modern times. Voltaire wrote in three days his famous novel *Candide* in ridicule of the

idea that our world is the best of all possible worlds, and perhaps it is unfair to ground a philosophical pessimism upon what was intended to be a mere skit. Still, the Voltairian contentions were at least symptomatic of the views of many in his time, and possibly became the views of his patron and pupil, Frederick the Great. Marshal Foch has pointed out how France introduced nationalistic warfare into the world in the Napoleonic era, and how this kind of warfare has come back to plague France. It is equally true that the notions of the French pessimist Voltaire may be said in the person of Frederick the Great of Prussia also to have come back to plague the land of their origin. As opposed to such pessimism as that of Voltaire is the optimism of Leibnitz, as expressed in his *Theodicy*.

In contemplating the views of Epicureans and Stoics, of Voltaire and Leibnitz, the psychiatrist is inclined to inquire how much of mental deviation may lodge in these philosophers, particularly in the pessimistic persuasion. I suppose that it must remain doubtful whether Voltaire was an out-and-out psychopath. That he was "all intellect" and somatically an odd stick may stand without question. On the whole, however, it remains far more doubtful in the case of Voltaire that he was psychopathic than it remains in the case of his successor, Rousseau. As for Rousseau, it would be a pretty inquiry how far his views were not merely colored but manufactured by his psychopathic temperament. According to Rousseau, man was naturally good but rendered evil by culture. Accordingly, Rousseau started his back-to-nature cult and made many a princess try her luck as a shepherdess. He is a man whose contentions may be placed on both sides of the account. Rousseau is in one sense an optimist, in another sense a pessimist. It may be observed that his view is in one sense the inverse of the Freudian view, for according to Rousseau, man is by nature good and by civilization rendered bad; whereas for Freud it would appear that man is by nature bad—that is, a compound of selfishness and cruelty—and that we can only hope for a little "sublimation" by the obscure processes of history.

Kant was doubtless greatly influenced by Rousseau. Whether Kant was psychopathic is as doubtful as in the case of Voltaire. However, he underwent a temperamental change in his life. From being a confirmed optimist, he appears finally to have become a believer in a radically base element in man, an element so extensive and important as to warrant Kant's being regarded as, if not a pessimist, nevertheless a father of pessimism.

As for Hegel, he assuredly regarded the world as evil if it was viewed statically in a cross-section at a given time. But the world in process, the world of actuality, was for Hegel a good world, and he has had many followers in the attempt to prove that evil is somehow good. Kant's view had run in somewhat the same direction. For Kant had been an optimist in regard to the potentialities of man, though a pessimist in regard to the present situation. Though man had a good motive in him, namely, the rational and universal motive of humanity, nevertheless the tendency on man's part was to make his motive of action out of mere self-love. To be sure, in a state of nature, both Kant and Rousseau felt that man had good natural propensities, rather naturally fitted to the ends of man. He was, as it were, in a sort of Garden of Eden, in a physical state of Paradise and in a moral state of complete innocence. It was, perhaps, not a snake which caused his fall, but it was something equivalent, namely, Consciousness. When a man grew conscious, according to Kant, he found he had a will, and by means of this will he got away from the natural law that governed his instincts. Through the operation of this will of his, man became evil. If civilization and culture are a product of the natural desires of man, then civilization and culture become non-natural affairs. Nature and culture are in conflict. The individual turns out to be necessarily unhappy in this situation. It was not up to history to make the individual happy. History's plot was to perfect humanity as a whole. In the process of this perfection, we were going to suffer tremendous conflicts and pain.

Hegel now took optimistic lines: somehow history was perfecting humanity. Perhaps it would not be too flippant to consider that Hegel felt that it was Germany's part to secure through history the perfection of humanity. We Anglo-Saxons, and of course also the clear-headed Latins, are a bit amused at this curious idea of Germans as the chosen people: but one does not feel that Hegel had any particular sense of humor in this regard.

Whereas Hegel laid hold upon the perfection of humanity in point of time, Schopenhauer laid hold of the Kantian notion of the will. Man, according to Kant, found he had a will and became through this will evil. There was a radical evil in the nature of man, of which for Schopenhauer the best account was that it was somehow the will. The rest of the Schopenhauerian story is to be read in every textbook of philosophy.

