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Way Beyond Freud

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The Importance of the Past

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One might think the importance of the past would be an embarrassingly unnecessary topic for a psychoanalytic audience. Freud made so much of the significance of history for each individual, as well as the repeated emphasis he put on the story of the early development of psychoanalysis itself, that one could suppose that there would be no need to pursue the point. But Freud did take a somewhat special approach to life histories, singling out for example the critical importance of early traumas, with the idea that once they were reconstructed neuroses could be overcome; and he, as well as his supporters, polemicized so early about the origins of his "movement" that it has taken considerable subsequent effort to come up with alternative narratives. Further, he tended in principle to isolate clinical material from social realities in a way that can now be considered ahistorical. Nobody has followed up on his commitment to the inheritance of acquired characteristics, nor his fascination with Egyptian archeology; but it is more than antiquarianism on our part to insist that there were historically significant aspects to his work (including his interest in telepathy) that are apt to be passed over today.

The main problem we have to confront now seems to be that

storytelling itself appears to some to be the central enterprise with which psychoanalysts are concerned, as if old-fashioned truth could afford to take a backseat clinically. For no matter how impossible it may be to approach a God-like omniscience, without some such ideal goal of the truth history is in danger of becoming merely a weapon in partisan warfare. Propagandizing, as well as the possibilities of suggestion, are so common an occurrence that we need to think of trying to construct many kinds of barriers against them.

An immense amount of the world's great literature has had to do with the past and how we conceive it. Poets and novelists have come up with a host of imaginative reflections on the subject. Objectivity has itself come under a cloud, and not much deserves to survive of Freud's frequent use of the image comparing his therapy with surgery. (The current fashionable reliance on classification and diagnoses like those in DSM III & IV can show how little modesty we have learned since early-20th-century psychiatry.) Psychoanalysts have been on stronger ground for being among those whose central concern is with memory, including the perils of avoidance as well as the vagaries of recapturing lost time. Historians themselves, whose professional subject matter so many different kinds of amateurs have trespassed upon, only relatively rarely seem willing to pause in reflecting on the broadest generalizations connected with their field; consequently even the word ‘‘historiography" seems offputting to most, about as attractive-sounding as "bibliography."

My own approach to the importance of the past starts by hinging on the question of power, which has generally been considered the key concept in political science, the subject in which I was professionally educated. Machiavelli and Hobbes both put power so at the center of their respective approaches that it was subsequently hard for political thinkers to dodge it. Yet the study of politics remains one of the human sciences—like psychoanalysis. The difference is that political life is concerned with the outside world, where success is considered the great objective; while psychoanalysis, also simultaneously an art as well as a science, is centrally preoccupied with the inner world in which failure deserves to be respected. For me psychology and politics have been complementary disciplines that can add to each other; the external world should belong at least within the broadest scope of a psychologist's concern, just as fallibilities and weaknesses ought not to be scornfully brushed aside by political observers.

Power as a subject has never attained much legitimacy within psychoanalysis. It is true that in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" Freud did rely on the writer Anatole France's liberal maxim that "when a man is endowed with power it is hard for him not to misuse it"(Freud, 1937/1964, p. 249). Freud also could acknowledge the legitimacy of the question of whether psychoanalysis could cause harm: "if a knife does not cut, it can not be used for healing either" (Freud, 1916-1917/1963, p. 463). But on the whole it would be others, unsympathetic to the revolution in ideas Freud

initiated, who would point out the power elements within psychoanalytic practice. Wielding authority ought not to be automatically suspect, although authoritarianism is another matter. Rousseau, a great leader in the history of education, once famously proposed the paradox of "forcing" people to be "free," an idea that foreshadowed many of the ethical dilemmas implicit in later psychological thinking.

