



New Pathways in Psychology

Maslow & the Post-Freudian Revolution

COLIN WILSON

DELUXE EBOOK EDITION

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For Bertha Maslow

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C.W.

CORNWALL, MARCH 1971

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Introductory Personal Notes on Maslow

SOME TIME IN 1959, I received a letter from an American professor of psychology, Abraham H. Maslow, enclosing some of his papers. He said he had read my book *The Stature of Man*,^{1} and liked my idea that much of the gloom and defeat of 20th century literature is due to what I called 'the fallacy of insignificance'. Maslow said this resembled an idea of his own, which he called 'the Jonah complex'. One day, he had asked his students: 'Which of you expects to achieve greatness in your chosen field?' The class looked at him blankly. After a long silence, Maslow said: 'If not *you—who* then?' And they began to see his point. This is the fallacy of insignificance, the certainty that you are unlucky and unimportant, the Jonah complex. The papers he enclosed looked highly technical; their titles contained words like 'metamotivation', 'synergy', 'eupsychian'.

I glanced at them and pushed them aside. Some months later I came across them again: this time, my eye was caught by the term 'peak experience' in one of the titles, and I started to read. It was immediately clear that I'd stumbled upon something important. Maslow explained that, some time in the late thirties, he had been struck by the thought that modern psychology is based on the study of sick people. But since there are more healthy people around than sick people, how can this psychology give a fair idea of the workings of the human mind? It struck him that it might be worthwhile to devote some time to the

study of *healthy* people.

'When I started to explore the psychology of health, I picked out the finest, healthiest people, the best specimens of mankind I could find, and studied them to see what they were like. They were very different, in some ways startlingly different from the average . . .

'I learned many lessons from these people. But one in particular is our concern now. I found that these individuals tended to report having had something like mystic experiences, moments of great awe, moments of the most intense happiness, or even rapture, ecstasy or bliss . . .

'These moments were of pure, positive happiness, when all doubts, all fears, all inhibitions, all tensions, all weaknesses, were left behind. Now self-consciousness was lost. All separateness and distance from the world disappeared as they felt one with the world, fused with it, really belonging to it, instead of being outside, looking in. (One subject said, for instance, "I felt like a member of a family, not like an orphan".)

'Perhaps most important of all, however, was the report in these experiences of the feeling that they had really seen the ultimate truth, the essence of things, the secret of life, as if veils had been pulled aside. Alan Watts has described this feeling as "This is it!", as if you had finally got there, as if ordinary life was a striving and a straining to get some place and this was the arrival, this was Being There! . . . Everyone knows how it feels to want something and not know what. These mystic experiences feel like the ultimate satisfaction of vague, unsatisfied yearnings . . .

'But here I had already learned something new. The little that I had ever read about mystic experiences tied them in with religion, with visions of the supernatural.

And, like most scientists, I had sniffed at them in disbelief and considered it all nonsense, maybe hallucinations, maybe hysteria—almost surely pathological.

‘But the people telling me ... about these experiences were not such people—they were the healthiest people! . . . And I may add that it taught me something about the limitations of the small . . . orthodox scientist who won’t recognise as knowledge, or as reality, any information that doesn’t fit into the already existent science.’{2}

These experiences are not ‘religious’ in the ordinary sense. They are *natural*, and can be studied naturally. They are not ‘ineffable’ in the sense of incommunicable by language. Maslow also came to believe that they are far commoner than one might expect, that many people tend to suppress them, to ignore them, and certain people seem actually afraid of them, as if they were somehow feminine, illogical, dangerous. ‘One sees such attitudes more often in engineers, in mathematicians, in analytic philosophers, in book-keepers and accountants, and generally in obsessional people.’

The peak experience tends to be a kind of bubbling-over of sheer delight, a moment of pure happiness. ‘For instance, a young mother scurrying around her kitchen and getting breakfast for her husband and young children. The sun was streaming in, the children, clean and nicely dressed, were chattering as they ate. The husband was casually playing with the children: but as she looked at them she was suddenly so overwhelmed with their beauty and her great love for them, and her feeling of good fortune, that she went into a peak experience . . .

‘A young man working his way through medical school by drumming in a jazz band reported many years later, that in all his drumming he had three peaks when he

suddenly felt like a great drummer and his performance was perfect.

'A hostess after a dinner party where everything had gone perfectly and it had been a fine evening, said goodbye to her last guest, sat down in a chair, looked around at the mess, and went into a peak of great happiness and exhilaration.'

Maslow described another typical peak experience to me later, when I met him at his home in Waltham, Mass. A marine had been stationed in the Pacific and had not seen a woman for a couple of years. When he came back to the base camp, he saw a nurse, and it suddenly struck him with a kind of shock that women are different to men. The marine had told Maslow: 'We take them for granted, as if they were another kind of man. But they're quite different, with their soft curves and gentle natures . . .'

He was suddenly flooded with the peak experience. Observe that in most peak experiences (Maslow abbreviates it to P.E's, and I shall follow him), the person becomes suddenly *aware* of something that he had known about previously, but been inclined to take for granted, to discount. And this matter had always been one of my own central preoccupations. My *Religion and the Rebel* (1957) had been largely a study in the experiences of mystics, and in its autobiographical preface, I had written about a boring office job: 'As soon as I grew used to it, I began to work automatically. I fought hard against this process. I would spend the evening reading poetry, or writing, and would determine that, with sufficient mental effort, I could stop myself from growing bored and indifferent at work the next day. But the moment I stepped through the office door in the morning, the familiar smell and appearance would switch on the automatic pilot which

controlled my actions . . .’ I was clearly aware that the problem was *automatism*. And in a paper I later wrote for a symposium of existential psychology, {3} I elaborated this theory of the automatic pilot, speaking of it as ‘the *robot*. I wrote: ‘I am writing this on an electric typewriter. When I learned to type, I had to do it painfully and with much nervous wear and tear. But at a certain stage, a miracle occurred, and this complicated operation was ‘learned’ by a useful robot whom I conceal in my subconscious mind. Now I only have to think about what I want to say: my robot secretary does the typing. He is really very useful. He also drives the car for me, speaks French (not very well), and occasionally gives lectures in American universities. ‘He has one enormous disadvantage. If I discover a new symphony that moves me deeply, or a poem or a painting, this bloody robot promptly insists on getting in on the act. And when I listen to the symphony for the third time, *he* begins to anticipate every note. He begins to listen to it automatically, and I lose all the pleasure. He is most annoying when I am tired, because then he tends to take over most of my functions without even asking me. I have even caught him making love to my wife.

‘My dog doesn’t have this trouble. Admittedly, he can’t learn languages or how to type, but if I take him for a walk on the cliffs, he obviously experiences every time just as if it is the first. I can tell this by the ecstatic way he bounds about. Descartes was all wrong about animals. It isn’t the animals who are robots; it’s us.’

Heaven lies about us in our infancy, as Wordsworth pointed out, because the robot hasn’t yet taken over. So a child experiences delightful things as more delightful, and horrid things as more horrid. Time goes slower, and

mechanical tasks drag, because there is no robot to take over. When I asked my daughter if she meant to be a writer when she grew up, she said with horror that she got fed up before she'd written half a page of school-work, and couldn't even imagine the tedium of writing a whole book.

The robot is necessary. Without him, the wear and tear of everyday life would exhaust us within minutes. But he also acts as a filter that cuts out the freshness, the newness, of everyday life. If we are to remain psychologically healthy, we must have streams of 'newness' flowing into the mind—what J. B. Priestley calls 'delight or 'magic'. In developing the robot, we have solved one enormous problem—and created another. But there is, after all, no reason why we should not solve that too: modify the robot until he admits the necessary amount of 'newness', while still taking over the menial tasks.

Now I was much struck by Maslow's comment on the possibility of *creating* peak experiences at will. Because his feeling was that it cannot be done. 'No! Or almost entirely no! In general, we are "Surprised by Joy", to use the title of C. S. Lewis's book on just this question. Peaks come unexpectedly . . . You can't count on them. And hunting them is like hunting happiness. It's best not done directly. It comes as a by-product, an epiphenomenon, for instance, of doing a fine job at a worthy task you can identify with.'

It seemed to me that this is only partly true. I will try to explain this briefly.

Novelists have to be psychologists. I think of myself as belonging to the school known as the phenomenological movement. The philosopher Edmund Husserl noted that all

psychological acts are 'intentional'. Note what happens when you are about to tickle a child. The child begins to squirm and laugh before your hands have actually reached him. On the other hand, why doesn't it tickle when you tickle yourself? Obviously, because you know it's you. The tickling is not something *physical* that happens when your hands encounter flesh and make tickling motions. It seems to be 99% psychological. When the child screams with laughter, *he is tickling himself*, just as he might frighten himself by imagining ghosts in the dark. The paradoxical truth is that when someone tickles you, you tickle yourself. And when you tickle yourself, you don't tickle yourself, which is why it doesn't tickle.

Being tickled is a 'mental act, an 'intention'. So are all perceptions. I look *at* something, as I might fire a gun at it. If I glance at my watch while I am in conversation, I see the time, yet I don't *notice* what time it is. As well as merely 'seeing' I have to make a mental act of *grasping*.

Now the world is full of all kinds of things that I cannot afford to 'grasp' or notice. If I am absorbed in a book, I 'grasp' its content; my mind explores it as though my thoughts were fine, thin tentacles reaching every corner of the book. But when I put the book back on the shelf, it is standing among dozens of other books, which I have also explored at some time in the past. As I look at all these books, I cannot simultaneously grasp all of them. From being intimate friends, they have become mere nodding acquaintances. Perhaps one or two, of which I am very fond, mean more to me than the others. But of necessity, it has to be very few.

Consider Maslow's young mother getting the breakfast. She loves her husband and children, but all the same, she is directing her 'beam of interest' at making the coffee,

buttering the toast, watching the eggs in the frying pan. She is treating her husband and children as if they were a row of books on a shelf. Still, her energies are high; she is looking forward to an interesting day. Then something triggers a new level of response. Perhaps it is the beam of sunlight streaming through the window, which seems to shake her arm and say: 'Look—isn't it all wonderful?' She suddenly looks *at* her husband and children as she would look at the clock to find out the time. She becomes self-conscious of the situation, using her beam of interest to 'scan' it, instead of to watch the coffee. And having put twice as much energy into her 'scanning', she experiences 'newness'. The mental act of looking *at* her family, and thinking: 'I am lucky', is like an athlete gathering himself for a long jump, concentrating his energies.

