Notes of the Month

Psycho-Analysis and Ethics

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Psycho-Analysis and Ethics

BY

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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN,

PROFESSOR C. A. MACE, M.A., D.Lit.

There is no question that psycho-analysis has exercised a profound influence on the values and attitudes of our generation. It is, accordingly, not unnatural to suppose that it must, therefore, influence the views we take on the questions traditionally discussed by the great moral philosophers. But to decide if this is so requires a rare combination of qualifications—a thorough understanding of the principles of philosophical analysis and an intimate acquaintance with psycho-analytic theory. This combination of qualifications is becoming increasingly rare. Psychologists pride themselves, rightly, on their modern scientific and factual approach. They sometimes pride themselves, wrongly, on their lack of concern with philosophy. They are mistaken, I think, because one cannot avoid discussing philosophical questions without having sufficient knowledge of philosophy to enable one to recognise a philosophical problem, and so avoid it.

Professor Ginsberg is psychologist enough to present psycho-analytic doctrines with insight and authority. He is philosopher enough to do more than avoid the philosophical issues on which these doctrines impinge. He enjoys that rare combination of qualities needed for the illumination of the very intricate philosophical issues which have arisen out of a very intricate science.

There are two very embarrassing situations in which a chairman may find himself. The first is that in which he so profoundly disagrees with the speaker that he cannot combine intellectual honesty with the courtesy which the situation demands. I am certainly not in that embarrassing situation. Professor Ginsberg and I have similar approaches to this problem; we speak the same language, we recognise the same authority—by which I mean not the authority of any person or persons, but the principles of reason and good sense.

The other embarrassing position for a chairman is that in which he is so completely in agreement with the speaker that he can say only "How true!" and then have to wonder what to say next. I confess that I am in danger of this embarrassment. I find myself in agreement with Professor Ginsberg not only in general approach, but also in the conclusions to which I am drawn. Like Professor Ginsberg, I genuinely appreciate the enormous contribution which Freud and other psycho-analyst writers have made to our understanding of the natural history of morals. But I see no reply whatever to Professor Ginsberg's thesis that Freud and other analytic writers have failed to undermine, as they seem to wish to do, the distinction between the causal explanation of a moral judgment and its justification. I agree with Professor Ginsberg that when they have tried to be purely naturalistic they have been inconsistent.

To add one more example, I would refer to Freud's distinction between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. There is no doubt whatever, in my opinion, that Freud considers action in accordance with the reality principle morally superior to action in accordance with the pleasure principle. So, too, when Freud reproved his critics for their prejudiced judgments on his theories he was not merely expressing his emotions and he certainly was not making a naturalistic judgment that people do express prejudices. He was
passing a genuine moral judgment. He thought that they ought not to have allowed their emotions to influence their reason in this way. On all this and on so many other matters on which Professor Ginsberg has spoken, I am in the position of the chairman who can say only, “How true!”

If I am to contribute anything more conducive to discussion, it can be only by emphasising slight differences within a common philosophical position. I agree with Professor Ginsberg that the psycho-analysts have failed to establish a naturalistic ethics. But I think I may be a little more sympathetic than Professor Ginsberg to the attempt to do so. I am not happy in leaving the distinction between what men actually desire and what they ought to desire, stark and unresolved. I am sure that the distinction exists. What I should like to do is to soften this distinction a little, or at least, to establish some clear connection between facts and values. The way in which I should try to do this is by arguing that what is good is what any man would desire under certain circumstances.

If this position can be defended two advantages are gained. It would explain and in some measure reward the persistent efforts of naturalistic moralists to relate values to the desires of sentient beings. It would explain and reward the efforts of the critics of naturalism to avoid relativism. Those of naturalistic bias, like myself, who would relate values to actual desires, might hope to establish the objectivity of moral judgments through their universality. To do this they must show two things: First, they must show that what would be desired under the specified conditions corresponds to what we know to be good. Second, they must show that all sentient beings would desire these things under the conditions specified.

