

CRITICAL POLITICAL THEORY AND RADICAL PRACTICE

SUBTERRANEAN  
POLITICS AND  
FREUD'S LEGACY

Critical Theory and Society

Amy Buzby



## CRITICAL POLITICAL THEORY AND RADICAL PRACTICE

Mainstream political theory has been experiencing an identity crisis for as long as I can remember. From even a cursory glance at the major journals, it still seems preoccupied either with textual exegesis of a conservatively construed canon, fashionable postmodern forms of deconstruction, or the reduction of ideas to the context in which they were formulated and the prejudices of the author. Usually written in esoteric style and intended only for disciplinary experts, political theory has lost both its critical character and its concern for political practice. Behaviorist and positivist political “scientists” tend to view it as a branch of philosophical metaphysics or as akin to literary criticism. They are not completely wrong. There is currently no venue that highlights the practical implications of theory or its connections with the larger world. I was subsequently delighted when Palgrave Macmillan offered me the opportunity of editing *Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice*.

When I was a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, during the 1970s, critical theory was virtually unknown in the United States. The academic mainstream was late in catching up and, when it finally did during the late 1980s, it predictably embraced the more metaphysical and subjectivist trends of critical theory. Traditionalists had little use for an approach in which critique of a position or analysis of an event was predicated on positive ideals and practical political aims. In this vein, like liberalism, socialism was a dirty word and knowledge of its various tendencies and traditions was virtually nonexistent. Today, however, the situation is somewhat different. Strident right-wing politicians have openly condemned “critical thinking” particularly as it pertains to cultural pluralism and American history. Such parochial validations of tradition have implications for practical politics. And, if only for this reason, it is necessary to confront them. A new generation of academics is becoming engaged with immanent critique, interdisciplinary work, actual political problems, and more broadly the link between theory and practice. *Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice* offers them a new home for their intellectual labors.

The series introduces new authors, unorthodox themes, critical interpretations of the classics, and salient works by older and more established thinkers. Each after his or her fashion will explore the ways in which political theory can enrich our understanding of the arts and social sciences. Criminal justice, psychology, sociology, theatre, and a host of other disciplines come into play for a critical political theory. The series also opens new avenues by engaging alternative traditions, animal rights, Islamic politics, mass movements, sovereignty, and the institutional problems of power. *Critical Political Theory and Radical Practice* thus fills an important niche. Innovatively blending tradition and experimentation, this intellectual enterprise with a political intent will, I hope, help reinvigorate what is fast becoming a petrified field of study and perhaps provide a bit of inspiration for future scholars and activists.

STEPHEN ERIC BRONNER

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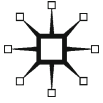
By Amy Buzby

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# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>Acknowledgments</i>  | vii |
| Introduction  | 1   |
| Chapter 1 Freud and the Critical Method   | 11  |
| Chapter 2 Freud and the Critical Theory of Society  | 39  |
| Chapter 3 Psychoanalysis as Humanism: Reclaiming Eros<br>for Critical Theory                            | 61  |
| Chapter 4 New Foundations for Resistance: The Marcuse-Fromm<br>Debate Revisited                         | 93  |
| Chapter 5 Working through the Past: Psychoanalysis,<br>Critical Theory, and Bad Conscience              | 115 |
| Chapter 6 Wrong Life Lived Rightly: Sublimation, Identification,<br>and the Restoration of Subjectivity | 153 |
| Concluding Remarks  | 175 |
| <i>Notes</i>  | 177 |
| <i>Bibliography</i>   | 199 |
| <i>Index</i>  | 203 |

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# Introduction

When Sigmund Freud died in London on September 23, 1939, many mourned a therapist, some mourned an intellectual, but few mourned a radical. The handful that appreciated Freud as a revolutionary, however, did him the fuller honor and themselves the better service. Although Freud is generally read as a bitter pessimist, a bourgeois conformist, and the founder of a fraught orthodoxy, his legacy is best and most productively understood as a progressive and optimistic mode of praxis. Psychoanalysis, indeed, links theory immediately to compassionate practice, refuses to rationalize the unhappy lives of the vast majority of subjects, and insists that the underlying forces producing discontentment must be torn up from their very roots. It is the science of an Eros through which we come to know ourselves as limited beings so that we can recreate ourselves as autonomous builders of alternatives to the present order. In short, Freud demanded that the subject, who is made responsible for what he *is* through the discovery of the unconscious, develop into a mature, creative autonomy: In reified modernity, this is an essential, radical political project. At its best, above all, psychoanalysis smashes at once the internal and external chains that bind the subject to a dominating totality. As such, Freud's life and work continue to speak urgently to the needs of the present.

