Free Associations: Psychoanalysis and Culture, Media, Groups, Politics
Number 67, January 2015
ISSN: 2047-0622
URL: www.freeassociations.org.uk

THE OBSOLESCENCE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE AGE OF NEUROSCIENCE?

C. Fred Alford

Abstract: In 'The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man', Herbert Marcuse regretted the loss of the bourgeois individual with a strong ego. Not because he thought such an individual was good, but because of what came next, what he calls mass man, whose ego is merged with others. In an entirely different utopian context, laid out in Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization,* the loss of the autonomous ego would be a good thing, an expression of liberation. In this world, the loss of the autonomous ego simply leaves individuals more subject to manipulation. Recently, several affect theorists, as they are known, have argued that the autonomous ego is an illusion. Or rather, ego is a rationalizing machine, giving reasons for actions that we know to be retrospective rationalizations. It might seem as if this loss of ego is good, a step in the direction of liberation. In fact, the idealization of the loss of ego, sometimes called the de-situated subject, by theorists such as Brian Massumi and William Connolly is dangerous, because it is happening now, in a world far from utopia. Massumi and Connolly employ recent neuroscientific discoveries as metaphors in their account of how individuals might liberate themselves from their egos. This essay concludes that while a genuinely neuroscientific study of psychoanalysis is possible and desirable, one must choose between utopia and science. Marcuse chooses utopia; the new affect theorists choose neither.

In a work that seems to belong to another age and time, 'The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man' (1970), originally presented to an association of political scientists, Herbert Marcuse made the disturbing argument that the unconscious no longer belongs exclusively to the individual. It is shared with the masses. Such an unconscious is marked by the massification of

domination, as Marcuse calls it, in which the private and personal realm no longer exists (1970: 50). Hence it is no longer subject to reflection. On the contrary, the individual is subject to manipulation by political forces in a way that bypasses the ego.

It might appear as if this argument has been recently reinforced by the work of Brian Massumi (2002; 2005) and William Connolly (1999; 2002; 2005), among others, who argue that ego autonomy was always an illusion, a retrospective reinterpretation of acts that are done for reasons beyond our knowledge and control. Not ego but affect is the source of human freedom. Affect may also be a source of slavery. For an individual without ego (or rather, whose ego is preoccupied with rationalizing its actions) is remarkably vulnerable to political manipulation. Consider Massumi's (2005: 34) reference to the colour-coded terrorism alert system under the George W. Bush administration in the United States.

> Government gained signal access to the nervous systems and somatic expressions of the populace in a way that allowed it to bypass the discursive mediations on which it traditionally depended and to regularly produce effects with a directness never before seen. Without proof, without persuasion, at the limit even without argument, government image production could trigger reaction.

My argument is not with Massumi's claim about the colour-coded alert system, though it seems as if the ego would have to be even more diminished than Marcuse imagined for such a simple technique to bypass the ego so readily. My argument is primarily with the assumption, by Massumi, and even more so by the political theorist Connolly, that bypassing the ego is good. My argument is complicated by the fact that Marcuse too thought that the ego had become a medium of domination. The difference is that Massumi and Connolly find liberation in what they call "affect," a parallel medium of experience that bypasses the ego, and so allows the individual to find freedom in his or her body. In other words, Massumi and Connolly find liberation now.

Confusion will be avoided if the reader is clear from the outset that the term "affect" employed by Massumi and Connolly is not only unrelated to the older psychological meaning of affect as the experience or feeling of an emotion, but in some ways its opposite. For Massumi and Connolly, affect refers to experiences that take place in a nanosecond, far too fast for the individual to be aware of. Affect theory carries other connotations separate from its older

employment in psychology, including by Freud (1915), who held in his later work that emotional experiences known as affect come to consciousness by virtue of their perception by the body. In other words, the experience of affect does not instantly and forever bypass the ego.

While Marcuse too would dethrone the ego, he was wary about bypassing the ego in this less than utopian world, lest individuals become even more subject to manipulation and control. Arriving at a stage in which the ego disappears, and with it most of the repressive demands of culture, would be the result of the hard work of revolution, "the long march through the institutions" as Marcuse once called it in a phrase popularized by the German leftist Rudi Dutschke during the 1960s, but often attributed to the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. With the phrase Marcuse meant that counter-culture revolutionaries would have to work from within the institutions they wished to revolutionize, all without forgetting their counter-cultural goals.