I do not think they can show either of these things by purely anthropological, or purely psychological, studies. They must prove their point perhaps by arguing in an a priori way that if anyone should desire evil things under the required conditions he could not be a sentient being of the kind we understand, i.e., that the desire for evil is inherently self-contradictory. The “naturalistic moralist” then finds himself using arguments strangely like those of a Hegelian philosopher. This is strange company for a naturalist to be in!

However, I have derived great encouragement from Professor Ginsberg’s lecture. Especially encouraging to me was the passage in which he said: “The moral criterion which is finally adopted clearly goes beyond what individuals actually desire to what they ought to desire, or, if you like, to what they would desire if they were rational.”

It was the “if you like” clause that encouraged me. That is precisely what I should like—to equate what men ought to desire to what they would desire under certain circumstances. That is the line along which I am thinking in my attempt to soften the distinction between “fact” and “value”. I know Professor Ginsberg is going to tell me that I shall be awfully careful in defining rationality if this analysis is to be true and not a mere tautology. It may be hoped that on some other occasion he will give us his opinion on this analysis of value judgments.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND ETHICS

The contribution of psycho-analysis to ethics may be considered from three points of view. We may inquire, in the first place, what light analytic theory throws on the natural history of morals, that is the way in which moral rules and moral sentiments are formed and developed in the individual and the group. We may ask next whether psycho-analysis can, from its own resources, provide the basis for an ethical theory or a set of standards or principles in the light of which existing moral codes can be criticised or evaluated. Finally, there is the question how far the insight into human nature acquired through the exploration of the unconscious elements in the human
mind can help us in releasing the energies of man and removing the obstacles that hinder the realisation of his ideals, whatever may be their ultimate source.

I propose to confine myself to the first and second of these questions. I do so, not because I consider the third less important. On the contrary, it may well be the most important. The reason for this self-imposed limitation is that a satisfactory treatment would necessitate a detailed study of case histories and should not properly be undertaken by anyone who, like myself, has no personal experience of analytic procedure. The problems raised in the first two questions are not always clearly distinguished by psycho-analytic writers and some would deny that there is such a thing as ethical theory other than the psychology of morals. Freud himself tells us that it is not the object of his investigations to provide an ethic, still less a Weltanschauung. Such activities, he says, may be left to philosophers who avowedly "find it impossible to make their journey through life without a Baedeker of that kind to tell them about everything".\(^1\) Professor Flugel, in his very thorough and searching examination of the ethical aspects of psycho-analysis, distinguishes between questions of origin and questions of validity, and he is of the opinion that the problem of ultimate or intrinsic value is one for ethics and not psychology. Despite these disclaimers, however, the impression is conveyed, perhaps unwittingly, that a fuller knowledge of the psychology of motivation will render philosophic ethics unnecessary, and this despite the fact that assumptions are made about the nature of value judgments which certainly require philosophical justification. Thus Freud has no hesitation in asserting, despite his professed modesty in these matters, that value judgments are ultimately determined by desires and are, in fact, illusionary in character.\(^2\) Similarly, there are many passages in Professor Flugel's book which suggest that he favours a "naturalistic" view of moral judgments, as, for example, when he argues that moral judgments are "thetic", i.e., expressions of feelings, desires or wishes, and that reason is concerned with the means, but not the ends, of action. These are views which, of course, have a respectable philosophical tradition. I do not wish to prejudge the issue. But it is important to bear in mind that the problems thus raised are philosophical rather than psychological and that sooner or later they must be squarely faced as such.