Critical theory has shared these urgent political aims from the time that Max Horkheimer took over the Institute for Social Research. The scholars of the Frankfurt School, indeed, were among the first to discern and deploy the radical content of psychoanalysis. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, critical theory drew on this current extensively and productively. During this time, psychoanalysis was correctly understood as an ally in the effort to create a general theory of a society that would exist *for* man. Critical theory, from the very beginning, utilized psychoanalysis as a key resource in developing a functional theory of society. When asked about the role of psychoanalysis in critical theory, indeed, Horkheimer responded, "We really

are deeply indebted to Freud and his first collaborators. His thought is one of the *Bildungsmachte* [foundation stones] without which our own philosophy would not be what it is."<sup>1</sup> In the postwar era, however, the timbre of critical theory's discussion of psychoanalysis shifted, and Freud became an important signifier of the systemic adaptation to domination for many critical theorists. The mobilizing effect of antifascism and socialist revolution faded into the horror of the death camps and the thermidor of Cold War realism. Hope for revolution reached its apogee, betrayed in the seamless one-dimensionality of advanced industrial capitalism. As the world assumed the conformist dimensions of mid-century modernism, the cultural projection of an already desiccated future, pessimism colored critical theory's ability to speak to effective practice. Critical theory, in other words, lost much of its anticipatory quality when confronted with a social order that seemed to absorb any resistance and subsume all hope for change. In the present, where the contradictions of capital seem once again to surge to the surface, critical theorists cannot afford to remain bound to this atrophied standpoint. In occupied spaces and politicized times, we require a critical theory that operates in the real world, fearlessly.

As such, we must seek to restore critical theory to its original optimism and ferocity. Returning to a reimagined psychoanalysis is an important part of this work. I will be blunt: No radical political project can succeed today unless it simultaneously resists domination as it operates both in society *and* in the mental life of individuals. Where the psychological dynamics supporting external injustices are left intact, the roots of domination remain alive. Through targeting the deepest layers of reification and oppression in the psyche, however, theorists can weed them out and thereby revivify the connections among critique, experience, and emancipation. Only with this dynamic interplay restored can the link between theory and practice be fully actualized.

What I am asking for is not a major shift in the project of critical theory; it is simply a reprioritization of our aims. Critical theory has been concerned with subjectivity and emotional experience as a core component of resistance from the beginning, and that concern has never been more urgent than now. The co-option of the subject by what Marcuse called "one-dimensionality" is the chief cause of the reproduction of domination by the subject, who is objectified for use by the system through the subsumption of the subjective. As evidenced in Adorno and Horkheimer's breathtaking reading of *The Odyssey* in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the order imposed by an uncritical society that seeks to master nature in turn deadens the individual to his nature by degrees. To survive as seemingly legitimate social beings, therefore,

individuals repress their genuine interests; they “preserve their existence by denying their subjectivity.”<sup>2</sup> The subject who denies subjectivity, “The man who, for the sake of his own self, calls himself Nobody,”<sup>3</sup> is caught in a dangerous pincer. The sacrifice of the subjective leaves him unfulfilled, unfree, and unable to truly live, as it is a betrayal of his human potential and genuine interests. As the system increasingly inverts these interests, he is also less able to recognize and resist his plight due to his lack of autonomy and critical ability. The subject, in short, becomes actively complicit in his own domination as he becomes more dependent on the system that dominates him. The problem identified here, reification, *can* be met through criticism and resistance. To effectively challenge reification, as any truly critical theory must, emphasis needs to be placed on the restoration of the subjective. The foundation, that is to say, for reflection must be strengthened such that individuals can think critically and reach out constructively toward a world recognized for its impoverishment and injustice.

