# CHAPTER ONE

# Freudian and Postfreudian Ethics

## INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, was not slow in expressing his ethical views, often based on arguments developed on the basis of his psychoanalytic perspective. I will begin this exploration with a consideration of his ethical views and those of some of his followers. Early psychoanalytic contributions to ethical reflection were rooted in Freud's thinking, but were subsequently elaborated and diversified by both his immediate followers and by subsequent generations of analysts.[1]

We can imagine the conflicting perspectives in Freud's mind as he sat listening to his patient on the couch. On the one hand, he had discovered a level of mental functioning that was unconscious and, as he thought, driven inexorably and in predetermined fashion by instinctual drives that acted as mental forces demanding immediate discharge. Such drive-derivative expressions acted beyond the range of conscious awareness and left no room for discretion, decision, reflection, or choice. On the other hand, he knew very well that there had to be something in the patient that would enable him to come to terms with these forces and to integrate them with the conscious personality in order for the patient to escape from instinctually driven conflict and attain some degree of adaptive self-regulation. Freud knew the value of autonomy as a central component of psychic health and maturity. The patient had to come to a point of self-awareness, self-determinism, and choice in order to free himself from the grasp of unconscious and neurotic entanglements. The puzzle and the problem was how to help the patient find his or her way through this maze of interlocking complexities. It still is!

The prevailing view of freudian ethics emphasizes his deterministic, egoistic, and antimoral stance. This interpretation focuses on the role of the

superego in the development of ethical attitudes, especially conscience; on the role of libidinal and aggressive drives and narcissism; on dominance of the pleasure principle; repression; and in general on the effects of unconscious dynamics on human thought and action. In sum, the freudian perspective, so conceived, was charged with undermining the very foundations of ethical choice and morality. Ernest Wallwork (1991), however, drew a contrasting picture of Freud's ethics:

> The theory is naturalistic, grounded in a concept of human flourishing and regard for others, critical of exclusively Kantian-based ethics, yet respectful of certain Kantian emphases (such as the centrality of respect for autonomy), and concerned with the common good and special relations, as well as with individual rights. Significantly, this new understanding of Freud's ethic challenges postmodernist readings of Freud that find in him a model of the radically pluralistic self. Although it recognizes the decentering implications of the workings of the unconscious it allows for a self with sufficient cohesiveness and structure to counter the ethical relativism of much postmodernist thought. At the same time Freud's ethic acknowledges tensions between the private self and public responsibilities, impersonal moral reasoning and personal concerns and commitments. (p. x)

If we can fractionate the meaning of "ethics" into directives for a general pattern of life, a set of rules or codes governing right and wrong behavior, or an inquiry into the basis of rules of conduct (metaethics), Freud touched on all of these areas, although his primary focus fell on the second (Wallace 1986b).

## READING FREUD

One reading of Freud (Klein 1976b) distinguished between experience-remote metapsychology and experience-near clinical theory. Much of Freud's thinking about ethical or moral issues was only loosely connected to his metapsychology. Much of contemporary analytic thinking has distanced itself from the mechanistic aspects of Freud's drive-derived theory. The dynamic hypothesis, conceived as the energy-driven and drive-derivative apparatus of the mind, can be read interpretively rather than mechanistically: mechanistically it deals with conflicting psychic forces (energically powered), while interpretively it is more a matter of "purposeful intentions working concurrently or in mutual opposition" (Freud

1916–1917, p. 67). Drive influences can thus be understood in terms of motives and reasons (Meissner 1995a,b,c; 1999a,b; Rapaport 1960; Sherwood 1969).[2]

The tension between energic and hermeneutical dimensions of analytic concepts led Paul Ricoeur (1970) to suggest an integration of metapsychological and hermeneutic concerns by reading the patient's productions in the analytic hour as a text to be interpreted; and viewing the analytic effort as "limited to restoring the integral, unmutilated and unfalsified text" (p. 260). But this did not cover the demands of either psychoanalytic praxis or theory: "As I see it," wrote Ricoeur,

> the whole problem of Freudian epistemology may be centralized in a single question: How can the economic explanation be *involved* in an interpretation dealing with meanings; and conversely, how can interpretation be an *aspect* of the economic explanation? It is easier to fall back on a disjunction: either an explanation in terms of energy, or an understanding in terms of phenomenology. It must be recognized, however, that Freudianism exists only on the basis of its refusal of that disjunction. (p. 66, italics in original)

In subsequent years, the ground has shifted somewhat to allow for the possibility of an economic metapsychology without reliance on outdated energic models and for closer connection of a revised metapsychology with hermeneutical and informational models (Meissner 1995a,b,c).[3]

However impelled Freud might have felt to make his theory acceptable to the mechanistic scientific world of his day, he also allowed room for concepts that spoke to ordinary experience and to his own clinical experience. Ernest Wallwork (1991) notes:

> For the fact is that the metapsychology makes liberal use of bridge concepts such as "instinct" and "the dynamic point of view" that have clinically interpretable referents that must be appreciated on the level of ordinary folk psychology in order for the metapsychology itself to be properly understood. With these bridge concepts, Freud was struggling to do justice to both nonteleological and teleological explanations of human mental life that we have yet to reach consensus about how to combine theoretically. (p. 34)

Freud's writing indulges in shifting perspectives that introduce inevitable tensions, even at times contradictions, in his theorizing. He

was not unaware of this aspect of his work, writing (1915b), somewhat apologetically:

> The extraordinary intricacy of all the factors to be taken into consideration leaves only one way of presenting them open to us. We must select first one and then another point of view, and follow it up through the material as long as the application of it seems to yield results. Each separate treatment of the subject will be incomplete in itself, and there cannot fail to be obscurities where it touches upon material that has not yet been treated; but we may hope that a final synthesis will lead to a proper understanding. (pp. 157–158)

This inherent looseness of freudian theory has yet to be adequately integrated. There is still an unresolved debate whether psychoanalysis is a more-or-less unified theory or an aggregate of multiple theoretical perspectives, only loosely and problematically interconnected (Wallerstein 1992).

   The ambiguity between mechanistic and more personal experiential formulations was present from the beginning of Freud's enterprise. Even in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), the helmholtzian dictates of all-embracing materialism did not prevent Freud from leaving an island of personal agency in the form of the decidedly unmechanistic "I" capable of registering signals of pleasure and displeasure, evaluating qualitative differences, and deciding on remedial action—"a prime mover, the willer and ultimate knower, and thus a vitalistic homunculus with some degree of autonomy" (Holt 1965, pp. 99–100). The issues of personal agency in psychoanalytic theory remain unsettled, but in my view demand a theoretical accounting that goes beyond efforts of ego psychology to center personal agency in an impersonal and systemic ego (Meissner 1993).