Psychological theories of morals tend on the whole to be relativistic in outlook. For if moral judgments are considered to be expressions of desires or emotions there will be a tendency to stress the fact that they vary from one individual or group to another. From this the conclusion is readily drawn that they are not subject to rational tests, and, indeed, that the distinction between true and false does not properly apply to them. It is interesting to note, however, that recently several attempts have been made by psychoanalysts to move away from at least the more extreme forms of relativism. Thus Dr. Erich Fromm tries to show that it is possible on empirical grounds to distinguish between "genuine" and "fictitious" ideals—"a difference as fundamental as that between truth and falsehood", and that the test is not subjective attractiveness but is to be found in the objective condition of mental life.\(^3\) From another point of view, Dr. Money-Kyrle tries to escape relativism by a redefinition of the "normal" which he seeks to identify with the rational. In both these cases and in others the revulsion against relativism is to be traced to the impact of Nazism which made ethical relativism emotionally untenable. Relativists had to face the question whether it could really be the case that there was no rational way of deciding between the ethics of a Roosevelt and the ethics of a Hitler, and whether the moral

\(^1\) *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, p. 29.

\(^2\) *Civilisation and its Discontents*, p. 143.

\(^3\) *Escape From Freedom*, p. 266.
indignation aroused by Nazi atrocities could really be intellectually on the same level as the contempt which the Nazis felt for what to them seemed the maudlin sentimentality of their opponents. The test of “adjustment to the environment” which would come naturally to a psycho-therapist clearly failed. As judged by this test, the Nazi could be as “good” as the democrat, so long as both were equally conditioned to fit into the environment favoured by their societies. Could it be that the real crime of the Nazis was their inefficiency, that is their failure to adopt the means likely to achieve the ends they set themselves? If this is rejected as morally repugnant it would follow that moral judgments relate not merely to the means but also to the ends of action or else that the repudiation of the Nazi mode of life is emotional only and has no rational foundation. Questions of this sort troubled the minds of all who favoured ethical relativism. But they were felt with special acuteness by psycho-analysts, who realised that they had to re-examine their conception of what constitutes mental health, and that this could not be done without raising the problem of the validity of the criteria implicit in the ethical codes prevailing in different societies. The answers that have been given reveal a tacit reluctance to abandon ethical relativism combined with or qualified by a hope that objective or universal standards of the “normal” or the “healthy” can be derived from the data furnished by empirical psychology. In this respect the claims made by recent writers are bolder than anything to be found in Freud’s work. With what success we have now to inquire.

II.

A striking feature of Freud’s treatment of morals is his preoccupation with the sense of guilt. In this respect he differs markedly from the philosophers, who with the exception of Plato and Kant give little attention to moral evil. For analogy we have to go to the doctrine of original sin, and it is interesting to note that theologians have themselves noted the affinity between their doctrine and Freud’s. The theme forms the centre of Freud’s *Totem and Tabu* where morality is represented as a reaction-formation against the evil inherent in man. As is well known, he connects it with the early Oedipus situation in the primal horde, the incestuous desires of the band of brothers, the murder of the father, the subsequent remorse and identification with him. Social organisation and moral restrictions are all traced back to this sequence of events. The bond which holds the group together is complicity in a common crime; religion is rooted in the sense of guilt and the consequent remorse; and morality is “based partly on the necessities of society, and partly on the expiation which this sense of guilt demands”.  

Freud’s reconstruction of primeval society was based on the views of Atkinson and Lang and on Robertson Smith’s interpretation of the totem feast, and as it is not now accepted by anthropologists, the matter need not here be pursued further. Freud, however, never abandoned it, as is evident from one of his latest writings. It retains its importance I think, for two reasons. Firstly, it is taken by Freud as providing an explanation of “ambivalence”, that is the coincidence of love and hate towards the same object, a concept essential to psycho-analytic theory. Secondly, it survives in Freud’s deep-rooted belief in the existence of an inherited sense of guilt, transmitted in some way not further explained, through racial heredity. If this is taken seriously, it would involve the assumption of a group-mind, or a psyche of the mass as Freud calls it, in which mental processes occur analogous to those that occur in the mind of the individual, or else the possibility of the inheritance of acquired characters.