Both critical theory and psychoanalysis reveal, therefore, the failure to bolster subjectivity as a fatal one. Modernity not only envelops the subject in the illusion of comfort and freedom, but also uses systemic disciplines—contained in flattened instrumental language, mass culture, and ideology—to shape the human subject as the object of a history in which power is developed for its own sake. The subject, therefore, is sufficiently anaesthetized to feel certain that he is free despite his domination, as Adorno warns, “The subject still feels sure of its autonomy, but the nullity demonstrated to subjects by the concentration camp is already overtaking the form of subjectivity itself,” which leaves the critical intellectual to “consider the evanescent as essential,” in light of the vanishing subject.<sup>4</sup> This responsibility is exacerbated by the outraging conditions of modern life. There is an urgent need, consequently, to promote thinking and defend the subjective foundations for thinking. The turn back to the subjective, which must be made if theory and practice are to remain not only effective, but even *possible*, is thus no abdication. The purpose of dialectical work is to navigate the tension between the truth content of a situation and the factors restricting and concealing emancipatory alternatives so that meaningful resistance against all that inverts the world can emerge from theory. Because the engulfment of subjectivity is the point at which modernity becomes intimately problematic for the subject who might and ought resist the present system, it is possible to exposit the desiccated condition of the individual with explosive effect. In other words, the emancipatory possibility of rebuilding subjectivity in opposition to brutalizing contemporary norms and disciplines is obscured within the problem of “one-dimensionality” itself and must be reclaimed.

Today, critical theory alone retains the dialectical capacity to construct the new despite and out of the complex injustices of the present system. At the same time, however, critical theory has come under attack from many directions and seems to be caught in a "crisis of purpose."<sup>5</sup> Without the potent anticipation of a liberated humanity building an emancipated mode of living, critical theory offers a frail, pessimistic challenge to a modernity that demands a strong, positive response. It thus stands in need of reinforcement, and of new avenues for development. My central contention is that fresh engagement with psychoanalysis can effectually augment and reinforce critical theory in this needful moment. On the surface, Freud's claims about society are seemingly problematic for a critical theory pursuing emancipation. I argue, however, that psychoanalysis must be reinterpreted within the context of and for use by critical theory, with the goal of reanimating critical theory as a project of lived resistance to an outrageous world. My central argument is that psychoanalysis has emancipatory potential that critical theory has yet to tap, and that a reimagined psychoanalysis, therefore, has much to offer critical theory in the present. As a whole, this book reclaims psychoanalysis as an ally to critical theory's efforts to restore subjectivity and oppose systemic domination in modernity.

The consequences of critical theory's failure to act effectively today are too terrible to countenance. Without a vibrant critical theory, the forces of advanced industrial capitalism will continue, to borrow a phrase from Erich Fromm, to transform the world we share into a poisonous place. The traumas of the twentieth century were neither an aberration nor was the aggression feeding them exhausted through performance. We can expect that the factors, many of them psychological, driving aggression, disillusionment, and disempowerment in modernity will continue to mar human life well into the future if they are not soundly confronted in the present. A host of emerging trends, moreover, threatens to deepen the insecurities and alienation experienced by the subject as time progresses. The nation-state, a key marker of group and individual identity and security, for example, is drawn into deep question and practically challenged in diverse ways by globalization's relation to borders, populations, language, and economics. A return to its psychoanalytic foundations will restore the compassion of critical theory and grant crucial access to the psychological foundations of domination. Through psychoanalysis, in other words, advances in praxis will become possible and critical theory can return to the vitally important task of restoring subjectivity against domination and for the emancipation of society. Psychoanalysis demands that the critic confront a perverse world in its perversions, by smashing illusions and meeting the structural forces that work against critical efforts precisely at their strongest point. Without

its foundations maintained in good order, in other words, not even critical theory can maintain its integrity.

This book commends the psychoanalytic enterprise to the critical theorist. In the first chapter, I start from a reimagining of Freud's critical method. My reading of Freud's methods develops three central and related claims. First, I argue that although Freud has long been read as an exemplar of pessimism, psychoanalysis is a lived process of criticism and contestation that is, to borrow Ernst Bloch's term, militantly optimistic. Freud is often uncritically read as an unfeeling explorer of the mind, committed to advancing the interests of his school above the interests of his patients. A full accounting of Freud's work, however, shows such interpretations to be spurious. Freud's methods and categories are, indeed, meant to build the autonomy of the subject and cause him to recognize his social agency. Psychoanalysis's power comes from Freud's unshakable belief, expressed throughout his works, that through psychoanalysis, the subject can develop his social agency and become an emancipatory smasher of the structural illusions that ensnare society in domination. It is in its optimism, therefore, that psychoanalysis is useful in contesting oppression. Second, I highlight Freud's compassion and argue that psychoanalysis is helpful as a means of building the compassionate strain within critical theory. Psychoanalysis matured into a cathartic method that works against the resistance of the patient to prompt introspection. Psychoanalysis demands, furthermore, that the subject recognize the unpleasant facets of individual life and thereby primes him to recognize and reject dominating tendencies within society. Finally, therefore, I will argue that psychoanalysis is deeply supportive of the spontaneous engagement demanded by democratic processes, because it prepares the subject to resist the external injustices that surround him and builds his compassionate capacity to recognize the suffering of others as tantamount to his own. I thus reclaim psychoanalysis as a radical method for rebuilding subjectivity, supporting autonomy, and contesting domination that can be used in practice.

