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SIGMUND FREUD¹

(1856-1939)
Bernard Jolibert¹

In an essay published in 1925 entitled *Selbstdarstellung*,² Sigmund Freud explicitly informs us that we must never dissociate his life, his work and the way they were treated if we are to understand his discovery of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice and as a metapsychological theory. In this close association, however, one element finally predominated, to the point where it eventually became the true purpose or ambition of his existence: the will to understand the only thing that ultimately matters, namely the human being. 'My "Autobiographical study" shows how psychoanalysis came to be the substance of my life and subsequently follows the soundly based principle that nothing that has happened to me personally, as opposed to my relations with scientific knowledge, deserves to arouse interest'.³

In this close interlinking of existence, scientific ambition and relations with the world the dominant element is therefore the intellectual project that led to the discovery of psychoanalysis as both a therapeutic practice and a hypothetical model for understanding human behaviour, indissolubly bound together. What path did Freud's life take?

Life and work

To paint a faithful portrait the best course may well be simply to follow Freud's own autobiographical account, that might be entitled, to borrow Alain's expression, 'the history of my ideas'. So many major scientific discoveries; so many essential stages in the course of a life.

The first major period is made up of the years of learning. Freud was born on 6 May 1856 in Freiberg, Moravia (today in the Czech Republic), and he had acquired from his Jewish origins three qualities that greatly helped him in his struggles: veneration for knowledge in general, and above all scientific knowledge; an extremely free and critical mind; and great resistance to hostility. As regards his family background, it already seems to foreshadow the Oedipus complex: a father who married again, taking as his second wife a young woman scarcely older than the eldest child of his first marriage.

The young Freud's thirst for knowledge first steered him towards medicine, botany, chemistry, zoology and pathological anatomy; also towards philosophy and history. As M. Robert rightly says: 'Freud, a materialist and a positivist ... firmly convinced that the causes of diseases are to be sought in the organism and that any opinion to the contrary was but an illusion or a prejudice, might doubtless have become, had he not discovered psychoanalysis, one of those eminent researchers who make a name for themselves in the narrow circle of their speciality, more or less unknown to the public at large'.⁴

A novel medical experiment introduced a change of focus and marked the beginning of a new period that Freud jocularly called the 'cathartic prehistory of psychoanalysis'.⁵ Faced with

¹ We are indebted to the author and to Editions Klincksieck for their kind permission to reproduce here this essay, first published in part in Bernard Jolibert, *L'éducation contemporaine: Sources théoriques et problèmes*, Paris, 1989, p. 111-24. At our request, the author agreed to revise and expand his essay (the Editor).

patients unfairly branded ‘malingerers’ or ‘neurotics’, he began to devote himself to the delicate question of hysteria. Thanks to his meetings with Charcot in Paris, with Liebault and Bernheim in Nancy, and later with Janet, he discovered through hypnosis and medical suggestion that there might exist ‘powerful psychic processes of which a person is nevertheless not consciously aware’⁶ and which, without his or her realizing it, impel the person to act. Freud very rapidly came to the conclusion that hysterical symptoms were linked to forgotten earlier experiences. The cathartic crisis showed that the symptom resulted from the retention of an affect, and that affect was frequently rooted in sexuality. Contrary to what Janet believed, the hysteric did not suffer from a constitutional weakness leading to a psychic split; what was involved was a veritable ‘unconscious psychic conflict’,⁷ monstrous as such an expression may appear. Breuer’s misadventure with Anna O. confirmed that in the cathartic experience the hysteric is a sick person who is not shamming but seeking to express something to which he or she does not usually have access.

As Freud himself acknowledged, the historic era of psychoanalysis began with the recognition that abreaction was not sufficient to cure the patient. There were resistances and repressions that had to be brought to light so that they could be replaced by ‘acts of judgement culminating in the acceptance or rejection’⁸ of what had earlier been repressed. The patient’s ability freely to express himself, or herself would in the long run prevent relapses, something that mere catharsis did not permit.