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1 p. 238.
2 *Moses and Monotheism.*
In the later writings the account that is given of the sense of guilt is not necessarily connected with these biological or anthropological theories and is compatible with the assumption that the individual starts his life as neither moral nor immoral but as amoral. The child acquires his morality from his environment. The formation of the "conscience" consists essentially in a process whereby the external authority of the father or of father substitutes is transformed into an inner authority. It is described both by Freud and by his followers in terms of the distinctions they draw between the id, the ego and the superego. Throughout, emphasis is laid on the negative or repressive aspects of morality, the "Thou shalt not" of the moral codes. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that in therapeutic treatment analysts are struck with the great severity of the conscience, often resulting in cruel self-humiliation and self-torture. To account for this, appeal is made to the part played by the aggressive tendencies in the formation of the super-ego. In incorporating the authority of the father into his own self, the child also incorporates the aggression imputed to the father as the source of frustration, and, at the same time, the child turns the aggression which he feels to the father, but which he has to repress against himself. The conscience thus contains a double dose of aggression, the aggression of the father and that towards the father. To this redoubled aggression is attributed the rigour and severity of the conscience, often going beyond the actual severity of the father; it explains the fact that the individual can be harsher towards himself than his parents ever were. The tensions of the conscience are, on this view, due not merely to the discomfort of resisting the pressure of habits inculcated by the group, but result from the fact that every time we refrain from meeting frustration by aggression, the aggression is turned against ourselves. The tension is felt as the sense of guilt, in essentials the result of a struggle between the ego and the superego. It may be noted in passing that one of the functions of religion is to relieve this tension by the promise of salvation and inward peace.

Freud repudiates the charge frequently made against him that he ignores the more positive aspects of the moral life. "It is no part of our intention", he says, "to deny the nobility of human nature, nor have we ever done anything to disparage its value. On the contrary, I show you not only the evil wishes which are censured, but also the censorship which suppresses them and makes them unrecognisable. We dwell upon the evil in human beings with the greater emphasis only because others deny it, thereby making the mental life of mankind not indeed better, but incomprehensible. If we give up the one-sided ethical valuation then, we are surer to find the truer formula for the relation of evil to good in human nature."

It remains that the side of the moral life which is concerned with what is positively worth while receives scanty treatment. What there is, is couched in terms of the theory of sublimation, and the formation of the ego-ideal. Sublimation seems to be closely related to the process of identification, though in some of the later essays there are suggestions that it might be due also to the independent work of the ego, among whose functions is included that of introducing unity and harmony into the mental life. On the whole, however, what Freud has to say about the nature of ideals is brought within the framework of the theory of the libido. The love of ideals is, in fact, reduced to self-love or "narcissism". A portion of the libido is directed to ourselves, but some of it goes to ourselves not as we are, but as we should like to be, in other words to our ego-ideal. Now the ego-ideal is built up by identification with the father or father-substitute, and in the course of identification these are idealised, and we ascribe to them qualities which would make them worthy of our love. The root of the idealisation, however, is narcissism or self-love. "The object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego-ideal of

\[^1\] Introductory Lectures to Psycho-Analysis, p. 128.
our own. We love it on account of the perfection which we have striven to
search for our own ego and which we should now like to procure in this
roundabout way, as a means of satisfying our narcissism.” 1 It will be seen
that this leaves the problem of the root of idealism unresolved, since nothing
further is said of the reasons which make us seek our own perfection. Fur-
thermore, I find it difficult to believe that the love of ideals can be reduced
to self-love. Why should there not be other things and qualities which are
loved directly and for their own sake and not as parts of the self? Behind
this assumption there seems to be a lingering attachment to the theory of
psychological hedonism, the theory that desire is always for pleasure to the
subject or self.

