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## THE PROTEST PHENOMENON

(AN EXAMPLE OF DISCONTENT IN PRESENT CIVILIZATION)

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“If violence is to be eliminated, it is not enough just to create a favorable mentality and the proper spiritual state in human beings, but the means must also be found for obtaining justice, because only by such means can any possible motive, pretext, or justification for the use of violence be eliminated.”

-Rene Cassin (1966).

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## THE PROTEST PHENOMENON (AN EXAMPLE OF DISCONTENT IN PRESENT CIVILIZATION)

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The presentation for discussion of such a vast, general topic as "Present Civilization and Its Discontents" forces me to follow a line of thought that I hope will have a certain coherence and structure, and will lead the discussion along paths that will include familiar aspects of psychoanalytic theory applied to the observation of social phenomena.

Referring to the interaction of analytic and sociological theories, Hartmann (1950, p. 90) stated: "For mutual understanding it would be desirable to create a common conceptual language, or to define sociological problems in terms of their psychological meaning... A great deal of progress has been achieved towards a common conceptual language. Since this is not the subject under discussion, I shall only mention Gonzalez-Pineda's efforts (1959 and 1961) in his two books on the psycho-social dynamics and destructiveness of the Mexican, in which he suggested an analogy between social and mental structures. In order to define social problems in psychoanalytic terms, to have, as Hartmann said (1950, p. 91), ...a definite theory of social action that would make correlation possible." And later (p. 92): "Action, in analysis, is primarily defined by its position in the structure of the personality and the contributions made to its various aspects by the psychic systems". With regard to rational and irrational action, Hartmann (1947) indicated the importance of the principle of multiple functions and the change of function phenomenon. The principle of multiple function stressed by Hartmann, which is one of the theoretical antecedents of the concept of intra- and intersystemic conflicts, allows us to make the assumption that social action, that is, social events, is a reflection of the predominant type of psychic structure of the individuals within the group in the peculiar regression that Freud (1921) described in "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego". The regression of the individual within the group may not persist, as it is the intensity and quality of infantile identifications delegated to the leader that are the decisive factors in the degree of organization found within the group. The idea of "tradition" is related to this persistence of the identifications that are indispensable to ego identity.

The change of function phenomenon, particularly from the angle of the individual's processes of adaptation to society, together with other phenomena that are useful in a consideration of our subject, explain the splits of the war superego and the peace superego and the highly adaptive use of sadomasochistic impulses in war and in violence in general.

In "Totem and Taboo", Freud (1913) suggested that man's first moral code arose from the need to maintain social cohesion by controlling aggression, which if set free could lead to repetition of the primitive murder of the father. From the deification of the murdered father, religion was born, with its illusory but adaptive function in the face of solitude and the fear of death. The internalization of the father-authority creates the superego, which thus remains as the internal representative of all external authority; fear and guilt go hand-in-hand on behalf of the group's integrity, freeing instinctive energies for the cultural task.

In Civilization and Its Discontents, "Freud (1930) classifies man's suffering as coming from three principal sources: the struggle to control nature, the struggle against disease and death, and the struggle among men. Relief from the first two is generally left to science, particularly medicine. With regard to the third, Freud was pessimistic, and believed the guilt

feeling provoked by the introjection of aggression to be the cause of the discontent felt by civilized man, who unsuccessfully attempts to love his neighbor as himself. Thirty-nine years ago, he wrote prophetically (p.145): "The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness, and their mood of anxiety." The eternal Eros pathetically invoked by Freud at the end of this book seems to have disappeared from the face of the Earth, rather than serving as the principal motivator for human action.

In his reply to Einstein, Freud (1933) alluded to the imperative need in the League of Nations for administering justice at the world level. He was pessimistic about that organization's possible achievements, as it had neither autonomy nor power of its own. The coalitions of nations, with increasingly greater concentrations of power, would seem to require a world government to control all forms of aggression: military, economic, and moral. The United Nations Organization may perhaps be a fertile seed from which to initiate some type of world government, but again, its autonomy and organization are very precarious. The importance of the concept of the superego's autonomy can be deduced from the above.