What happens if somebody returns a book that he borrowed from me a long time ago? I look at the book with a kind of delight, as though it were a returned prodigal: perhaps I open it and read a chapter. Yet if the book had stayed on my shelf for six months I might not even have bothered to glance at it. The return of the book has made me focus my beam of interest, like an athlete gathering for a leap.

When something occupies my full attention, it is very *real* to me. When I have put the book back on the shelf, I have un-realised it, to some extent. I have pushed it back to a more abstract level of reality. But I have the power to realise it again. Consider the mental act I make when I feel glad to see the book again. I 'reach *out*' my invisible mental tentacles to it, as I might reach out my hand to a friend I am delighted to see, and I *focus* my beam of interest on it with a kind of intensity—the kind of intentness with which a sapper de-fuses an unexploded

bomb.

We do this 'real-ising' and 'un-real-ising' all the time—so automatically that we fail to notice that we are doing it. It is not just 'happening'. Like the athlete gathering himself to leap, it is the deliberate compression of mental muscles.

All this suggests that Maslow is mistaken to believe that peak experiences have to 'come' without being sought. A little phenomenological analysis, like the kind we have conducted above, reveals that the P .E. has a structure that can be duplicated. It is the culmination of a series of mental acts, each of which can be clearly defined.

The first pre-condition is 'energy', because the P .E. is essentially an overflowing of energy. This does not mean ordinary physical energy; Maslow points out that sick people can have P.E's as easily as healthy ones, if the conditions are right. If you say to a child: 'I'll take you to the pantomime tonight if you'll tidy your bedroom', he immediately seethes with a bustling energy. The normally boring act of tidying a room is performed with enthusiasm. And this is because he—figuratively—'takes a deep breath'. He is so determined that the tidying shall be satisfactory that he is prepared to devote attention to every square inch of the floor. And the 'mental act' that lies behind this is a certain concentration and 'summoning of energy', like calling 'All hands on deck'. If I am asked to do a job that bores me, I summon only a small quantity of energy, and if the job is complicated, I skimp it. If I am determined to do it thoroughly, I place the whole of my interior army and navy 'on call'. It is this state—of vigilance, alertness, *preparedness*—that is the basis of the peak experience.

Healthy people—like Maslow's housewife—are people with a high level of 'preparedness'? This can be expressed

in a simple image. My 'surplus energy' is stored in my subconscious mind, in the realm of the robot: this is like money that has been invested in stocks and shares. Nearer the surface of everyday consciousness, there are 'surplus energy tanks', energy which is ready-for-use, like money in my personal account at the bank. When I anticipate some emergency, or some delightful event (like a holiday) which I shall need energy to enjoy to the full, I transfer large quantities of 'ready energy' to these surface tanks, just as I might draw a large sum out of the bank before I go on holiday.

'Peakers' are people with large quantities of energy in the ready-energy tanks. Bored or miserable people are people who keep only small amounts of energy for immediate use.

But it must be borne in mind that both types of people have large amounts of energy available in their 'deep storage tanks' in the realm of the robot. It is merely a matter of transferring it to your 'current account.'

In a paper called 'The Need to Know and the Fear of Knowing', Maslow describes one of his crucial cases.

'Around 1938, a college girl patient presented herself complaining vaguely of insomnia, lack of appetite, disturbed menstruation, sexual frigidity, and a general malaise which soon turned into a complaint of boredom with life and an inability to enjoy *anything*. Life seemed meaningless to her. Her symptoms closely paralleled those described by Abraham Myerson in his book *When Life Loses Its Zest ...* As she went on talking, she seemed puzzled. She had graduated about a year ago and by a fantastic stroke of luck—this was the depression, remember—she had immediately got a job. And what a job! Fifty dollars a week! She was taking care of her whole unemployed family

with the money and was the envy of all her friends. But what was the job? She worked as a sub-personnel manager in a chewing-gum factory. And after some hours of talking, it became more and more clear that she felt she was wasting her life. She had been a brilliant student of psychology and was very happy and successful in college, but her family's financial situation made it impossible for her to go on into graduate studies. She was greatly drawn to intellectual work, not altogether consciously at first because she felt she *ought* to feel fortunate with her job and the money it brought her. Half-consciously then she saw a whole lifetime of greyness stretching out ahead of her. I suggested that she might be feeling profoundly frustrated and angry simply because she was not being her own very intelligent self, that she was not using her intelligence and her talent for psychology and that this might well be a major reason for her boredom with life and her body's boredom with the normal pleasures of life. Any talent, any capacity, I thought, was also a motivation, a need, an impulse. With this she agreed, and I suggested that she could continue her graduate studies at night after her work. In brief, she was able to arrange this and it worked well. She became more alive, more happy and zestful, and most of her physical symptoms had disappeared at my last contact with her.'

It is significant that Maslow, although trained as a Freudian, did not try to get back into the subject's childhood and find out whether she experienced penis envy of her brothers or a desire to murder her mother and marry her father. He followed his instinct—his feeling that creativeness and the desire for a *meaningful existence* are as important as any subconscious sexual drives.

Anyone who knows my own work will see why Maslow's

approach appealed so much to me—and why mine, apparently, appealed to Maslow. My first book, *The Outsider*, written when I was 23, was about people like Maslow's girl patient—men driven by an obscure creative urge that made them dissatisfied with everyday life, and which in some cases—T. E. Lawrence, for example—caused them to behave in a manner that seemed masochistic. The book sprang from my own obsession with the problem of 'life failure'. Auden wrote:

'Put the car away; when life fails
What's the good of going to Wales?'

Eliot asks in *The Rock*: 'Where is the life we have lost in living?' And Shaw says of the Ancients in *Back to Methuselah*: 'Even at the moment of death, their life does not fail them.' Maslow's patient was suicidal because she felt she was losing her life in the process of living it. Quite clearly, we were talking about the same thing. I had asked repeatedly in *The Outsider*: 'Why does life fail?' Maslow was replying, in effect: Because human beings have needs and cravings that go beyond the need for security, sex, territory. He states it clearly in the preface to the Japanese edition of *Eupsychian Management*, asserting that 'human nature has been sold short, that man has a higher nature which is just as "instinctoid" as his lower nature, and that this higher nature includes the need for meaningful work, for responsibility, for creativeness, for being fair and just, for doing what is worthwhile and for preferring to do it well.'

I must outline my own approach to this problem, as I explained it in subsequent correspondence with Maslow. *The Outsider* had developed from my interest in the

romantics of the 19th century—Goethe, Schiller, Novalis, Wagner, Nietzsche, Van Gogh. What fascinated me was their *world rejection*. It was summed up by Villiers de 1'Isle-Adam's hero Axel in the words 'Live? Our servants can do that for us.' Axel asserted that 'real life' is always a disappointment. The heroine, Sarah, has a long speech in which she speaks of all the marvellous places they might visit now they have found the treasure. Axel replies that the cold snows of Norway *sound* marvellous, but when you actually get there, it's just cold and wet" L. H. Myers had made the same point with fine precision in *The Near and the Far*, where the young Prince Jali stares at a splendid sunset over the desert, and reflects that there are two deserts: one that is a glory to the eye, and one that is a weariness to the feet. If you tried rushing towards that sunset, you would only get your shoes full of sand. It seems impossible to grasp 'the promise of the horizon'. And it was this feeling of despair about the near and the far—the feeling that they can never be reconciled—that led to so many early deaths among the romantics: suicide, insanity, tuberculosis. Obermann, in Senancour's novel of that name, says that the rain depresses him, yet when the sun comes out it strikes him as 'useless'. *This* is life-failure.

But man's achievement is to have created a world of the mind, of the intellect and imagination, which is as real in its way as any actual country on the map. Sir Karl Popper, in one of his most important papers, calls it 'the third world.'⁴ The first world is the objective world of things. The second world is my inner subjective world. But, says Popper, there is a third world, *the world of objective contents of thoughts*. If some catastrophe destroyed all the machines and tools on this earth, but *not* the libraries, a new generation would slowly rebuild civilisation. If the

libraries are all destroyed too, there could be no re-emergence of civilisation, for all our carefully stored knowledge would have gone, and man would have to start regaining it from scratch. Teilhard de Chardin calls this 'third world' the noosphere—the world of mind. It includes the works of Newton, Einstein, Beethoven, Tolstoy, Plato; it is the most important part of our human heritage.

A cow inhabits the physical world. It has almost no mind, to speak of. Man also inhabits the physical world, and has to cope with its problems. But he has built civilisation because *the physical world is not enough*. Nothing is so boring as to be stuck in the present. Primitive man loved stories for the same reason that young children do. Because they afforded an escape from the present, because they freed his memory and imagination from mere 'reality'. Einstein made the same point: '. . . one of the strongest motives that lead men to art and science is to escape from everyday life, with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness. . . A finely tempered nature longs to escape from personal life into the world of objective perception and thought; this desire may be compared to the townsman's irresistible longing to escape from his noisy, cramped surroundings into the silence of high mountains. . .'{5}

But my central point is this. Man is a very *young* creature: his remotest ancestors only date back two million years. (The shark has remained unchanged for 15,000,000 years.) And although he longs for this 'third world' as his natural home, he only catches brief glimpses of it. For it can only be 'focused' by a kind of mental eye. This morning, as I cleaned my teeth in the bathroom a fragment of Brahms drifted through my head and caused

that sudden feeling of inner-warmth. The person labelled 'Colin Wilson' ceased to matter: it was almost as if I had floated out of my body and left him behind, as if the real 'I' had taken up a position somewhere midway between myself and Brahms. In the same way, when I am working well, I seem to lose my identity, 'identifying' instead with the ideas or people I am writing about. But very often, I cannot even begin to focus the 'third world'; the real world distracts me, and keeps my attention fixed on its banal 'actualities' like some idiot on a train who prevents you from reading by talking in a loud voice.

All the same, this 'third world' is a *place*; it is there all the time, like China or the moon; and it ought to be possible for me to go there at any time, leaving behind the boring person who is called by my name. It is fundamentally a world of pure *meaning*. It is true that my small personal world is also a world of meaning; but of trivial, personal meaning, distorted and one-sided, a worm's eye view of meaning.

It is man's evolutionary destiny to become a citizen of the third world, to explore it as he might now explore Switzerland on a holiday.

It is impossible to predict what will happen to human beings when that time comes: for this reason. Meaning stimulates the will, fills one with a desire to reach out to new horizons. When a man in love sees the girl approaching, his heart 'leaps'. When I hear a phrase of music that means something to me, my heart leaps. That 'leap' is vitality from my depths, leaping up to meet the 'meaning'. And the more 'meaning' I perceive, the more vitality rushes up to meet it. As his access to the world of meaning increases, man's vitality will increase towards the superman level; that much seems clear .