In the second chapter, I place Freud in direct dialogue with Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas. Through an analysis of the works of the young Horkheimer, I will show that compassion (or, to put it differently, an identification with and mobilizing respect for the suffering) is a necessary foundation for critical theory. Because compassion has faded as an emphasis within critical theory, critical theory's capacity to build solidarity and foment emancipatory challenges to domination has been compromised. I present psychoanalysis as usefully restoring this aspect of theory, as it answers this need effectively in practice. I will argue that psychoanalysis provides concrete mechanisms for accessing the social relations, like the family, in which

compassion and autonomy are compromised. I will also highlight psychoanalysis as a means of restoring these essential qualities through a privileged form of discourse. On one level, as Habermas unpacks in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, psychoanalysis is a form of communicative action and discovery that allows both the analyst and analysand to reflect on human interests effectively. Because psychoanalysis sets up a privileged form of communication, indeed, Habermas discerned that psychoanalytic conversation has the potential to challenge structural alienation and domination. Habermas, however, has edged away from psychoanalysis over time, and has yet to fully develop an account of psychoanalysis as a powerful disruptive resource in the arsenal of critical theory. In this chapter, I will pick up this task. This chapter, therefore, develops a new reading of Freud that seeks to maximize the liberating and compassionate potential of his legacy through focusing on the radical, optimistic force of psychoanalysis as an ongoing communicative process.

The third chapter focuses on the category that enables Freud's method to function, Eros, and juxtaposes Freud's vision of this drive with Herbert Marcuse's. I argue that Marcuse's vision founders in that it is regressive and overly utopian, whereas Freud develops Eros as a social force balanced heavily toward the quotidian. Psychoanalytically understood, Eros is an inborn creative and constructive passion that drives all men, not just philosophers, toward the loving building of connections, development of relationships, and achievement of maturity. Freud's Eros is effective precisely because it is a quality of real individuals in a flawed system, an instinctual energy that can be supported as a fruitful orientation toward self and world without and in spite of the absence of utopia. In short, my central contention is that Eros must be understood through psychoanalysis as a category that draws its potency from the fact that it is a real lived process operative within and necessary because of the limitations of the human condition. Freud frames Eros as the primary antagonist of human aggression and the systemic injustices of modernity and thus, given Freud's belief that human aggression can be sublimated in nondestructive directions, Eros is at the heart of any effort to draw radical insights, methods, and challenges from Freud's work. I also claim that such an Eros does not threaten to disenchant the world and, indeed, shapes a reciprocal and creative relationship between the subject and society. Through Freud, I present Eros as a realistic social force supporting solidarity and mobilizing challenges to domination that can be developed by critical theory.

The fourth chapter deepens the consideration of Eros by reconsidering the debate between Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, which reached its most intense pitch after the publication of Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*.

This debate confronts critical theory with an important question, one that still demands an answer: Does critical theory require an anthropological foundation? I argue that critical theory absolutely cannot afford to make an anthropological break. In the process, I make the case that Fromm, following his excommunication from the Frankfurt School, has weathered many unfair and unfounded criticisms from the Left. Fromm's work—much like Freud's—was in no way meant to merely conform the subject to the values and practices of the established system. Erich Fromm's project, grounded in large part in radical psychoanalysis, was instead to highlight the need for resistance, both internal and external, against that system. His goal was to support the transformation of man and society necessary to establish an emancipated mode of living. In working toward this goal, Fromm neither deradicalized psychoanalysis nor the categories, demands, and project of critical theory. I conclude, therefore, that the retheorization and rehabilitation of Fromm's work is an important component of the reclamation of critical theory's psychoanalytic dimension.