## FREUD'S ETHICS

Freud's profoundly humanistic interests and his sense that he was uncovering aspects of human behavior not previously well understood led him to reevaluate on his own terms matters that had long been prerogatives of philosophy and ethics. But he made little distinction between ethics and morality and spoke of ethics in more-or-less generic, even at times naive, terms: "What is moral is always self-evident. I believe that in a sense of justice and consideration for one's fellow men and in discomfort in making others suffer or taking advantage of them, I can compete with the best men I have known";[4] or ethics was "a kind of highway code for traffic among mankind";[5] or ideas "which deal with the relations of human beings to one

another are comprised under the heading of ethics" (1930, p. 142). And as Heinz Hartmann (1960) noted, "He had no urge to go deeper into the question of the 'validity' of moral feelings or judgments" (p. 15). He wrote to Oskar Pfister at one point, somewhat cynically and condescendingly:

> "Ethics are remote from me. . . . I do not break my head very much about good and evil, but I have found little that is "good" about human beings on the whole. In my experience most of them are trash, no matter whether they publicly subscribe to this or that ethical doctrine or to none at all. . . . If we are to talk of ethics, I subscribe to a high ideal from which most of the human beings I have come across depart most lamentably. (Meng and Freud 1963, pp. 61–62)

In his assessment of such matters, there was much he could endorse and support in more traditional viewpoints, but also much he felt compelled to critique and condemn. He accepted the necessity for moral codes and regarded conscience as a necessity whose lack could only lead to the greatest conflicts and dangers potentially undermining human society. Among the motivational underpinnings of repression, shame and morality were early targets of criticism (Freud 1950 [1892-1899]), and somewhat later ethical and aesthetic standards (Freud 1909b, 1923b). Subsequent institutionalization of the superego gave the moral perspective a locus and function within the structural theory. The terms *moral* and *immoral* found consistent application respectively to repressing and repressed mental contents. Parapraxes, for example, were attributed to "compliant tolerance of the immoral" (Freud 1901, p. 276), and again in discussing one of his patients, the Rat Man (Freud 1909c), "He had only to assimilate this new contrast, between a moral self and an evil one, with the contrast . . . between the conscious and the unconscious. The moral self was the conscious, the evil self was the unconscious" (p. 177). This evil was further specified: "Repression invariably proceeded from the sick person's conscious personality (his ego) and took its stand on aesthetic and ethical motives; the impulses that were subjected to repression were those of selfishness and cruelty, which can be summed up in general as evil, but above all sexual wishful impulses, often of the crudest and most forbidden kind" (Freud 1924c [1923], p. 197).

Despite the strains of puritanical conscience in his own private life, he was often critical of traditional moral stances, but his condemnations were "hardly ever condemnation of the traditional principles but rather, in the name of these principles, a critique of actual behavior deviating from them" (Hartmann 1960, p. 18). A particular target of his criticism was attitudes toward sexual behavior, advocating greater understanding and tolerance of

sexual deviation. In the previously cited letter to James Putnam, he wrote: "I interpret morality, such as we speak of it here, in the social, rather than the sexual sense. Sexual morality as society—and at its most extreme, American society—defines it, seems very despicable to me. I stand for a much freer sexual life. However, I have made little use of such freedom, except in so far as I was convinced of what was permissible for me in this area."[6]

## DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

His reinterpretation of immorality in terms of infantile developmental residues, universal bisexuality, and the emergence in childhood and persistence in adulthood of perverse modes of sexual experience provided the framework for his modified ethical attitudes. He regarded infantile sexuality as polymorphous perverse and asserted that "this disposition to perversions of every kind is a general fundamental human characteristic" (Freud 1905c, p. 191). His intent seems to have been to withdraw these aspects of human behavior from moral consideration and thereby increase the level of tolerance for them (Wallace 1986b).

Freud developed a more-or-less systematic view of the childhood origins of morality. The infant's total dependence on parents and early threats of the loss of love provided the basis for internalizing parental moral attitudes and led to further sublimation and reaction formation of perverse instinctual impulses. Much of character formation arose on the basis of defensive modifications of relatively perverse preoedipal drives and impulses (Freud 1905c). Morality, along with shame and disgust, were defined as forms of reaction formation (Freud 1908a) contributing to sphincter morality. This was followed in the oedipal phase by formation of the superego, the regulatory agency for establishing moral control over disordered and perverse instinctual drives. Basic to these considerations was the question of how much of apparently virtuous and consciously well-intentioned ethical behavior was based on such repressive and other defensive responses to unconscious wishes and impulses that had a very different character. In some cases, dispositions to generosity, goodness, and kindness were found to be riding on a substratum of selfish, sadistic, envious, and hateful impulses.

## UNCONSCIOUS GUILT

Unconscious guilt played a central role in Freud's thinking about morality and about the pathology of conscience. His thinking about unconscious guilt found expression in his analysis of depressive processes following loss of a loved object. The basic mechanisms were identification with the lost

object and turning of aggression toward the ambivalently held object against the self. He (1917) wrote: "The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself, and expects to be cast out and punished" (p. 246). Thus all the reproaches and hostility, directed originally toward the lost object, are directed against that portion of the self identified with that object. This channeling of destructive impulses into the "conscience" was the basis for depressive reactions and states (Freud 1917b) and contributed to motivations of obsessional doubts and rituals (Freud 1907), and to forms of character pathology (Freud 1916). In ensuing years, Freud increasingly emphasized the role of unconscious guilt in the genesis of neurosis—even calling it "perhaps the most powerful bastion in the subject's (usually composite) gain from illness—in the sum of forces which struggle against his recovery and refuse to surrender his state of illness" (Freud 1924b, p. 166).

I would note that Freud was concerned with "neurotic guilt" operating in pathological contexts in which moral judgment was distorted and subject to neurotic needs and wishes. This neurotic sense of guilt focused more on fantasies than on facts or deeds, more specifically with unconscious fantasies. In Freud's (1913b) view, morality was a matter of action rather than fantasy:

> This creative sense of guilt still persists among us. We find it operating in an asocial manner in neurotics, and producing new moral precepts and persistent restrictions, as an atonement for crimes that have been committed and as a precaution against the committing of new ones. If, however, we inquire among these neurotics to discover what were the deeds which provoked these reactions, we shall be disappointed. We find no deeds, but only impulses and emotions, set upon evil ends but held back from their achievement. What lie behind the sense of guilt of neurotics are always *psychical* realities and never *actual* ones. (p. 159, italics in original)

The tension between unconscious and conscious motivation, between psychic and actual reality, and between neurotic and real guilt remain points of confusion and controversy.