The reader need not necessarily agree with Marcuse about the diminution of the ego in the post-war world. Marcuse may well go too far. He was not one for half measures and measured statements. My argument is not so much a brief in favour of Marcuse's argument as it is a caution against those who would idealize affect in place of ego in a world that is a long, long way from utopia. Marcuse's virtue, in this respect, stems from the political tradition he comes out of. No matter how utopian, he remains within the Marxist tradition in so far as he recognizes that utopia lies in the future, and that men and women will have to work collectively to realize it. Utopia is not an individual psychological project.

Though Massumi, Connolly, and Marcuse would agree that the Freudian concept of man has become obsolete, they do so on very different grounds. With the term "obsolete," Marcuse meant that in the place of a repressed but self-directed ego a new post-war generation had arisen that lacked a reflective ego all together. Marcuse called this generation mass man. The obsolescence of Freud is regrettable considering what came next. Massumi and Connolly, on the other hand, refer to a strictly conceptual transformation, albeit one that can be furthered by individual experimentation.

For Marcuse, the Freudian concept of man is becoming obsolete because the conditions under which children were raised, conditions which Freud mistakenly assumed were ahistorical, have been superseded. The primary socialization of the child is properly the task of the family. Whatever autonomy the child may achieve, the foundation of his or her ego is laid down in this

circle of refuge and privacy. Family is the place within which but also against which the child becomes him or herself (Marcuse 1970: 46). It is this with/against process that is the crucible within which the ego is formed. So far, Marcuse is writing about all children, girls and boys.

Soon, however, he begins to write about the influence of the Oedipus complex. From then on all the action is with little boys. During the inter-war years, middle-class children were typically brought up in father-dominated families. In the years after the war, the decline of the influence of the father followed the decline of the family in general, as the mass media, therapists, bureaucrats, schools, and other socializing agencies took over the place of the family in raising the child. The father, in turn, is no longer a owner or manager of a recognizable enterprise; he is but a cog in the industrial bureaucratic state.

The result is that the child is pre-socialized before he has a chance to develop his own ego in a personal struggle with father.

> The socially necessary repressions . . . are no longer learned—and internalized—in the long struggle with father. The ego ideal is rather brought to bear on the ego direct and "from outside" before the ego is actually formed as the personal and (relatively) autonomous subject of mediation between him-self and others. These changes reduce the "living space" and the autonomy of the ego and prepare the ground for the formation of masses. (Marcuse 1970: 47)

Marcuse qualifies his remarks by noting that the father continues to perform his primary Oedipal function of diverting the (male) child's sexuality from mother, but his authority is no longer fortified by his position in the larger society. This theme is developed further in the 1960s by the German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich (1992) in *Society Without The Father*.

The result is that the individual is no longer capable of mediating between himself and another. Mediation gives way to identification with others, and "the space no longer exists in which the mental processes described by Freud can develop; consequently the object of psychoanalytic therapy is no longer the same." (Marcuse 1970: 47-48) Ego is no longer capable of maintaining itself as an entity distinct from superego and id. The delicate balance the individual had achieved between freedom and repression, autonomy and heteronomy, collapses into a one-dimensional static identification of the individual with others. Paradoxically, the

freedom the individual had enjoyed in the child-centered family turns out to be liability, as the ego that has grown up without a struggle is a weak entity, ill equipped to stand up for itself against others.

> In the context of Freudian theory, the paradox disappears: in a repressive civilization, the weakening of the father's role and his replacement by external authorities must weaken the libidinal energy in the ego and thus weaken the life instincts. (Marcuse 1970: 50-51)

The result, continues Marcuse (1970: 48), is that psychoanalytic theory, once primarily applicable to the individual, now becomes even more applicable to politics, the realm in which individuals combine into masses. For the psychological individual no longer exists. The masses are marked, as Freud noted, by "regression to a primitive mental activity."

Sometimes one has the feeling Marcuse is writing about himself, the Frankfurt School, and the elite of a generation of which he was a member A generation which, as Theodor Adorno said, would *nicht mitmachen*. Would not play along. Except that oftentimes it made no difference, the system tracking down even the "independent intellectual" in his home. (Adorno 1974: 21; § 1)

Marcuse, and the Frankfurt School rest their argument on the little boy's resolution of the Oedipal conflict. Not only does this ignore half the world. It is fundamentally hypocritical. For as Jessica Benjamin (1977, 1978) argued a number of years ago, Oedipal internalization of the father's authority produces not strong egos but instrumental ones. Why would Marcuse, Adorno, as well as Max Horkheimer, the three intellectual founders of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, embrace as emancipatory a process by which the son, in fear of dismemberment, internalizes the values of society, values that father and son both recognize are esteemed by the son largely because they are the values associated with power and authority?