Beres.(1965, p. 30) described the two contributions that psychoanalysis can make to the history of morality: "... (i) to describe the development of the superego, the psychic agency to which moral functioning is ascribed, and (ii) to describe the factors that make the moral functions stable, i.e., superego autonomy" Later on, he stressed that since the superego is by definition an internalized psychic agency or structure, "One must, then, keep separated superego precursor from internalized superego function". In my opinion, Beres was referring to two different levels of structuralization of the superego during its development, and this would facilitate the postulation of-the possible loss of the superego's autonomy by individuals in the group through the regression process. The heroism and panic phenomena of the individuals in a group are, I believe, linked to this regression. The rational action of ego predominance can suddenly fall under the command of the highly punitive and idealized precursors of the superego. The relative autonomy of the functions of the ego and superego is lost through regression.

As I shall later make an analysis directed more towards showing that social institutions, especially those whose function is the administration of justice, have failed to provide proper nourishment for the individual and the child in the development of their superegos, it seems pertinent to me to anticipate criticism in keeping with Parsons' warning (1950, p. 373): "...it is dangerous to infer too directly from the psychological to the social structure level and vice versa (because of) the extremely important fact that there is not a simple correspondence between personality structure and institutional structure In my opinion, this warning, which was reasonable at the time he gave it, is no longer valid. Many studies of diverse cultures and minority groups under heavy social pressures have been made, using a variety of methods, from those that include analytical theory to psychoanalytic treatments. In all of these studies, there is significant agreement between the social institutions and the psychic structures, inasmuch as the former nourish the latter during the developmental process, and they in turn motivate social change, in a process fittingly referred to by Erikson' (1958, p. 254) as the metabolism of generations: "Each new being is received into a style of life prepared by tradition... that...'molds' the individual, 'channels' his drives,... transform(s) instinctual energy into patterns of action, into character, into style--into an identity... which... contributes to the tradition". Erikson later said that each generation of adolescents and young people, through its struggle of identity crisis, supplies the

material for the ideological rejuvenation of its historic moment, thus completing the circle of the metabolic cycle.

Wangh's paper (1964) on "National Socialism and the Genocide of the Jews" is a magnificent example of the psycho-analytic approach to a historical event. Although prejudice exists in potential in all human beings, Wangh (p. 388) postulates that: "... the generation in Germany which formed the core of Hitler's storm-troopers was, for specific genetic reasons, more inclined than its parental generation to resort without restraint to the regressive defense of prejudice". In another paper on the recurrence of war, Wangh (1968, p. 322) said: "...while the psychological predisposition created by a former war is doubtless not the sole factor in the promotion of a renewed war it is a factor which must not be neglected". It is Wangh's hope that the predominance of the ego will be increased by historic insight, and that the equilibrium of the war and peace cycle can be altered by the additional barrier of knowledge. I should like to hear more of his optimistic ideas about this possibility with which I am in agreement. Wangh, in a recent article that has not yet been published, entitled "Further Reflections on the Psychogenetic Factors in War and Civil Upheaval," gives new form, to the thesis expressed in his two previous papers, which he bases on the psychoanalytic hypotheses of traumatic experiences. He stresses the traumatic alterations of the ego and superego of the generation of children whose fathers went to war, and makes an important contribution to the genesis of upheavals and riots in the United States, relating them to the trauma arising from the atmosphere created by the Korean War.

Let us now consider the last psychoanalytic concept that I want to stress in presenting the problem of protest, fundamentally by adolescents and young people, as a prototype of the discontent manifested in our civilization. This is the concept of the formation of the superego and the ego ideal. Lampl-De Groot (1960, p. 313) proposes "...to distinguish between the superego in a narrower sense as the restricting and prohibiting agency and the ego ideal as comprising ethics and ideals". She was referring to and agreeing with A. Freud's work on adolescence that suggests the idea that the adolescent must go through a work of mourning during his development. The identity crisis includes this work of mourning, and is a state of high psychic mobility in which regressive-progressive dissociation of the ego, the superego, and the ego ideal, not observed in a "normal" state, are found. It is because of this regressive-progressive state in the adolescent that socio-economic and political conflicts have a great effect in youth. This state may be the principal internal genetic factor in the universal protest phenomenon. Lampl-De Groot goes on to say (p. 314): "New ideals that compensate for the essential helplessness of human beings are more difficult to acquire (at least in our civilization). The youngster very well knows, and feels., that adults are not omnipotent but vulnerable creatures. ...and consequently his ego ideal is impaired".