The fifth chapter deals with the central psychoanalytic category of guilt, and analyzes its substantial impact on citizenship, groups, and political processes. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud identified guilt as the great disease of all civilization, a plague that intensifies apace with the historical development of societies and the superego. Adorno and his team's results in *The Authoritarian Personality*, which consistently links the unchecked operations of unconscious guilt with prejudice and the predisposition to authoritarianism, mirrored this finding. One need not read psychoanalysis, however, as offering no means of contesting guilt, especially as a social problem. I will argue that psychoanalysis, by offering a method that supports the subject in contesting the superego and developing principled conscience, offers essential methods for the threshing out of guilt in modernity. I will further argue that psychoanalysis crafts citizens capable of facing difficult moments of decision and owning the consequences of the choices made. By placing the subject in touch with the repressed, moreover, psychoanalysis grapples with the internal foundations of guilt. In short, psychoanalysis is optimally situated to answer questions that are only becoming more relevant with the passage of time. Groups that work through guilt, simply put, are better able to develop genuine democratic processes. Groups that fail to work through the tangle of guilt are prone, in contrast, to aggressively and defensively react to the past. Because psychoanalysis predicts and interprets the complex operations of guilt in modernity, it can be utilized to improve upon the translation of theory into effective social mechanisms for confronting guilt. Critical theory, therefore, has a vital interest in studying these approaches as means of serving and advancing its own goals. Psychoanalytic



means of contesting guilt (and psychological mechanisms related to guilt) as a social problem can be used to enhance critical theory's response to a troubling world.

The final chapter takes up the categories of sublimation and identification, both of which are core components of maturation that condition social agency. Sublimation, the redirection of impulses into secondary avenues of release and fulfillment, and identification, a catchall term for a set of processes that enable the individual to acknowledge and build identity through the recognition of desirable and undesirable characteristics of others, are preconditions for citizenship and intellectual tasks like criticism. To consider the modern subject and group without attention to these categories, therefore, is impossible. Despite this, however, critical theory often reads sublimation as an objectionable mechanism adapting the subject to his domination. Likewise, identification is frequently described as a process through which the individual is passively constrained and shaped by others. Both, indeed, are seen as a primary hooks ensnaring the subject in a disempowering order. Both processes are thus undertheorized within critical theory. The main goal of this chapter is to contest the dominant readings of the reality principle and the related categories of sublimation and identification as submissions to a repressive order indicative of the worst failures of Freud's vision. Instead, I will show that the goal of securing vibrant subjectivity capable of supporting autonomy in modernity can be best met precisely through the deployment of sublimation and identification in fresh ways. I argue that the full significance of Freud's optimism and the potency of the creative orientation to world he demands of the subject can only be understood through a close and careful reading of these categories. I will place Freud in direct dialogue with several critical theorists, including Marcuse, Horkheimer, and Adorno, and will work toward a reading of these categories in relation to both the reality principle and the goals of critical theory. I will thus reclaim these categories by showing that both can be utilized to build subjectivity and support democratic processes just as surely as each contains snares for the growth of agency and independence that are of grave importance to critical theorists.

Before I can turn to these chapters, a few words are necessary about what this book is not. Feminist, post-structuralist, and postmodernist scholars have made significant contributions to the interpretation of Freud's legacy. This book, however, is not about these discursive traditions. Because my goal is to reimagine psychoanalysis and its meaning for critical theory, I am engaging directly with the works of the Frankfurt School and contemporary critical theorists; to attempt to do more than this is beyond the scope and aims of this volume. This is also not a plea for theorists to become therapists,

or to seek psychoanalytic treatment for themselves. Not only would such a program be facile, but the suggestion itself would be pedantic. I am merely asking that critical theorists reengage with psychoanalysis as a theory immanently connected to practice, and thus consider it both in terms of its insights and its methodology.

Psychoanalysis could restore some of the potency of critical theory, if critical theorists will let it. In the face of a European culture that increasingly enshrined, through fascism, death as the ideal of life, Freud developed the stirring idea of an Eros hopefully armed against the oncoming tide of brutal history. Confronted with the analysand's desperate plea for help, Freud responded with the firm insistence that he could develop into meaningful and creative autonomy. Seeing the teeming contents of the unconscious, Freud insisted that we speak the unspeakable and end the power it could only hold over our lives with our ignorance and silence. The subject that emerges from Freud's legacy is empowered and absolutely unafraid, because he came to see that where life persists, especially where persistence seems absurd, it is stronger than any of the forces of aggression and death. This is the subject critical theory must support today, and the spirit it must possess. In returning to psychoanalysis, we have nothing to lose, and everything to redeem.