There then began the specifically theoretical period of psychoanalysis, which must be understood as the ‘attempt to picture the psychic apparatus on the basis of a number of functions or systems, and to identify the relations they maintain with one another’.⁹ ‘The doctrines of resistance and repression, the unconscious, the aetiological significance of a person’s sex life and the importance of childhood experiences are the main building blocks of the theoretical edifice of psychoanalysis’.¹⁰

From that period on Freud ceased to be alone; his colleagues and his students acquired increasing importance, at the risk of distorting and misrepresenting the very inspiration of his research. There seems little point in dwelling here on the doctrinal disputes that cast their shadow over the declining years of the father of psychoanalysis. His work focused increasingly on exploration and generalization of the results obtained in other fields of knowledge (topical remedies, anthropology, history, religion, dreams, jokes, art, etc.). Fame came to Freud at the same time as distress at the rise of Nazism in Germany. ‘It was in 1929 that Thomas Mann, one of the authors most clearly cut out to be the spokesman of the German people, assigned to me a place in the intellectual history of the modern era, in words as eloquent as they were kind. Shortly afterwards my daughter Anna was feted at the Town Hall in Frankfurt am Main when she received on my behalf the Goethe Prize awarded to me in 1930. That was the high point of my social life; shortly afterwards our homeland had withdrawn into narrow-mindedness, and the nation no longer wished to have anything to do with us’.¹¹ In 1938, a year before his death, Freud was forced by the arrival of the Nazis to leave Vienna, where he had spent virtually his entire life, and go into exile.

Education

Regarding the application of psychoanalysis to education, Freud said that he himself had made no contribution, leaving to Melanie Klein and to his daughter Anna the task of applying the metapsychological model to education.¹²

Nevertheless, childhood is an omnipresent topic in Freud’s writings. Few analytical notes fail to make some reference to it. From the theory of stages to the concept of ‘childhood seduction’, from the notion of infantile sexuality to the central concept of the Oedipus complex, the entire corpus is predicated on a theory of childhood and the child’s development. Childhood is seen as the decisive period for the development of the human being.

Hence, Freud’s influence on educational thinking in the twentieth century has been decisive,

and few contemporary authors writing on the subject have failed to make direct or indirect reference to him. Some base themselves explicitly on his doctrine in order to justify a particular approach, others are content to borrow certain of his concepts. This undoubted success may quite possibly be bound up with a certain fuzziness of interpretation. Enlisted in support of non-directiveness by those who see in him the denouncer of assimilation (education-authority-neurosis), called upon by others to the rescue of adult authority, Freud continues to be tugged this way and that by his interpreters torn between contradictory visions of the role and limits of education.

This may possibly be due to the fact that he left no treatise specifically on education. This did not prevent him throughout his career from inquiring into, scrutinizing and if necessary criticizing the role of teachers and of parents, that is of adult authority over the child. Indeed, there is not one of Freud's works that, at one moment or another of his development, does not tackle some educational matter. From the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) to *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) he makes constant references to education. That both conservatives and revolutionaries invoke him may be because these scattered considerations, following such different lines of inquiry as that of *Totem and Taboo* and the case of 'little Hans' in the *Five Psychoanalyses*, are crucial. The superficial reader might then find his thinking on the question ambiguous. In point of fact, Freud's meditations on education, that is, as we shall see, on the question of the child's adjustment to both natural and social realities, are imbued with an indisputable unity, continuity and firmness of purpose. Their coherence doubtless derives from the fact that psychoanalysis is not a mere therapeutic method but reflects an overall view of existence, of which childhood is a first, founding moment.

The starting-point of Freud's thinking on education is at the confluence of two lines of inquiry: the biological and the historical. Biology, Freud's first branch of study, gave him an insight into the radical immaturity of the child at birth. Compared to the other animal species, the infant human appears incomplete: not only is it born naked, incapable of feeding itself, but this state is long-lasting. This innate vulnerability condemns the infant to live for longer and to a great extent under the protection, and hence under the influence, of adults. The child's individual history marks him or her for life, its traces remaining indelible in the grown man or woman. This primary intuition was systematized by Freud in his first writings, when he successively rejected the explanation of mental disturbances as being of nervous origin¹³ and refused to attribute neurosis to hereditary factors¹⁴. Freud saw in the trials and tribulations of childhood as the source of the adult's distresses and disturbances. How then could the issue of education not be seen as crucial? If the child is indeed 'father of the man', then clearly the question of the child's education cannot be overlooked.