### INSTINCTS VS. MORALITY

The charge of sexual libertinism, leveled against Freud on the basis of his tolerance for sensual and sexual wishes and criticism of restrictive and

punitive attitudes toward instinctual derivatives, seems to misread his position. He took up the challenge in his lectures at Clark University (1909b), arguing that the alternative was not simply acting out sexual impulses without restraint, but rather that neurotic restraints imposed through repression or other defenses could be replaced with conscious moral restraints:

> If what was repressed is brought back again into conscious mental activity . . . the resulting psychical conflict, which the patient had tried to avoid, can, under the physician's guidance, reach a better outcome than was offered by repression. There are a number of such opportune solutions, which may bring the conflict and the neurosis to a happy end, and which may in certain instances be combined. The patient's personality may be convinced that it has been wrong in rejecting the pathogenic wish and may be led into accepting it wholly or in part; or the wish itself may be directed to a higher and consequently unobjectionable aim (this is what we call its "sublimation"); or the rejection of the wish may be recognized as a justifiable one, but the automatic and therefore inefficient mechanism of repression may be replaced by a condemning judgement with the help of the highest human mental functions— conscious control of the wish is attained. (pp. 27–28)

The refrain is sounded again in the last lecture:

> On the other hand, the final outcome that is so much dreaded— the destruction of the patient's cultural character by the instincts which have been set free from repression—is totally impossible. For alarm on this score takes no account of what our experiences have taught us with certainty—namely that the mental and somatic power of a wishful impulse, when once its repression has failed, is far stronger if it is unconscious than if it is conscious; so that to make it conscious can only be to weaken it. An unconscious wish cannot be influenced and it is independent of any contrary tendencies, whereas a conscious one is inhibited by whatever else is conscious and opposed to it. Thus the work of psychoanalysis puts itself at the orders of precisely the highest and most valuable cultural trends, as a better substitute for the unsuccessful repression. (p. 53)

Freud's claim, then, is not that psychoanalysis drives moral and ethical considerations from the field, but precisely the opposite—that successful

analysis brings underlying unconscious conflicts within the range of conscious ethical judgment and decision-making, thus undercutting the neurotic process and leading toward greater ethical maturity. In his words, "Analysis replaces the process of repression, which is an automatic and excessive one, by a temperate and purposeful control on the part of the highest agencies of the mind. In a word, analysis replaces repression by condemnation" (1909a, p. 145).[7]

## ETHICAL CRITICISMS

But Freud was far from acting as a moral advocate. He wrote, "We can present society with a blunt calculation that what is described as its morality calls for a bigger sacrifice than it is worth and that its proceedings are not based on honesty and do not display wisdom" (1916–1917, p. 434). A decade later (Freud 1925a [1924]), he proclaimed:

> Psychoanalysis has never said a word in favour of unfettering instincts that would injure our community; on the contrary it has issued a warning and an exhortation to us to mend our ways. But society refuses to consent to the ventilation of the question, because it has a bad conscience in more than one respect. In the first place it has set up a high ideal of morality—morality being restriction of the instincts—and insists that all its members shall fulfil that ideal without troubling itself with the possibility that obedience may bear heavily upon the individual. (p. 219)

This state of affairs Freud did not hesitate to describe as "cultural hypocrisy" (1925a, [1924] p. 219).

At the same time, he staunchly resisted any effort to enlist psychoanalysis in the service of any ethical system, insisting on its ethical neutrality (Freud 1921a). There was undoubtedly good reason for insisting on this neutrality in the clinical context, yet the essential neutrality of the consulting room seems often enough to have yielded to more value-ladened and judgmental stances beyond those confines. Freud's many disclaimers on the undue restraints and moral rigidities of traditional views and societal norms are far removed from neutrality. If analysis itself was to remain neutral, the same constraints did not apply vis-à-vis society.

By the same token, he held back from any claim that analysis contributed to the moral betterment of patients. He wrote Putnam: "The unworthiness of human beings, including the analysts, always has impressed me deeply, but why should analyzed men and women in fact be

better. Analysis makes for integration but does not of itself make for good-ness."[8] But his somewhat ambiguous position on this score stands revealed in other texts. For example, "We tell ourselves that any one who has suc-ceeded in educating himself to truth about himself is permanently defended against the danger of immorality, even though his standard of morality may differ in some respect from that which is customary in society" (Freud 1916–1917, p. 434). Other letters to Putnam make similar claims: "Our art consists in making it possible for people to be moral and to deal with their wishes philosophically. Sublimation, that is striving toward high goals, is of course one of the best means of overcoming the urgency of the drives. . . . Whoever is capable of sublimation will turn to it inevitably as soon as he is free of his neurosis. Those who are not capable of this at least will become more natural and more honest."[9] And nearly three years later: "The great ethical element in psycho-analytic work is truth and again truth and this should suffice for most people. Courage and truth are of what they are mostly deficient".[10] And much later: "the analytic relationship is based on a love of truth—that is on a recognition of reality . . . it precludes any kind of sham or deceit" (Freud 1937, p. 248). The honesty and truth he had in mind was not merely that between analyst and analysand, but that of the analysand to and about himself. This was the essential "ethic of honesty" of analysis (Rieff 1959).

Edwin Wallace (1986b) has offered a summary statement of Freud's ethic:

> a Stoic-Epicurean notion of balance between self-expression and fulfillment on the one hand and self-restraint and renunciation on the other; governance of one's life by the reality principle; adapta-tion—the optimal fit between a well-equilibrated psyche and its environment; empowering the ego in its negotiations with id, superego, and external reality; the independence of ethical princi-ples from religious foundations; an increased tolerance for certain aspects of self and others (especially regarding the private fantasy and sexual lives) and for a more understanding approach to cer-tain types of human frailty and disability (particularly that related to psychopathology and to certain universal and enduring psy-chological features of humankind); a premium on individuation, independence, and autonomy; strong allegiance to Eros (particu-larly as manifested in altruistic, aim-inhibited libido and in ties based on mutual identifications) in the war against Thanatos; an emphasis on the value of sublimation and work to the individual and to society; "endurance with resignation" (1927a, p. 50) of that which cannot be changed; and emphasis (with the exception

of his equation of Eros with *caritas*) on "prudential" (prudence, wisdom, justice, and fortitude) rather than Christian (faith, hope, and charity) values. (pp. 118–119, italics in original)

## POSTFREUDIAN DEVELOPMENTS

In the more than three score years since Freud's final comment on ethical concerns, ethical issues have not been a primary focus for analytic reflection. Yet it may also be said that the seeds Freud cast fell on somewhat fertile ground and stimulated a generation of meaningful developments in psychoanalytic thinking about these complex questions. These developments largely reflect theoretical evolution within psychoanalysis itself— beginning with the development of ego psychology, complemented by the emergence of object relations theory, and still later by development of hermeneutical and linguistic approaches and various forms of self-psychology. These developments led not only to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the origins and functions of the superego, as involved in moral or ethical functions, but also to a deepening grasp of the extent to which ethical issues were linked to not only personality development but to effective adult functioning as well.