## CHAPTER 1

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# Freud and the Critical Method

Sigmund Freud was a man who played many roles—most notably thinker, therapist, pioneer, and, yes, bourgeois—and he was fearless in all of them. Even an unsympathetic reading of Freud, indeed, must cede that as both theorist and practitioner, he was uncowed by either the challenges society threw against his work or the devastating weight of history itself. The First World War, above all, tested intellectuals with an unprecedented display of what human beings are capable of, especially in an increasingly reifying modernity. For psychoanalysis, a system concerned from its inception with the psychological foundations of dissatisfying modes of living, this challenge was especially important. If Freud's concern was to merely fit his patients for an impoverished life in modernity (and thereby flatten their subjective resistance to alienation and oppression), the war should have caused him to confirm his pessimistic forecasts for humanity. Instead, Freud was mobilized by the war to radicalize in both theory and practice. Where death swept across Europe, Freud countered with an instinctually rooted Eros. Where ovine mass mentalities threatened, Freud challenged the psychological dimension of reactionary groups. Where, above all, aggression and illusion held deadly court, Freud denied the efficacy of both, demanding that man become autonomous and develop a just, free, and fulfilling mode of living. It follows, therefore, that Freud is better understood as an opponent of domination, internal and external, than as its advocate. Unfortunately, many critical theorists have reached precisely the opposite conclusion about Freud, particularly in terms of his praxis.

When Freud's rejection of oppressive trends is coupled with his concern for the subjective, however, it follows that Freud is more of an ally to the

project of critical theory than those critical theorists have given him credit for. In short, it is thus time to reimagine what psychoanalysis can mean for critical theory. In this chapter, I present psychoanalysis as a process meant both to restore the subject to health *and* to propel the subject to grow into autonomy and social agency. As such, psychoanalysis is an important wellspring for critical theory, which urgently needs to support these developments in the present. The central goal of the chapter is to reveal psychoanalysis as an ongoing process of reflection, criticism, and action with implications for critical theory that go far beyond the couch. I argue that direct engagement with psychoanalysis reveals its militantly optimistic and compassionate character. Freud's optimism is important because it informs a process of critique and action that challenges not only the suffering of the individual, but also the *structural conditions that produce that suffering* through the reorientation of subject to self and world. Psychoanalysis therefore, anticipated critical theory in terms of subjectivity and social agency, and has emancipatory potential that critical theory has yet to tap. Today, where extremes of hope and disillusionment dance together to an often-bewildering tune, it is long past time to reconsider Freud's legacy to critical theory and society.

Reimagining psychoanalysis for critical theory, however, is challenging, as critical theory has a complex relationship with psychoanalytic methods. As Martin Jay recalls, the original push to couple Freud and Marx was audacious for its time, particularly given psychoanalysis's mystique as a thoroughly bourgeois enterprise.<sup>1</sup> Early efforts, especially Erich Fromm's, focused on using psychoanalytic mechanisms to mediate between the individual and society, and perhaps reveal something about each in speaking to the relation between the two.<sup>2</sup> The drive, in other words, was to couple psychoanalysis with sociology, and to bring out the sociological dimension of Freudian categories. The critique of Freud as a patriarchal absolutizer of the status quo arose from this work.<sup>3</sup> Even Adorno's "Social Science and Sociological Tendencies in Psychoanalysis," which castigates the revision of psychoanalysis, ends with the gloomy assessment (borrowed from Benjamin) that "it is only for the sake of the hopeless that hope is given" and contests, "I suspect that Freud's contempt for men is nothing but an expression of such hopeless love which may be the only expression of hope still permitted to us."<sup>4</sup> Adorno here ascribes a clear pessimism and scorn for "men" to Freud; it is worth noting, perhaps, that the Frankfurt's School's "intensified appreciation of Freud's relevance" in the 1940s and beyond was bound to its "increased pessimism about the possibility of revolution."<sup>5</sup> For thinkers like Adorno, Freud was the brilliant, but terribly grim, prophet of a

world from which the promise of history was seeping out, like the life from a dying man.