Boredom cripples the will. Meaning stimulates it. The peak experience is a sudden surge of meaning. The question that arises now is: how can I *choose* meaning? If Maslow is correct, I can't. I must be 'surprised' by it. It is a by-product of effort.

At this point, I was able to point out to Maslow a possibility that he had overlooked, a concept I called 'the indifference threshold' or 'St Neot margin'. It is fundamentally a recognition *that crises or difficulties can often produce a sense of meaning when more pleasant stimuli have failed*. Sartre remarks that he had never felt so free as during the war when, as a member of the French Resistance, he was likely to be arrested and shot at any time. It seems a paradox: that danger can make you feel free when peace and serenity fail to arouse any response. It does this by forcing you to concentrate.

I stumbled on this concept in the following manner. In 1954, I was hitchhiking to Peterborough on a hot Saturday afternoon. I felt listless, bored and resentful: I didn't want to go to Peterborough—it was a kind of business trip—and I didn't particularly long to be back in London either. There was hardly any traffic on the road, but eventually I got a lift. Within ten minutes, there was an odd noise in the engine of the lorry. The driver said: 'I'm afraid something's gone wrong—I'll have to drop you off at the next garage.' I was too listless to care. I walked on, and eventually a second lorry stopped for me. Then occurred the absurd coincidence. After ten minutes or so, there was a knocking noise from *his* gearbox. When he said: 'It sounds as if something's wrong', I thought: 'Oh *no!*' and then caught myself thinking it, and thought: 'That's the first definite reaction I've experienced today.' We drove on slowly—he was anxious to get to Peterborough, *and by*

this time ... so was I. He found that if he dropped speed to just under twenty miles an hour, the knocking noise stopped; as soon as he exceeded it, it started again. We both listened intently for any resumption of the trouble. Finally, as we were passing through a town called St Neots, he said: 'Well, I think if we stay at this speed, we should make it.' And I felt a surge of delight. Then I thought: 'This is absurd. My situation hasn't *improved* since I got into the lorry—in fact, it has got worse, since he is now crawling along. All that has happened is that an inconvenience has been threatened, and then the threat withdrawn. And suddenly, my boredom and indifference have vanished.' I formulated then the notion that there is a borderland or threshold of the mind that can be stimulated by pain or inconvenience, but not pleasure. (After all, the lorry originally stopping for me failed to arouse a response of gratitude.) I labelled it 'the indifference threshold' or—after the place I was travelling through at the time—the St Neot margin.

All that had happened, of course, was that the threat of a second breakdown had made me *concentrate my attention*. I spent a quarter of an hour listening intently to the engine. The threatened 'crisis' made me use my focusing-muscle, instead of allowing it to remain passive. Relaxing it—when he said we could probably make it—caused a rush of pleasure.

The same applies to Sartre. The constant danger of arrest kept him at a high level of *alertness*, of tension. Maslow's girl patient became so bored with her job in the chewing gum factory that she allowing the focusing-muscle to go permanently flaccid.

If you allow the will to remain passive for long periods, it has the same effect as leaving your car in the garage for

the winter. The batteries go flat. When the batteries go flat, 'life fails'. These 'focusing muscles' must be used if we are to stay healthy, for they are the means by which the mind focuses on values, just as the eye muscles enable the eye to focus on distant objects. If we fail to use them for long periods, the result is a kind of mental shortsightedness, a gradual loss of the feeling of the reality of values, of meaning. This explains what happens if you watch television for too long, or read a very long book on a dull winter day until your eyes are aching. Your 'meaning focus' relaxes as your interest flags, and if you then go for a walk, everything seems oddly meaningless and dull. It just 'is', and it doesn't arouse any response.

The Greek poet Demetrios Capetanakis wrote in the early forties: ' "Well," I thought when the war started, trying to hope for the best, "it will be horrible, but if it will be so horrible as to frighten and wake up the mind, it will be the salvation of many. Many are going to die, *but those who are going to survive will have a real life, with the mind awake*" . . . But I was mistaken . . . The war is very frightening, but it is not frightening enough.'

The same thought struck me when I read the article Camus wrote for the resistance paper *Combat* when the Germans were being driven out of Paris. (6) It is called 'The Night of Truth' and is full of noble phrases. The skyline of Paris is blazing, he says, but these are the flames of freedom. 'Those who never despaired of themselves or of their country find their reward under this sky . . . the great virile brotherhood of recent years will never forsake us . . . man's greatness . . . lies in his decision to be stronger than his condition', and so on. But Simone de Beauvoir's novel *The Mandarins* begins shortly after the liberation, and Camus is one of the characters. And they

drift around the nightspots of St Germain and drink too much and smoke too much and waste time on pointless adulteries. What had happened to the Night of Truth?

The answer is simple. Without the danger and injustice to keep the mind alert, they allowed a kind of inner-laziness to descend.

But didn't Camus *remember* their feelings about a completely different kind of future? The answer is: in the real sense of the word, no. Real memory brings a sense of meanings and values with it. False memory recalls the 'facts', but without their inner content of meaning. It must be squarely recognised that man suffers from *a very real form of amnesia*. This is not a figure of speech but a reality. For the 'meaning' depends upon the mind's power of 'focusing'.

Must we, then, draw the pessimistic conclusion that mankind needs war and injustice to prevent him from lapsing into a condition of boredom, or at least, of preoccupation with trivialities? The answer, fortunately, is no. 'Focusing' is a muscle, and it can be strengthened like any other muscle. Graham Greene, in an essay I have often quoted, describes how, in his teens, he sank into a condition of extreme boredom and depression, during which life became meaningless. He tried playing Russian roulette with his brother's revolver, inserting only one bullet, spinning the chambers, pointing it at his head and pulling the trigger. When there was just a click, he was overwhelmed by a feeling of delight, and a sense of the meaningfulness of life. The situation is fundamentally the same as in my 'St Neot margin' experience in the lorry, except that Greene's concentration was more intense, because the negative stimulus was greater. At a later stage, I discovered that a mild peak experience could

easily be induced merely by concentrating hard on a pencil, then relaxing the attention, then concentrating again ... After doing this a dozen or so times, the attention becomes fatigued—if you are doing it with the right degree of concentration—and a few more efforts—deliberately ignoring the fatigue—trigger the peak experience. After all, concentration has the effect of summoning energy from your depths. It is the ‘pumping’ motion—of expanding and contracting the attention—that causes the peak experience.

Another interesting point arose when I was lecturing to Maslow’s class at Brandeis University in early 1967. I was speaking about the peculiar power of the human imagination. I can imagine trapping my thumb in the door, and wince as if I had actually done it. I can go to see a film, and come out of the cinema feeling as if I have been on a long journey. Even so, it must be admitted that imagination only provides a dim carbon copy of the original experience. I may try to recall a particularly happy day, and even re-experience some of its pleasures; but compared to the original experience, it is like paste jewellery compared to the real thing. The hero of Barbusse’s novel *Hell*, trying to recall the experience of watching a woman undress, admits: ‘These words are all dead. They leave untouched, powerless to affect it, the intensity of what was’. Proust, tasting a madeleine dipped in tea, recalls with sudden intensity the reality of his childhood: but that is a fluke. He cannot do it by an ordinary act of imagination.

Yet the matter of sex appears to be an exception to this rule. A man can conjure up some imaginary scene with a girl undressing, and he responds physically as if there *were*

a girl undressing in the room: his imagination can even carry him to the point of a sexual climax. In this one respect, man has completely surpassed the animals: here is a case where the mental 'act' needs no object . . .

At this point, Maslow interrupted me to point out that this is not quite true; monkeys often masturbate. I asked him if he had ever seen a monkey masturbating in total isolation, without the stimulus of a female monkey anywhere in the vicinity. He thought for a moment, then said he hadn't.

Even if he had, it would not have basically affected my point. If monkeys can do problems for fun, perhaps they have more imagination than we give them credit for. But the interesting point is that in the matter of sex, man can achieve repeatedly what Proust achieved momentarily tasting the madeleine: a physical response *as if* to reality. Absurd as it sounds, masturbation is one of the highest faculties mankind has yet achieved. But its importance is in what it presages: that one day, the imagination will be able to achieve this result in *all* fields. If all perception is 'intentional', due to a 'reaching out', a 'focusing', on the part of the perceiver, then it ought to be possible to reconstruct any reality by making the necessary effort of focusing. We have only been kept from this recognition by the old, false theory of 'passive perception' .

Anyone who did chemistry at school will recall what happens if you mix sulphur and iron filings, and then heat them in a crucible. A small area of the sulphur melts and fuses with the iron. At that point, you can remove the flame of the Bunsen burner; the reaction will continue of its own accord; the glow slowly spreads throughout the mixture until the whole crucible is red hot, and the end

result is a chunk of iron sulphide. The same process goes on in the mind when we become deeply interested in anything. The warm glow produced by favourite poetry or music is often the beginning of this fusing process.

We are all familiar with the process of a wider glimpse of 'meaning' leading to the revitalising of the will. This, in fact, is why people need holidays. As life drags on repetitively, they get tired; they stop making effort; it is the *will* that gets run down. The holiday 'reminds' them of wider meanings, reminds them that the universe is a vast spider's web of meaning, stretching infinitely in all directions. And quite suddenly they are enjoying *everything* more: eating, reading, walking, listening to music, having a beer before dinner. The 'meaning' sharpens the appetite for life—that is, the will to live.

It is our misfortune that we are not equally familiar with the reverse process: that a deliberate increase in willed concentration can *also* start the 'fusion' process working. This is, in fact, common sense. The deeper my sense of the 'meaningfulness' of the world, the fiercer and more persistent my will. And increased effort of will leads in turn to increased sense of meaning. It is a chain reaction. So is the reverse, when 'discouragement' leads me to stop willing, and the passivity leads to a narrowed sense of meaning, and the gradual loss of 'meaning' leads to further relaxation of the will. The result is a kind of 'down staircase' of apathy. On the other hand, any intense glimpse of meaning can cause a transfer to the 'up staircase'. This is most strikingly illustrated in an experiment that Maslow's colleague, Dr. A Hoffer, carried out with alcoholics. {7} Hoffer reasoned that alcoholics may be people of more-than-average intelligence and sensitivity. Because of this, they find that life is too much

for them, and they drink because at first it produces peak experiences. But as often as not it doesn't; then they drink more to increase the stimulus, and become involved in guilt and depression. Hoffer tried giving these alcoholics mescaline-producing a far more powerful 'lift' than alcohol—and then deliberately induced peak experiences by means of music, poetry, painting—whatever used to produce P.E.'s before the subject became alcoholic. The startling result was that more than 50 % were cured. The peak experience is an explosion of *meaning*, and meaning arouses the will, which in turn reaches out towards further horizons of meaning. The alcoholic drinks because he wants peak experiences, but he is, in fact, running away from them as fast as he can go. Once his sense of direction had been restored, he ceased to be alcoholic, recognising that *peak experiences are in direct proportion to the intensity of the will*.