V. Hartmann now laid hold of the will concept and developed

from faint beginnings in older philosophy the semi-mystical concept of the Unconscious, a concept which is used to this day by the Freudians. V. Hartmann himself, despite his tremendous vogue and modishness, appears to have been a lucid critic, not only of other people's notions, but also of the Unconscious, and has left an analysis of the types of the Unconscious used by the different philosophers to the number of seventeen! That there was anything psychopathic about v. Hartmann that influenced his work is doubtful, though we may give full credence to the idea that temperament played a part. Darwinian notions had now become current. The Darwinian evolution could be used effectively by Herbert Spencer as an argument towards a millennium, and from that point of view one might regard Darwinism as a quintessence of optimism. But the pain and annihilation suffered in the struggle for existence might well lead to the employment of Darwinian concepts for the purposes of pessimism, and this it would appear has been the special task of many German authors. One seems to see in Nietzsche distinct traces of this use of Darwinism. While Sir Francis Galton was quietly developing his Viriculture and his noble concepts of Eugenics, Nietzsche was on the other hand depicting the ideas of the Blonde Beast and the Superman. Elements of logical identity might be found for these Galtonian and Nietzschean ideas, and the psychiatrists would be tempted to lay to the matter of temperament alone much of the difference between a Galton and a Nietzsche.

The Massachusetts Commission on Mental Diseases recently purchased a set of the works of Nietzsche, and the sober and astute financial officers of the State could find no fault with the purchase of such excellent psychopathic materials: Could not the state research officers profit by a direct study of the works of Nietzsche as much as by the study of case records from their hospitals? As in Rousseau, so in Nietzsche, we find obvious psychopathy. Perhaps it is even more obvious and more thoroughgoing in its effects in the case of Nietzsche than in the case of Rousseau. Nietzsche, born in 1844, appears to have been clearly psychopathic as early as 1876, and became obviously insane in 1888, dying only in 1900. Of course, it may be pointed out that Nietzsche revolted against pessimism and really in a way inverted the views of Schopenhauer. He wanted life led vigorously just because it was painful. Nietzsche had in himself enough psychopathy to study. Schopenhauer had studied the relations of moral and physical at the Berlin clinic of the Charité. In the twenties Schopenhauer had kept loaded weapons at his bedside. These two great pessimists



in the history of philosophy are, beyond all question and cavil, psychopaths. Shall we not draw a lesson from their psychopathy and seek, amongst other milder, milk-and-watery pessimists of a more modern day, the causes of pessimism in temperament?

In this wholly superficial analysis of the history of pessimism, whose main facts lie at the surface of every historical work, I do not mean to argue for or against the truth of pessimism. The decidedly healthy mind of William James found "a deep truth in what the school of Schopenhauer insists on—the illusoriness of the notion of moral progress. The more brutal forms of evil that go are replaced by others more subtle and more poisonous. Our moral horizon moves with us as we move, and never do we draw nearer to the far-off line where the black waves and the azure meet."<sup>6</sup>

One of the best popular accounts of pessimism is in James' essay "*Is life worth living?*" James there points out how "Germany, when she lay trampled beneath the hoofs of Bonaparte's troopers, produced perhaps the most optimistic and idealistic literature that the world has seen; and not until the French 'milliards' were distributed after 1871 did pessimism overrun the country in the shape in which we see it to-day." And no doubt there were political and economic factors in the development of the pessimism of modern Germany. In another portion of "*Is life worth living?*" James speaks of speculative melancholy as not necessarily an outcome of animal experience. He speaks of it as possibly the "sick shudder of the frustrated religious demand."

With respect to both Nietzsche and more modern pessimists one wonders how far this insight of James really carries. Certainly in Germany itself at this time there appeared to be tremendous readjustments in the attitude to religion, out of which one gets the impression that a frustrate state of mind must come. James regards pessimism as essentially a religious disease. He elsewhere defined it as "consisting of nothing but a religious demand to which there comes no normal religious reply."

Where there is no free will there is apt to be no religion, and pessimism has usually, though not always, allied itself with a philosophy which denies free will, namely, with determinism. Some provision for free will or the importation of novelty into the world, some concession of indeterminism, seems to be required for the religious man. Freud can probably be shown in all his works to be a determinist. That he

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<sup>6</sup>P. 169, *Will to Believe; Essay on the Dilemma of Determinism*, 1884. P. 47, "*Is Life Worth Living*," Wm. James.

is always so obviously a pessimist as his essay on *War and Death* implies, I think we cannot be certain. But is it not clear from even a superficial analysis of the history of optimism and pessimism that Freud is, historically speaking, nothing but another bead on the string of pessimists? Is he not using the most frequent tool of pessimism, namely, a world system without free will, without (so far as I can see) the operation even of absolute chance in the sense of Charles Peirce? a world system which employs that Jack-of-all-trades, the Unconscious, to secure results which a deterministic or fatalistic formula would not readily secure?