Freud's own culture led him to perceive—transcending historical differences, cultural disparities and the sheer diversity of civilizations and their phenomena—a single issue: that of our condition as a cultural being. Nature is omnipresent, to be sure, with all her biological and instinctual force, but everywhere the humanness of humankind derives from the transmutation of instinct by the discipline of culture. It is this transmutation, this transition, of which the Oedipus complex came to be regarded by him as the prototype, that defines the human estate. The encounter between natural desire and culture occurs initially at the level of the prohibition on incest, whatever form it may take. This primary law of development, analysed from the phylogenetic standpoint in *Totem and Taboo* and from the ontogenetic standpoint in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, distinguishes the model whereby culture establishes itself in us. The rule cuts across the natural biological order and marks the locus of education.

It is understandable then that, starting from these two standpoints, Freud should have been led from the very beginning of his research into hysteria and the aetiology of neuroses to ponder the meaning and values of a process whose sole goal is to steer the child from the immediacy of desire to the restraint of social reality. Education is defined as the adult's action or impact upon the child, facilitating the transition from pleasure to reality, the passage from desire in the raw to socialized desire, integrated into a regulated universe of interpersonal relations. How is this integration

brought about?

It should be noted that, in order to elucidate the process of socialization of the individual, Freud does not resort to hypotheses such as maturation, which presupposes a sort of latent aptitude that social customs would gradually harness, a void waiting to be filled. He eschews the nature-versus-nurture debate. To account for the fact that the child becomes socialized, Freud adduces rather the necessity of repressive action. Education begins with the act of preventing certain spontaneous urges or drives from expressing themselves freely. For Freud, therefore, education's repressive function is not a subsidiary, parasitic function that could be dispensed with: the essence of the socializing process resides in prohibition.

'It is during the period of total or partial latency that are built up the psychic forces (disgust, modesty, moral and aesthetic aspirations) that will later inhibit sexual impulses and will, like dykes, limit and compress their course. When considering the child born into a civilized society, one has the feeling that such dykes are the work of education'.¹⁵ Freud's psychoanalysis of 'little Hans' confirms this conception. In the conclusion to his commentary, Freud reminds the reader¹⁶ that the task of education has to date been seen as one of 'dominating, or more properly repressing, instincts'. He adds at once that, in even the gentlest forms of education, which seek to prevent such prohibitions from degenerating into a morbid condition, there remains a necessary minimum element of prohibition. To render an individual 'capable of culture', to make of him or her a 'socially serviceable' being, a minimum sacrifice of his or her own immediate instinctual activity is always required.

Are we to infer from this that the work of education is to replace desire by social rules, to install a new principle of psychic regulation to replace desire? The reality principle would then substitute for the pleasure principle; Freud would become the inspirer of totalitarian educational doctrines. If 'unpleasure' (*die Unlust*) is the sole effective means of education, then the pleasure principle and the reality principle appear to be radically irreconcilable. The individual's entire psychical apparatus would obey either the one principle or the other, without any possibility of combination. If education is a matter of replacing pleasure by reality, instinct by society and desire by rules and regulations, then socialization is purely and simply a process of substitution. Inner obedience to the pleasure stemming from the immediate release of energy is replaced by obedience to the rule imposed from without, be it by the natural world (the intransigence of reality) or by cultural dictates (laws, moral precepts, customs that exist for society before the child enters the world).

Education would then be the practice (techniques, procedures, methods and content) whereby adults compel children, more or less strictly, to forego the immediacy of instinctual pleasure and replace it with a readiness to toe the line of reality. This substitution would involve a form of corrective suffering that it would simply be necessary to take care not to allow to degenerate into a morbid condition.

In point of fact, although Freud never appears to renounce the idea that a minimum repression of the instincts is necessary if children are to be educated, he is much less categorical about the alternative it seems to imply.

In fact, it very rapidly becomes apparent that, if education's ultimate goal is indeed to establish the reality principle as the principle whereby individual behaviour is regulated, its establishment in no way implies a process of substitution. In reality, it is not pleasure that must be forgone, but the immediacy of pleasure. Likewise, it is not a matter of rejecting the instinctual side of life, of denying the instincts (Freud knew better than anyone that such rejection amounted to a wholly ineffectual denial), but rather of adapting it and adjusting it to a natural and social reality that cannot be circumvented and in which it must find expression.

It is thus perhaps becoming clearer that, for Freud, education is not aimed at securing a naïve, illusory substitution, but seeks to effect a sort of adaptation serving to preserve within the context of the reality principle, in a modified form acceptable to it, all or part of the regulatory

pleasure necessary to the psychical apparatus. If we wish to understand how reality and pleasure can be reconciled, it is these two principles that we must now attempt to define more closely.