The value of the psycho-analytic contribution to the natural history of
morals does not, I think, depend upon whether or not these particular theories
will prove acceptable. It is to be found to a far greater extent in the wealth
of material which analytic experience has brought to light, showing the
enormous part played by unconscious factors in the formation of the
moral sentiments. No doubt the fact that in the censure which we direct
against ourselves and against others, repressed impulses and desires find an
outlet, has long been known. 2 Again self-deception and sophistication are
processes which have been frequently described by novelists, and to some
extent by moral psychologists, long before the days of psycho-analysis. But
no one has shown so clearly as the analysts how infinitely varied are the
distortions to which the conscience is subject, or disclosed in greater detail
the extent to which the processes may be concealed from the agent himself.
Psycho-analysis has further thrown a flood of light on the fact that the
knowledge of good is so frequently dissociated from the will to good, the
fact so vividly described by St. Paul: “that which I do I allow not; for what
I would that I do not; but what I hate that I do . . . the good that I would
I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do”. 3 Psycho-analysis can,
perhaps, also help to explain the very remarkable variations in the emotional
depth of the response to different types of offence against the moral code.
The intensity with which we condemn “unnatural” lust, fraud, treachery,
pride, cruelty, does not seem to be at all closely related to the degree of
evil which the reflective conscience would find in each of these vices.
Traditional moral psychology seems to have paid little attention to problems
of this sort. 4

The central weakness of Freudian moral psychology lies, I think, in its
failure to deal adequately with the nature of moral obligation, and this in
turn is due to the obscurity which surrounds the treatment of the relation
between the cognitive and emotional components of the conscience. Obliga-
tion, it seems, consists in submission to authority, whether internal or external.
The emotional basis is in either case fear, that is fear of punishment or of
losing the love of those around us, or of our aggression towards those whom
we love. The attitude towards ourselves when the moral sanctions have been
internalised retain all the characteristics it had when the authority was
external. Nothing is said of the possibility in the advanced levels of moral

1 Group Psychology and the Psychology of the Ego, p. 74.
2 Professor Laird quotes in this connection the following passages from King
Lear: “Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rials upon yond simple thief. Hark
in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the
thief? . . .”

   “Thou rascally beadle, hold thy bloody hand
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lust’st to use her in that kind
For which thou whipp’st her. . .”

A Study in Moral Theory, p. 151.
3 Romans, vii, 15-19.
development of self-imposed rules, or of respect for principles of conduct 
rationally accepted as binding. The conscience, I would suggest, is a system 
of emotional dispositions or "sentiments" or rather a cluster of such senti-
ments of varying degrees of unity, which have gathered round our beliefs or 
judgments concerning right and wrong. The emotional components and the 

rational level of the judgments vary greatly in the different clusters or 
systems. There is not in fact one conscience, but an indefinite plurality of 
consciences, each with its own degree of emotional intensity and intellectual 
grasp. A man may be highly "conscientious" in his commercial dealings, but 
not in controlling his appetites; another may have rigid standards of sexual 
morality but very flexible ones in matters of business relations or profes-
sional morality. "I ought" may mean to one "my social circle expects this 
of me"; to another "God expects it of me"; to yet another "I expect it of 
myself". The degree of "internalisation of authority" may differ widely 
from case to case in the same person and in different persons. The extent 
to which this internalisation occurs can easily be exaggerated. For 
many individuals even in advanced societies a great deal of morality remains 
prudential and conventional. People like to believe that their conscience is 
their own, but in this they are easily deceived. Nevertheless, the whole of 
morality is not "borrowed" morality. In morals as in other matters people 
do not live by taking in each other's washing. At some point we have to 
assume direct value judgments which are slowly clarified by experience and 
reflection. On this psycho-analytic theory seems to have very little to say.