In rethinking critical theory's utilization of psychoanalysis, it is important to remember Bronner and Kellner's claim that "against the trends toward conformity, massification and submission, the critical theorists all advocate strengthening the ego and developing critical individualism."<sup>6</sup> This statement speaks equally to psychoanalysis. The common views of Freud as man, intellectual, and practitioner, however, work against the correlation of psychoanalysis with this goal. To take an example, the reading of Freud as striving to "[turn] hysterical misery into mere unhappiness,"<sup>7</sup> obscures the necessary relationship within psychoanalysis between "strengthening the ego," a goal made clear in Freud's work, and, "developing critical individualism" against the emergent dangers of "conformity, massification and submission," an end of psychoanalysis frequently missed by those who read Freud as urging his own form of submission.<sup>8</sup> In short, the major critical theorists read psychoanalysis as dogmatically crafting, particularly through authoritarian clinical practices, subjects capable of enduring, not challenging, the world around them. Freud's were the frail subjects who betrayed the full realization of humanity and its species-being, who laid down arms they could no longer understand and were too weak to carry.

Critical theory has maintained that a nondogmatic perspective is essential to emancipatory work from its inception.<sup>9</sup> It is easy to see how the image of Freud as something of a primal father in his own right, policing a rigid orthodoxy, not to mention the bourgeois biases that pepper his work, could color the perception of radical thinkers. Still the worse, the sale of Freud action figures, the proliferation of Freudian quips on sitcoms, and the publication of endless "self-help" volumes drawing on Freud in more or less crude ways (one could go on), might indicate that we have come far too close to Freud as commodity to substantively approach Freud as thinker who knew himself to be making contributions and sought to prime new discoveries that would surpass his own. In other words, critical theory generally treats psychoanalysis as something of a fellow traveler, a source of potential insight, but one whose aims call its methods into question. Critical theory, therefore, approaches Freud's work as exemplifying a genius that identifies the limits of alienation, but cannot transcend them.

As a harbinger of the loss of history's emancipatory potential, the stilling of the very heart of Marxism, Freud was an ally who could never be fully trusted. Critical theory's work with Freudian categories—gradually seen as more or less social in themselves due to society's engulfment of the subjective—eventually turned from the psychoanalytic process. Today, however,

Freud must be picked up in an antipodal fashion: as a militant optimist compassionately contesting domination in the hope that mankind might be other than hopeless. I argue that psychoanalysis, contrary to the common reading of Freud, is one of the strongest means for restoring the emancipatory hope so many have lost. In this volume, I hope to return Freud, whom critical theory has turned on his head, firmly to his feet.

### *Reimagining Freud: A Search for a Method*

Fresh study of Freud's critical method, indeed, has much to offer to critical theory. The question becomes: What is the psychoanalytic process, and how can it enrich critical theory? To answer this question, one must know how to read psychoanalysis as a process that evolved over time, and not just as it remains frozen in the most commonly read of Freud's works. To read Freudian methods through the early case studies alone, for example, is to miss the forest for the trees. The case studies, most importantly the infamous account of Dora's unsuccessful treatment,<sup>10</sup> are windows on the development of the psychoanalytic process, not examples of the deployment of mature methods. Freud used his early forays into clinical practice to refine his methods. The psychoanalytic process that emerged from this period, directly from the active linking of theory and practice in line with human interests, cannot be reflected upon unless Freud's methods are examined in detail. This is because, as Freud famously noted in his controversial lecture, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*," psychoanalysis is not and does not lead to a set worldview, and is instead a critical push against the illusions, most importantly religion, which structure identity and reality. Freud argues that a *Weltanschauung* is:

an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of our existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which, accordingly, leaves no question unanswered. . . . As a specialist science, a branch of psychology—a depth-psychology or psychology of the unconscious—[psychoanalysis] is quite unfit to construct a *Weltanschauung* of its own: it must accept the scientific one.<sup>11</sup>

More than this, though, Freud fears that any reliance on or construction of a *Weltanschauung* is a troubling attempt to sate psychological needs, and that even science posits a uniformity that psychoanalysis cannot sanction.<sup>12</sup> Critical theory errs, therefore, where it presumes Freud promotes a set worldview and seeks to adjust the subject to an inflexible system of principles demanding renunciations. Instead, psychoanalysis questions all worldviews