The pleasure principle is a principle in so far as it regulates from the outset all individual activity 'in the raw', at the instinctual level. It might be defined by saying that it provides a primary rule to the effect that our actions, feelings and thoughts in general are all governed by the quest for pleasure and the avoidance of 'unpleasure': 'It seems most probable that the purpose of our entire psychical apparatus is to procure pleasure for us and to cause us to avoid unpleasure; it is automatically driven by the pleasure principle'.¹⁷ 'People wish to be happy and to remain so. There are two sides to this aspiration, a negative goal and a positive goal: on the one hand, to shun pain, on the other, to seek intense pleasure'.¹⁸

Freud immediately adds that this pleasure principle not only determines the purpose of existence but governs from the outset all the operations of the psychical apparatus.

One might be tempted to stop there and aver that neurosis stems in its entirety from prohibition, from what is forbidden. According to such reasoning, the institution of education is in essence pathological, since it inhibits the expression of a natural principle: true education must consist on the contrary in reinstating this pleasure principle as the regulator. Education without frustration or repression would then be possible within a sort of spontaneous concord of interpersonal pleasures and desires.

Reality

Why did Freud not adopt this hypothesis? Did he not himself write that 'primitive men and women had the best of it, since no restriction was placed upon their instincts'.¹⁹ We can discern occasional traces of nostalgia for a lost innocence when Freud ventures to criticize the immoderately repressive education of this time. But why is it impossible to conceive of a form of education that is not repressive? The reasons are many and various.

First, the pleasure principle cannot be a goal in its own right. Pleasure exists essentially in a state of disequilibrium. And this disequilibrium necessarily conflicts with the minimum stability that all civilization requires. Progressive tension cannot be conjoined with stability. Moreover, while the pleasure principle does indeed account for human conduct, its goal of infinite, everlasting, perfect happiness can never be attained. This criticism focuses on the intrinsic inadequacy of the pleasure principle: 'What is termed happiness in the strictest sense stems from a relatively sudden satisfaction of needs that have reached a high tension, and by its very nature can be achieved only in the form of an episodic phenomenon. Any persistence of that state sought by the pleasure principle generates only a somewhat lukewarm well-being ... Thus our capacity for happiness is already limited by our constitution'.²⁰ In itself, therefore, pleasure is not enough to define a goal, since it spends its time shunning itself.

Moreover, it is indissolubly and structurally linked to pain. 'Unpleasure' is far more familiar to us than pleasure, and experiencing it provokes anxiety. As it degenerates and deteriorates, our own body urges us to reduce our aspiration to absolute happiness. The outside world, with its inexorable natural forces, works towards our annihilation—and our fellow humans do not always wish us well either. All these factors prompt us to limit our ambition to raise the pleasure principle to the status of an educational archetype.

However, the impossibility of developing a non-repressive form of education is not rooted solely in this internal analysis of the mechanisms of pleasure. Freud links the necessity of education to a harsh criticism of the condition of 'primitive man', that of a being given over exclusively to the unfettered satisfaction of his or her instincts. To be sure, 'primitive man' possesses his or her quota or basic instincts, but the absence of interpersonal regulation means that, even though he or she can indulge those instincts, sensual enjoyment is neither guaranteed nor even desirable.

Instinctual desires are the same from both the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic standpoints. Identical in the history of the race and in the individual's history, they reappear with every new born child: 'The instinctual desires upon which [culture] takes its inevitable toll are reborn with each

child ... These primitive desires are those of incest, cannibalism and murder'.²¹

Just as civilization began to withdraw from the 'primitive state' as a result of 'frustration', 'privation', 'prohibition' or taboo, individual education, as a constraint, is a necessity, whereby the child can be steered from a state of primitive desire to one of controlled desire.

This necessity derives from the genuine impossibility of gratifying these instincts freely and fully in a primitive state. Freedom in that state is experienced as freedom to no purpose, freedom that cannot be exercised, because of nature's intransigence and the unpredictable violence of interpersonal relations that are not regulated. The aggressive, conflict-fraught and destructive instincts and impulses become self-destructive for lack of any norms.