If I were starting out as a young man today, it might no longer be as necessary to point out the abusive possibilities within so-called classical psychoanalysis, now evidently a rare enough procedure; but the main object of contemporary legitimate concern could be the ease with which striking power can unknowingly be wielded by naive enthusiasts for so-called biological psychiatry. (A variety of different schools of thought, including existential analysis and an interpersonal approach, should not be compressed into the arbitrary dichotomy between psychoanalysis and biological psychiatry [Havens, 1973].) Drugs whose side-effects are only partially known (or that are addictive) are too often being prescribed—even to children—without enough adequate knowledge of the complex human beings being treated. (A potentially lethal drug such as lithium can be recommended, for ambulatory patients, on the basis of a telephone conversation [Fieve, 1975].) Technical diagnoses are being bandied about, and heredity made central, as if we were living a hundred years ago and no one had ever criticized the drawbacks to such a highly formalistic approach (Roazen, 1998,

chap. 2).

The past should be a central concern; unless we understand history we are left surrendering to the present. Imagine what it would be like to think politically without any memory of World Wars I and II, or the Vietnam War, for example. Or how would we like to be without knowledge of the ways in which civil liberties can be threatened in time of war? And yet some such strictly contemporaneous approach is all too common in clinical fields. One central temptation that needs combating is the assumption that whatever is must be right. I am suggesting that the main way of avoiding the implicit premise that we are living in the best of all possible worlds is an awareness of the past. Although analysts at least pay lip service to historical sequences, in virtually every psychoanalytic training center I know about, Freud's writings are extracted from their intellectual context so that they are read in isolation from whatever opponents he might have been trying to contest. In psychiatry too, practitioners are encouraged to think in terms of technique rather than the values and beliefs of the past.

To take an example: the history of dentistry does not bear the same relation to the work of today's dentists as the history of psychotherapy does for contemporary practitioners of that different craft. Every field has its hidden as well as its open sectarianism. Even dentists, however, would acknowledge that we in the United States go in for orthodontics in a way that

is unique in the modern world. In general we must try to get people to see that suffering and pain are to a large degree defined culturally, mediated by social expectations. It is not necessary to join in any simplistic antipsychiatry movement in order to acknowledge that different societies look on human problems in culturally characteristic ways.

In America, for example, we need to be especially aware that we are likely to be misled by our traditional faith in progress. If one were knowledgeable enough in comparative cultures it would be possible to write about the manner in which different countries construct their past in distinctive ways. Although it can be perilous to engage in conjectures concerned with the subject that used to be known as “national character,” the speculative dangers that might be involved are worth risking, given what we can expect to learn.

A famous literary example would be Henry James's study of Nathaniel Hawthorne, in which James sympathized with how the young artist was confronted with “the coldness, the thinness, the blankness” of early-19th-century American life. James was writing in 1879, after having taken up permanent residence in England three years earlier. James was convinced that “later in life” Hawthorne had felt, after he had “made the acquaintance of the denser, richer, warmer European spectacle,” that “it takes such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types,

to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist." James's words enumerating "the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life" have become famous:

> No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages, nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot!

James did not seem to realize how narrow his own snobbism was going to make him appear subsequently; instead, he felt that "the natural remark, in the almost lurid light of such an indictment, would be that if these things are left out. everything is left out" (James, 1956, pp. 34-35).

James thought he had found in Hawthorne a writer after his own heart, and was able to quote him along his own preferred lines. Hawthorne had once written:

> No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. (James, 1956, p. 33)

Although at the time James may have been helping to introduce

Hawthorne as a writer, by means of James's long "critical essay," from our own point of view it is difficult to believe that James could ever have so misunderstood Hawthorne's achievements. For Hawthorne had inherited the distinctively American version of Puritanism, as obsessed with the sins of the past as one could imagine. Hawthorne was hardly the ideal spokesperson to pick for "a commonplace prosperity," and I suspect that Hawthorne could have been ironic when he wrote about the "broad and simple daylight" supposedly characteristic of his "dear native land." *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) was not only in gloomy contrast to such a simple-minded outlook, but deeply rooted in the Salem past. *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) also demonstrated Hawthorne's convictions about how history powerfully influences the present. Hawthorne's earliest short stories, or "tales," from the 1830s demonstrated his belief in human rootedness; he filled his writings with almost doom-filled atmospherics associated not just with the heritage of the American Revolution but of the New England version of Puritanism. As late as 1879, Henry James could, somehow, still think that "history, as yet, has left in the United States but so thin and impalpable a deposit that we very soon touch the hard substratum of nature. . .''(James, 1956, p. 10), but I think that in general Hawthorne was a writer among those least likely to support James's point of view.