In fact, argues Jessica Benjamin, Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer, have confused the process that produces a strong (primarily in the sense of harsh and punitive) superego with the process that produces a strong ego. Oedipal internalization produces the former, not the later. Oedipal internalization produces cunning but not criticism. Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer made this mistake because they confused the Oedipal conflict, in which the son's sexual identity

is consolidated, with an earlier process—separation from mother—in which the basis of individuality are laid down (Benjamin 1977: 47-50).

Benjamin turns to the successors of Freud, such as Melanie Klein, W. R. D. Fairbairn, and D. W. Winnicott. But it is worth noting that one sees a hint of this line of thinking in Marcuse's comments introducing the concept of the obsolescence of the Freudian concept of man, where he refers not to father but the family as the crucible of the ego, a place in which the child can at once feel held, and at the same time oppose the family, in order test the limits of the family's holding power, and so feel the strength of the child's own ego (Marcuse 1970: 46). Not the Oedipal conflict, but the holding power of the family, within and against which the child can feel secure enough to test his or her own ego, is how psychologically complex individuals are formed. We now see that there is no reason this must be the traditional family; just a family that can hold a child long enough to let him or her go.

Freud or neuroscience: unawareness as liberation?

For many who study or use neuroscience, affect is a prelinguistic source of biological energy that cannot be conceptualized or put into words. Affect is the wild thing, often located in the limbic system, grasped as a source of biological power beyond conscious and unconscious knowledge and symbolization. In this view the unconscious disappears, to be replaced by autonomic bodily reactions. There is no unconscious mediation, no unknown thought. Eric Shouse (2005) characterizes affect in these terms.

> Affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social , . . . and affects are pre-personal . . . . An affect is a nonconscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential . . . . Affect cannot be fully realised in language . . . because affect is always prior to and/or outside consciousness.

Scholars have turned to neuroscience in order to bring affect to bear on what seemed to them an insufficiently embodied, overly rational account of human life. In this they are correct. With this Marcuse would have agreed. Affect, however, rather than opening the door

to the dynamic unconscious, closes it. For not just affect, but the way of thinking that affect represents, is closed to experiences of reflection on the unconscious mind. The unconscious revealed by neuroscience is an embodied self fundamentally unaware, and fundamentally incapable of being brought to awareness, of its own motives. Motives that lack the quality of ordinary motives to begin with, such as will and intention, including will and intention unknown to the actor. The vision of Connolly and Massumi comes closer to Marcuse's Freudian-inspired nightmare than his Freudian-inspired utopia.

For today's affect theorists, emotion is a subjective, historical, owned experience (Massumi 2002: 28). Affect is "unqualified" experience, unrecognizable as individual experience. One theorist goes further, stating that from the perspective of affect, "individuals are generally understood as effects of the events to which their body parts (broadly understood) respond and in which they participate" (Thrift 2004: 60). About this characterization, Leys (2011: 243) responds that whatever the difference among the new affect theorists, and between them and the neuroscientists whose findings they would appropriate, the key point is that they all share the belief that affect is independent of signification and meaning.

In *Neuropolitics*, Connolly (2002) takes up the concept of affect discussed above, in which affect becomes a source of biological energy that is not subject to reflection or unconscious symbolization. Connolly is particularly interested in what he calls infraperception, which is the super fast pre-conceptual processing of affect (26-27). Infraperception is associated with "somatic markers," a concept developed by the neurologist Antonio Damasio (1996). Connolly claims to find a similar speeded up quality in ordinary memory, citing Bergson to the effect that memory no longer "represents" the past to us. Rather, memory acts the past, "and if it still deserves the name of memory, it is not because it conserves bygone images, but because it prolongs their useful effect into the present moment." (Connolly 2002: 27, quoting Bergson 1991: 78) Whether "speeded up" is the best way of describing this aspect of memory is unclear. In any case, memory is indeed hardly a passive process. It acts from the present into the past, as Prager (1998) argues in *Presenting the Past: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Misremembering*.

Political and cultural theorists such as Connolly are drawn to Damasio's (2003) work because he explains the existence of the instrumentally rational actor while exploring the limits of rationality. Drawing on one of the most powerful sources of evidence in neuroscience, the

inability of patients with damage to particular areas of the brain to perform certain functions, Damasio investigates the emotional and everyday decision-making deficits displayed by patients suffering from damage to the ventromedial sector of the frontal lobes by suggesting that these patients lack the relevant nonconscious emotional "intuition" or "somatic markers" that normally influence abstract [rational] thinking. Damasio stresses the limits of "pure reason" and instead emphasizes the essential role played by affects claimed to operate at hyper-speed below the threshold of reflection and argument.