Lampl-De Groot (1962, pp. 322-323) systematizes four parallel phases in the development of the ego ideal and the superego, and feels that, "The ego ideal is originally and essentially a need-satisfying agency, whereas the superego (or conscience) is originally and essentially a restricting and prohibiting agency." She goes on to say (p. 321): "Because both agencies unite into one substructure after the passing of the Oedipus complex, they may considerably influence each other's functions" And later (p. 328): "In abnormal development, traces of the origins of both ego ideal and superego can be observed... (and) different identifications may be used as defense mechanisms in a pathological way..." These ideas unquestionably permit me to postulate that primitive identifications are the basis for specific social roles in the young person when engaged in protest. This represents the interplay of external factors in and intra and intersystemic conflictive dissociations.

In a paper published in 1965 which I have continued to develop, I described the impairment of the ego and superego found in the analysis of adults who lost one or both parents before they were six years old. When many of these patients enter adolescence, this conflict

between the superego and the ego ideal becomes a parent, with the defensive use of early identifications and social action which is frequently characterized by masochistic behavior.

I shall bring to an end here the bibliographic review of psychoanalytic aspects that I consider indispensable in laying the foundation for my ideas. I did not consider it necessary to give a special introduction to other psychoanalytic concepts that I shall include in the following summary, since they can easily be deduced from the above. I find that in the summary I define my theoretical position, which is clarified by the explanations that follow:

1. Psychoanalysis can and should concern itself with the social problems of today, particularly with discontent, protests, and war. A study based on social action can be made of the interaction between social institutions and the generations of adults and children.

2. The Oedipus complex integrates the precursors of the ego ideal and the superego into a substructure that can dissociate under the conditions of regression-progression found in the adolescent and the individual within one group. The social roles played by the adolescent imply the possibility of the use of defensive identifications that are manifested in the protest phenomenon.

3. The adolescent's identity crisis includes the struggle between generations, with the revitalization of group ideals at a given historic moment, and it is the young people who offer this possibility of renewal, which may, however, contain pathological expressions. Protest which is due to the irrational discharge in it self (the means rather than the end) must be distinguished from protest with insight and responsibility (humanity's goal as the end).

4. Social institutions whose functions are Justice, Ethics, Law, and Religion provide nourishment for the superego and the ego ideal. The quality and type of control of aggression and the ease or hindrance of sublimation and neutralization depend on the interaction of these social institutions with the individual. During his development, the child can acquire traumatic alterations that may be repeated in social violence phenomena.

5. The idea of life cycles linked to cyclic social phenomena is fundamental. The psychoanalytic study of history adds a dynamic dimension to this and a distant possibility of social action by the psychoanalyst.

6. At the basis of the discontents in civilization are found guilt feelings derived from the introjection of aggression and the loss of ideal, illusory, self-compensating, adaptive systems.

7. The fear of death is universal. Irregardless of polemics about the death instinct, the existence of the aggressive impulse is undeniable.

8. Illusion, Utopia, and the Ideologies are the projective processes, with varying degrees of organization, to which humanity resorts as defensive and adaptation mechanisms in its struggle against existential anxiety. The fear of death seems to be related to the development of the self and the object relationship.

The idea of discontent and discomfort necessarily, includes the need for a change that will remove or reduce possible sources of discontent. Just as one analyzes a neurotic symptom or ambiguous behavior which is a mixture of adaptation, suffering pleasure, and perspective, it can be useful to study the surface in order to arrive at the interactions of the underlying causes of what appears on it. I have chosen the universal phenomenon of protest as an example, of the discontents in our present civilization, not because it is exclusive to our era, but because today it

has become of such magnitude that an analysis may perhaps shed some further light on the third source of man's suffering to which Freud referred (1930): the struggle among men themselves.