Even if James was demonstrably wrong in what he had to say about Hawthorne, he may have nonetheless been onto a sound comparative point

about America. When one thinks of the whole revolutionary period itself, the Founding Fathers proceeded to reason in a peculiarly antihistorical manner. Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, for example in the Federalist Papers, tried to appeal to universal principles about human motives. In their defense of the new Constitution they were proposing to proceed with full confidence in the power of reason and reflection. Although they took for granted dissatisfaction with life under the Articles of Confederation, it is striking that they did not make an appeal back to the long historical experience they had had as colonies of Great Britain.

We have been so peculiarly fortunate as a country that we almost do not notice the way others have found it necessary to ablate their pasts (Roazen, 2002b). In Japan, for example, the post-World War II offices of General MacArthur have been allowed to disappear. Italians have been apt to have a blind spot when it comes to the Mussolini period. In Germany the break occasioned by the Hitler period has left in its wake both guilt and cynicism about the past. (At the same time Germans publish facsimile editions of books on a scale that we would never dream of producing.) The collapse of the Soviet Union has left a series of countries having to come to terms with the problem of who in their pasts might have collaborated with dictatorial regimes. In Budapest recently I was impressed by how they had preserved, in a park outside the city run by a commercial freelancer, huge relics of their Stalinist past; within the city itself a slab of the Berlin wall had been donated

by a Germany grateful for Hungary's opening of its gates to refugees at a critical moment. Hungary may be an exception that defies many of the historiographical rules I have tried to explicate. But the historical experience of the rest of the world has been so much more textured with tragedy than that of America that it is hard in spite of everything not to think that Henry James was onto something when he developed the theme of American innocence.

I do not wish to dwell here on the momentous events of September 11, 2001. But it seems to me that before then we felt uniquely protected in an unrealistic way; thirty billion dollars a year on intelligence spending still left us vulnerable and exposed. It was not just a massive failure in intelligence, but also a characteristic American avoidance of even the dirty-sounding word "spying," in preference to the neutral sounding and idealistic concept of "intelligence."

Abroad, in older cultures, art restorers are more likely to be aware that fixing up deteriorating frescoes, for example, must inevitably mean changing the painting to something different from what it now is, or for that matter, what it once was; but the decision to leave it alone simply invites a different sort of change. Federico Fellini made a film about Rome (*Fellini's Roma*, 1973) in which an archeologist watching over digging for construction witnessed an ancient chamber being penetrated; the excavators of a tunnel broke through

into the remains of a Roman villa. Its walls were brilliant with frescoes; but the painted faces were the faces of the modern interlopers, and the colours, as the air of today seeped in, faded and disappeared. Fellini had a fine European sense of irony about history.

In the midst of 19th-century England's romance with evolution Lord Acton once declared that "Progress [is] the religion of those who have none"(Himmelfarb, 1970, p. 179). Now technology itself does in fact progress, but we in America have hardly been moving upward and onward ever since the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, or the Founding Fathers organized our Constitution. It is true that our national cultural myths do encourage such a naively progressive orientation; and the Supreme Court, for instance, tries to maintain a kind of seamless connection between us and the past, so that we can appear to be living under an 18th-century document which has been adapted for current times without any discontinuity.