Since somatic markers signal the mixing of innate and learned components of our affective responses, the somatic marker hypothesis suggests a mechanism for conceptualizing how culture and the body interact. Somatic markers are said to be culturally influenced gut reactions that provide guidelines for rational decision making. These ideas are appealing, notes Leys (2011: 464) to those who contest theories of "deliberative democracy" and the role of rational choice in ordinary life. Damasio's somatic marker theory is, it should be noted, not without its critics (Dunn et al., 2006).

As Connolly (2002: 34) puts it, "a somatic marker operates below the threshold of reflection; it mixes culture and nature into perception, thinking, and judgment; and it folds gut feelings into these mixtures." Connolly endorses entities that while lacking the sophistication of the unconscious, are nonetheless culturally influenced. They are influenced by ethics too (presumably via the culture), but lack any of the complex mechanisms of the unconscious mind, such as being subject to symbolization and reflection. But why, you might ask, is Freud and the unconscious to be dismissed in favour of memory traces? Because Freud gives one single authoritative interpretation. In that respect his approach may be said to be unethical.

> Put another way, Freud encloses memory traces within a deep interpretation in which he knows the source and shape of the most archaic traces, even though those beset by them do not. The perspective developed here refuses for ethical reasons to join the appreciation of layering and depth to the hubris of deep, authoritative interpretation. (Connolly 2002: 40)

Surely Connolly is aware that there is more than one psychoanalyst, more than one interpretation of unconscious experience. When authorities contest, one almost always finds a realm of

freedom in the spaces among them. In fact, one suspects it is not so much the hubris of Freud's authority that Connolly would be free of, but the depth and complexity of the unconscious mind, which gets in the way of the claims of the body to its own truths.

At points it appears that Connolly turns to neuroscience not as a scientific enterprise which might illuminate the workings of the brain upon which mind depends for its existence. Connolly (2002) seems to be using neuroscience as source of metaphors for thinking about thinking. This is not the only way to use neuroscience to explore psychoanalysis, as the more rigorous work of Karl Friston (2010) and his associates reveals. Their work will be discussed shortly.

Consider how Connolly (2002: 89) writes about the amygdala.

> Its [the amygdala] relays to other, more sophisticated brain regions may not be susceptible to complete tracking and close prediction, because the amygdala both influences conduct on its own and bumps *intensities* into conscious thinking and judgment that the complex brain regions then process according to their own capacities of reception, speed, and organization.

Whatever this is, it is not only not a scientific account; it is not even a scientific account as simplified for the layperson. It is the use of scientific terms to make a general claim about the inaccessibility of certain kinds of thought to reflection. According to Massumi (2002: 25), "intensity" is the manifestation of the effects of stimuli. Connolly generally follows Massumi in his neuropolitical thinking, but does not cite him here. In any case, little would be explained if he had, for Connolly offers no evidence.

Connolly does elsewhere. The evidence is based upon the half-second delay between experience and conscious awareness of the experience, the importance of which was pointed out to him by Massumi (Connolly 1999: 28; 2002: 82). Connolly's key example is a sixteen year old girl treated by a team of neurophysiologists for severe epilepsy. Applying an electric probe to eighty-five separate spots on her left frontal lobe, they eventually hit by chance upon that part of the brain that made her laugh. The more current, the more laughter, so that a slight smile was produced by a low current, robust, contagious laughter by higher currents. Remarkable is that every time she was asked why she was laughing, she always had an explanation that referred to

an external stimulus, one which we know to be retrospective. Whether we know it to be simply false is another question, one which Connolly wisely does not address. When asked why she was laughing when asked to point at the researchers, she says "you guys are just so funny… standing around." When asked to name an object, she said "the horse is funny," and laughed (Fried et al. 1998: 650).

The inference Connolly draws is that "'incomprehensible quantities of unconscious calculation' take place during the half-second delay between the reception of sensory material and the consolidation of perceptions, feelings, and judgments" (Connolly 2002, 82). The internal quotation is from Tor Nørretranders (1998: 221), who refers to the "quick, crude reaction time of the amygdala that precedes feeling and consciousness". However, nothing else in Connolly's example refers to the amygdala. It refers to the gap between experience and awareness of an experience, a gap that seems to allow people to retroactively, and seemingly quite arbitrarily attribute explanations to their experiences. Or as Leslie Paul Thiele (2006: 212) puts it in *The Heart of Judgment,* "our conscious judgments are mostly afterthoughts. They bespeak the efforts of a left hemisphere . . . feigning cognitive control through the narrative fabrication of a self".