Furthermore, the account given of the way in which the individual moves 
from a stage in which authority is external to that in which it becomes an 
inward monitor, is I think, open to objection. The transition is said to be 
effected through identification with the father, whereby his authority is 
incorporated into the self. It seems to me, however, that this process of inter-
nalisation and individualisation owes at least as much to our experience 
with equals with whom we have to establish a modus vivendi. It is through 
such experience that people come to make their own rules, and these may 
often be at variance with the rules that have come to them from superior 
authority. Another important factor is contact between different groups 
which brings to light conflicting moral standards between which the indivi-
dual has to choose. In this context the psycho-analysts have tended to treat 
the family too much in isolation from the larger group, and this has led 
them to underestimate the part played by social factors in the moral life, and 
almost completely to ignore the forces, rational and other, making for change 
and development.

III

We have now to deal with the question whether psycho-analytic theory can 
provide the basis for a rational ethic. The morality so far discussed is super-

ego morality. Its basis is the authority of the father or father substitute 
internalised. If all the rules of morals come to us from without as com-
mands, is there any rational method for choosing between them? We have 
seen that Freud himself nowhere claims to have worked out a rational ethic, 
yet in various places in his writings he holds out hopes for such an enter-
prise. In general, he has great faith in the power of rational inquiry. He dis-
imissed subjectivist or relativist views of knowledge as "intellectual nihilism".1 

1 New Introductory Lectures, p. 224.

Though our knowledge of nature is affected by the structure of the mind, 
this does not make knowledge necessarily subjective, since the structure of 
the mind itself can be scientifically investigated, and the errors arising out 
of subjective factors allowed for. The theory of psycho-analysis, so often 
accused of exaggerating the strength of the non-rational elements in human
nature, rests in fact on the assumption that these are subject to rational control. The function of analysis is to extend the area of conscious control by bringing what was unconscious into consciousness, to ensure, as we are told, that "where id was there shall ego be". The ultimate ideal is the "primacy of reason" and on the moral side, "the brotherhood of man and the reduction of suffering". An ethic of this sort, it is suggested, requires another foundation than that of religion. Only hints are given, however, where such a foundation is to be sought for. It is suggested, for example that a scientific ethics might play a therapeutic role analogous to that which the physician plays in dealing with neuroses in the individual. The analyst frequently finds that he has to do battle with the individual's conscience, which is often excessively severe and makes demands which he cannot possibly fulfil and which threaten his happiness. What Freud calls the "cultural super-ego" as represented, for example, in the ethical injunctions of the higher religions, calls for similar therapy. They set up standards too high for human nature and are therefore easily defeated by those who take a more realistic view. Thus the command to love your neighbour as yourself is no defence against human aggressiveness. "Such a grandiose inflation of love only lowers its value and cannot remove the evil". It is not clear, however, by what principles such an examination of idealistic codes is to be guided. The analogy with individual therapy breaks down. In dealing with the individual, the analyst assumes a "normal" environment and considers behaviour as neurotic which is in conflict with it. No such standard is available for societies, since there exists no scientific, comparative study of the pathology of civilisations, and we therefore cannot tell what is normal and what pathological.

Despite the lack of comparative data Freud has ventured on a general statement of the role of repression in the history of culture. Our civilisation, he argued already in his early papers, is in the main founded on the suppression of instincts. The theme is developed more fully in his sombre essay on the malaise of culture. Both the libidinal and the aggressive tendencies have to be repressed if civilisation is to flourish. Sexual energy has to be diverted from its original object to make possible the formation of wider groups and to keep them together. This is one of the reasons for the rules and regulations by which all known societies seek to control the sexual relations of their members. Another reason is to be found in the fact that love is needed to control hate. The aggressive impulses which, in Freud's view, are an ineradicable and primary element in human nature, could destroy mankind if left to work themselves out. To control them, aim-inhibited sexual energy has to be used. The process involves the building up of the super-ego by the aid of which aggression is turned inwards and prevented from expressing itself directly. Following this line of thought Freud might have said with Buddha that "hatred does not cease by hatred; by love alone is hate destroyed". Freud, however, does not share the hope held out by the spiritual religions of the ultimate triumph of love. Eros is pitted against Thanatos and the antagonism between them will in all probability never be overcome.