Of course, one must insist that determinists are not necessarily pessimists, and *vice versa*. As James acutely remarks, "Our deterministic pessimism may become a deterministic optimism at the price of extinguishing our judgments of regret." If we cease regretting and let by-gones be by-gones, we shall not need to be pessimistic. Neither v. Hartmann nor Freud has quite the "wild-eyed look" at life which James charges the pessimist with having. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, obviously psychopathic, may readily answer to the charge. On the whole, however, one feels that the world of Freud as expounded in the last twenty odd years is a *somewhat* wild-eyed world, a "nightmare view of life," as James elsewhere expresses it.

In this new essay on *War and Death*, Freud however seems really to have let the pessimistic cat out of the bag of mechanistic tricks. I return to some quotations from Freud's essay, which runs as above-mentioned to the astonishing conclusion that everybody is a hypocrite who is not wholly selfish and cruel and that war tears the mask off this hypocrisy. War tears the mask off this hypocrisy whether it be a subjective or an objective one, for Freud opines that he has really found a *novum genus* of hypocrisy—*objective hypocrisy*.

Civilization, we saw above, is according to Freud, an *illusion dashed to pieces by collision with a bit of reality*. Accordingly our *disappointment over the war* is "strictly speaking [*i. e.*, intellectually?] *not justified, for it consists in the destruction of an illusion.*"

Freud writes avowedly as a German. He concedes that "science has lost her dispassionate impartiality." Would he grant himself one of "her deeply embittered votaries, intent upon seizing her weapons to do their share in the battle against the enemy?" Possibly. For, on a later page, Freud writes: "We live in the hope that impartial history will furnish the proof that this very nation, in whose language I am writing and for whose victory our dear ones are fighting [curiously

enough, Freud is an Austrian, though he seems here to identify himself with Germans], has sinned least against the laws of human civilization," and proceeds: "But who is privileged to step forward at such a time as judge in his own defense?" On the whole, however, Freud throughout makes a brave show of philosophical impartiality and cheerfully assigns to both sides an equal guilt in regard to the war's exposure of our (in Freud's eyes) fundamentally evil nature. "States and races" are described as having "abolished their mutual ethical restrictions" so that they were seen "to withdraw from the pressure of civilization." Both sides, he seems to concede, are equally at fault. I take it that Messrs. Brill and Kuttner were astonished at so great a concession by a German as the concession of mutual guilt. May this not be the true explanation of that extraordinary preface by Messrs. Brill and Kuttner about contributing to "the cause of international understanding and good will?" A German, writing to be sure from Austria, concedes a portion of guilt as Germany's. Is not this a bit of a *rapprochement*? Is not the time approaching for a Gargantuan embrace of the nations, a Brobdignagian kiss and make-up? This I can readily believe was a part of that which lies under that prefatory note. Another bit of underpinning is probably the belief that the world might well await the pronouncement of a Freud as a genuine oracle. For Freud has his votaries, and not the least of them is Dr. Brill.

Now, quite seriously speaking, I grant the oracle part and will not stoop to calling the stuff that emerges "Delphic"! It is lucid enough. It is important stuff also. But is it true?

Perhaps the most exact statement of the fundamental pessimism of man's nature is made in these terms:<sup>8</sup>

"The most pronounced childish egotists may become the most helpful self-sacrificing citizens," and "*The majority of idealists, humanitarians, and protectors of animals have developed from little sadists and animal tormentors,*" and, more summarily, "The earlier infantile existence of intense 'bad' impulses is often the necessary condition of being 'good' in later life."

Let us stoutly resist at this point the wish to doubt the cogency of all this logic and to question the accuracy of this psychology. Let us merely try to understand the implications of Freud concerning the pessimistic basis of many phenomena of this war.

<sup>7</sup>Pages 13, 2 and 30.

<sup>8</sup>Page 21.