And it is characteristic of us to think in terms of what the historian David Brion Davis has recently called generational chauvinism—that ours is somehow inherently superior to previous times. Some degree of presentmindedness is inevitable, and today's concerns do inevitably shape what interests us. But it ought to be clear that any progressive approach to history means that we ourselves are certain to be soon left behind in the rubbish-heap that such an outlook entails. A few short years from now any

fool will be able to look back and see us as prejudiced and dumb. (A cyclical view of history can of course be equally misleading.) We ought to have the foresight to see that relying on any chauvinistic hindsight based on a strictly developmental perspective is bound to be deadly—even to our own best efforts.

Just as we must never allow ourselves the complacent assumption that everything now is the best of all possible worlds, so we must acknowledge that it is in the nature of ideals to be permanently at odds with reality. Norms must be at odds with facts, and we should not take it for granted that some incoming tide will automatically lift us onto higher ground. The way to improve things is always to be chasing after ideals that are in principle unattainable although they remain inherently desirable. It is the tension between what ought to be and that which is that helps motivate us to action. So neither conservatism nor utopianism suits the full reality of the human condition (Hartz, 1990).

There has undeniably been progress in the field of dentistry, but how securely can we say exactly the same for psychotherapy? Every clinical encounter is, I believe, simultaneously an ethical one (Lomas, 1999); and in the world of moral values we encounter choices whose merits cannot ever be proven one way or other. I am not suggesting that in philosophizing everything is either relativistic or equally up for grabs. But at the same time

science cannot hope to settle things in a way that could, in principle, make everyone equally satisfied. Morality inevitably gets us into a murky area that is, at least for some, unsatisfactory in its ambiguity and cloudiness; but I think we are better off acknowledging the reality of ethical dilemmas, and how values can be inherently at odds with each other. This is a point that my supervisor and tutor in political theory at Oxford, Sir Isaiah Berlin, liked to expand on (Berlin, 1998).

Taking certain medication can be at the expense of creativity, and antidepressants are known to be hard on the sexual drive; but how can we calibrate the pros and cons of what can be gained as opposed to what is likely to get lost ? Practitioners of rival psychotherapeutic schools have had contrasting moral outlooks, and it is characteristic of American optimism not to want to weigh the disadvantages of so-called progress. The better educated one is the more likely that choices get made in an informed context. One of the reasons why the history of controversies in psychoanalysis has held my attention is the extent to which such quarrels were about rival conceptions of the good life (Roazen, 2002a).

How we ought to live, and the best ways of organizing society in order to promote objectives that we might have in mind, are bound to be questions that civilized people are able to disagree about. Much of world philosophy has been concerned with competing outlooks on the good life. Alfred Adler, to

give only one example, was a socialist, and it can be no accident that psychologists whose testimony was relied on by the US Supreme Court in its 1954 Brown decision on desegregation traced their intellectual ancestry back to Adler; nor can the Menningers be proud of how their family refused to cooperate in undertaking that historic lawsuit against a Topeka school board. In general, by becoming acquainted with the past we should be better able to come up with sophisticated judgments; there is little in human affairs that is really new under the sun. The history of ideas is a rich subject precisely because it offers concrete examples of how people under different social and political conditions have chosen options that might enlighten us about our own situations.

The past is gone, and is, at best, only partially recoverable. The future, though, is almost completely unknown, and a matter largely for prophecy. To reiterate: as we try to live in the present the main resource we have for challenging that which exists has to come from our knowledge of the past. It is history that provides us with the enlightenment with which we can deal with what we encounter. It is not only concepts from history that can help us but also examples of how people have lived. The explicit teachings that Freud or his early disciples may have promoted can be supplemented by the complex examples of their lives. How people behave is at least as instructive as what they preach. Psychoanalysis became a profession that was, almost uniquely, open to women, and Freud was defying a younger generation in Vienna when

he ignored the views of those opposed to allowing female practitioners to be full members of his psychoanalytic group (Roazen, 2000a).