This aggressive trend, 'which we can discern in ourselves, and which we rightly suppose to exist in others',²² is the driving force behind the transition to a possible state of coexistence. Desire, instinct in whatever spontaneous form it may be expressed, offers no guarantee of leading to possible pleasure if it is content to act solely on immediate impulse. Infinite freedom is tantamount to the negation of freedom.

'Primitive man' in fact had the best of the bargain, since he or she experienced no restriction upon his or her instincts. On the other hand, his or her certainty of enjoying such happiness for long was minimal indeed. 'Civilized man' has exchanged a measure of happiness for a measure of security. More precise information on the *mores* of a present-day 'savage' peoples have taught us that there are no grounds at all for envying them the freedom of their instinctual life. They are in fact subject to restrictions of another order, ones that are possibly more severe than those imposed upon the modern, civilized individual. If we quite properly tax our present-day civilization with falling so far short of creating a vital order calculated to make us happy - which is what we nevertheless expect of civilization - and with allowing to persist so much suffering that could probably be avoided, and if, moreover, we endeavour, through ruthless criticism, to discover the sources of its imperfection, we surely do no more than exercise our rights, and in doing so we do not declare ourselves to be its enemies. It is also our right to expect from it gradual changes that will enable it better to satisfy our needs and so put it beyond the reach of such criticism. Nevertheless, we may well become familiar with the idea that certain pre-existing difficulties are intimately bound up with its essence and are proof against all attempts at reform'.²³

This essence is the minimum amount of repression imposed by the disciplining of the instincts, and its instrument is education. Education accordingly begins with the 'unpleasure' caused by authority. Prohibition pertains to culture, that is to 'that whereby humankind has raised itself above the animal kingdom'.²⁴ It is through it that we manage to curb certain instincts that would lead us to certain death. To adapt to the reality principle is to become capable of such self-mastery.

The question then arises as to what this reality is. If, as has been seen, the ultimate goal of education is indeed to install the reality principle, in order to establish it as the source of the process that guides our intellectual, moral and psychical behaviour patterns, in what does this reality consist?

The sphere of reality is everything that goes to make up the external world, both natural and cultural. To remain in the educational field, it is for Freud everything that occurs to the child once it emerges from the initial state of dependence upon its benevolent mother. In other words, it is what happens once the confusion has to cease between objective satisfaction and the hallucinatory representation of satisfaction. Reality is then made up of all the natural or cultural factors that resist the child by introducing a hiatus between desire and its satisfaction. Space, time and otherness subsume in their general frameworks all the particular cases in which reality confronts immediate desire.

Thus defined, reality appears indeed to be the enemy of desire, and the reality principle must be seen as the necessity of yielding to unavoidable coercion. Pleasure and reality appear therefore to be irreconcilable. However—and herein lies the great force of Freud's analysis—these two principles are not contradictory but complementary.

As has been seen, the pleasure principle does not, by itself, render human existence

possible, qua human existence, nor even the reality of pleasure. It cannot succeed, in fact, unless the reality principle is combined with it. The pleasure principle already contains within itself its own real limits. Reality is therefore already within it, if not as regulatory principle, at least as an inner obstacle. 'Each individual is a virtual enemy of civilization, which itself, however, is in the interests of human kind in general. It is strange that people, who find it so difficult to live in isolation, nevertheless feel sorely oppressed by the sacrifices that civilization expects of them in order to make life together possible for them. Civilization must therefore be defended against the individual, and its organization, its institutions and its laws all serve to accomplish this task'.²⁵ The opposition is therefore no more than 'virtual', and it is indeed the process of socialization, that is of adjusting to reality, that makes life together, and hence the attainment of pleasure, possible. The task of education is therefore not only to prohibit, to frustrate, but also to discover a sort of balance between the search for pleasure that continues to govern psychical equilibrium after the process of socialization has been completed and the constraints that the natural and social realities impose upon our primitive instincts. Education's task is to tame instinctual nature, but it can succeed in this task only by allowing legitimate pleasure its rightful place. At best, it takes the edge off conflicts, but it does not suppress them. Freud reminds us of this task:

The main aim of all education is to teach the child to control its instincts. It is indeed impossible to allow it total freedom, to authorize it to follow its every impulse, without constraint ... Education must therefore inhibit, forbid and repress, and it is to that task that it has at all times applied itself to the full. However, analysis has shown us that it is in fact such repression of the instincts that causes neuroses. Education must therefore navigate its way between the Scylla of the *laissez-faire* approach and the Charybdis of prohibition. While the problem is not insoluble, the aim must be to strike an optimal balance, that is to work out how such education will be most beneficial and least dangerous. It will be a matter of deciding what must be forbidden, and then at what moment and by what means the prohibition must be enforced ...