For the most part, these post-freudian writers were concerned more with implications of psychoanalytic findings than with ethical theory as such. As Ernest Wallwork (1991) notes: "Most of the literature on psychoanalysis and morality comes from psychoanalysts and sociologists whose primary concern has been to draw normative implications out of psychoanalysis for evaluating modern culture and personality formation . . . not with understanding how psychoanalytic findings relate to the deepest questions of philosophical ethics" (pp. 1–2). We can take this as a caution not to look for more than is offered in these efforts, but at the same time not to overlook the complex of analytic perspectives emerging from the work of these thinkers.

### *Flugel*

Flugel's (1945) book marked a point of departure for more extensive study of implications of analytic ideas for ethical and moral questions. Fully aware of anxieties created by efforts to bring psychological insights to bear on ethical issues, he emphasized the role of psychology, including psychoanalysis, in describing and explaining mental phenomena rather than

evaluating or establishing norms. At the same time, values can be examined psychologically. For the most part, psychologists study instrumental rather than intrinsic values, the former related as means to the latter as ends. Investigation and understanding of intrinsic values belong more properly to ethics, but within this dichotomy, the intricate relations of means and ends provide gray areas, in which the interests of psychologists and ethicists overlap and intersect, resulting in deeper appreciation of the influence of psychological understanding even on intrinsic values.

Following Freud, Flugel argued that at root much ethical behavior is biologically determined and influenced by instinctive factors. Ethical discipline and constraint, however, must be learned and developed. This view is complemented by analytic discoveries that unconscious (often pathogenic) derivatives tend to have an "immoral" cast contravening accepted moral standards of either the individual or society, and are usually connected with sexual or aggressive impulses not tolerated by cultural conventions. Intrapsychically, these forces were opposed by counterforces acting in the interests of order and morality, giving rise to conflict and defense. Flugel reinforced Freud's view that repressive and defensive forces are essentially ethical in character.

These controlling forces, however, associated with conscience, could at times and under pathogenic conditions become harmful rather than positive. At times, allowing repressed impulses a degree of ventilation achieved more positive results than enforcing repressive controls. Indeed, analytic experience brought more clearly to light the often infantile, crude, and archaic rudiments of conscience, bringing its reliability as a moral guide increasingly into question. The analytic effort was directed toward replacing this often rigid and repressive tendency with a more discriminating and realistic capacity for conscious and reasonable deliberation and decision. The psychoanalyst, in this difficult terrain, tried to set a course between unregulated gratification of instinctual impulses and excessive submission to the dictates of moral authority, opening the way to the exercise of reason, conscious decision, adaptive self-restraint, and self-determination.

Flugel also sketched a schematic overview of moral progression reflecting some of the moral assumptions of the psychoanalytic view. Morality, in the form of ideals, restraints, guilt, and punishment, was deeply embedded in the human mind. Man was fundamentally a moral animal, but much of mankind's morality was crude and primitive, poorly adapted to reality, and often at variance both with understanding and higher conscious aspirations. Moral development progressed from egocentricity to sociality; from egoistic to altruistic motives; from unconscious to conscious needs and motivations: from autism to realism; from prevalence of the pleasure principle to regulation by the reality principle; from narcissism to object-related

care and concern; from moral inhibitions to spontaneous "goodness," reflecting diminution of the guilt dynamic and allowing freer use of instinctual energy in the service of individual and social adaptation; from destructiveness to tolerance and love, including superego destructiveness, whether turned against the self or directed against external scapegoats; from fear to security; from heteronomy to autonomy, implying development of autonomous moral judgment, and replacing superego control with ego regulation; and from moral to cognitive (psychological) judgment, reflecting Flugel's faith that reason and scientifically informed judgment would provide a better basis for ethical decision than anger and moral condemnation.

And as his final dictum on the superego, Flugel wrote:

> In so far as its basis is fundamentally sound . . . the super-ego can also be entrusted with the enforcement of what might be called moral routine. But it is clearly unsuited to serve (as it is often expected to do) as the supreme court of moral appeal. If, as seems indeed to be the case, man is by his very nature doomed to conflict, we must seek the ultimate solution of conflict at the higher level of reason rather than at the lower one of conscience or tradition. (p. 260)

### Fromm

For Erich Fromm man was unique in nature, a freak of evolution, embedded in nature yet transcending it (Fromm 1955). Man alone among animals has the capacity for self-creation and self-realization. This capacity is embedded in his *freedom*—both *freedom from* and *freedom to* (Fromm 1941). But the ability of contemporary men to achieve negative freedom, freedom from constraint whether internal or external, left them isolated, alienated, anxious, suffering from a sense of loneliness and separation, powerless, and driven to seek new submissions, largely due to the effects of modern capitalistic society and culture that turns men into commodities and alienated automatons (Fromm 1956).

Hope can be found in positive freedom, in the freedom for self-realization, and in the achievement of intellectual, emotional, and sensuous potential. But such freedom brings with it a threat and a burden from which men are often driven to escape (Fromm 1941). Fromm located his ethical considerations in forms of character and character pathology resulting from the need to escape from existential isolation. As a counterpoise to Hartmann's (1960) effort to separate ethical from analytic issues, Fromm and

other neo-Freudians took the position that neurosis had moral implications insofar as neurotic mechanisms alienated man from himself as well as from his fellowmen and interfered with his productivity and creative potential. For Karen Horney (1950), neurotic forces impeded man's natural striving for psychic growth and self-realization. Among the Kleinians, Roger Money-Kyrle (1961) even held out the utopian ideal of a better humanity to be achieved through psychoanalysis (Eckhardt 1996).