*Egotism and cruelty are primitive impulses in us.*<sup>9</sup> There is a "deceptive appearance" of altruism in place of egotism (Messrs. Brill and Kuttner use "egotism," not egoism, here) and of sympathy in place of cruelty. Again let us resist questioning the accuracy of the term "deceptive" in this transformation and let us rather try to get Freud's point. "*We learn to value being loved as an advantage for the sake of which we can renounce other advantages.*"<sup>10</sup> Again, "The influences of civilization work through the erotic components to bring about the transformation of more and more of the selfish tendencies into altruistic and social tendencies."<sup>11</sup> Or still more pointedly, "Our conscience is not the inexorable judge that teachers of ethics say it is; it has its origin in nothing but 'social fear.'"<sup>12</sup>

But how and why is this transformation "a deceptive appearance" only? If it be a transformation, why is it not a transformation? Why does it turn into an appearance? Well, one reason is "ambivalence" (love—hate, etc.); but, passing over this sleight-of-hand, we learn that society's system of rewards and punishments does not always effect a genuine transformation. One person may, to be sure, be "always good," because his impulses compel him to be so, while another person is good only in so far as this civilized behavior is of advantage to his selfish purposes."<sup>13</sup> Honesty is here the best policy with a vengeance! "We shall certainly be misled by our optimism into greatly over-estimating the number of people who have been transformed by civilization."<sup>14</sup>

Still forbearing to question the facts or the uses to which the alleged facts are put, let us on. These prudential hypocrites ("civilization built upon hypocrisy"<sup>15</sup>) ought, one might think, to be allowed the free and cold-blooded use of their algebra of worldly success. But no! civilized obedience, even for selfish purposes, seems to put a strain on this majority group of untransformed egotists. They are somehow the victims of "a continual emotional suppression."<sup>16</sup> "*There are therefore more civilized hypocrites than truly cultured persons.*"<sup>17</sup> As to these hypocrites, it does not matter (according to Freud) whether they are conscious of their hypocrisy or not. *You are a hypocrite even if you do not know it—an "objective hypocrite"*<sup>18</sup>—and you are in

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<sup>9</sup>Page 19.

<sup>10</sup>Page 21.

<sup>11</sup>Page 22.

<sup>12</sup>Page 15.

<sup>13</sup>Page 26.

<sup>14</sup>Page 26.

<sup>15</sup>Page 28.

<sup>16</sup>Page 27.

<sup>17</sup>Page 28.

<sup>18</sup>Page 28.

fact a hypocrite whenever you "react continually to precepts that are not expressions of impulses."<sup>19</sup> The only impulses in question, be it remembered, are those of selfishness and cruelty.

It is thus fair to say that *those who are not selfish and cruel are hypocrites*. Those who are not selfish and cruel are victims of civilized suppressions. Hypocrites, whether conscious or not of their hypocrisy, are under a strain because they are not continually selfish and cruel.

Still not inquiring how true all this may be, let us ask how Freud makes it seem so to himself? It is because "the primitive psyche is in the strictest sense indestructible." The fact that psychic evolution is thus "unique" in the world of development does not stagger Freud in the least. *Au contraire!* For some reason Freud terms this alleged property of the psyche "plasticity." The indestructibility of the primitive psyche is just the plasticity of the psyche. Put otherwise, the (alleged) fact that selfishness and cruelty cannot be destroyed is an example of mental plasticity! The mind is "plastic" because you can always get down to selfishness and cruelty. In fact this vaunted plasticity is pretty much a one-way path of retrograde action or "regression." In fine, we poor mortals tend to selfishness and cruelty. Or, as one might say, man is cacotropic (a neologism of my own!). War creates these regressions, as it were hastens this cacotropic trend.

Selfishness and cruelty, or, more briefly, evil, is the indestructible element in man. And there is a pressure upon us, a "repression," when we get away from this indestructible evil core. In short, even the higher ethical processes are (here Freud might or might not follow me) in themselves evil, just because they produce these inhibitions, pressures, suppressions, repressions, hypocrisies. And, whether you feel any pressure of *Kultur* or not, anyhow aggression is your lot.

Well! what is to be the basis of international good will? Evidently whatever anybody in this war does is after all only to be expected. The *Apologia Freudi pro bello maximo*, as it might be called, is simply the *Apologia maxima et simplicissima*, viz., there is a radically base element in man to which he regresses in war.

With this blanket apology, let us now internationally be satisfied. The remedy? "A little more truthfulness and straightforward dealing."<sup>20</sup> Just what good this straight truth would do, I am bound to say

<sup>19</sup>Page 28.

