NEUROSIS AND HUMAN GROWTH

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NEUROSIS AND HUMAN
GROWTH

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NEUROSIS AND HUMAN GROWTH

The Struggle Toward Self-Realization

KAREN HORNEY

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A MORALITY OF EVOLUTION

THE NEUROTIC process is a special form of human development, and—because of the waste of constructive energies which it involves—is a particularly unfortunate one. It is not only different in quality from healthy human growth but, to a greater extent than we have realized, antithetical to it in many ways. Under favorable conditions man's energies are put into the realization of his own potentialities. Such a development is far from uniform. According to his particular temperament, faculties, propensities, and the conditions of his earlier and later life, he may become softer or harder, more cautious or more trusting, more or less self-reliant, more contemplative or more outgoing; and he may develop his special gifts. But wherever his course takes him, it will be *his* given potentialities which he develops.

Under inner stress, however, a person may become alienated from his real self. He will then shift the major part of his energies to the task of molding himself, by a rigid system of inner dictates, into a being of absolute perfection. For nothing short of godlike perfection can fulfill his idealized image of himself and satisfy his pride in the exalted attributes which (so he feels) he has, could have, or should have.

This trend in neurotic development (which is presented in detail in this book) engages our attention over and beyond the clinical or theoretical interest in pathological phenomena. For it involves a fundamental problem of morality—that of man's desire, drive, or religious obligation to attain perfection. No serious student concerned with man's development will doubt the undesirability of pride or arrogance, or that of the drive for perfection when pride is the motivating force. But there is a wide divergence of opinion about the desirability or necessity of a disciplinary inner control system for the sake of insuring moral conduct. Granted that these inner dictates have a cramping effect upon man's spontaneity, should we not, in accordance with the Christian injunction ("Be ye perfect . . ."), strive for perfection? Would it not be hazardous, indeed ruinous, to man's moral and social life to dispense with such dictates?

This is not the place to discuss the many ways in which this question has been raised and answered throughout human history, nor am I equipped to do so. I merely want to point out that one of the essential factors upon which the answer hinges is the quality of our belief about human nature.

Broadly speaking, there are three major concepts of the goal of morality which rest upon these different interpretations of essential human nature. Superimposed checks and controls cannot be relinquished by anyone who believes—in whatever terms—that man is by nature sinful or ridden by primitive instincts (Freud). The goal of morality must then be the taming or overcoming of the *status naturae* and not its development.

The goal must be different for those who believe that there is inherent in human nature both something essentially "good" and something "bad," sinful, or destructive. It will center upon the insurance of the eventual victory of the inherent good, as refined, directed, or reinforced by such elements as faith, reason, will, or grace—in accordance with the particular dominating religious or ethical concept. Here the emphasis is not exclusively upon combatting and suppressing evil, since there is also a positive program. Yet the positive program rests either upon supernatural aids of some sort or upon a strenuous ideal of reason or will, which in itself suggests the use of prohibitive and checking inner dictates.

Lastly, the problem of morality is again different when we believe that inherent in man are evolutionary constructive forces, which urge him to realize his given potentialities. This belief does not mean that man is essentially good—which would presuppose a given knowledge of what is good or bad. It means that man, by his very nature and of his own accord, strives toward self-realization, and that his set of values evolves from such striving. Apparently he cannot, for example, develop his full human potentialities unless he is truthful to himself; unless he is active and productive; unless he relates himself to others in the spirit of mutuality. Apparently he cannot grow if he indulges in a "dark idolatry of self" (Shelley) and consistently attributes all his own shortcomings to the deficiencies of others. He can grow, in the true sense, only if he assumes responsibility for himself.