Within psychoanalysis itself there has naturally been a tremendous amount of attention given to Freud himself. But biographical accounts of Freud have often been unusual and unspoken vehicles of partisanship. Vested interests have added to this acrimoniousness, and rival groups of interested parties have used observations about Freud's life for the sake of promoting their own points of view. Students of Freud need to be alert not just to the "spin" he could put on his own life, but to the variety of biases that inevitably enter into accounts of Freud's life. But however critical of him one might be, nobody could contest that he was a highly educated intellectual full of ideas, and that he succeeded in attracting to him a fascinating group of people whose lives, whatever one might now think of the merits of what they proposed, have to be seen, I think, as models of interesting originality. In talking about the early days of psychoanalysis, or the struggles of Freud's tortured genius, one is not dealing with the uninteresting sort of bureaucracy that, let us say, we confront with today's International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA).

Any organization with approximately 10,000 members has to be a completely different matter than a narrative connected with the tiny group of people involved, for example, with the early strife between Freud, Jung and

Adler. I mention these names because they are so intimately associated with the central founding myths of the discipline. My own approach has been that of an outsider willing to reconsider all past professional difficulties. As an intellectual historian I have found this a rich field precisely because there were, when I started out some forty years ago, so many examples of central figures who were neglected, ignored, or misunderstood. Filling in some of the silences seemed an intellectual adventure in keeping with Freud's own stated aim of correcting amnesias. Challenging collective family romances, and rearranging various lineages, was in keeping with what intellectual historians are supposed to be doing.

At the outset of my work the early editions of Freud's letters were being regularly bowdlerized. When in my *Freud: Political and Social Thought* I put an entry called "censorship, by Freud family" in the index I helped make, I naively thought that would attract attention (Roazen, 1968/1999). It was only with the publication the next year of my *Brother Animal: The Story of Freud and Tausk* that when I cited a particularly shocking example of a suppression in a letter from Freud to Lou Andreas-Salome that I put an end to such tendentious tampering (Roazen, 1969/1990). (That is the reason why correspondences in this field are now called "complete." There is a downside here, since although a book of letters between Helene Deutsch and her husband Felix might be a good idea, the German publisher I have consulted on the matter hesitates to bring out anything less than all the letters, fearing

accusation of partisanship.) The English page proofs of the correspondence between Freud and Lou Andreas-Salome had to be withdrawn from circulation, and the book finally came out with those critical key words of Freud's reinstated. I felt I was then launching a scholarly torpedo, but that was my youth; even so I am afraid I have fairly regularly continued to drop little scholarly bombshells, not fully aware of how provocative I think it is the job of a political philosopher to be. The Jung family still has to face up to all sorts of private papers not yet released, such as the extensive existing correspondence between Jung and his wife.

Right now I am still continuing at the same old game, although we are in a different phase of scholarship. The editing of the Freud-Ferenczi letters was so unsatisfactory and inadequate that, with the English edition of the Freud-Binswanger correspondence, I have inadvertently slowed things down by suggesting to the publishers pre-publication editorial changes. And I have worked hard on the revised edition of the Freud-Abraham letters in order to help ensure that the editing is more up to what I consider scratch. I wish there were many others who could also actively share in this academic "pulling up of socks," so that in the future students of the history of ideas would have a better and a more truthful appreciation of what occurred in the past.

Forty years ago Freud himself was not widely considered a legitimate

field of inquiry within my field of political science. A career in political theory could have been advanced more readily by attention to the ideas of Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, even Thomas Aquinas or Augustine. In the years since I started out American political science has been moving even closer to economics, and away from political theory or the outlook of a professional pioneer such as Harold Lasswell, who was once closely connected with people such as Karen Homey and Harry Stack Sullivan. And yet I like to think that the central points in past political theorists were concerned with ideas about human nature which have been newly contested within psychoanalysis (Roazen, 2000b).

To some extent sectarianism has thrived within psychoanalysis precisely because of these fundamental clashes between alternative visions of the good life. The more uncertain the field, the more fanatically held convictions can be. And the fragility of the acceptance of the field can mean that it seems unpatriotic, if not treasonable, to march independently. But history is not supposed to be written solely for celebratory purposes. Historical cheerleading is not something that interests me.