Fromm proposed a humanistic ethical theory opposed to authoritarian forms of ethics. Authoritarian ethics were based on forms of irrational authority, as found in the authoritarian character, whereas rational authority was based on competence and reason and open to scrutiny and criticism. Authoritarian ethics negates man's power to discriminate right from wrong, good from bad, addressing these questions in terms of the interest of rulers rather than the ruled. In contrast, humanistic or rational ethics views man alone as determining the criteria of good and evil, in virtue of his capacity for reason, and not any transcendent authority. The ultimate criterion is thus man's inherent self-interest and individual welfare, not in any purely egoistic sense since self-interest can only be achieved in relation to others. Vice in this sense is indifference to authentic self-interest and virtue the affirmation of one's truly human self. Thus self-love stands in opposition to selfishness and self-renunciation assumes a valued place in humanistic ethics (Fromm 1947, 1955).

The role of psychoanalysis in this scheme is critical, since it was the first psychological system in modern times to study the total personality, thus making character the focus of ethical study rather than isolated virtues or vices. He faulted orthodox freudians for turning conscience into an internalized irrational authority and seeing morality as no more than a reaction formation to evil inclinations, claiming that his humanistic ethics were antithetical to Freud's ethics (Fromm 1947, 1955). The only satisfying vehicle for overcoming isolation and alienation and gaining sanity and satisfaction was productive love, i.e., love that is active, creative, caring, responsible, respectful, and based on knowledge and truth. From this platform, Fromm developed his criteria for judging right and wrong, and good and evil. Action was good insofar as it tended toward fulfilling basic needs, enabling maturation of human potentialities and attaining mature functioning, and thus becoming an authentic self.

### Hartmann

Hartmann's *Moral Values in Psychoanalysis* (1960) was his seminal contribution to psychoanalysis and ethics. He drew moral issues to the forefront

of analytic interest and gave them a legitimacy they previously lacked. His reappraisal of the relation of the pleasure principle to moral issues not only softened the impact of Freud's antinomian bent, but undercut any purely hedonistic ethical theory. He described three grades of satisfaction:

> It appears that the three types of satisfaction . . . cannot completely be substituted for one another. Instinctual gratification can often take the place of the other two types of gratification—of ego gratification and of moral or aesthetic gratification—although not fully nor under all conditions. Moral satisfaction, on the other hand, can replace even less completely, in most people, the gratification of instinctual demands. (pp. 36–37)

Thus, any "widespread expectation that a maximal consideration of self-interest would provide solutions most satisfactory from all points of view . . . is not borne out by psychoanalytic experience and is unlikely to prove true" (Hartmann 1960, p. 33).

By implication the economic demands of the pleasure principle or regulatory and moral agencies can be ignored only at a certain cost. He commented that the misperception, common among analysts, that "deep interpretations, the broad range of communication, unlimited self-revelation, widest permissiveness, the discarding of every consideration which stands in the way of full psychological understanding . . . the avoidance of what we consider moral judgement" were the only right course for dealing with personal relations was well worthy of challenge. He was critical of tendencies to elevate technical analytic considerations to moral principles and to extrapolate permissive and nonjudgmental attitudes of the consulting room to the world at large. Freud's ethic of honesty was never intended as normative beyond the walls of the consulting room and provided no endorsement of any and every form of self-expression and gratification.[11]

Hartmann argued that morality and mental health were not synonymous. Moral codes served a certain integrative function in mental economy, but the connections between morality and mental health were not straightforward, since many neurotics can be highly moral and socially productive, and many healthier people are neither. Where moral difficulties are rooted in neurotic causes, analytic treatment may have a role in remedying it by fortifying the ego, by modifying the harshness or archaic attitudes of superego, or by increasing awareness of moral values and their dynamic components, allowing for more consistent and integrated moral behavior. Hartmann was thus one of the first to focus on the possibility of an adaptive and reality-based ethics, as a function of the ego and not restrictively of the superego.

The confusion of moral values with mental health values ran the risk of equating badness with mental dysfunction. Freud had argued firmly that his neurotic patients were not morally inferior—a common misconception of the time. But the insistence on health ethics can harbor illusions; as Hartmann (1960) commented: "As a matter of fact, 'health ethics' can be as 'moralistic' as any other type of ethics. The strictness and rigidity which are so often found in moral demands are displaced onto another field. Some wishful thinking, too, may well have a part in this form of 'ethics': the hope that in attacking neurosis individual therapy can do away also with everything that is considered 'bad' in human nature" (p. 70).

Hartmann (1960) insisted on the status of analysis as value-free—a technology that minimizes evaluation and value-conflicts. He proposed that analysis could properly include the study of values as important aspects of mental life. He insisted, however, that values were to be regarded on the same basis as any other piece of mental content or fact. Analysis explores their form, content, and origin, assesses the degree of strength and authority they exercise and their influence on the individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behavior, without passing judgment on them or subjecting them to any moral evaluation. At the same time, he warned against "hidden preachers" who "actually preach their own philosophies, their own old or new values, or old or new religions (camouflaged with analytic terminology), while pretending to teach analysis, and present what are their own 'Weltanschauung' as logically derived from analysis" (pp. 23–24)—possibly aimed at Fromm's then current ethical constructions.

The contrast between Hartmann's approach and that of Fromm raises some questions. Hartmann was much closer to Freud, although his theorizing was intended and generally accepted as creatively developing Freud's view of the ego in the structural theory and elaborating it into a fully developed ego psychology. The essay on moral values was part of this program. The focus remained intrapsychic, reflecting on the intrapsychic qualities of moral valuation, ethical decision-making, and the authentic aspects of moral behavior as reflected in, processed through, and developed as a result of analytic therapy. Throughout, the ethical neutrality of the analytic situation was emphasized. Despite his emendations of Freud, Hartmann remained within the line of more-or-less orthodox freudianism. In contrast, Fromm followed a more "deviant" path, or so it was viewed in analytic circles at the time. He was more interested in confronting and challenging the implicit morality of the freudian system and locating the sources and causes of moral inclinations and behavior in social and cultural determinants. He proclaimed the inherent morality of the analytic situation, suggesting a very different role of the analyst in therapy. His concept of character served a mediating function between society and social influences and the individual

personality. Analysts of the freudian tradition were not at that point ready to accept and integrate social input, which was declared nonanalytic and labeled as *sociological*. Curiously, it was only after the work of Erikson on psychosocial crises and the development of identity that social and cultural influences began to find a place in analytic thinking.