And what should be quite clear is that there is no theoretical limit to the 'chain reaction'. Why does a man get depressed? Because at a certain point, he feels that a certain difficulty is 'not worth the effort'. As he becomes more discouraged, molehills turn into mountains until, as William James says, life turns into one tissue of impossibilities, and the process called nervous breakdown begins. Having recognised that the cause of the trouble lies in the collapse of the will, there is no theoretical reason why the ex-alcoholic should come to a halt with the achievement of 'normality'.

There is, of course, a practical reason. The will needs a *purpose*. Why do we feel so cheerful when we are planning a holiday—looking at maps, working out what to pack? Because we have long-distance purpose. One can understand how Balzac must have felt when he first

conceived the idea of creating the *Comédie Humaine*, the excitement of working out a series of novels about military life, a series about provincial life, a series about the aristocracy. . . 'Building castles in the air', this activity is called; but with a little effort, they actually get built. Man seems to need long-range purpose to get the best out of himself. And once the alcoholic has achieved 'normality' again, he may well say: 'All right, where do I go from here?'

If this were true, it would represent a kind of dead end. For undoubtedly, our civilisation tends to deprive us of the kind of long-range purpose that our pioneer ancestors must have enjoyed. But it provides us with something else: the ability to live on the plane of the mind, the imagination.

And there is a still more important matter we have over-looked: the mind's capacity to *reach out* for meaning. This is perfectly illustrated by a story told in Romain Gary's novel *The Roots of Heaven*. In a German concentration camp during the war, the French prisoners are becoming increasingly demoralised: they are on a down-staircase. A man called Robert devises a way to arrest the decline. He suggests that they imagine an invisible girl in the billet. If one of them swears or farts, he must bow and apologise to the 'girl'; when they undress, they must hang up a blanket so she can't see them. Oddly enough, this absurd game works: they enter into the spirit of the thing, and morale suddenly rises. The Germans become suspicious of the men, and by eavesdropping they find out about the invisible girl. The Commandant fancies himself as a psychologist. He goes along to the billet with two guards, and tells the men: 'I know you have a girl here. That is forbidden. Tomorrow, I shall come here with these guards, and you will hand her

over to me. She will be taken to the local brothel for German officers.’ When he has gone, the men are dismayed; they know that if they ‘hand her over’, they won’t be able to re-create her. The next day the Commandant appears with his two soldiers. Robert, as the spokesman, says: ‘We have decided not to hand her over’. And the Commandant knows he is beaten: nothing he can do can force them to hand her over. Robert is arrested and placed in solitary confinement; they all think they have seen the last of him, but weeks later, he reappears, very thin and worn. He explains that he has found the way to resist solitary confinement—their game with the invisible girl has taught him that the imagination is the power to reach out to *other realities*. realities not physically present. He has kept himself from breakdown by imagining great herds of elephants trampling over endless plains . . . The irony, in the novel, is that it is Robert who later becomes a hunter of elephants. But that is beside the point. The point is that the will *can* make an act of reaching towards meaning, towards ‘other realities’.

In phenomenological terms, what actually happened when the prisoners began apologising to the imaginary girl? First of all, they threw off their apathy and entered into a communal game. It was like a coach-load of football fans whiling away a tedious journey with community singing. But having raised their spirits by entering into the game, they also *reminded themselves* of circumstances in which they would normally be ‘at their best’. Gorky’s story *Twenty Six Men and a Girl* may be regarded as a parable about the same thing: the twenty-six over-worked bakers keep up their spirits by idealising the girl, treating her as a goddess. . . . And thereby *reminding themselves* of the response appropriate to a goddess.

And this leads naturally to a concept that has become the core of my own existential psychology: the Self-Image. A man could not climb a vertical cliff without cutting handholds in the rock. Similarly, I cannot achieve a state of 'intenser consciousness' merely by wanting to; at least, it is extremely difficult without training. We tend to climb towards higher states of self-awareness by means of a series of self-images. We create a certain imaginary image of the sort of person we would like to be, and then try to live up to the image. 'The great man is the play-actor of his ideals,' says Nietzsche.

One of the clearest expositions of the self-image idea can be found in a story called *The Looking Glass* by the Brazilian novelist Machado de Assis. A young man who has lived all his life in a small village in Brazil is called up for military service. In due course he becomes a lieutenant. When he returns home in his uniform he is the envy of the village; his mother calls him 'My lieutenant'. One of his aunts is particularly delighted with him: she invites him to her remote farm, and insists on addressing him as 'Senhor Lieutenant'. Her brother-in-law and all the slaves follow suit. At first, the youth is embarrassed; he *doesn't feel like* a lieutenant. But gradually he gets used to the idea. 'The petting, the attention, the deference, produced a transformation in me. . . .' He begins to feel like a lieutenant. But one day, the aunt goes away to the bedside of a sick daughter, and takes the brother-in-law with her. The lieutenant is left alone with the slaves. And the next morning, they have all deserted, leaving him alone.

Suddenly, there is no one to feed his ego. He feels lost. In his room there is an enormous mirror, placed there by his aunt. One day he looks in the mirror—and his outline seems blurred and confused. The sense of unreality

increases until he is afraid he is going insane. And then he has an inspiration. He takes his lieutenant's uniform from the wardrobe and puts it on. And immediately, his image in the mirror becomes solid and clear. His feeling of sanity and self-respect returns.

Every day thereafter, he puts on the uniform, and sits in front of the mirror. And he is able to stay sane through the remaining week before his aunt returns . . .{8}

Machado subtitles his story 'Rough draft of a new theory of the human soul'. And so it is, for a story written in 1882. His hero explains to his auditors that he believes man has two souls: one inside, looking out, the other outside, looking in. But this is crude psychology. He means that the subjective 'I' gains its sense of identity from actions and outward objects. But this implies that the 'inner me' remains unchanged. This in turn implies that the shy, nervous 'inner self' is the permanent substratum of one's more confident layers of personality, and this is obviously untrue. Shyness is simply a disinclination to express oneself out of fear that it will turn out badly; confidence—such as he gained through the petting and admiration—is the ability to act decisively.

The key sentence is: 'The petting, the attention, the deference, produced a transformation in me.' For this type of transformation, I coined the word 'promotion'. It is, in effect, a promotion of the personality to a higher level. All poetic experience is a 'promotion' experience, since it raises the personality to a higher level. One has a sense of becoming a stronger, or more mature, or more competent, or more serious person.

If he had been a lieutenant for several years, being alone in the house would not have eroded his sense of identity. The trouble is that he is young, and that he is

only just trying-on a new personality, the 'Senhor Lieutenant'. The image of himself in the looking glass provides the reinforcement he needs.

The resemblance between this story and Romain Gary's story of the prison camp need hardly be pointed out. In both cases, moral decline is arrested by *reminding oneself* of something that re-creates the self-image. The weakness of Machado's theory of two souls becomes clear when we consider that Robert keeps himself sane in solitary confinement by an effort of inner-strength, of imagination, not by evoking a more 'successful' level of his personality. The elephants are an image of freedom. The sensation of freedom is always accompanied by a feeling of *contraction* of one's inner-being. Such a contraction occurs when we concentrate intently upon anything. It also occurs in sexual excitement, and explains why the orgasm is perhaps the most fundamental—at least the most common—'promotion' experience.

Donald Aldous, the technical editor of a well-known record magazine, told me a story that makes the role of the self-image even clearer. Before the war, the B.B.C. hired a famous conductor to broadcast a series of concerts. They were to be relayed from the new soundproof studios. The orchestra had never played there before, and the rehearsals lacked vitality. They explained that the studio was too dead: they could not hear the echo of their own playing. Donald Aldous was given the interesting job of arranging a system of loudspeakers around the walls that relayed the sound back to the orchestra a split second after they had played it, like an echo. As soon as they could 'hear themselves', the playing of the orchestra improved enormously.

What is at issue in all such cases is a certain inner-

strength. Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House* tells Ellie Dunne that as a young man, he 'sought danger, hardship, horror and death'—as captain of a whaler—'that I might feel the life in me more intensely'. That is to say, he sought conditions that would keep him at a high level of tension and alertness, so as to develop the inner-muscle of concentration. And note that the function of this muscle is to produce a sense of inner-freedom. When it is feeble, I am easily bored, depressed, made to feel sorry for myself. I am a moral hypochondriac. When it has been strengthened by a long period of alertness and effort) I feel equal to most emergencies, and this is the same as to say that I feel inner-freedom .

The self-image notion is of immediate relevance to Maslovian psychology. And here we touch upon the very heart of the matter, the most important point of all.

Let us consider the question: what is the mechanism by which a 'self-image' produces 'promotion'? The answer is: it provides me with a kind of artificial standard of objective values. It gives me a sense of external *meaning*. Why did the peak experience under mescaline cure the alcoholics? Because the peak experience is a flood of meaning, obviously pouring in from outside. As it pours in, you ask yourself the question: Why doesn't this happen all the time, if the meaning is always there? And the answer is obvious: because I allow the will to become passive, and the senses close up. If I want more meaning, then I must force my senses wide open by an increased effort of will. We might think of the senses as spring-loaded shutters that must be forced open, and which close again when you let them go.

It must be clearly understood that we live in a kind of

room of subjective emotions and values. If I am not very careful, the shutters close, and I lose my objective standards. At this point, I may wildly exaggerate the importance of my emotions, my private ups and downs, and there is no feeling of objective reality to contradict me. A child beset by misery is more bewildered than an adult because he has nothing to measure it by; he doesn't know how serious it is. As soon as his mother kisses him and says, 'There, it doesn't really matter ... ', he relaxes. If I get myself 'into a state' about some trivial worry, and then I hear that some old friend has died of cancer, I instantly 'snap out' of my black mood, for my emotions are cut down to their proper size by comparison with a more serious reality.