It is into this gap between experience and awareness, says Connolly (2002: 82), that people like Immanuel Kant project concepts such as transcendental (*a priori*) knowledge. Connolly (83-84) has a point. The Kantian transcendental is humanly constructed, and yet claims to be beyond the reach of human knowledge, for it sets the conditions of human knowledge. It does so by our very acts of knowing; it is knowledge constitutive. As Kant put it, "I call all knowledge transcendental if it is occupied, not with objects, but with the way that we can possibly know objects even before we experience them." (Kant, 1850: 16 [Intro., §7]) Yet who is to say that these empirical *a priori* conditions cannot be known? Since Kant believed transcendental idealism applied to scientific knowledge, moral knowledge, and aesthetic experience, among other things, it seems presumptuous to claim that it will always be impossible to know the conditions under which we can know the objects of scientific or aesthetic experience, for example. The study of the brain might be quite relevant here. In a terse but true sense it makes sense to say that such impossibility claims fall into that gap between what we experience and what we know.

Into this gap, suggests Connolly, falls the unconscious. For a moment it seems as if Connolly has opened the door to Freud, admitting that this unconscious realm is effective in

influencing conduct and judgment. However, his examples are restricted to "technique and artistry in thinking and ethics" (Connolly 2002: 84). Among these are taking Prozac or Valium, introducing full-spectrum lighting into your house, introducing the phrase "nontheistic gratitude" into discussions with secularists, and minimizing encounters with associates whose "dispositions are saturated with existential rage or resentment" (101-103). Depending on the individual, these may all be good pieces of advice, but they offer no access to the dynamic unconscious.

The stated reason for Freud's exclusion, we have seen, is that his interpretations are too authoritative, and hence hubristic (Connolly 2002: 40). Consider the substitution of a more tentative, less authoritarian psychoanalyst. D. W. Winnicott (1971) would be exemplary. Would such a psychoanalyst be admitted? If this were a possibility, then the unconscious that Connolly is writing about would presumably still possess the key features of the Freudian unconscious: the symbolic signification of fear and desire, one which tells a story that acts upon the body and mind, and which can be known, in part, through reflection. This is not something that Connolly specifically rules out.

Nevertheless, it seems unlikely, both Damasio (2010: 144) and Thiele holding to the position that "many of the narratives that make up our sense of self are the silent, synaptic kind." Although "`language is necessary for these narrative accountings to achieve the richness and depth required for full self-consciousness,' it is not the case that the narratives and self-consciousness cohere" (Vander Valk 2012: 13; internal quotation from Thiele 2006: 217). Precisely what Thiele means by silent, synaptic narratives remains unclear. A synapse is not a story; a neuron is not a sentence. Nevertheless, the claim that the unconscious lacks signification and meaning seems once again to be the main point.

Connolly goes on to argue that one can make much the same point phenomenologically about retrospective interpretation (the half-second delay). When you place your hand on a hot stove, your hand recoils before you experience the pain, even before you interpret the recoil as if it were caused by the feeling that followed it. As Leys (2002: 461) suggests, it is telling that Connolly chooses to illustrate the half-second delay, the gap into which all philosophy and reason might fall, by referring to the reflex movement we make when we touch a hot stove. (A reaction, by the way, which does not exemplify the gap Connolly is talking about; it is a flexor reflex that takes place between cutaneous and pain receptors and the spinal cord, short-circuiting the brain). Is Connolly suggesting that laughter, far from being a complex socially constructed

psychologically meaningful activity has instead the quality of a reflex, given meaning only in retrospect? Has not Connolly gone too far? So far that social meaning threatens to become an arbitrary construction. Or perhaps not arbitrary, but rather purely political: the outcome of whoever has the more powerful ability to manipulate affect (Connolly 2005: 885). Two responses are possible. First, since against the political manipulation of affect there is no rational defence, one has to trust upon the life force that both Sigmund Freud and Herbert Marcuse referred to as Eros.

Second, if one understands affect as an unconscious, rather than simply nonconscious process, then possibly people could learn to become aware of its effects. Perhaps, but it will not be easy. As Leys argues, Connolly et al. have actually reinforced the mind/body split, abandoning Freud's concept of a psychical unconscious. "On this postpsychoanalytic model, what is not fully conscious must necessarily be corporeal or material" (Leys 2011: 459, n. 43). This is why one cannot take the simple step of equating the amygdala and its cortical connections with a primitive version of the unconscious. The missing half-second splits body and mind in such a way as to simplify mind, rendering it equivalent to consciousness. Unconsciousness now belongs to the body, where it becomes unknowable.

Or rather, unknowable according to the usual ways of knowing. In *The Primacy of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962: 440) wrote that "in so far as I have hands, feet, a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent upon my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way which I do not choose". The body has its own truths, its own language, which is expressed in terms of what Connolly (2002: 121) calls memory traces. For Connolly, these memory traces take the place of the Freudian unconscious.