## *Rieff*

In the outcropping of ethically oriented works and opinions, contrary to Hartmann's defense of ethical neutrality, Philip Rieff also argued that there was an ethical, both normative and prescriptive, core of psychoanalytic thought that found its way into, not only Freud's cultural and social thinking, but was evident even in psychoanalytic therapeutic praxis. Psychoanalysis presented a moral challenge to the neurotic patient, and in this sense was a treatment for those prepared to render the sacrifices necessary to achieve psychological health. As Rieff (1959) put it, "For those who seek, through analysis, to avoid the sacrifice, therapy must inevitably fail" (p. xiii). Freud, he asserted, had no message to preach, no ideology, no morality, but his thinking contained an implicit set of ideas and ethical connotations that could be shaped into such a message. He sought shrewd compromises with the human condition, not its transformation or salvation. Rieff saw the impact of Freud's morality as sketched more on the larger canvas of cultural and social values than on the sketchpad of individual ethical behavior. If we live in the age of psychological man, it is in good measure due to Freud that that image has come to replace the older image of economic man.

Even so, Freud's view of humanity reflected not merely a sense of moral conflict at the source of his neurotic symptomatology, but moral issues at the level of character (not unlike Fromm). As Rieff (1959) commented, "It was not simply the objective symptoms manifested by the patient but was, beyond that, an element of *character,* identical with the patient himself. It was the host himself—or rather his moral character—that must be treated" (p. 11, italics in original). Thus, Freud's views echo stoic themes of emotional disturbance causing physical sickness, the need for rational regulation of the passions, and the place of virtue in moral character. However, Freud also diverged from the stoic path by elevating the aristotelian ethos above pathos—if the development of character (ethos) was determinative, such that character was to become destiny, the vagaries of time and experience also had to have their say. But there also had to be room for pathos, the passions that reflect the play of circumstance, experience, and life history.

Rieff regarded Freud's theory, cast in metaphors of energy and mental mechanisms, as thinly veiled masks for the essentially ethical direction of his thought. The inner voices of the tripartite theory were reminiscent of the good and bad counselors of old morality plays—id speaking with the voice of desire, ego steering and directing with the voice of reason, and superego exhorting and scolding. In his effort to grasp the meaning of symptoms and behaviors, Freud had to rely not only on metaphors rather than on measurements, but also on intuition, interpretation, and evaluation—implicitly reflecting the moral cast of his thought. Thus, evaluation was essential to the understanding of conflict and defense—"Certain crucial events of the past may, at the behest of the ego, which does not want to remember them, be at some time repressed. Repression thus becomes an infallible index of ethical import. What is too imperative to be remembered suffers the compliment of being forgotten" (Rieff 1959, p. 40).

In Rieff's reading of Freud, morality was centered in the superego such that superego and conscience were regarded as synonymous. Insofar as the therapeutic task was to reduce the degree of conflict and defense in the ego and to draw it in the direction of greater integration and adaptive functioning, the separation of ego functioning from moral judgment left a vacuum of ethical reassurance. As Rieff (1959) put it, "But this integration of self is no harbinger of goodness. It is possible to become more sound of mind and yet less good—in fact, worse" (p. 65). This interpretation drove a wedge between therapeutic and ethical concerns, a view of Freud leaving a trail of uncertainty with regard to the rest of Rieff's argument pointing to the inherent ethicality of Freud's argument.[12]

An essential component of Freud's view of man was his emphasis on self-deception. As part of the hermeneutic of suspicion, Freud cast doubt on the role of intellect and self-understanding. As Rieff (1959) observed: "Against the conventional assumption that each knows himself best in his own heart, Freud supports the nietzschean assumption that each is farthest from his own self and must journey through experience in search of it. He surpasses even the Romantics in his deprecation of mere intellect. He calls into question all self-insight, intuitive as well as intellectual" (p. 75). The freudian answer is to submit self-knowledge to the analytic other—to "know thyself" is to be known by another. The great promoter of self-deception and enemy of self-understanding was the superego, taken as Freud's repository of conscience and moralistic self-criticism. In Rieff's (1959) terms, "Conscience, not passion, emerges as the last enemy of reason. True self-awareness is impossible until the moralizing voice is restrained, or at least controlled. Freud presumes it is impossible otherwise to be truly self-aware" (p. 78).

Freud's penetration of the conscious and manifest to reach the level of the latent and unconscious often led him to seek the source of distortion in repressed sexuality—even though, as Rieff (1959) noted, there may have been no necessary connection. But the reason lay in an underlying ethical imperative to chastise ethical aspirations insofar as they reflect varying degrees of self-deception—"we are really natural beings, irrational, capricious, limited" (p. 161). But by the same token, Freud was no advocate of unbridled sex; his message of reform, familiar enough to the nineteenth century, sought "a lifting of the ascetic barrier, a relaxation of the moral fervor that created more hypocrites than saints, more sick minds than healthy souls" (p. 164). Thus the quantitative metaphors of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905c) can be read in ethical terms, pleading for greater sexual latitude and picking at the repressive order by underlining the relation of perverted and normal sexuality as differentiated quantitatively rather than qualitatively.

Freud did not intend psychoanalysis as an ethic of social adjustment, although the prudential course he envisioned might support submission to social demands out of considerations of expediency and personal need. Psychoanalysis cautions against social enthusiasms and overinvestments and proposes the grounds for skepticism of all ideologies, even its own. In Rieff's (1959) terms, "Psychoanalysis is the doctrine of the private man defending himself against public encroachment. He cultivates the private life and its pleasures, and if he does take part in public affairs it is for consciously private motives" (p. 278).[13] And further: "Like those who worked for shorter hours but nevertheless feared what men might do with their leisure, Freud would have welcomed more constructive releases from our stale moralities, but did not propose to substitute a new one. Our private ethics were his scientific problem: he had no new public ethics to suggest, no grand design for the puzzle of our common life" (Rieff 1968, p. 38).[14]

Rieff (1959) was among the first to stake a claim for psychoanalysis as a form of moral teaching: "Psychoanalysis cannot disclaim its influence on the day-to-day consciousness of our age by calling itself simply a science. All the issues which psychoanalysis treats—the health and sickness of the will, the emotions, the responsibilities of private living, the coercions of culture—belong to the moral life" (p. 329). But whatever moral teaching it had to render was distilled into a critique of social and cultural mores that Freud regarded as repressive and that he counted among major contributing factors to the development of neuroses. In his view, the advantages of civilization and culture were purchased at too high a cost—the repression of fundamental instinctual drives and resulting intrapsychic conflict. As Rieff commented:

Freud found the essential lie upon which culture is built in its zealous but faltering repressions. His way of mitigating them was, first, through rational knowledge, and, second, through a prudent compromise with the instinctual depths out of which rational knowledge emerges. He proposes that "certain instinctual impulses, with whose suppression society has gone too far, should be permitted a certain amount of satisfaction; in the case of certain others *the inefficient method of suppressing them by means of repression should be replaced by a better and securer procedure* (Freud, 1925a, [1924] p.171, in *Collected Papers V*) (pp. 345–346, italics in Rieff)