Moods and emotions are a kind of fever produced by lack of contact with reality. The shutters are closed, and the temperature in the rooms rises. It *can* rise to a degree where it becomes a serious fever, where the emotions have got so out-of-control that reality *cannot* break in. These are states of psychotic delusion—or perhaps merely of nervous overstrain. The characteristic of these states is exaggeration: every minor worry turns into a monstrous bogey. Inevitably, I cease to make efforts of will—for the will is at its healthiest when I have a firm sense of reality and of purpose. And we have seen what happens when the will becomes passive: the vital forces sink, and, at a certain point, physical health is affected. The 'existential psychologist' Viktor Frankl—of whom I shall speak at length later—remarked on 'how close is the connection between a man's state of mind—his courage and hope, or lack of them—and the state of immunity of his body', and tells a story that makes the point forcefully. Frankl was a Jew who spent most of the war in a German concentration

camp:

'I once had a dramatic demonstration of the close link between the loss of faith in the future and this dangerous giving up. F—, my senior block warden, a fairly well known composer and librettist, confided in me one day: "I would like to tell you something, Doctor. I have had a strange dream. A voice told me that I could wish for something, that I should only say what I wanted to know, and all my questions would be answered. What do you think I asked? That I would like to know when the war would be over for me. You know what I mean, Doctor—for me! I wanted to know when we, when our camp, would be liberated and our sufferings come to an end." "'And when did you have this dream?" I asked.

"In February, 1945", he answered. It was then the beginning of March.

"What did your dream voice answer?"

'Furtively he whispered to me, "March thirtieth."

'When F— told me about his dream, he was still full of hope and convinced that the voice of his dream would be right. But as the promised day drew nearer, the war news which reached our camp made it appear very unlikely that we would be free on the promised date. On March twenty-ninth, F— suddenly became very ill and ran a high temperature. On March thirtieth, the day his prophecy had told him that the war and suffering would be over for him, he became delirious and lost consciousness.

On March thirty-first, he was dead. To all outward appearances he had died of typhus.'{9}

Frankl's composer friend was physically near the end of his resources; this is why the collapse of his will made such a difference. (Frankl also mentions the unprecedentedly high death rate in the camp between Christmas 1944 and

New Year 1945, because so many prisoners had pinned their hopes on being home for Christmas.) It took a year of work in the chewing-gum factory to deplete Maslow's girl patient to the point where she ceased to menstruate. Normally healthy people possess a 'cushion' of energy to absorb shocks and disappointments, and this cushion is identical to the 'surplus energy tanks' of which we have spoken. It is maintained by will power fired by the sense of meaning. We are only aware of this *direct* action of the will upon the body in physical extremes: for example, if I am feeling sick, I can disperse the sickness by 'snapping out' of my feeling of nausea and summoning subconscious forces of health. If we were more clearly aware of this connection between 'positive consciousness' and physical health, we would treat mental passivity as a form of illness. Another anecdote of Frankl's—from the same book—may be said to provide the foundation of an 'attitude psychology' closely related to Maslow's. The prisoners were transferred from Auschwitz to Dachau. The journey took two days and three nights, during which they were packed so tight that few could sit down, and half starved. At Dachau, they had to stand in line all night and throughout the next morning in freezing rain, as punishment because one man had fallen asleep and missed the roll call. Yet they were all immensely happy, laughing and making jokes: *because Dachau had no incinerator chimney.*

To summarise: man evolves through a sense of external meaning. When his sense of meaning is strong, he maintains a high level of will-drive and of general health. Without this sense of external meaning, he becomes the victim of subjective emotions, a kind of dream that tends to degenerate into nightmare. His uncontrolled fantasies

and worries turn into an octopus that strangles him.

Man has evolved various ways of preventing this from happening. The most important is religion. This *tells* a man that certain objective standards are permanently true, and that his own nature is weak and sinful. The chief trouble with authoritarian religion is that it works best for intellectually-uncomplicated people, and fails to carry much conviction for the highly sophisticated and neurotic—who are the very ones who need it most.

In certain respects, art succeeds where religion fails. A great symphony or poem is an *active reminder* of the reality of meaning: it provides a stimulus like an electric shock, re-animating the will and the appetite for life. Its disadvantage is that we all assume that art is 'subjective' by nature, that it tells us about the emotions of the artist, not about the objective world. And so 'when life fails', the effectiveness of art diminishes.

Men of imagination have always tended to use the self-image method to prevent them from becoming victims of the octopus of subjectivity. It is essentially a method for pushing problems and disappointments to arm's length. Yeats has described how, when he was sure no one was looking, he used to walk about London with the peculiar strut of Henry Irving's Hamlet. In *Heartbreak House*, Hector whiles away an idle moment by pretending to fight a duel with an imaginary antagonist and then making love to an imaginary woman. But the self-image also plays a central role in all human creativity. The young artist, lacking certainty of his own identity, projects a mental image of himself that blurs into an image of the artist he most admires. Brahms's self-image is half-Beethoven; Yeats's is half-Shelley. And the ultimate value of their work—its inner-consistency and strength—depends upon

how deeply they commit themselves to acting out the self-image.

According to Freud and Karl Marx, fantasy is an escape from reality and responsibility. According to Maslow, fantasy is the means by which a determined man masters reality. 'Reality' is the key word in existential psychology. It poses no philosophical problems. It means objective meaning, as opposed to subjective values. Eliot wrote: 'We each think of the key, each in his prison', implying that there is no escape from one's subjective prison. Blake knew better: he agreed that 'five windows light the caverned man', but added that through one of them, he can pass out whenever he wants to. That is to say that by an effort of reaching out to meaning, he can re-establish contact with reality. The situation could be compared to a child who becomes confused during a game of blind man's buff, but who has only to remove the bandage in order to re-orient himself to the room. And the most important point for psychotherapy is that he can do this *by an act of will*. Mental illness is a kind of amnesia, in which the patient has forgotten his own powers. The task of the therapist is to somehow renew the patient's contact with reality.

The first thing that will be observed about this 'third force psychology' I have outlined is that it is a great deal more optimistic than that of Freud, or even Jung. It implies that *all* human beings are closer to more intense states of consciousness than they realise. Somewhere in his autobiography, Stephen Spender remarks that everyone nowadays is neurotic, because it is inevitable at this stage in civilisation. Maslow's feeling seems to be that neurosis is definitely abnormal, and that there is no reason why

most people should not be capable of a high level of mental health and of peak experiences.

Among intelligent people, our cultural premises are certainly largely responsible for the prevailing pessimism. The Victorians went in for moral uplift and the belief in man's higher nature. Darwin and Freud changed all that. Darwin showed that we do not need the postulate of a creator to explain why man is superior to the ape. Freud denounced religion as a delusion based upon the child's fear of the father, and asserted that neurosis is due to the frustration of man's animal nature—specifically, his sex drives. After the First World War, despair and frustration became the keynote of literature; the optimists of the previous decade—Shaw, Wells, Chesterton—became almost unmentionable. In science, philosophy, psychology, there was an increasing tendency to 'reductionism'—which Arthur Koestler has defined as the belief that all human activities can be explained in terms of the elementary responses of the lower animals, such as the psychologist's laboratory rat. This reductionism should not be construed as a materialistic jibe at idealism—although it often looks like that—but as *a desire to get things done*) accompanied by the fear that nothing will get done if too much is attempted. Maslow told me once that a respectable psychologist had leapt to his feet at a meeting of the American Psychological Association, and shouted at him—Maslow—'You are an evil man. You want to destroy psychology.' The irony of the story is that by the time Maslow told it to me, he was president of the American Psychological Association! The old reductionist climate began to change in the early sixties. In Europe, the school of existential psychology was already well established. Sir Karl Popper—one of the original founders of the school of

Logical Positivism—was arguing that science is not a plodding, logical, investigation of the universe, but that it proceeds by flashes of intuition, like poetry. Popper's most distinguished follower, Michael Polanyi, published in 1958 his revolutionary book *Personal Knowledge*, a carefully reasoned attack on the 'timetable or telephone directory conception of science'—i.e. the view that all future books on science could be written by an electronic brain, if it was big enough. Polanyi stated that what drives the scientist is *an increasing sense of contact with reality*—that is to say, precisely what drives the poet or the saint. In biology, the old rigid Darwinism began to relax; in 1965, Sir Alister Hardy, an orthodox Darwinian, and Professor of Zoology at Oxford, asserted in his Gifford Lectures that the genes might be influenced by telepathy, and that certain biological phenomena are only explainable on the assumption of some kind of 'group mind'. 'Reductionism' was breaking apart. It was in 1968 that an American publisher suggested to me that I should write a book about Maslow. I asked him how he felt about the idea, and he approved—pointing out, at the same time, that another friend, Frank Goble, was also writing one. I decided to go ahead all the same, and Maslow patiently answered the questions I threw at him through 1969, although a heart attack had slowed him up considerably. At my suggestion, he made a pile of tapes, full of biographical and personal details, some for publication, some not. Meanwhile, I was reading my way steadily through a hundred or so papers he had sent me, dating back to the early thirties, when he was working on monkeys with Harry Harlow. But when I started writing the book, in Majorca, in the autumn of 1969, I realised that it was going to be more difficult than I had expected. I had

intended to make it a straight account of Maslow's life and work, a short book that would stick to my subject. But, after all, Viktor Frankl was also part of the subject, and so were Erwin Straus, Medard Boss, William Glasser, Ronald Laing, and many other existential psychologists. Worse still, it was hard to keep myself out of it, since Maslow's work had exerted so much influence on my own ideas, and since we had been engaged in a fragmentary dialogue for the past ten years.

In June, 1969, I told Maslow in a letter that it looked as if my book about him was going to be part of a larger book about the revolution in psychology, and asked more questions, which he answered on tape. A few days before this last batch of tapes arrived, I received a letter from his secretary telling me that he had died of a heart attack on June 8, 1970. Listening to his voice, it was hard to get used to the idea that he was dead.

I am still not certain whether this is the best way to write the book; but I can see no other. In this introduction I have tried to give a sketchy outline of the ideas that preoccupied Maslow—and myself—during the past ten years. In the first part of the book, I have tried to give a picture of the major trends in psychology from its beginnings in the 19th century, through the Freudian revolution, down to Maslow. Part Two deals exclusively with Maslow; it is the book I intended to write to begin with. Part Three discusses existential psychology in general, and attempts to state some general conclusions about the movement. Inevitably, this is the most personal part of the book, and may be regarded as a continuation of this introduction. The ultimate question is not one of psychology so much as of philosophy, or even religion.