We arrive thus at a *morality of evolution,* in which the criterion for what we cultivate or reject in ourselves lies in the question: is a particular attitude or drive inducive or obstructive to my human growth? As the frequency of neuroses shows, all kinds of pressure can easily divert our constructive energies into unconstructive or destructive channels. But, with such a belief in an autonomous striving toward self-realization, we do not need an inner strait jacket with which to shackle our spontaneity, nor the whip of inner dictates to drive us to perfection. There is no doubt that such disciplinary methods can succeed in suppressing undesirable factors, but there is also no doubt that they are injurious to our growth. We do not need them because we see a better possibility of dealing with destructive forces in ourselves: that of actually *outgrowing* them. The way toward this goal is an ever increasing awareness and understanding of ourselves. Self-knowledge, then, is not an aim in itself, but a means of liberating the forces of spontaneous growth.

In this sense, to work at ourselves becomes not only the prime moral obligation, but at the same time, in a very real sense, the prime moral *privilege.* To the extent that we take our growth seriously, it will be because of our own desire to do so. And as we lose the neurotic obsession with self, as we become free to grow ourselves, we also free ourselves to love and to feel concern

for other people. We will then want to give them the opportunity for unhampered growth when they are young, and to help them in whatever way possible to find and realize themselves when they are blocked in their development. At any rate, whether for ourselves or for others, the ideal is the liberation and cultivation of the forces which lead to self-realization.

I hope that this book, by a clearer exposition of the obstructing factors, may, in its own way, help toward such liberation.

K. H.

THE SEARCH FOR GLORY

W HATEVER the conditions under which a child grows up, he will, if not mentally defective, learn to cope with others in one way or another and he will probably acquire some skills. But there are also forces in him which he cannot acquire or even develop by learning. You need not, and in fact cannot, teach an acorn to grow into an oak tree, but when given a chance, its intrinsic potentialities will develop. Similarly, the human individual, given a chance, tends to develop his particular human potentialities. He will develop then the unique alive forces of his real self: the clarity and depth of his own feelings, thoughts, wishes, interests; the ability to tap his own resources, the strength of his will power; the special capacities or gifts he may have; the faculty to express himself, and to relate himself to others with his spontaneous feelings. All this will in time enable him to find his set of values and his aims in life. In short, he will grow, substantially undiverted, *toward self-realization*. And that is why I speak now and throughout this book of the *real self* as that central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth.[1]

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[1] When in the future a reference is made to growth, it is always meant in the sense presented here—that of free, healthy development in accordance with the potentials of one's generic and individual nature.

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Only the individual himself can develop his given potentialities. But, like any other living organism, the human individuum needs favorable conditions for his growth "from acorn into oak tree"; he needs an atmosphere of warmth to give him both a feeling of inner security and the inner freedom enabling him to have his own feelings and thoughts and to express himself. He needs the good will of others, not only to help him in his many needs but to guide and encourage him to become a mature and fulfilled individual. He also needs healthy friction with the wishes and wills of others. If he can thus grow *with* others, in love and in friction, he will also grow in accordance with his real self.

But through a variety of adverse influences, a child may not be permitted to grow according to his individual needs and possibilities. Such unfavorable conditions are too manifold to list here. But, when summarized, they all boil down to the fact that the people in the environment are too wrapped up in their own neuroses to be able to love the child, or even to conceive of him as the particular individual he is; their attitudes toward him are determined by their own neurotic needs and responses.[2] In simple words, they may be dominating. overprotective, intimidating, irritable, overexacting. overindulgent, erratic, partial to other siblings, hypocritical, indifferent, etc. It is never a matter of just a single factor, but always the whole constellation that exerts the untoward influence on a child's growth.

As a result, the child does not develop a feeling of belonging, of "we," but instead a profound insecurity and vague apprehensiveness, for which I use the term *basic anxiety*. It is his feeling of being isolated and helpless in a world conceived as potentially hostile. The cramping pressure of his basic anxiety prevents the child from relating himself to others with the spontaneity of his real feelings, and forces him to find ways to cope with them. He must (unconsciously) deal with them in ways which do not arouse, or increase, but rather allay his basic anxiety. The particular attitudes resulting from such uncon-

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[2] All the neurotic disturbances in human relations which are summarized in Chapter 12 of this book may operate.