Rieff labeled this the *ethic of honesty* that Freud regarded as essential to his therapy, as well as potentially reformative of culturally reinforced tendencies to do violence to natural desires and needs. Freud's reliance on a view of social and cultural processes as repressive and restrictive remain open to question, and call for consideration of ways in which these same institutions are essential to the enhancement and preservation of human life and culture—a point to which Freud gave ambivalent and grudging acknowledgment. Nor does the freudian critique necessarily endorse current social and cultural settings fostering greater permissiveness and tolerance of deviance, thus elevating psychological health and normality to the status of moral indexes (Rieff 1968). But, if Freud could stringently critique society and culture, neither did he proclaim himself the prophet of pleasure. As Rieff (1959) noted: "He believed no more in instinct than in culture; for his day and age he sought only to correct the imbalance between these two main categories of the moral life. He is the architect of a great revolt against pleasure, not for it. Rather he exhibited its futility. It is toward the reality principle that Freud turns us, toward the sober business of living and with no nonsense about its goodness or ease" (p. 355).[15]

But having reached this point, Rieff (1959) argues that the freudian ethic runs out of gas—"Being honest, admitting one's nature, does not resolve specific issues of choice. The Freudian ethic emphasizes freedom at the expense of choice. To achieve greater balance within the psyche, to shift the relative weights of instinct and repression, instills no new substantive rules of decision" (p. 352). Thus, openness and honesty about oneself and one's needs offers no guarantee of validly ethical outcomes. In Rieff's (1959) terms: "Openness of character may well elicit more, not less, brutality. Unaided by the old transcendental ethics of guilt, or by the rationalist ethics of a future harmony through knowledge, the Freudian lucidity may pierce the deepest shadows of the self without dispelling one degree of gloom" (p. 353). This perspective on the freudian ethic leaves several ques-

tion unanswered—as I shall argue. To my reading, Rieff's rendering of the freudian ethic is truncated and relatively simplistic, since it leaves aside issues of moral integrity and value formation as essential components of the psychoanalytic (if not freudian) ethical perspective. More of this later![16]

### *Winnicott*

Donald Winnicott gave us a view of psychological development as an aspect of moral development. Insofar as healthy psychic development contributes to healthy moral growth, psychic development involves assimilation of moral attitudes and orientations derived from caretaking figures, parents, educational influences, and the surrounding culture. Winnicott spoke to the conditions of care and nurturance in the mother-child interaction that provide essential components for this process (1960a). To the degree that the process is successful, the basic elements are put in place enabling the individual to pursue a path of ethical self-realization. In this context we seek to understand what goes right in healthy and adaptive ethical adjustment and what goes wrong when development of the personality seems to lead to character flaws and ethical deficits. What influences come into play when individuals need to flaunt or ignore ethical concerns, or conversely when they are overly conformist or turn to authoritarian submission?

The moral or ethical sense Winnicott had in mind was not simply taught or instilled, but was the by-product of normal development and an expression of well-formed and stable human identity. The issue, therefore, was not moral judgment, but moral character and the psychic structure of the moral agent. The patterns of behavior inclining to moral goodness and the courses of life leading toward greater happiness and self-fulfillment were facilitated by authentic personal development and by achievement of mature identity—the basic building blocks of which Winnicott was to identify in the very first stages of human experience. He drew our attention to issues fundamental to all ethical concern, the task of establishing an authentic sense of self and the capacity to relate meaningfully and productively with others—both other persons and society. Without a belief in oneself and in one's personal value, moral issues are devoid of meaning. Without such a sense of self, the individual has few resources with which to withstand guilt for destructive impulses and to undertake reparative initiatives. Winnicott (1963) wrote:

> In the same way it is no answer to the problem of moral values to expect a child to have his or her own, and for the parents to have nothing to offer that comes from the local social system. And there

is a special reason why a moral code should be available, namely, that the infant's and the small child's innate moral code has a quality so fierce, so crude, and so crippling. Your adult moral code is necessary because it humanizes what for the child is subhuman. The infant suffers talion fears. The child bites in an excited experience of relating to a good object, and the object is felt to be a biting object. The child enjoys an excretory orgy and the world fills with water that drowns and with filth that buries. These crude fears become humanized chiefly through each child's experiences in relation to the parents, who disapprove and are angry but who do not bite and drown and burn the child in retaliation related exactly to the child's impulse or fantasy. (p. 101)

But where the rudiments for a purposeful moral sense are lacking, due to early failures of development, society imposes a moral code—but the effect is not the same since it lacks the quality of authenticity and results in little more than false-self conformity and unstable socialization. The impulse to implant a moral code in the interest of compliance and conformity is not only counterproductive, but may end in disaster:

> Compliance brings immediate rewards, and adults too easily mistake compliance for growth. The maturational processes can be by-passed by a series of identifications, so that what shows clinically is a false, acting self, a copy of someone perhaps; and what could be called a true or essential self becomes hidden, and becomes deprived of living experience. This leads many people who seem to be doing well actually to end their lives which have become false and unreal; unreal success is morality at its lowest ebb. (Winnicott 1963, p. 102)

The worst sin for Winnicott, then, is forcing a child into a pattern of compliance, in the process aborting discovery of the true self, driving that self into hiding and substituting a form of conformity that falsifies its whole life experience. The essence of moral growth lies in development of the true self—that is, an authentic self to which one can lay claim as truly one's own and as the root of a mature and productive identity (1960b).

### *Erikson*

These themes concerning development of the moral sense found their self-conscious elaboration in the work of Erik H. Erikson. From his study of

psychic development in children to his discussions of social and cultural forces and complexities, Erikson centered his argument on the need for mutuality and loving acceptance as essential for growth to mature identity and ethical integrity. Even his schema of psychosocial crises, tracing the epigenetic pattern of development leading to the formation of identity and beyond, was tinged with ethical import (Meissner 1970a).

He distinguished between morality and ethics. Moral rules were based on a relatively immature and primitive level of development. They derived from fear, responding to threats of abandonment, punishment, exposure, or inner threats of guilt, shame, or isolation. Ethical rules, however, were based on ideals to be striven for. Moral and ethical senses are different in their development and in their psychodynamics. This does not mean, however, that the primitive morality of fear and retribution can be bypassed developmentally. They exist in the adult mind as remnants of childhood. The child's morality precedes the adult's ethical sense not only developmentally but in the sense that the earlier stage is necessary for the emergence of the later.