Viktor Frankl talks about 'the existential vacuum', writing: 'More and more patients are crowding our clinics and consulting rooms complaining of an inner emptiness, a sense of total and ultimate meaninglessness of their lives'. I coined the term 'nothingness neurosis' to describe this state. But in discussing it, I have tried to avoid generalisations, and to remain faithful to the phenomenological—the descriptive—method. That was always Maslow's own approach.

PART ONE

I

The Age of Machinery:
from Descartes to Mill

ACCORDING TO MASLOW, mental health depends upon the will fired by a sense of purpose. When human beings lose their forward drive, the will batteries become flat, just as a car's batteries become flat if it is left in the garage all winter. The result is a feeling of 'life failure', a loss of instinctive values. In Maslow's psychology, the central place is given to the sense of values the human response to *what is worthwhile*.

It is one of the absurd paradoxes of psychology that it has taken three centuries to reach the conclusion that man actually possesses a mind and a will.

Some time in the 1630s, the philosopher Descartes was intrigued by the automata in the royal gardens at Versailles. When the water supply was turned on, musical instruments played: nymphs vanished into the bushes, and a menacing figure of Neptune advanced on the intruder waving a trident. It was not long since Harvey had discovered the circulation of the blood, and many physiologists believed that the nerves were tubes that conducted the 'animal spirits' round the body. Descartes found himself speculating about what distinguishes a man from an automaton, and concluded that it is simply that his mechanisms are more subtle. There was no question, of course, of believing that man is *merely* a machine; as a

good Catholic, he knew that man possesses an immortal soul. But it seemed to him highly likely that plants and animals are nothing more than automata, driven by their sensations and desires. Even in man, he wasn't certain where the mechanism ended and the soul began; he decided that the body and soul interact in the brain's pineal gland. The mind, according to Descartes, can exist and think quite apart from the brain.

Descartes was timid by nature. When he heard that Galileo had been seized by the Inquisition for declaring that the earth revolves around the sun, he decided against publishing his own system, contained in a book called *Le Monde*. An expurgated version appeared after his death.

Other thinkers were bolder. Thomas Hobbes, an Englishman and a Protestant, visited Galileo in 1636; although Galileo had recanted his heretical ideas three years before, he was still under house arrest. Hobbes began working on his own system of nature, and it was intended as a blow against religious bigotry. The mind, he said, does not exist, for it is a contradiction to talk about an 'immaterial substance'. Even God, if he exists, must be made of *something*. It follows that thoughts are the motion of some refined substance in the head. Imagination is basically the same thing as memory—a kind of faded snapshot of past events. Both memory and imagination are no more than 'decaying sense', like the after-image you get if you close your eyes after staring at a bright window frame. Moreover, said Hobbes (still defying the Pope), the driving motives of human existence are fear and the desire for power. Generosity and disinterestedness are only more subtle forms of the will to power.

Hobbes, it must be remembered, was a contemporary of Shakespeare and Milton; he lived in an age when the

burning of witches—and atheists—was still commonplace. Any scientific man with a mind of his own felt the need to tilt at the colossus of bigotry that still ruled the lives of most people in Europe. The best way of undermining superstition was to continue the work of men like Giordano Bruno and Francis Bacon: to write books glorifying the power of reason. Philosophy, Hobbes said, is a form of calculation that uses words instead of numbers. It has no business with belief or superstition, only with what can be *known for certain*. Anything worth understanding can be understood scientifically. The scientific definition of a man is not an immortal spirit (saved from damnation by Jesus), but a group of material particles in motion.

All this is not an expression of intellectual defeat or nihilism, but the defiant expression of a credo of freedom. (And even in England, the publication of such ideas was not without its dangers; Hobbes anticipated charges of heresy by fleeing to Paris.) To begin with, 'reductionism' was forged as a weapon of free thought.

Hobbes's friend Lord Herbert of Cherbury wrote books on philosophy that were closer in spirit to Descartes. For Descartes accepted that man has certain ideas that are *not* learned from experience; for example, the idea of God, of right and wrong, of the self, of cause and effect. . . . Herbert of Cherbury interpreted this to mean that God has provided man with certain faculties by means of which he can attain to infallible truth. He is born with innate truth written on his soul, so to speak. This means that he has no need of religious revelation; the use of these faculties is enough to prove the truth of religion. (This doctrine became known as Deism, or Natural Religion.)

John Locke, a younger contemporary of Hobbes, set out to refute this theory. Locke was a member of a club that met to discuss questions of religion and morality. Cherbury's views caused some controversy. Locke supported the view that man has no knowledge that is not learned from experience. At the beginning of his life, the human mind is like a sheet of blank paper, and experience writes on it. Locke wrote an essay explaining this idea and read it to the club; it was received with applause. He decided to expand it, and the result was *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), which attempted to do for the human mind what Isaac Newton had recently done for the solar system in his *Principia*: to explain it in terms of *laws*.

Nearly half a century later, Locke's views were carried to new extremes by David Hume—who, for our purposes, is one of the most significant figures in the history of psychology. For Hume's model of the human mind, has influenced every psychologist—directly or otherwise—since the publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739). Hume went even further than Hobbes in denying the existence of the mind. When he looked inside himself, he said, he did not discover a soul, the 'essential David Hume', but merely sensations and ideas, drifting around like leaves in the wind. Why should there be an essential David Hume, or anybody else? The personality of man is totally shaped by his experience, as mountains are shaped by wind and rain. He derives the idea of his identity from his intercourse with other people. His mental life is only a dim carbon copy of his physical life. What he calls thinking is actually only association of ideas. It follows, of course, that free will is an illusion. It must be, because man has no

'self' to do the willing.

And it was these ideas—that thinking and willing are illusions—that came to mean so much to the psychology of the next two centuries. It certainly looks plausible enough. If I stare out of the window of a train, my thoughts drift along, one thing reminding me of another. Readers of Sherlock Holmes will remember his trick of startling Watson by suddenly breaking in on his thoughts with a remark that proves he knows what Watson is thinking. He does it by watching Watson's eyes wandering round the room, and inferring his 'train of thought' from the expression on his face. And what is a 'train of thought', after all, but an association of ideas? Can we deny that this is how we do most of our thinking?

But surely, we might object, *real* thinking is quite different from daydreaming or free-associating? *It feels* different. I have a sensation of putting more will into it—in fact, of putting more of 'myself' into it than into daydreaming. Hume will, of course, deny this. He will say that 'real thinking' is also association of ideas, and that how much I put into it is neither here nor there. I could not put more into it unless what I was thinking about stimulated and excited me. Everything can be explained in terms of stimulus and response . . .

And this is, I think, the point to state flatly that Hume's theory is ultimately unacceptable. One stage further, and he will be assuring me that I am not alive at all, and that there is no such thing as consciousness. (In fact, William James wrote an essay entitled 'Does "Consciousness" Exist?', and the behavioural psychologist J .B. Watson answered the question in the negative.) It is true that you *could* interpret all thinking as a mechanical process, just

as a paranoid can interpret everything that happens to him as evidence that the whole world is plotting against him. And Archbishop Whately made the same point in a delightful book called *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*, in which he proves conclusively, by Hume's method, that Napoleon never existed. With a little skill and casuistry, *any* proposition can be doubted. It would be possible for a Martian to argue that the Empire State Building is a product of the wind and weather, and his arguments would be irrefutable unless Martians could come to earth and investigate for themselves. And if we are going to explain the mind as some kind of 'natural formation', how about the body? What it amounts to is that our human world is full of *meaningful* objects—chairs, tables, houses, books—and Hume has invented a party game whose rules consist in explaining them away as meaningless, the products of chance. It is amusing as an intellectual exercise, but should not be taken seriously.

As in the case of Hobbes, it is important to understand Hume's reasons for insisting on the seriousness of his particular game. By the time he wrote the *Treatise*, witches were no longer burned, and Isaac Newton had settled the matter of the earth revolving round the sun once and for all; but the thought of the age was still dominated by religion. Volumes of sermons were as popular as novels are today—readers of Boswell will recall Dr Johnson's discourse on the relative merits of the sermons of Jortin, Sherlock, Atterbury, Tillotson, South, Seed and Smallridge. Hume produced a sceptical essay on miracles whose avowed intention was to act as 'a check to the most arrogant bigotry and superstition'. He enjoys baiting the clergy, commenting that a wise man proportions his belief to the evidence, and that a miracle

would only be acceptable if the reasons against it should be more incredible than the reasons in its favour. In the *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751) he asserts—predictably—that moral judgements are purely a matter of emotion, not of reason. The word ‘good’ means either useful or agreeable. It must have given Hume considerable pleasure to read some of the indignant sermons directed against him. A society dominated by the clergy must have been almost as intolerable to his precise intellect as a society dominated by television advertisements or women’s magazines would have been. Michael Polanyi’s comment about Marxism applies to Hume’s scepticism: ‘. . . it enables the modern mind, tortured by moral self-doubt, to indulge its moral passions in terms which also satisfy its passion for ruthless objectivity’.^{10} Hume’s feeling for logic and reason was a passion.

But did Hume literally believe his demonstration that man possesses no self and no will? If by belief we mean a principle that one lives by, the answer is no. He was a philosopher, and this restricted his field of intellectual vision. If he had been a racing driver, he would have been more aware of the reality of his will and freedom of choice, for a man involved in such a dangerous activity, requiring split-second timing, is aware of dozens of choices that he *could* make—overtaking, braking, cutting—in, accelerating. A racing driver is aware that what does the choosing is not a robot, but a ‘self’ that looks out from behind his eyes. And as he takes a corner at eighty miles an hour, he knows perfectly well that this self is not merely the sum of all his past sensations and experiences, but that it is somehow over and above them, their *ruler*. Sedentary philosophers fail to notice the importance of the

will because thinking uses so little of it. A zoologist whose only knowledge of tigers came from the stuffed ones in museums might be forgiven for failing to emphasise their speed and savagery. It takes an upsurge of powerful feeling to make the mind aware of the importance of willed effort. It is not even true that it makes no difference to leave the will out of account in psychology, as William James discovered. James was much inclined to Hume's type of sceptical analysis. At the age of twenty-eight, when in a state of depression, he experienced a panic-attack followed by nervous collapse. He describes^{11} how he was suddenly struck by 'a horrible fear of my own existence'. He found himself recalling an imbecilic patient he had seen in an asylum, and thinking 'That shape am I, potentially. Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him.' For months he experienced continual panic, until, on April 29, 1870, he read Renouvier's essay on freedom, and was suddenly convinced by his definition of free will—'the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts'. He decided that his first act of will would be to believe in free will. A slow recovery commenced. The case bears obvious resemblances to Maslow's case of the girl who ceased to menstruate, and the element that makes the difference between neurosis and health is again optimistic forward drive. If Hume had really believed in his own theories, he would have ended in mental collapse.