An alternative neuroscientific approach to psychoanalysis

In recent years, a number of neuroscientists have turned their attention from cognitive neuroscience, as it is called, to a neuroscience of the unconscious. Some, such as Mark Solms (2011) are trained both in neuroscience and psychoanalysis. Others, such as Friston were led to the study of psychoanalysis out of frustration with the way in which neuroscientists seemed to regard cognition as the only aspect of mind (or brain) worth attending to (Carhart-Harris and Friston, 2010). Turning to neuroscience to explain psychoanalysis is not in itself the problem.

Freud, who began as a neurologist, believed that one day the phenomena of psychoanalysis might be explained in neurological terms. As Freud (Freud 1914: 78-79) put it,

> We must recollect that our provisional ideas in psychology will presumably some day be based on an organic substructure. . . . We are taking this probability into account in replacing the special chemical substances by special psychical forces.

Friston (Carhart-Harris and Friston, 2010: 269-1270) takes his lead from Freud's view that the organism seeks constancy:

> [We] have taken the view that the principle which governs all mental processes is a special case of Fechner's 'tendency towards stability', and have accordingly attributed to the mental apparatus the purpose of reducing to nothing, or at least of keeping as low as possible, the sums of excitation which flow in upon it (Freud, 1924: 60).

This, Freud believed, was the function of the ego. Carhart-Harris and Friston (2010) believe they have found the locus of this ego function in what they call the Default Mode Network (DMN), a group of linked neural processes whose goal is to reduce the stimuli produced by the unconscious mind.

> We speculate that spontaneous activity in the DMN reflects the constant containment of spontaneous endogenous activity—commensurate with Freud's concept of repression . . . while spontaneous activity in the dorsal attention system indexes the continual monitoring and suppression of exogenous stimuli. (1271)

Many of the more severe mental illnesses, they hypothesize, are characterized by the inability of the DMN to suppress these stimuli when compared to so-called normal subjects, as measured by increased activity in the DMN relative absence of external stimuli.

It is unnecessary to go into any more detail regarding the work of Friston, other than to note that they utilize a more sophisticated neural imaging technique than that to which Massumi and Connelly refer. Diffusion tensor imaging (DTI), employed by Carhart-Harris and Friston, no

longer depends on the assumption that particular mental functions are located in one particular part of the brain, an assumption that has been dated for some time. Rather, parts of the brain work together to generate the one of the key psychological functions that Freud attributed to the ego.

As Carhart-Harris and Friston argue, theirs is an attempt to link Freudian phenomenology with neuroscience. It works especially well with Freud, as he began as neuroscientist, and there is a mechanistic quality to his model of the mind absent in the work of Winnicott, for example. Wisely, they also argue that this linkage of Freudian phenomenology and neuroscience is not essential. Freudian phenomenology, and I would add more recent psychoanalytic models, can live on their own, providing an account of psychological experience that is independently valuable. Nevertheless, they have made a useful beginning of finding key aspects of the Freudian structural model in the linked structures of the DSM.[1]

Not only does their study say nothing about Freudian analysis as therapy (except that it explains what cognitive behavioral therapy cannot, as Carhart-Harris and Friston note [2010: 1275]), but it adds little to how we evaluate Marcuse's reinterpretation of Freud's account of civilization based upon the harsh repression of the unconscious. For close readers always understood that Marcuse's transformation of repression from a psychological to a social category, key to his argument, was a verbal sleight of hand. For Freud, repression would always be necessary, as it was generated by internal biological forces (the need to turn the young boy from mother to the larger world via Oedipal repression) that could not simply be transformed into social ones once scarcity was eliminated. These biological forces are one element of the massive stimulation of the ego by endogenous sources which the DSM is designed to deal with, lest we go insane.

The great advantage of Friston et al. is that they do what is necessary to apply neuroscience to Freud in a sophisticated, non-metaphorical way, one not dependent on an old fashion view of the brain's functions being localized in parts, such as the popular amygdala. In this they stand in stark contrast to Massumi et al. As Leys (2011: 467) points out, Massumi (2002: 233) has some rather harsh things to say about the sciences, characterizing them as

> seeking to tame, instrumentalize, and render profitable the singularity, unpredictability, immanence, and liveliness of a world in flux. "Scientific method is the institutionalized

> maintenance of sangfroid in the face of surprise," he writes. "Properly scientific activity starts from a preconversion of surprise into cognitive confidence."