Certainly a "cold" analysis of protest cannot be attempted my position as a teacher has permitted me to view university protest from a number of angles. For the last three years I have conducted a "Seminar on Social Pathology from the Psychoanalytic Point of View" in the course leading to a Doctorate in Psychology at the National University of Mexico. They are semester courses with no more than ten students. We attempt to apply psychoanalytic theory as an approach to a number of past and present social problems. We are trying to establish some systematization for the discussions and topics, and the recent, misnamed "student" conflict gave us the opportunity to see protest and violence from "close at hand and from the inside" The ideas that I shall expound are in part the fruit of this seminar. They are general ideas, which I feel can be applied to the universal phenomenon of protest, and are in no way exclusive to Mexico, although of course there must be national and regional differences in the way the phenomenon is expressed.

Protest is directed against an established order, by what ever name it is known: local or national authority, "establishment" "apparatchik", "burocracy", "consign governmental", etc. The protesters are principally adolescents and young people, mostly students or with some students included in other groups. By no means do all the students belong to economically weak and marginal socio-economic classes, but all proudly confess, whether in a simple or complicated way, their very idealistic desire to "break with an archaic or inoperative structure that does not provide social justice". They obviously identify themselves with the dispossessed, the underdog, the victims of those who wield power, with discriminated minority groups, etc. In any protest group, large or small, regardless of its degree of organization, there is a general atmosphere of tension that can easily lead to action. In reality, protest groups are always in action, even when this is passive action in the form of protest known as "passive resistance". The despair in these passive resistance groups is more apparent because of its quietness; this is not the case with action groups, where despair is concealed and neutralized in part by action. In spite of the need for organization for action, there exists in the protest groups an anarchic rejection of an internal power hierarchy, as they democratically seek equality of command.

Another characteristic of protest groups is their capacity for changing action, that can be called emergency action. Marcuse (1968, pp. 55-56) described how a student manifestation at Berkeley, came to a forbidden zone protected by an imposing police barricade, and although some leaders were inciting the group to violent action, its members sat down on the ground and began to play, sing, and make love, to the resultant perplexity of the authorities. In protest manifestations humor frequently breaks out as a relief from the tension that reaches critical levels. From Freud's study of jokes and humor (1905), we know their economic value as an escape valve for restrained impulses, as well as their character of violation emerging from the superego's censorship.

At the central core of protest groups there is a sincere desire for social change and a passionate love for the study of the social and psychological sciences. When these young people, at meetings, in cafes, or seminars, discuss the development of the modern socio-economic-psychological concept of "alienation", they do so in such a way that any psychoanalyst would be inclined to consider them as "alienated" in the most usual sense of the word. In an old essay (1956, unpublished) on Kafka, I described this type of interminable, "Kafkian" dialogue as the peculiar expression of a type of conflict between the ego and the superego, in which projective mechanisms and recriminatory mania are basic, alternating with self-reproach, seasoned with flights of black humor. In my opinion, the alienation of protesters reflects their impotent separation

from authority. Through its polemics, it reproduces the absence of a stable superego and relative autonomy to guide its social acts. It would seem that the young man who joins a protest group easily regresses to the predecessors of the superego and the ego ideal, taking on emergency and sometimes heroic roles.

I am going to take the liberty of digressing to talk about one of the protest movement's theorists and philosophers. I am referring to Herbert Marcuse. I do not intend to discuss his ideas, but shall only mention those that I feel attract youth, who see him as a philosopher and critic "emerging from the heart of the capitalist system". In "Eros and Civilization", Marcuse (1965 Spanish edition of the original 1953 U. S. edition), basing himself on the thesis sustained by Freud in "Civilization and Its Discontents" that civilization has required the rigid restriction of the pleasure principle, suggested the possible "Utopia" of a non-restrictive civilization. He believes that the material achievements, of western culture have alienated man from his instinctive creative ability, which might tend toward the civilization sought. In "One-Dimensional Man" (1968a), he criticizes the failure of Soviet Marxism in its attempt to achieve the "Utopia" suggested in his previous book. He feels that the advanced industrial society increasingly alienates its individual members by the "irrational rationality" of the system. He includes in this category of "advanced industrial societies" all the highly developed countries, with the gradual crumbling away of the economic and ideological frontiers between the American and Soviet blocs. Man, living alienated and discontented in present civilization, has become "one-dimensional", with no interior perspective. He criticizes behaviorism as an expression of "alienated" psychology, as he emphasizes the capacity of the human being to react to the stimuli of a production and consumption mechanism. For him, liberty is still found in the "aesthetic dimension", which holds the hope for a different world.