Again, consider the matter of sexual response. At first there seems to be no difficulty in the way of explaining this in terms of associationist psychology. A healthy male sees a strange girl undressing; the image is conveyed to the retina of his eye, to his brain, to his sexual nerves;

there is a release of hormones, and the stimulus produces a predictable effect on the sexual organs. It *seems* straightforward enough, until we look more closely. Sex between two intelligent human beings is never as simple as this; they are responding on many levels, and both have other things at the back of their minds. It is far more complicated than any Pavlov-dog mechanism—as one can see, for example, in reading D. H. Lawrence. The various impulses must be channelled, directed, perhaps taken past certain obstacles. There is a story of Maupassant's called *The Unknown* in which a man who is completely obsessed and infatuated with a girl experiences total sexual failure with her—because she has a fine line of black hair down the centre of her back which he sees as she undresses. The Pavlov-dog mechanism only applies to the simplest kind of sex. More complex varieties may require as much 'steering' and judgement as a football player needs as he dribbles the ball towards the goal. The act is *not* preordained for success; there are a hundred possibilities, between supreme success and total failure, and the whole act sweeps forward *on the point of the will*, like a surf rider on a wave. Even the simple process of sexual tumescence is not Pavlovian, as one can see in the Maupassant story; it depends upon mental acts *carried forward* by the will, step by step, and the whole process could be reversed or arrested at any of the steps.

Man already spends most of his time in a state of passivity, hardly aware of his capacity for freedom; this is the price he has paid for his complexity. If Hume's associationism ever came to be *totally* accepted as a picture of the workings of the human mind, all flashes of non-passivity, all peak experiences, would cease.

On the other hand, if man can ever come to grasp how

completely he sustains his minute-to-minute, second-to-second existence by means of his will, the result will be a total change in the quality of human consciousness. Consider what happens if I am feeling vaguely sick, and I somehow repress the nausea by an act of will. What exactly do I do? The simplest method is to focus on something that interests me deeply, to try to forget my sickness. For the very act of focusing awakens my impersonal will. And the effect upon the body is instantaneous. It could be compared to those ghosts in M. R. James who get inside the bed sheet and make the sheet rise up and float around the room. When the will is passive, the sheet lies innocently on the bed; the will awakens, and the sheet suddenly rises up with a human shape inside it.

At this point, another aspect of Hume's philosophy must be considered: his belief that we *add* meaning to the world—just as you add milk to a bowl of cornflakes, which would otherwise be dry and uneatable.

Again, the evidence looks convincing. If I hear a tune that reminds me of some happy time in the past, I feel a ripple of pleasure. A child who is with me does not experience the same pleasure, for he is hearing it for the first time, with an 'innocent ear', so to speak. I am getting the pleasure from a certain meaning which I *add* to the tune. A man in love sees all kinds of charms in the lady of his affections; his friends strongly suspect that it is a kind of self-hypnosis, for to them she appears to be just another girl. . . . On a spring morning, I go for a walk and see everything as delightful; on my walk I meet a friend who works a night shift in a factory, and he obviously fails to appreciate the charm of the morning because he is

tired. In other words, it is my *energy* that makes the difference between delight and indifference, just as a glass of whisky can brighten a dull day.

That is Hume's position. The world is just moving matter. It is pointless to ask whether a sunset is really beautiful, just as it is pointless to ask if it is really red. Redness is a wavelength of light which my eyes *interpret* as redness, and beauty is also 'in the eye of the beholder', not out there.

This leads to what is known as the sense-datum theory of perception. When I say, 'I see that pencil', I mean literally that I perceive a real, solid object. But if someone puts the pencil in a glass of water, it appears to bend in the middle. Would it be true to say, 'I see a bent pencil'? Obviously not: the pencil itself isn't bent. So what is it that I see? The answer is 'a sense datum', an appearance. Sense data can vary. A bar of chocolate tastes sweet to me and bitter to a man with jaundice. Is the chocolate really sweet or bitter? The question is meaningless, says Hume. All I know about the chocolate is what my senses tell me, and my senses are quite capable of telling me lies. For example, they may tell me that a mirage is an oasis.

According to this view, the senses are like an interpreter who accompanies a tourist in a foreign country. The tourist cannot speak the language, so he has to rely on the interpreter for all communication with the natives. And he has no way of knowing how far the interpreter distorts what people say to him or what he tries to say to them. For all he knows, the interpreter may have a malicious sense of humour, and give an absurd twist to everything. If that is so, man can never *know* anything definite; his most cherished certainties may be illusions.

This view, however, is based to some extent upon

verbal confusion. The words 'sense data' *mean* that I am aware of something. If I am looking at a red book, then my awareness of red is a sense datum. To say I am 'aware of a sense datum' is to say I am aware of my awareness of red, which is tautologous.{12} One of Hume's earliest and most penetrating critics rejected the sense datum theory. This was Thomas Reid (1710-1796), another hardheaded Scot, who was also a clergyman. Reid had been much impressed by the arguments of Locke and Bishop Berkeley, but when he read Hume, his common sense revolted. Hume says that consciousness is a series of sensations and impressions that appear to be joined up together because they follow one another. In reality, there is no connection. Consciousness is not even a string of beads; it is a row of beads without a string. Reid denied this: he declared that man's intuition of his consciousness reveals that it is a creative unity, capable of purpose. There *is* a string. And my mind doesn't 'add' meaning to a bowl of dry sense data. It has a direct sense of meaning, of reality. It is common sense for the tourist to assume that his interpreter is translating him more or less accurately—certainly more sensible than assuming, on no evidence whatever, that he is wilfully distorting. Besides, the tourist has a pair of eyes, and his instincts would soon tell him if the interpreter was distorting to any great extent. This is Reid's argument, abstracted from his rather obscure *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764). He convinced many people at the time, but Hume remained the greater influence on psychology.

In the twentieth century, Alfred North Whitehead used similar arguments against Hume. Whitehead argued that we have two kinds of perception, 'immediacy perception'

and 'meaning perception', which operate together just as my two eyes operate to give me depth perception. (Whitehead called them 'presentational immediacy' and 'causal efficacy'.) Hume's 'string of sensations' is immediacy perception; but more important, from the point of view of my will and creative drives, is 'meaning perception'. Meaning perception shows us what is important; immediacy perception shows us what is trivial. One is a telescope; the other, a microscope. Significantly, Whitehead illustrates the theory by mentioning William Pitt, the Prime Minister of England, who was heard on his deathbed to murmur: 'What shades we are, what shadows we pursue.' Whitehead points out that what has happened here is that the exhausted Pitt has *lost* meaning perception, and grasps the world only as the meaningless repetition of immediate experience. The significance of this illustration for our present purposes should be clear. If immediacy perception is associated with despair, and mental health depends upon the sense of meaning, then a psychology that allows no room for meaning perception is seriously deficient *as a science*.

From the point of view of Maslow's psychology, the real objection to Hume is this: that his psychology cannot define the difference between narrow consciousness and 'intensity consciousness', which, as far as human beings are concerned, is the most important difference in the world. The consciousness of a very tired man is almost entirely 'subjective'. He sees things, but somehow they don't 'get through' to him. The quality of his everyday experience is not much higher than a daydream. (Most people have had to ask themselves at some time: 'Did that actually happen to me, or was it just something I dreamed or imagined?') There are other states when everything

seems curiously *new* and fresh, and impressions seem to fall into the senses like a stone into a pool, producing ripples. We have all experienced these two states—the feeling of narrowness seldom leaves us. But Hume’s psychology cannot distinguish between them (any more than Freud’s can, as we shall see). He might say that in states of ‘intensity consciousness’, one is simply more wide-awake and therefore receives more impressions and sensations than when tired. But this is not true, for intensity consciousness can happen to me when I am tired. No, the real difference between these two states is a difference of what I put *into* them. When I am bored, I close my senses as I might close a window. If something ‘awakens my interest’ I open my senses and somehow ‘reach out’ towards reality. This is impossible, according to Hume, because (a) I do not possess the will-power to ‘reach out’; will is an illusion, and (b) I cannot, in any case, ‘reach out’ to reality; I am trapped behind my senses as if in a prison, and all I can ‘know’ is the sense data that get in through the bars of my cell.

It is worth noting, before we leave Hume, that one of the reasons that he was convinced of the correctness of his ‘associationism’ was that he was unaware of the existence of the subconscious mind. The most powerful forces that move men and animals tend to work on a level below normal consciousness: the sexual impulse is an obvious example. And an instinctive activity *seems* to be automatic—that is to say, mechanical. Only as a fuller understanding of the subconscious mind began to develop, in the early 19th century, was it possible to grasp the difference between a mechanism and a subconscious or instinctive drive.

On the Continent, it was a contemporary of Hume's, the Abbe de Condillac (1715-1780), who popularised the idea that man is 99% machine. One of his most celebrated and persuasive arguments makes use of a statue as illustration. Imagine, says Condillac, a statue which nevertheless possesses just one single faculty, the sense of smell. A pungent smell impinges on this sense, and the result is 'attention'. More smells follow, and now that attention has developed, the difference between them is noted—that is to say, memory also develops. And from then on, anything can happen: that is to say, according to Condillac, the statue will develop a kind of mind based upon the sense of smell. The complex develops out of the simple. Allow the statue five senses—as man actually has—and the possibilities for increased complexity are endless, Condillac goes on to explain how his statue develops the power of reflection, imagination, reason, as well as passions, hopes and sense of purpose (will). Man does not *need* free will, says Condillac, since he can only desire what is good for him anyway—or what he thinks is good for him. What else would he desire even if he had free will? The complexities of the human mind are due to natural laws. It is as if snowflakes believed that they choose their own shapes, pointing to the differences between them as evidence of free choice. Until a snowflake psychologist explains to them that their shapes are strictly a matter of the laws of nature, and could not be altered even if they wanted. (The image is not Condillac's, but it is in his spirit.)