<sup>20</sup>Page 39.

I do not see; for all that we should clearly see would be that the evil in our psyche was indelible!

From all which one might veritably deduce that Freud was not only a pessimist, but a determinist. As apologist for the war Freud is, I think it may be allowed, a pessimist. It happens to be to Germany's interest to follow the Freudian argument. As *propaganda Teutonica*, the essay is admirable. Though Freud himself may be philosophical enough to view quite impassively the minimal differences in regression he sees between the two enemies, eager propagandists will readily seize on one fact. Had this war not been started, then these gigantic repressions would not so soon have taken place. Hence, whoever started the war is responsible for it all. But the Teutons were centrally situated, so by nature on the defensive: hence the Entente is obviously at fault. Merely combine philosophical pessimism with anthropogeography, and the tale is told!

Intentionally or not, Freud, I hold, has so manipulated his pessimism as to make a subtle apology for the Central Powers, all the while parading on the high line of impartial weighing of both sides.

Both sides "have abolished their mutual ethical restrictions." Instances of their regression I find in Freud's pages to the number of twelve classes. I understand Freud to intimate that both the Teutonic and the Entente Allies have been guilty. I simplify by letting it seem that Germany and England stand for their respective allies in this wrong-doing.

1. England and Germany have regressed from that stage of community progress long ago reached by the Greek anphictyonies that forbade (a) destruction of a league city, (b) the felling of oil trees, (c) cutting off water supply.<sup>21</sup>

2. England and Germany have not afforded complete protection to the wounded, the physicians, and the nurses.<sup>22</sup>

3. England and Germany have not properly considered the rights of non-combatants, of women, and of children.<sup>23</sup>

4. England and Germany have not in the processes of war sought to maintain the projects and institutions of international corporate life.<sup>24</sup>

5. England and Germany have placed themselves above the rights of nations and all restrictions pledged in times of peace.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Page 10.

<sup>22</sup>Page 10.

<sup>23</sup>Page 11.

<sup>24</sup>Page 11.

<sup>25</sup>Page 12.

6. England and Germany have not respected the claims of private property.<sup>26</sup>

7. England and Germany have made free use of every injustice, every act of violence, that would dishonor the individual.<sup>27</sup>

8. England and Germany have apparently outdone the customs of previous wars in the degrees to which they have employed conscious lies and intentional deception against the enemy.<sup>28</sup>

9. England and Germany have intellectually repressed their citizens by excess of secrecy and censorship of news and expression of opinion.<sup>29</sup>

10. England and Germany have absolved themselves from guarantees and treaties by which they were bound to other states.<sup>30</sup>

11. England and Germany have made unabashed confession of their greed and aspiration to power.<sup>31</sup>

12. England and Germany have, by abolishing conscience (*i. e.*, "social fear") caused individuals to commit acts of cruelty, treachery, and deception.<sup>32</sup>

Freudism, if this account be correct, is certainly an extremist view of the universe; almost as extremist a view as that of Eddyism, to which allusion was made above. Why not ticket Freud pessimist and have done, just as we ticket Eddy optimist and have done? Why not use as practical physicians Freudism and Eddyism as alternative methods of cure by suggestion? On the one hand a suggestion that your native badness be now sublimated, on the other hand a suggestion that your badness simply does not exist at all? The choice of patients for Freudian sublimation or Eddyian subtraction of morbid agents might then depend upon the temperament discerned in the patient. These would be the *All-or-None* (as the physiologists say) alternatives of a two-way system of psychotherapy—back to the doctrine of original sin on the one hand, back to the doctrine of original bliss on the other. We might counsel brunettes for psychotherapy, Freudian type, blondes for psychotherapy, Eddyian type. Or possibly thin persons ought to be psychoanalyzed, fat ones given absent treatment. *Red slip; Sublimate! Blue slip: Oblivisce!*

Suggestion, Bernheim declares, is an *idea accepted*. Very well!

<sup>26</sup>Page 14.