Observation shows that to date education has been very deficient in fulfilling its mission and has harmed children greatly. If its 'optimum' can be discovered, if it succeeds in doing its work to the full, then and then only may it hope to succeed in nullifying the effect of one of the factors of disease: the action of the accidental traumata of childhood. With regard to the other factor, education will never ever manage to suppress the demands of an unruly instinctual make-up'.²⁶

This lengthy quotation enables us to situate the place and role of education fairly precisely in Freud's thinking. The educator must tread a wary path between two stumbling blocks; on the one hand, maintaining the child in its original brute state as a result of the absence of adult resistance; on the other, the neurosis that may be caused by excessive repression. It should never be forgotten, moreover, that education remains, at best, an art; even were it to attain an ideal theoretical and practical level, there remains a 'natural constitution' that ensures that it cannot achieve everything. Certain individual spirits remain impervious to its discipline.

The problem, then, is how to reconcile the pleasure principle and the reality principle. How can the search for maximum immediate and untrammelled sensual enjoyment find common ground with the reality principle, which forbids, inhibits and raises barriers? How is it that the psychical apparatus consents to knuckle under to reality? Upon what *Instanz* or agency of the subject does reality have a hold?

Educability

In order for it to be effective, the prohibition must be internalized. The existence of individual morality shows that the rule imposed by reality does not remain external to the subject but is taken over, integrated, by the subject in an affective form. Its efficacy depends upon its being internalized. This is possible only if the subject possesses an agency of his or her own that is capable of integrating the social imperative counteracting the impact of the instincts. The Freudian system

accordingly postulates the existence in the subject of an intrinsic energy, a sort of self-preservation and survival instinct that counterbalances the primitive instinctual drives. It is self-love that lies at the root of moral obligation and hence of educability. 'Repression, we have said, derives from the self, the ego; or, to be more precise, from the ego's self-esteem (*Selbstachtung*)'.²⁷

External prohibition and frustration correspond to an internal mechanism that remains the pre-condition itself of educability and means that the individual is not trained to behave automatically but is indeed educated, that is capable of self-regulation.

It is therefore the ego, with its instinct for self-preservation and its self-ideal, that enters into conflict with those instincts whose energy is characterized by the libido,²⁸ and with the primitive instincts of the id. Education can manage those aspects of nature that represent a threat to culture only on the firm condition that the subject finds the sacrifice required of it by culture to be in its own interest. It is the ego that sees in its survival and its self-respect a counterweight to frustration.

Moreover, it is not a matter of absolute sacrifice, but rather one of displacement. For the ego brings into play the mechanisms whereby psychic energy is diverted, dramatized, sublimated, in order for it to find an outlet in reality. It is therefore within the subject that the counterweight to the primitive instincts is located. It is there, too, finally, that are forged the defence mechanisms that enable that primitive drive to achieve a partial or symbolic fulfilment in reality.

We see, then, what it is that gives Freud's thinking on education its great originality and coherence, in comparison with that of Reich, Neill or Marcuse. Instead of presenting education in Manichaeic terms as the training of the personality to obey by an outside trainer, Freud shows that education is possible because there exists within the individual, within his or her psychical apparatus, tendencies requiring that individual to be amenable to education. In other words the reason the reality principle can, in the course of individual development, channel those spontaneous impulses originally operating at the dictate of the pleasure principle is that there exists within us not only the capacity to internalize prohibitions but also certain forces, no less primitive than those of the id, that counterbalance the latter's influence, namely self-preservation instincts or drives, such as the narcissistic image of the self. It is by this medium that the libido's inner energy, translated into self-love, emerges as the very foundation of moral obligation, that is of education. It is this narcissism that subtends the fear of the withdrawal of love, the primary factor motivating the child's receptiveness to education and one that is doubtless more powerful than direct violence. It is also because it is the conscious part of the ego that is involved in the setting up of these various mechanisms that education may be considered to be the process of moulding the individual's intellectual faculties. The reality principle has its source within us: alike in the very limits of the pleasure principle and in the instigation (*Instanz*) of the person responsible for its preservation. Its externality is no more than apparent. This internality that renders education possible appears consciously in the form of 'ambition', the desire to 'grow up', to 'appear adult', in which pleasure and reality are closely bound up with one another.²⁹