In "The End of Utopia", Marcuse (1968b) takes part in a dialogue with students and professors at the Free University of Berlin, on repression, the third world, the possibility of a "Utopia" to be found in a less repressive society, and especially, on protest guided by reason. He asks youth to be the guides and mentors for the working masses, who do not have access to university culture and have become alienated, and through their alienation, permit the danger of war, violence, and the cruelty of a dehumanized world. Without going into a discussion of Marcuse's ideas, with which I am in general agreement, his thoughts can evoke and justify in protesting youth their most intense longings for justice and the triumph of love and goodness and the struggle for the defeat of suffering, injustice, and irrational aggressiveness, even at the cost of their own suffering. In my opinion, so-called theorists like Marcuse find an echo in the regressive dissociation referred to by Lampi-De Groot (1960, 1962) and Beres (1965), which, I would amplify to regressive-progressive dissociation. The need for an outlet that, will dispel the danger of war and injustice; the search for a refuge from suffering and discontent, can be seen in the "possible Utopia". The word itself encourages sacrifice and striving, in the protest phenomenon. Many young people fervently hope that the weak "third world" will set an example of reason for the powerful that will prevent war and violence. The "possible Utopia" contains the most recondite ego ideals, to satisfaction of the "pleasure principle".

The younger generation has always protested against the authority of older people, but the protest has never been so universal and "endemic". A psychoanalytic study of history would surely add more knowledge, therefore making predictions more possible, but time is apparently short, and every opportunity for study must be used to advantage. In the so-called "student Conflict" in Mexico last year, the National Strike Committee demanded a "dialogue" with the authorities, but violence beat reason to the draw. Within the family, young and old have tried to overcome their differences. Throughout history, the populace versus governments, minorities versus majorities, workers versus management, and conquered versus the conquerors have all sought to engage in dialogue based on reason, but on innumerable occasions the lack of proper control of aggression has unleashed the crisis of violence. After the mourning process, whose

characteristics it would be interesting to investigate, human groups seem to forget and to deny the consequences of war, but as Wang showed us (1964, 1968a, 1968b), traumatic sequelae persist throughout an entire generation of orphans and war waifs, either actually or psychologically speaking, that can be an important factor in the cyclical aspect of war.

I believe that the time has now come to further define my ideas, which are of a general nature. The psychogenetic element in protesting youth is due to a partial regression arising from membership in a group, from which there emerge identifications and stages of development from the time when the superego and ego ideal were not yet fully structured. Youth's behavior in the protest phenomenon contains these regressive elements accompanied by other progressive elements of adolescent development in an identity crisis which is given social expression. The progressive aspects of ego expansion during development seem to be related to the ego ideal, hence the tremendous positive value of the protest phenomenon as a factor in social change. In this regression that I am, postulating as one of the psychogenetic factors of protest, there is a tremendous distance (dissociation -between the superego imagos and those of the ego ideal. I believe that this can be seen in the difficulty of dialoguing with figures who, in today's situation, also behave dictatorially and superegotistically. The youth who participates in the protest phenomenon feels that he himself is the body containing the ego ideal, when he presents his demands for justice and freedom. He challenges some violent authority, and exposes himself to violence from it, with the hope of creating a "possible Utopia" where his more ideal infantile objects transcend either physical or historical death. His idealism, which contains the seed of Eros, revitalizes social institutions, even when it uses the destructive drive of the other germinal half of the ambivalence.

In this changing, labile state found in protest groups, other elements of lack of proper control of drives are seen, such as heroic violence, the attraction towards drugs, multiple sexual expressions. A detailed study of the hippie subculture would perhaps reveal more pathological elements of disintegration with regression at levels of secondary autism.