So why not turn to a strictly phenomenological approach to human experience, as Marcuse does, rather than using science as metaphor in a project aimed at de-situating the human subject, a project that has been going on for some time now in various disciplines once labelled humanistic? The danger, in any case, is not to science, which is proceeding apace, but a failure to appreciate the dangers to the de-situated human in a social world that is far from utopian. Study psychoanalysis in a genuinely scientific manner or do utopian psychoanalytic phenomenology, as Marcuse does (there are, of course, other alternatives). Imagining that one can somehow combine the two is a dangerous project. Marcuse (1969: 31) once toyed with the idea of a "new science," but it would require the discovery of a utopian eroticized nature to go with it.

Conclusion

Marcuse (1970: 60) concludes that psychoanalysis cannot offer political alternatives, but it can contribute to the restoration of private autonomy and rationality to those able to use its resources. That is, to those who have not completely lost their identity to the mass. And if the politics of mass society begins at home, counteracting it may begin there too. Marcuse appears to be referring to the individual, but we might well extend this to families and communities that hold each other, while providing enough room for individuals to resist their embrace. One thinks here of the psychoanalytic theory of Winnicott (1971), but this idea is not reducible to a single post-Freudian, or object relations theorist.

Consider Hannah Arendt, who defined totalitarianism as a world in which the space between individuals disappears, making the many into one "by pressing men against each other." (Arendt, 1973: 437) Arendt's inspiration was the concentration camp, and anyone who has seen the photographs of the "barracks" taken shortly after liberation, three and four men or women sleeping together in a single bunk, will understand. But for Arendt, as for the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002), the concentration camp was both a reflection and premonition of mass society, a world of vast loneliness, in which men and women were no longer able to talk

even to themselves. Or as Arendt (1973: 476) put it, "in solitude . . . I am 'by myself,' together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others.

Self-talk, what Arendt called the two-in-one, is one interpretation of the ego's function as interpreted in terms of the DSM.

> From a psychoanalytic perspective, this portrait of a brain preoccupied with introspective activity sounds strikingly familiar, says Maggie Zellner, who collaborates with Solms... In the psychoanalytic model, our minds constantly sift through thoughts about ourselves and our experiences. Below the surface of consciousness, our minds are absorbed with ruminating over memories and feelings, dreaming up fears and fantasies of the future, generating all the raw material that the “talking cure” taps into. The activity of the default mode network might be the biological equivalent of this incessant running internal monologue, suggests Zellner — the neural phenomenon that underlies this mental experience (McGowan, 2014).

The loss of the ego has singular significance in the work of Marcuse; it is both cause and effect of one-dimensional man. That the experience of its loss might be explicable in neuroscientific terms does nothing to diminish the phenomenology of one-dimensionality. The two explanations overlap only a little. What they share is the view that the loss of ego function, in this case the ability to carry on an interior monologue, and so have a rich inner life, is far from liberating.

Marcuse's argument about the obsolescence of the Freudian concept of man, and the rise of mass man, would explain almost everything that Connolly and Massumi observe: a world of affect, independent of signification and meaning, whose rationalizing subjects are almost infinitely vulnerable to those with the greatest power to manipulate affect. Marcuse would explain the recent history of this process, as well as how it might be overcome. Not only in the name of reason, but in the name of Eros in its widest sense. For in the end, Marcuse too would liberate the body, agreeing with Connolly that Enlightened reason has been worshipped far too long. The difference is that it is Marcuse, the great utopian, who better understands the political risks of the premature devaluation of reason.

The other difference, perhaps the greater difference, is in their respective visions of liberation. For Connolly, liberation is found in individual acts of technique and artistry through which the self takes itself out to play, opening itself to new dimensions of experience. As has been frequently observed (Krause, 2006), Connolly's vision of liberation has little to do with politics, including the politics of democratic participation. For Connolly, most of the time, liberation is a private affair, an experiment with the self performed alone or in small groups. There is something private about Marcuse's vision of liberation too, but it is a different kind of privacy. For Marcuse, private means non-political. In Marcuse's utopia, outlined in *Eros and Civilization*, neither labour nor government would be necessary, both a detour from gratification. However, the gratification he imagines is intensely social, a world governed by Eros, in which family, friends, and communities perform with pleasure what was once regarded as work. The ideal is utopian, absurd, in a word impossible. Nevertheless, the difference in their visions of liberation remains the most striking difference between Connolly and Marcuse, and it stems from their different views of the individual: someone whose body is the boundary of his world, or someone whose repressed Eros could, if liberated, re-join the larger world from which it springs.

Notes

1. Carhart-Harris and Friston, along with Solms, are among a number of scholars, mostly neuroscientists, some with psychoanalytic training, who seek to explain psychoanalysis in terms of neuroscience. See the Neuropsychoanalysis Society, whose journal *Neuropsychoanalsysis* is devoted to this topic (www.neuropsa.org.uk).