In urging that the growth of civilisation depends on the control or repression of fundamental instinctive drives Freud is saying—nur mit ein bisschen andern Worten—what the moralists of all ages have said. From the point of view of ethical theory the important problem is whether it is possible to elicit from his teaching any principles for determining the limits of this

1 The Future of an Illusion, p. 93.
2 Page 215.
3 "Civilised" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness, 1908. Collected Papers II.
inevitable repression or any standards for estimating the loss and gain involved. As regards "civilised" sexual morality his discussion in the early papers at least is tentative and inconclusive. It is possible, he allows, to maintain that the cultural gains derived from sexual restraint outweigh its manifestly injurious results. But he finds himself unable to balance gain and loss with any precision. And he ends by saying that as judged by individual happiness it is very doubtful whether the sacrifices demanded can be justified, so long, at least, as we are "still so insufficiently purged of hedonism as to include a certain degree of individual happiness among the aims of our cultural development". As regards the effect of sexual restraint on cultural activities, Freud's conclusions are equally tentative. He does not, of course, claim to have undertaken any comparative study of moral codes from this point of view. But on the basis of his own personal impressions he believes that "The relation between possible sublimation and indispensable sexual activity naturally varies very much in different persons, and indeed with the various kinds of occupation". He does not support the view that "sexual abstinence helps to shape energetic self-reliant men of action, or original thinkers, bold pioneers and reformers; far more often it produces "good" weaklings who later become lost in the crowd that tends to follow painfully the initiative of strong characters." In the end it emerges that while Freud is convinced that the code of sexual morality in Western societies urgently needs to be reformed, he is not prepared as a physician to come forward with definite proposals. This was not to be expected. But the discussion throws light on the sort of ethical theory that Freud might have developed, had he chosen to pursue the matter further. It is clear that the ethical criteria to which he appeals in criticising existing moral codes are individual happiness and cultural advance. Furthermore, he realises that we have not the knowledge that would be necessary for any accurate application of these criteria, and he is obviously disturbed by the fact that gains in one direction are often countered by loss in the other.

In the later writings the problem thus raised reappears in another form. Freud finds that there is a certain antagonism between the growth of culture and the development of the individual. The antagonism results in the first place from the struggle between Eros and Thanatos. The aim of cultural development is the unification of all mankind. This can only be achieved by a repression of aggression. But every time we control our aggression, it turns against the self. The result is an increasing tension between the ego and the super-ego which is felt as a sense of guilt. It seems to be assumed that the larger the group, the greater the difficulty of achieving libidinal unity and the greater the cost in human happiness. The progress of mankind can only be achieved at the expense of an intensification of the sense of guilt "until perhaps it may swell to a magnitude that individuals can hardly support." No wonder that Freud thought the sense of guilt constituted the most important problem in the evolution of culture.

2 Dr. J. D. Unwin has produced an elaborate argument to show that in primitive societies there is a definite relation between sexual continence and degree of cultural advance. (Sex and Culture, 1934.) But the criteria which he uses both for cultural condition and sexual regulation are very vague and the evidence he adduces is not sufficient to justify a generalisation so far reaching. (Cf. my review of this book in Nature, Vol. CXXXV, p. 203, 1935.) Westermarck, who has made a very comprehensive survey of the available information, concludes that there is no relation between the toleration of unchastity and the degree of culture, and that on the contrary chastity is more respected in the lowest tribes than in the higher ones. In The Material Culture and Social Institutions of the Simpler Peoples, (1915), L. T. Hobhouse, G. C. Wheeler and the present writer found that the evidence was not sufficient to establish a universal association between sexual regulation and cultural grade as judged by economic criteria.
3 Civilisation and its Discontents, p. 116.