History writing at its best is inherently subversive and upsetting. No authoritarian political regime has ever been able to tolerate genuine historical research. To burrow in the past means at least potentially to attack the established present. When Peter Gay subtitled his biography of Freud “A

Life For Our Time," he was being presentistic; a journalistic tag-phrase that no doubt helped sell copies of books revealed the lack of proper detachment. To write in order to make analysts feel good about themselves would be to betray the obligation of the historian to disturb the present by means of the past for the sake of the future. So Gay could leave the name of Wilhelm Reich out of his text entirely, since the story associated with Reich would have complicated the narrative purposes of prettifying the history of psychoanalysis for today. (Oddly enough a recent excellent biography of Freud, the critical best we have had, has also succeeded in avoiding the apparently dread name of Reich [Breger, 2000].) Trade unionists are entitled to want histories that promote their cause, just as corporations or famous families can appoint (and pay) scholars to present them in the best possible light. The supports that come from having joined the crowd are apt to be greater than the rewards for being willing to go against the grain.

As I look back on my own work, I remember how traumatic it was for me to be assailed in two full-length books by Kurt R. Eissler, the founder of the Freud Archives, and to find out that Anna Freud also viewed me as a "menace." (Three decades ago that particular party had a lot of powerful allies.) Yet I like to think that I am capable of being even-handed when I recently felt shocked to find how Anna Freud's position in England seems to have been swamped by those analysts who now ignore what she tried to accomplish. Anna Freud was so singularly lacking in political talent (or

perhaps committed to altruistic surrender) that she put her mind to a "defense" of her father more than to securing her own position. Kleinianism is as curiously triumphant in Britain as Lacan has been successful in having an impact in France. These are as much cultural matters as tales of comparative national politics. One of my earliest interests in this subject was the story of the reception of Freud in different national cultures—England and America, for example.

As the years have passed, and I have grown more familiar with a wider range of countries and their individual traditions, my original focus has been extended as well as broadened. But there are bound to be losers as well as winners in a tale as rich as the history of psychoanalysis; for instance, to cite the ill-understood example of Wagner-Jauregg, a contemporary of Freud and the first psychiatrist ever to win a Nobel Prize, seems to me a matter of course and not any sign of "antipsychoanalytic" bias. Someday scholars will also present accounts of the receptions of lithium, lobotomy, shock treatment, family therapy, self-psychology and goodness knows how many other movements within psychotherapy.

To work with the past means, I think, to engage in a kind of anthropological field work. It is culture which defines what we should be trying to get at; different eras naturally define things in their own special way. The study of great literature—which is how I would characterize Freud's

achievement—challenges us to get beyond today's conventional ways of thinking. The history of science itself is self-correcting, but even after all of Freud's works may appear to have been beached in an intellectual Smithsonian they should retain their artistic unity. To examine any such texts involves our trying to comprehend the special orientations the past has to offer; this means an opportunity not only to get outside of ourselves, and into the minds of people different from us, but thanks to that intellectual voyage there is a possibility of returning with an enhanced perspective on how we think now. History should not be undertaken either for the sake of enhancing our own sense of superiority or for the purpose of moralistically denouncing past ways of proceeding. The more educated we become the better able we should be to maintain critical distance toward today's ways of thinking. I am afraid that most psychoanalytic articles in our professional journals, which characteristically proceed by citing bibliographies of past literature, are constructing mythical bridges to the past—a procedure for establishing false continuities that unknowingly legitimates the status quo now.