References

Adorno, T. (1974) *Minima Moralia: Reflections From Damaged Life*. (E. F. N. Jephcott, Trans.). London: Verso.

Arendt, H. (1973) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Bergson, H. (1991) *Matter and Memory* (N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer, Trans.). New York: Zone Books.

Benjamin, J. (1977, Summer) The End of Internalization: Adorno's Social Psychology. *Telos* 32: 42-64.

Benjamin, J. (1978, Winter) Authority and the Family Revisited: Or, a World Without Fathers? *New German Critique* 13: 35-67.

Carhart-Harris, R. L. and Friston, K. J. (2010) The default-mode, ego-functions and free-energy: a neurobiological account of Freudian ideas. *Brain: A Journal of Neurology*: 133: 1265–1283.

Connolly, W. (1999) Brain Waves, Transcendental Fields, and Techniques of Thought. *Radical Philosophy* 94: 19-28.

Connolly, W. (2002) *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Connolly, W. (2005) The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine. *Political Theory* 33: 869-886.

Damasio, A. (1996) The Somatic Marker Hypothesis and the Possible Functions of the Prefrontal Cortex. *Transactions of the Royal Society* (London) 351: 1413-1420.

Damasio, A. (2003) *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. Orlando, Fl: Harcourt.

Damasio, A. (2010) *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*. New York: Vintage.

Dunn, B. D., Dalgleish, T. & Lawrence, A. D. (2006) The Somatic Marker Hypothesis: A Critical Evaluation. *Neuroscience and Behavioral Reviews* 30 (6): 239–271.

Freud, S. (1914) On Narcissism: An Introduction. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14: 67-105. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

Freud, S. (1915). The Unconscious. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* vol. 14: 159-236. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

Freud, S. (1924) The Economic Problem of Masochism. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 19: 157-172. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

Freud, S. (1930) Civilization and its Discontents. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21: 59-148. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

Fried, I., Wilson, C. L., MacDonald, K. A., & Behnke, E. J. (1998, February 12) Electric Current Stimulates Laughter. *Nature* 391: 650.

Horkheimer, M. (1949) Authority and the Family Today. In R. Anshen (Ed.), *The Family: Its Function and Destiny* (359-374). New York: Harper.

Horkheimer, M. (1972) Authority and the Family. In *Critical Theory* (47-128) (M. O'Connell et al., Trans.). New York: Seabury Press.

Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (2002) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. (E. Jephcott, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kant, I. (1850) *Critique of Pure Reason*. (J. M. D. Meiklejohn, Trans). London: Henry G. Bohn.

Krause, S. (2006) Brains, Citizens, and Democracy's New Nobility: Review of *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. *Theory and Event* 9 (1). Retrieved from http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v009/9.1krause.html

Leys, R. (2011) The Turn to Affect: A Critique. *Critical Inquiry* 37: 434-472.

Marcuse, H. (1955) *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (1969) *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (1970) The Obsolescence of the Freudian Concept of Man. In *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia* (J. Shapiro and S. Weber, Trans.) (44-61). Boston, Beacon Press.

Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables For The Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Massumi, B. (2005) Fear (The Spectrum Said). *Positions* 13 (1): 31-48.

McGowan, K. (2014, March 6) The Second Coming of Sigmund Freud. *Discover*. http://discovermagazine.com/2014/april/14-the-second-coming-of-sigmund-freud#.UxnWMOddVDU

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The Primacy of Perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Retrieved from http://www.archive.org/stream/phenomenologyofp00merl/phenomenologyofp00merl_djvu.txt

Mitscherlich, A. (1992) *Society Without The Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology* (E. Mosbacher, Trans.). New York: Harper Perennial.

Nørretranders, T. (1998) *The User Illusion: Cutting Consciousness Down to Size* (J. Sydenham, Trans.). New York: Viking.

Prager, J. (1998) *Presenting the Past: Psychoanalysis and The Sociology of Misremembering*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Shouse, E. (2005) Feeling, Emotion, Affect. *M/C Journal* 8. Retrieved from http://www.journal.mediaculture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php.

Solms, M. & Turnbull, Oliver (2011) What is Neuropsychoanalysis? *Neuropsychoanalysis* 13 (2): 133-145,

Thiele, L. P. (2006) *The Heart of Judgment: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience, and Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thrift, N. (2004) Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect. *Geografiska Annaler* 86 (1): 57-78.

Vander Valk, F. (2012) *Essays on Neuroscience and Political Theory: Thinking the Body Politic*. London and New York: Routledge.

Winnicott, D. W. (1971) The Location of Cultural Experience. In *Playing and Reality* (95-103). London and New York: Routledge.