Freud's strength was avoidance of the pitfall into which so many authors representing themselves as following in his footsteps have stumbled: that simplistic dualism that contrasts the individual - spontaneous, natural and asking no more than to satisfy unmotivated instincts - with society, a cultural, artificial and disabling device that for some unknown, perverse, ultimate goal denies the instinctual energy expression. Freud shows that morality and intellect are contained in embryo in the structure of the psychical apparatus. Sociability makes socialization possible, the latter being real only because in the final analysis it is in the individual's interest that it should be: he or she exchanges a freedom that is infinite but precarious for one that is regulated but real, being guaranteed. There is such a thing as natural educability, and it is this that makes education possible.

We come back to the biological dimension that served as our starting-point. The individual cannot remain eternally a child, he must one day enter the hostile environment of the outside world. The child might be defined as a being driven by immediate instincts, who lives protected by kind, benevolent adults, sheltered from both the harshness of the external world and from all inner conflicts. Education consists solely in leading it from that precarious state of sheltered dependence towards a state of responsibility. If, from a superficial standpoint, the role of education is to manage those forces of nature that are liable to prove dangerous for culture, from a more considered perspective it becomes clear that, by enabling the pleasure principle to be tamed, such education at

the same time enables the human being to be humanized. Unlike the child, who lives in a sheltered state of pleasure, unlike the animal, who is under the sway of immediate pleasure, the adult must be regarded as the being of mediate, emancipated pleasure.

No doubt this Freudian conception of education is in itself a fertile and clearly focused one. Nevertheless, the analysis of it needs to be pursued to its ultimate consequences, if it is not to give the impression of being inadequate. Indeed, were the analysis to be taken no farther, Freud might be reduced to the level of any mere theoretician of adaptation. In the final analysis, educating amounts in fact to socializing, and the reality principle generally matches the set of rules accepted by all societies, however tyrannical or unjust. It is a principle that allows no distinction to be made between social models. According to such a view, education boils down to inculcating the moral precepts and knowledge that are essential to any given society, such knowledge and precepts enabling it to pursue from generation to generation the exigencies imposed by its own structures. In this sense, Freud could be said to have been pursuing the same objects as Skinner and might be seen as an advocate of the pedagogy of ‘adjustment’.

Ultimate goals

This would be grievously to misunderstand Freud, who is neither a relativist nor a cynic. *Realpädagogie* and educational moralism were repugnant to him. His theory of education is based on an explicit ideal that is both human and interpersonal, one that can serve as the ultimate goal of action. This ideal is that of the progress of science seen as the progress of reason as it acquires self-awareness through the successive shedding of its illusions. The goal that Freud assigns to education is that of an autonomy that is both intellectual and moral and that can be attained only through scientific knowledge.

A cursory interpretation of psychoanalysis all too frequently glosses over the fact that, as a science, it presupposes the primacy of intelligence over instinctive behaviour. Far from seeking to glorify occult mechanisms and the illusions of the instinct, psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline leads to the intellect being given undisputed pre-eminence. Indeed, the religious critics quoted in *The Future of an Illusion*³⁰ knew what they were talking about when they presented psychoanalysis as a force tending to destroy the comforting illusions of religion.

In Freud’s thinking, education has no other purpose than to bring about the same demystification, the same removal of illusions as that effected by psychoanalysis: ‘The time when the primacy of the intellect will become established is no doubt still immensely remote from us, but the distance separating us from it is undoubtedly not infinite. And as the intellect, once it has won primacy, will probably pursue the same goals as those your God is to enable us to attain—human fraternity and the diminution of suffering—we are entitled to say that our antagonism is but temporary and in no way insurmountable’.³¹

It is reason and experience that, in Freud’s view, will elucidate the illusory consolations of religion. In the process, we may well forfeit a measure of relief. At the very least, it would be ‘an illusion to think that we can find elsewhere what (science) cannot give us’.³² True education, according to Freud, is education that leads, through science and experience, to reason. Hamlet in his doubt and his disquiet is ultimately, in Freud’s eyes, a better educational and human model³³ than any mystic hero, ensconced in the easy certainties of an easy conscience and the poor illusions of faith.