The protest phenomenon's struggle includes in its conflictive strata the remnants of the Oedipus complex. Everyone agrees that the adolescent revives his Oedipal conflict in his adjustment to his adult sexual object, and camaraderie between the sexes is constant and universal in protest manifestations. In a paper comparing the Oedipal conflict of Oedipus Luther, and Kafka, (1965b), I presented the idea that the basic motivation the fathers of these three personages was to eliminate the conflict between the generations, preventing the son's development by various techniques: death and abandonment in the case of Oedipus, authoritarian subjugation in Luther's case (see Erikson, 1958), and humiliating subjugation in Kafka's case. The injustice of this relationship is clear, inasmuch as the son is not permitted proper expansion of his ego. Rascovsky (1969) has recently been working on the conflict of filicidal impulses and their relationship to progress and-civilization.

It is obvious that where authorities are strictest, as well as where they act paternalistically, with strong subjugation overprotection, the adolescent is provoked to greater conflict, and thus joins the protest movement in a projective attempt at maturation. The quality of the institutions which administer justice, from the structure of the legal and penal systems to the action of the police force, is the other factor, the exterior factor that participates in the protest phenomenon. The child's disillusionment when he loses the sense of his parent's omnipotence which Freud.(1927) linked to the need for religion, is repeated dramatically in the adolescent crisis when young people perceive that the authorities cannot provide true, universal social justice. Perhaps adolescents are the "psychological mutants" of the intra- and interspecific drives about which erologists are learning more and more. The adolescent challenges authority fro a secret desire to test its strength, and very often authority does not manifest the strength of reason. A



study of the peculiar national or regional characteristics which feed the structuralization of the superego, and their levels of relative autonomy, would be interesting.

Nevertheless, I believe that, regardless of national characteristics, there is another factor to be considered in explaining the discontents found in present civilization throughout the whole world. I am referring to the fact that technological advances have definitely ruptured a certain periodicity in the universal conflict of the generations. In primitive, rural society, and particularly in the stability of large, bourgeois, urban zones of the developing industrial society, there was a certain predictable synchronization of the adolescent's development. There did not then exist a long lapse of time, allowing room for many conflicts, between biological maturation, psychosexual adjustment, and the inclusion of social action as a definite role. It now appears that technological advances, with the creation of an elite in highly-developed societies which augments the distance from the group, have left little room for the creation of adequate social structures for the administration of justice. There is an atmosphere of continual traumatic emergency, in which reality becomes a heavy load, in spite of the fact that technological advances could improve human welfare. The exterior screens of social institutions on which the superego and ego ideal of individuals are projected are increasingly created in the atmosphere of the conflict itself. Because of this weakening of autonomy, the tempo of action is becoming more accelerated by the minute. The periods of respite allow some glimpses of light, but the subsequent violent action in one place or another throughout the world plunges us again into the previous situation', but with even greater, tension. We live in a, world in which juvenile protest is the manifestation of the failure of the ability that existed in other eras to predict the cycle and destiny of generations. Religion increasingly fails as an illusory refuge, and dehumanized technology has not replaced our "possible Utopia". Many philosophers and sociologists feel that we are living at the birth of a new civilization, but labor does not seem to be of a eutocic nature. In addition to technological advances, it would be desirable to see the birth of a new Ethic, which, by viewing man more as a whole would mitigate the discontents of civilization. It would be an "impossible Utopia" to hope that the discontents might disappear, since at their foundation lies the fear of death

I should like to conclude this general essay with a quotation from a pacifist and romanticist, which truly expresses the "possible Utopia" of many people who feel these discontents. Bertram Russell (1953, p. 180), wrote in "New Hopes for a World in Transformation": "The motives of the very interest that arouses hostile sentiments in each band are merely the reflection of identical motives in the other, band, and in each are based on the assumption that the other has irrational inclinations... Where hostility exists, a great moral crusade is under way in both bands, in which it is the duty of all men of truth to defend high ethical ideals. By all this struggle, homo sapiens hides from himself his lack of wisdom...."

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