In his *Childhood and Society* (1950), Erikson laid out a program of ego development from birth to death: the individual passed through phases of the life cycle by meeting and resolving a series of developmental psychosocial crises. In the earliest stage of infancy, at the mother's breast, the child developed either a sense of basic trust or mistrust. In later infancy the child had to achieve a sense of autonomy or, failing that, he would be left with some degree of shame and doubt. In early childhood the child developed a sense of initiative hopefully without guilt. In latency the issue was a sense of industry without a sense of inferiority. The adolescent crisis saw the crystallization of the residues of preceding crises into a more-or-less definitive sense of personal identity, as opposed to a diffusion of identity and to a confusion of roles. For the young adult the question was development of a capacity for intimacy rather than isolation. For the older adult the issue was generativity, as a concern for establishing and guiding the next generation. And finally, in the twilight of life, the crisis to be resolved was that of ego integrity in the face of death and ultimate despair.

Finally, Erikson's treatment of these crises as specifically psychosocial brought into focus the fact that the development of the ego was not merely a matter of intrapsychic vicissitudes of inner psychic states. It was that, certainly, but it was also a matter of interaction and "mutual regulation" between the developing human organism and significant persons in its environment. Even more strikingly, it was a matter of mutual regulation evolving between the growing child and the culture and traditions of his or her society. Erikson made the sociocultural sphere an integral part of the developmental matrix out of which the personality emerges.

The ethical concern runs as a slender thread through the entire epigenetic schema. Erikson saw adolescence as a traditional psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood. The individual must pass from the morality of the child to the ethics of the adult. The adolescent mind then is prone to ideology, where the outlines of what is best and most valuable can be most clearly delineated. There is danger in harnessing human ideals to such overriding ideologies, whether they be communist, capitalist, religious, or whatever. The young adult, emerging from the search for, and need for, identity, is ready for intimacy, the capacity to commit himself to concrete partnerships and affiliations, and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments regardless of personal sacrifice. The adult phase is dominated by the ethics of generativity—regulated by what is required to promote and guide the emergence of the coming generation to the fulness of identity and productivity. All institutions codify the ethics of generative succession. This extends beyond the demands of genitality as such; even where spiritual tradition might propose renunciation of the right to procreation, there is care for creatures of this world along with concern for spiritual values and for charity that meets, as it transcends, this world.

Adult moralism is easily subverted to moral vindictiveness. There is a violence inherent in the moral sense. We violate children and arouse them to an inner rage when we keep from them the guidance and support without which they cannot develop fully. Nonviolence means more than preservation of another's physical inviolacy; it means protection of the human essence as developing person and personality. Erikson (1969) wrote: "Nonviolence, inward and outward, can become a true force only where ethics replaces moralism. And ethics, to me, is marked by an insightful assent to human values, whereas moralism is blind obedience; and ethics is transmitted with informed persuasion, rather than enforced with absolute interdicts" (p. 251).

Erikson (1964) made the ethical dynamism in his thought more explicit and specific. He wrote

> that the collective life of mankind, in all its historical lawfulness, is fed by the energies and images of successive generations; and that each generation brings to human fate an inescapable conflict between its ethical and rational aims and its infantile fixations. The conflict helps drive man toward the astonishing things he does—and it can be his undoing. It is a condition of man's humanity—and the prime cause of his bottomless inhumanity. For whenever and wherever man abandons his ethical position, he does so only at the cost of massive regressions endangering the very safeguards of his nature. (p. 45)

Man's basic ethical sense was in turn contingent on the inner strengths that supported and sustained it.

### *Lacan*

Jacques Lacan, despite his obscurities and ambiguities, can be counted among those who view psychoanalysis as not merely a psychology or as a system of therapeutics, but as an inherently ethical view of man's nature. As he put it, "We are concerned here with the Freudian experience as an ethics, which is to say, at its most essential level, since it directs us towards a therapeutic form of action that, whether we like it or not, is included in the register or in the terms of an ethics" (1992, p. 133). His views are set forth primarily in his seminars on the ethics of psychoanalysis, delivered in 1959–1960. He stated his basic position clearly enough:

> Moral experience as such, that is to say, the reference to sanctions, puts man in a certain relation to his own action that concerns not only an articulated law but also a direction, a trajectory, in a word, a good that he appeals to, thereby engendering an ideal of conduct. All that, too, properly speaking constitutes the dimension of ethics and is situated beyond the notion of a command, beyond what offers itself with a sense of obligation . . . one can, in short, say that the genesis of the moral dimension in Freud's theoretical elaboration is located nowhere else than in desire itself. It is from the energy of desire that the agency is detached which at the end of its development will take the form of the censor. (p. 3)

The connection of desire and the good occupies a central position in Lacan's analysis, interestingly enough with a strong linkage to Aristotle's vision of the good as an end of human desire found in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. Lacan makes the firm point that moral experience is not limited to the dictates of the superego; rather the burden of analytic experience is that the command of the superego is to be opposed as the analytic process uncovers and reveals its jurisdiction.

Analysis is thus not without its ideals. Lacan lists three: the first is human love that analysis places at the heart of the ethical experience. The second is the ideal of authenticity, as a norm and valued end product of analysis, and finally the third is the ideal of nondependence, more in tune with what we would call "autonomy." In similar terms, Lacan calls our attention to the matter of virtues and values that form such a predominant focus of the aristotelian reflection but that have been notably neglected by

psychoanalysts. Ethical experience in Aristotle's view was also a matter of character, not merely of attitudes or behavior.

The aristotelian problematic was that of the good, ultimately the sovereign good. This led Lacan to explore the problem of pleasure and its role in the mental economy of ethics. In analytic terms, pleasure and reality are interconnected, especially in the form of regulatory principles connected with primary and secondary process. The reality principle plays a central role in the modification and satisfaction of desires governed by the pleasure principle. The scope and nature of those desires is what separates psychoanalysis from Aristotle and from most philosophical approaches to ethics. But moral action is inexorably tied to reality as one of the channels through which we can enter the real.

To further explore this thesis, Lacan returns to a rereading of Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), where the issues of the regulatory principles and their interrelations are considered in some detail. He recast these reflections in an ethical framework rather than in the familiar economic one. The problem of neurosis he contends was cast in ethical terms from the beginning—a matter of the conflict of wills and desires. The paradox is that moral insistence on the real is opposed to mere pleasure, but it is only through the dynamic of desire and its connection with the pleasure principle that the ultimate good guiding ethical action can be achieved. His lengthy and circuitous exploration of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* then, was concerned with uncovering the traces of ethical thought masquerading as the economics of impersonal psychic systems.

With this review of some analytic approaches to ethical issues behind us, we can turn in chapter 2 to a consideration of some ethical systems with an eye to their relevance and implications in relation to psychoanalytic perspectives.