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Technique matters not, so the result be obtained. On the level of this broad definition the sage and catholic physician might choose to-day psychoanalysis, tomorrow Christian Science, for patients of different or shifting dispositions, on the sound psychological basis of the great polarities of man—towards pessimism, towards optimism. For the pessimist who is but half-hearted, a mere pejorist, we counsel thorough pessimism: *In the great world evil, sink thy small soul's evil and know that, whate'er befalls, thou canst but slide briefly down to the garden known of yore, wherein grows the Tree of Evil!* For the mere meliorist, him we counsel thorough optimism with its lotus leaves: *Extinguish thy sorrow and all thy judgments of regret: Forget and know that what thou shalt forget exists not, nor know we how that ever did exist, saving only by M. A. M.*

Some of these features I place in parallel columns:

<i>Eddyism</i>	<i>Freudism</i>
Idealistic	Materialistic
Indeterministic	Deterministic
Optimistic	Pessimistic
Evil Illusory	Good illusory
But, M. A. M.!	But, Sublimation!
Forget!	Recall!
Spiritual and Absent treatment	"Catharsis," Intimate re-education
Disease: delusion	Disease: flight from reality

I mean no disrespect to Freudism or for that matter to Eddyism in these parallel columns. One may regard Eddyism as a degenerate or pseudo form of idealism, a sort of backwater in the American philosophy of Emerson. One has naturally no design of denying the cures affected by Christian Science. As for Freudism, the logic is as finely drawn and complex as Mrs. Eddy's is coarse-meshed and simple. Eddyism is sectarian. Though Freudism threatened at one time to become sectarian, doubtless we now see a tendency to the utilizing of Freudian concepts in everyday terms. In fact, some are discovering that much of the novelty in many Freudian contentions lodges in nomenclature only. I am utilizing the parallel columns for the purpose of showing that any extreme optimistic view and any extreme pessimistic view is quite unlikely to be a sound view. At all events, the man who confronts the phenomena of Eddyian optimism and Freudian pessimism has the question sharply put up to him. What



after all is the truth about this world? Is it a radically evil world or not? Evidently Freud believes and avows that it is, and on that ground can justify anything that even Germany could do.

I said above that we could well separate the questions, Is Freud a pessimist, and, Is pessimism so? I consider that I have sufficiently proved that Freud is a pessimist. But why should he not be?

Why should we not be philosophical pessimists if the primitive and indelible instincts of us all are those of selfishness and cruelty? *The* instincts! Here we could toss the ingenious Freud in a number of logical blankets. I forbear! Whether my primitive instinct is not one of cruelty or whether I am buoyed up on a cloud of illusion, I forbear to show that Freud cannot tell *some* from *all*. We are all engaged now in trying to teach Pan-Germany that little distinction, *some versus all*! Freud, the subtle spokesman for Teutonic crimes,—can be really not tell the particular from the universal? Does he really think the one indestructible thing in man is a pair of instincts, selfishness and cruelty? Has he ever spent five minutes with books on instinct? Or is he merely a special pleader, choosing as propagandist to omit mention of all instincts save those he wants?

A slight technical acquaintance with Freud's writings will, I assure the reader, show quite readily that Freud is perfectly capable of all the arts of logical fencing. I do not deny that Freud might, to prove an honest point, deliberately suppress a lot of little instincts that seemed to him trivial in comparison with selfishness and cruelty, *e. g.*, such familiar instincts as gregariousness, constructiveness? Again, what does he do with selfishness and cruelty themselves: are they identical or not?

A truce upon such stuff, the pragmatic American wearily cries. No one really believes it. Freud is just the pepper of our substantial flow of soul. Freud is just the spanking we easy-goers perpetually need. There is a time for Freuding and a time for Eddying. Thus the pragmatic American.

But will said American ever wake to the fact that perhaps Freud really believes his talk and that perhaps the one good reason for Freud's believing is Freud's temperament? Will the American ever wake to the fact that perhaps the Germans, dear to Freud, really believe that everybody in the world is, according to the Freudian formula, a subjective or objective hypocrite? Will the American ever wake to the fact that, not militarism, but pessimism, not soldier-worship, but devil-worship, is the philosophy, the religion, of Germany? To the fact

that, though every trace of the cruelty-machine were obliterated, the selfishness-machine would survive? To the fact that these Germans are of this subjective belief: that civilization is founded on hypocrisy? To the fact that all seeming proofs to the contrary are taken by the Germans as but tokens of a deeper hypocrisy?