To be fair to the past means to respect human variety, without insisting that everything valuable in history must necessarily lend support to how we proceed now. How we ought to live should be an open question, requiring tentativeness and a sympathetic imagination on our part. In my own early work I found it a convenient short cut to interview psychoanalytic pioneers; even after all these years I am still assimilating the significance of what I once

learned (Roazen, 2001). The human context for ideas can be an essential road to understanding. Works of psychotherapeutic interest do not fall from the sky of abstract philosophical reasoning, but rather arise from the complex struggles people have in dealing with enduring human mysteries. I do not fear that the latest fashions in psychiatric classification will exhaust the complexities of human motives. It is not necessary for any of us to be Luddites about psychopharmacological developments, or the thinking that encourages them. But I do find demeaning the way diagnoses of patients can be used for the sake of pigeonholing; some things in life are unfixable, and need to be lived through. The human soul has triumphed before over such excessive rationalism as seems today so psychiatrically fashionable. (I find it puzzling that Otto Fenichel, whose giant textbook can be seen as a handbook of old mistakes, should be attracting contemporary interest. If one yearns for encyclopaedic knowledge Henri Ellenberger would seem to me far more admirable [Ellenberger, 1970].)

If one were presenting these ideas about the importance of the past in any other national setting, it would be necessary to adapt things radically. I once gave a talk in Paris entitled "What is wrong with French psychoanalysis?" (Roazen 2000c) and the place was mobbed. The French are used to serious intellectual exchanges, especially on the level of moral theory, even if one suspects that part of the price for that sort of vitality is a lack of conviction that civilization exists outside Paris. (The Chinese can be even

more frustratingly self-confident because their ancient culture predates ours.) Unfortunately, the French can be crassly anti-American, as in the way they have been apt to dismiss the growth of ego psychology as a mere matter of conformism.

In work as in life one makes choices, hopefully doing the best one can. If I have learned anything from my studies, it is how essential in all the human sciences can be the injunction to guard against fanaticism. One of the best characterizations of how Freud's mind could work can be found. I think, in Solzhenitsyn's novel *Lenin in Zurich* (Solzhenitsyn, 1976). Splitting a movement, reducing it down to its hard core in the faith that the future will redeem such purity, does remind me of Freud's way of proceeding before World War I. At least in the short run he prevailed against his opponents. And elsewhere that tenacious Bolshevik-like spirit has brought others remarkable psychoanalytic rewards. In the long run, however, I have a perhaps mistaken faith that the more modest people, those humble enough to allow themselves to be at least for a time forgotten, will also succeed in getting a hearing. So it is in behalf of those who have, for one reason or another, been neglected or unfairly treated that I have tried to work.

My coming of age in the 1950s meant that intellectual history—the power of ideas—was a live central faith. Max Weber writing on the role of the Protestant ethic in promoting capitalism seemed a powerful answer to any

dismissal of the central significance of the life of the mind. Marxists then had a way of dismissing the so-called superstructure, just as psychoanalysts could be high-handed about "rationalizations." But Freud too had staked his basic claims on the idealistic foundation that the way we think about things can be an independent variable in how we choose to live. Lord Keynes concluded his path-breaking *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936/1957) with words that became indelibly etched on my mind:

> the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.

Keynes right away went on in the same paragraph:

> Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval; for in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not many who are influenced by new theories after they are twenty-five or thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But, soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil. (Keynes, 1957, pp. 383-384)

(I am unable authoritatively to support the hunch, but a guess is that Keynes was in this paragraph, so stylistically so at odds with the rest of the book, still competing with his great old friend and rival Lytton Strachey. In his

book on Queen Victoria, Strachey had first written the final memorable paragraph, and then proceeded to write the rest of the text. This point does not appear in the otherwise excellent standard biography of Keynes [Skidelsky, 1983, 1995, 2002].)

I hope Keynes was right about the long-run weakness of "vested interests." But I must confess that no matter how important intellectual history may be in preparing for the future, it has its own inherent fascination. Still, remember also that Nazism was an idea, and combating it was no easy matter for liberalism. The mind is superior to the body only up to a point. A faith in the autonomy of the human spirit, at least politically, goes back as far as John Milton.

I believe that studying the past is truly an end in itself, a legitimate part of trying to become a cultured person. The ideal of living an examined life is an ancient Greek one. Books that recreate something where before there was nothing succeed on their own terms. The pursuit of knowledge does constitute, as a practical byproduct, a challenge to power, yet remains I think intrinsically self-justifying.

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