It was a disciple of Condillac, Pierre Cabanis (1757-1808), who took some of the most decisive steps in the history of psychology. It is true that Cabanis is basically a materialist, asserting that the brain is an organ for

producing thought as the stomach is an organ for digesting food, and that all mental processes are in reality physical. But he was also a practical physiologist who made a study of the nervous system. His conclusion was that there is an 'inner man' and an 'outer man'. The outer man is Hume's conscious, rational being; the inner man is more complex, for he consists of lower centres of consciousness associated with the brain and nervous system. This is, in fact, the first true appearance of the subconscious mind in psychology. {13} Cabanis also believed in the existence of a 'moi centrale', a central ego, and recognised that perception is a *transaction* between this central ego and the outside world. In the case of hallucinations or delusions, the 'inner man' does far more than his proper share of the transaction, overwhelming the external stimuli.

And so, in spite of thinking of himself as a materialist, Cabanis took several huge strides beyond Hume and Condillac. He recognised that perception is a *mental act*, a reaching out. In that case, what does the reaching? The very 'inner man', the essential 'me' that Hume denies. Add to this his intuitive recognition of the subconscious mind, and he becomes one of the key figures in the history of psychology. However, history, with its usual irony, has preserved his name mainly as the founder of physiological psychology, the laboratory study of the way we react to sensations, etc. In the 19th century, this aspect of his work was continued by Hermann von Helmholtz, E. H. Weber and Theodor Fechner. Helmholtz was the first man to measure the speed of a nerve impulse, while Fechner did important work on the measurement of the intensity of sensations. Wilhelm Wundt, who continued this work, coined the valuable term 'apperception', meaning the way

that new experiences blend with the mass of old experiences, forming a new whole.^{14} The value of this concept will be seen later.

Associationism received its most dogmatic statement in the work of James Mill, who asserted flatly that the mind is a machine and its laws mechanical laws. His son John Stuart Mill was altogether less of a determinist, and when he revised and edited his father's work, he suggested that perhaps the laws of the mind are *chemical* rather than mechanical; elements blend, strange combinations take place. The poet in Mill was in revolt against the depressing notion that all our feelings and insights are nothing more than the permutations of a computer. And there are times when he seems to recognise that even the complex, mysterious reactions of chemicals fail to explain the alchemy of the will. In economics, he rejected the determinism of Adam Smith and Ricardo, asserting that even if there are rigid laws of production of wealth, there are no rigid laws of distribution; society can make up its own mind what to do with its resources. But in psychology, he never worked up the courage to take the revolutionary step.

The philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817-1881) should be mentioned as an important transitional figure in psychology, and a spiritual forebear of Maslow. Lotze recognised that most of the laws of the universe—and the mind—are mechanical; but, he insisted, mechanism does not have the last word. Human hopes point beyond mere mechanism to a universe of values. No doubt the structure of the world—and the mind—is 'atomistic'; but perhaps even the atoms themselves are not dead matter; they *could* be sentient. Fechner himself had made the same

suggestion: if trees and plants are alive, but much *less* alive than human beings, then why should stones not be alive, but less so than trees? In the 20th century, Whitehead incorporated a similar view into his 'philosophy of organism', and Bernard Shaw's evolutionism is based on the same concept.

In spite of Lotze, and various other psychologists who accepted the reality of the will, psychology remained mechanistic. On the one hand there were experimental psychologists, measuring the intensity of sensations and the speed of reactions; on the other, systematic psychologists like Alexander Bain and Theodor Lipps, who accepted a modified associationism, allowing for various degrees of free will. James Ward and G. F. Stout, two British psychologists, argued powerfully against associationism, insisting on the reality of the 'moi centrale', the unifying ego, and its drive towards satisfactions. But by that time—the late 19th and early 20th centuries—the great Freudian revolution was under way, and these discussions were regarded as academic. There seemed to be a general feeling that since psychology had attained the rank of a science, it had better stick to analysis and definition. The will (or 'conation', as it came to be called) was allowed a small place among feelings, cognitions, memories, and so on, but it had to take its place at the back of the queue.

II

Towards a Psychology of the Will:
Brentano to James

IN THE MIDST of all this systematising, no one paid much attention to another weighty textbook, issued in 1874. Its author, Franz Brentano, was known to have been a spoiled priest, and this in itself made him an object of suspicion among scientists; a defence of the soul and the will was surely to be expected. . .? In fact, the psychology expounded in *Psychology from the Empirical Standpoint* was founded upon a flat denial of Humeian associationism. Hume had said that the apparently 'purposive' movements of our thoughts and feelings are like the movement of leaves on a windy autumn day: a matter of natural laws. Brentano observed his own thoughts and feelings, and decided this was untrue. For what *is* a thought or feeling? Surely, it is a kind of *action*, like reaching out to pick up an apple from the table? My thought or feeling has an object, like the apple; I love something or someone, I think *about* something. But the thought or feeling itself is the *act* of reaching out to whatever I am thinking or feeling about. No object, no thought. Hume, Condillac, Cabanis and the rest had tried to explain acts of will as a kind of natural outflow or reflex; if I am hungry, I can't help 'willing' to satisfy it, so to speak. My hand is drawn towards the apple by hunger, as if by some gravitational force. This isn't really 'will', any more than the steam that drives the steam engine is will. Brentano would accept this

illustration. The steam that drives the steam engine has no *object*: it is being driven from behind, by the hot coals. But a thought or a feeling always reaches out *towards* an object; they could not exist without this element of purpose.

An illustration will make this clear. An acquaintance told me recently about a murder case in which the killer had arranged his victim's clothing in neat piles around her. When caught, the murderer proved to be suffering from a brain disease called lepto-meningitis. Murderers suffering from lepto-meningitis *always* arrange the victims' clothing in neat piles, said my friend.

There is no doubt some element of truth in this; I can recall other cases with the identical feature. But my friend failed to recognise the illogicality of his assertion. The decision to fold clothes and arrange them around the victim's body is a highly complex one; it involves a number of choices. Lepto-meningitis might, for all I know, produce an obsession with neatness; but this would still not be a predisposition to arrange clothes in neat piles. No brain disease could dictate the exact form of a complex series of choices. It is like saying that hailstorms always make Hungarians stand on the left foot and whistle the first seven bars of the Radetzky March.

This illustration makes clear the absurdity of some of the 19th-century theories about the direct link between physical and mental processes. There is no mental process without its accompanying physical process, says Bain. The reverse seems to follow naturally: there is no thought or feeling that is not the outcome of a physical process. We can imagine certain physical processes—lepto-meningitis, for example—triggering certain mental processes: perhaps a craving for neatness, order, simplicity, to

counterbalance a feeling of disintegration. But beyond that, we move into the world of choice and free will, the realm of the mind and its responses.

Nowadays Brentano's 'act psychology' is remembered chiefly as the inspiration of his pupil, Edmund Husserl, the creator of phenomenology. Husserl carried Brentano's ideas to their logical conclusion. If all thoughts are mental acts, like your hand reaching out to pick up an apple, then we must accept the existence of a body to which the arm belongs. If thoughts are not blown around like leaves on a windy day, but directed by a sense of purpose, then who does the directing? Husserl decided in favour of the 'moi centrale', which he preferred to call by Kant's term, 'the transcendental ego'. That is to say, there *is* an 'essential David Hume', whether I notice him through introspection or not. Perhaps I am too close to see him. If I look at a newspaper photograph through a powerful magnifier, I see only a series of dots. If I remove the magnifier, I see a recognisable face with a recognisable expression. More important is the use Husserl made of Brentano's assertion that a thought or feeling is always *about* something. It reaches out to things. It is intentional. I look *at* something: that is, I do half the work. If I am tired or absent-minded, I may look at something—in the sense of allowing my eyes to rest on it—yet fail to notice it. I may look absent-mindedly at my watch and fail to notice the time. For looking at my watch and observing the time are two separate acts, as distinct as taking a bite out of an apple, chewing it and swallowing it. This is the 'apperception' I spoke of earlier. The process of perceiving reality is an active process, like chewing and swallowing.

Many earlier psychologists had noted the role of

'attention' in mental life, but no one had recognised that it disproves Hume and James Mill. Because although some external events may jerk me into attention, the kind of attention I pay to a book as I read it is a kind of 'pressure' that I exert towards the book. And I am doing the pushing: it is coming from inside, and going outwards.

Like Hume, Husserl was not primarily a psychologist, but a philosopher. Ever since Locke, European philosophers had taken the view that 'meaning' is in the eye of the beholder. The universe is devoid of meanings and values. The grass is not really green; it just happens to reflect light of a certain wavelength which my eye interprets as green. My so-called values all arise out of the need to survive. Hot food feels 'good' to an empty stomach because I need it; a girl strikes me as pretty because I also have biological needs. Why a sunset strikes me as beautiful is more difficult to explain; that is due to some complex association of ideas. Perhaps it reminds me of fried eggs. Husserl was a 'realist'—that is, he believed that our senses *do* give us more-or-less direct knowledge of the world. But it is true that the intentional element in perception—the part I put into it—often distorts what my senses convey. Sometimes this is simply a matter of prejudice; for example, I may feel that a person I dislike is genuinely ugly, or at least unpleasant, without realising that I am being influenced by my feelings.

In other cases, the distortion is more subtle. In the Muller-Lyer illusion, two lines of equal length appear to be unequal, because one of them has a V shape capping either end and the other has a y shape. There are dozens of other visual illusions of the same sort—straight lines appear curved, curved lines appear straight. Weber discovered that an icy cold penny, placed on the forehead, felt twice

as heavy as a warm penny. In the same way, if a man expects to be touched with a hot poker, and he is touched with an icicle, he may be convinced that it is the hot poker. (If he is very suggestible he may even blister.) A blindfolded man, made to take alternate sips of strong beer and water, may end up identifying the beer as water and vice versa. In all these cases, we cannot say that the senses are telling lies: it is our interpretation of what they tell us that is wrong.

Husserl's basic assertion could be summarised as follows: Philosophy has no chance of making a true statement about anything until it can distinguish between what the senses really *tell* us—the undistorted perception—and how we interpret it. A newspaper editor who was ordered to engage a highly emotional and opinionated man would carefully check his articles for distortions, and would try to train him in objective reporting before giving him any important assignment. And the philosophical method that Husserl called 'pure phenomenology' is an attempt to teach the mind to be objective. Consequently, it should be understood as a training course for philosophers rather than as a philosophical system.

Husserl was fundamentally a kind of mystic. He once referred to himself as 'one who has had the misfortune to fall in love with philosophy'. The act of trying to see things 'without prejudice', purely as themselves, was known as the 'phenomenological reduction', and the ultimate aim of the reduction is to discover the transcendental ego, or pure consciousness. The transcendental ego is the self that lies behind and above the 'self' we regard as our identity, the 'personal self'. It is impersonal. And the realm of pure consciousness is the realm of which the transcendental ego