Crush militarism out of Germany as we may, we shall not regenerate her so long as this Freudian formula of universal hypocrisy prevails. Voltaire with a laugh gave a *Candide* for a *Theodicy*. Darwin, who read German with difficulty, handed the psychopath Nietzsche some *matériel* which the psychopath Schopenhauer had not. The lucid v. Hartmann and the lucid Freud, apparently without a trace of psychopathy in them, serve symptomatically up to the modern German taste such philosophy as I have sketched above. Only a certain élite subjectively believed a v. Hartmann of yesterday or subjectively believe a Freud of today. But—let us borrow a little logical trick from Freud—if Freud can talk of *objective hypocrisy*, let us talk of *objective beliefs*! Germany, I consider, at times subjectively, but for the most part objectively, holds to the philosophy of pessimism. It will be Germany's fault, cried Nietzsche, if we do not get rid of Christianity. But why prod the poor Blonde Beast? *Objectively* he had already gotten rid of Christianity and all its likes. With a certain bravery the psychopath Nietzsche threw out the banner of the *Wille zur Macht*. He had painted the black lily of Schopenhauer with some foreign pigments. Darwinian were they—but "where all is rotten"? Hear ye, Hear ye, O objective hypocrites! A little straightforwardness and truth! "Where all is rotten!" Live not in despite of evil: Live and will your lives to power not in despite of evil, but because of evil.

Are the Germans psychopathic? The inquiry is open: They themselves have lodged the question, Is not France affected by the revenge-psychosis, *Psychopathia gallica*? No! No! soberly answered a German critic of this *Psychopathia gallica*. No! No! for in that case we should be compelled to pity France, poor morbid France! One does not indict a whole nation, even France, not even Germany.

I have not called Freud psychopathic; I do not call Germans psychopathic, much as I should like to pity him and them. I find him and them philosophically pessimists and believers in absolute evil. I consider that the most brilliant expressions of pessimism have been really psychopathic, witness Schopenhauer, witness Nietzsche. These men were temperamental extremes of a psychopathic degree, beside whose

brave wailings the stuff of v. Hartmann and of Freud seems anemic and banal. But—is it not always so?—when the psychopath leads, the stampede psychology of the mob is ever more violent. Why? I know not. Perhaps because the psychopath often expresses himself with abnormal clearness. Psychopathic sincerity is ever more persuasive than the common sort. Beware the clear issue! It is not real. The world is yet obscure. Who is this demagogue who has (thank God for the word) *doped* out this transparency of thought? Voltaire tucked a little germ in. Rousseau rubbed it deeply into Kant, who grew old with it. Napoleon burned every soul with it. Schopenhauer psychopathically played with it and youth hugged the idea. Darwin gave them strength. The French milliards showed how goods might be delivered by the simple formula, Selfishness  $\times$  Cruelty = Goods Delivered. Nietzsche got the whole thing out nude. V. Hartmann nicely draped the Unconscious over all. Murder will out: for the eloquent Freud it remained to blab the whole thing: *The choir hypocritical!*

They borrowed the air-planes, they borrowed the submarines—but *mirabile dictu* they borrowed their philosophy! One thing they did not borrow—the psychopathic weapon, gas. In like sense, from the psychopathic essence of pessimism found in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, they did not borrow—the poisonous idea of universal hypocrisy.

But did I not say that I might inquire, Is pessimism so? Bah! after looking up a few of the instincts, *e. g.*, in the ants, read a bit of Plato and enlist! All the while remember that some people, perhaps Freud, really believe the world fundamentally bad—mind, I say, *really believe!*

By the way, as I fell asleep over the Death part of Freud's essay (it was very hot on the way to Washington—think of all the nice fellows trying to be homothermous down there, that summer of 1918!), I dreamed a dream. *Pace Freudé*, it was about the Homeric Chimera. A Chimera is a Hypocrite. It is something of a Blonde Beast in front. It is, to be exact, a Lion in front. It is a Snake behind. It is midways a Goat. I seemed in my dream to be musing on orientation. The Snake seemed to be in Russia. In a dream you can see all around even a Chimera. The Lion part was roaring and bloody enough. The Goat part—Gambetta, Bryan, and I seemed to be pulling off a sort of *Levéé en masse* together, when I woke up and lost a whole train penning these lines.

## POSTSCRIPT

While the above paper was in press Mr. Charles J. Rosebault published in the New York Times, Sunday, August 24, 1919, in an article on "Americans Who Were More German Than Germans" some notes of an interview since the armistice with Freud. Mr. Rosebault quotes convincingly from Freud's book on "War and Death" to prove that Freud justified the Prussian theory of the supremacy of the state over morals and ethics. According to Rosebault, Freud is evidently reconsidering these published views and was unwilling to repeat them, saying that he had been fed upon nothing but lies for five years.