It may be, Freud replies, that science and the pursuit of reason are no more than ersatz gratifications that distract us from thoughts of death.³⁴ But even if the satisfactions they bring us are substitute satisfactions the body of knowledge they provide has the virtue of not being illusory. Such objective demystification can be measured by three factors: human powers are increased by the progress of science; the picture of the universe that it proposes is more coherent and more precise;³⁵ and the models that it furnishes are universal, being recognized as necessary.³⁶

In the light of such a goal, what in practical terms must education actually do? From the moral standpoint, schooling must train us to give up our infantile desires, must teach us to exchange boundless but illusory bliss for the assurance of enjoyment, and prepare us to bear certain frustrations that living together in society makes necessary. The aim must be to enable us to shed our illusions about ourselves and attain a greater degree of lucidity.

From the standpoint of knowledge, that is of instruction, education's task is to enable the adult within the child to achieve fulfilment, that is to develop the intellect, in order to pave the way leading from servitude to freedom.

In political terms, education's duty remains to bring about more 'fraternity among human beings, by reducing their sufferings'.³⁷

By virtue of his intellectual and critical approach, Freud therefore fits squarely into the humanistic tradition. According to the tenets of psychoanalysis, education consists not in freeing the fantasy-generating power of the instincts from social constraints but rather in 'teaching the child to control his or her instincts'.³⁸ Far from promoting any naïve hedonism, or a mystical harmony between self and self or between self and others, Freud assigns to education the task of seeking to manage, within a state of equilibrium acceptable to everyone, the sacrifices and rewards that reality imposes upon the immediacy of pleasure; this through and for reason and science, that is the intellect's work of disabusal. Education may be equated with an ascesis of the intellect that calls its own beliefs into question and works unceasingly upon itself in order to understand that reality of which it is part, transcending childhood's necessary illusions.

Notes

1. We are indebted to the author and to Editions Klincksiek for their kind permission to reproduce here this essay, first published in part in Bernard Jolibert, *L'éducation contemporaine: Sources théoriques et problèmes*, Paris, 1989, p. 111-24. At our request, the author agreed to revise and expand his essay (the Editor).
1. Bernard Jolibert (France). Lecturer on the educational sciences and the history of educational thought at the Université de la Réunion. Author of : *L'enfance au XVIIe siècle* [Childhood in the Seventeenth Century] ; *Raison et éducation : l'idée de raison dans l'histoire de la pensée éducative* [Reason and Education : The Concept of Reason in the History of Educational Thought] ; and *L'éducation contemporaine* [Modern Education]. Founder of the 'Philosophy of Education' series (Paris, Klincksieck). He has translated and published St. Augustine's *De Magistro*, as well as Comenius' *The Great Didactic* and Erasmus' *De Pueris*.
2. English translation: *An Autobiographical Study*, London, 1959.
3. Ibid., 'Postscriptum' (1935).
4. M. Robert, Article entitled 'Sigmund Freud' in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, Paris, 1980, Vol. 7, p. 384.
5. *An Autobiographical Study*, op. cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. S. Freud and J. Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, 1955.
14. S. Freud, *Neurosis, Psychoses and Perversion*, in which Freud refutes Charcot's hypothesis based on heredity.
15. S. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1953.
16. S. Freud, *Analyses of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy*.
17. S. Freud, *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée*, Paris, Gallimard, 1933, p. 13.
18. S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, London, 1961.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, London, 1961.

22. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, op. cit.
23. Ibid.
24. *The Future of an Illusion*, op. cit.
25. Ibid., p. 9.
26. S. Freud, *New Introductory Lecture on Psychoanalysis*, London, 1964.
27. S. Freud, 'Pour introduire le narcissisme', in: *La vie sexuelle*, Paris, P.U.F., 1972, p. 92.
28. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, op. cit.
29. S. Freud, 'Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming'.
30. *The Future of an Illusion*, op. cit., in which Freud indirectly addresses a series of questions to himself, and answers them.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. 'Deuil et mélancolie' in *Métopsychoanalyse*, Paris, Gallimard, 1952, p. 189-222.
34. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, op. cit.
35. *The Future of an Illusion*, op. cit.
36. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, op. cit.
37. *The Future of an Illusion*, op. cit.
38. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, op. cit.