Cf. also Karen Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts,* Chapter 2, The Basic Conflict and Chapter 6, The Idealized Image.

scious strategical necessities are determined both by the child's
given temperament and by the contingencies of the environ-
ment. Briefly, he may try to cling to the most powerful person
around him; he may try to rebel and fight; he may try to shut
others out of his inner life and withdraw emotionally from
them. In principle, this means that he can move toward, against,
or away from others.

In a healthy human relationship the moves toward, against,
or away from others are not mutually exclusive. The ability to
want and to give affection, or to give in; the ability to fight, and
the ability to keep to oneself—these are complementary ca-
pacities necessary for good human relations. But in the child
who feels himself on precarious ground because of his basic
anxiety, these moves become extreme and rigid. Affection, for
instance, becomes clinging; compliance becomes appeasement.
Similarly, he is driven to rebel or to keep aloof, without refer-
ence to his real feelings and regardless of the inappropriateness
of his attitude in a particular situation. The degree of blindness
and rigidity in his attitudes is in proportion to the intensity of
the basic anxiety lurking within him.

Since under these conditions the child is driven not only in
one of these directions, but in all of them, he develops funda-
mentally contradictory attitudes toward others. The three
moves toward, against, and away from others therefore con-
stitute a conflict, his basic conflict with others. In time, he tries
to solve it by making one of these moves consistently pre-
dominant—tries to make his prevailing attitude one of com-
pliance, or aggressiveness, or aloofness.

This first attempt at solving neurotic conflicts is by no means
superficial. On the contrary, it has a determining influence
upon the further course his neurotic development takes. Nor
does it exclusively concern attitudes toward others; inevitably,
it entails certain changes in the whole personality. According
to his main direction, the child also develops certain appropri-
ate needs, sensitivities, inhibitions, and the beginnings of moral
values. The predominantly complying child, for instance, tends
not only to subordinate himself to others and to lean on them,
but also tries to be unselfish and good. Similarly, the aggressive

child starts to place value on strength and on the capacity to endure and to fight.

However, the integrating effect of this first solution is not as firm or comprehensive as in the neurotic solutions to be discussed later on. In one girl, for instance, compliant trends had become predominant. They showed in a blind adoration of certain authoritative figures, in tendencies to please and appease, in a timidity about expressing her own wishes, and in sporadic attempts to sacrifice. At the age of eight she placed some of her toys in the street for some poorer child to find, without telling anybody about it. At the age of eleven she tried in her childish way for a kind of mystic surrender in prayer. There were fantasies of being punished by teachers on whom she had a crush. But, up to the age of nineteen, she also could easily fall in with plans evolved by others to take revenge on some teacher; while mostly being like a little lamb, she did occasionally take the lead in rebellious activities at school. And, when disappointed in the minister of her church, she switched from a seeming religious devotion to a temporary cynicism.

The reasons for the looseness of integration achieved—of which this illustration is typical—lie partly in the immaturity of the growing individual and partly in the fact that the early solution aims chiefly at a unification of relations with others. There is therefore room, and indeed a need, for firmer integration.

The development described so far is by no means uniform. The particulars of the unfavorable environmental conditions are different in each case, as are those of the course the development takes, and its outcome. But it always impairs the inner strength and coherence of the individual, and thereby always generates certain vital needs for remedying the resulting deficiencies. Although these are closely interwoven, we can distinguish the following aspects:

Despite his early attempts at solving his conflicts with others, the individual is still divided and needs a firmer and more comprehensive *integration*.

For many reasons, he has not had the chance to develop real self-confidence: his inner strength has been sapped by his having to be on the defensive, by his being divided, by the way in

which his early "solution" initiated a one-sided development, thereby making large areas of his personality unavailable for constructive uses. Hence, he desperately needs self-confidence, or a substitute for it.

He does not feel weakened in a vacuum, but feels specifically less substantial, less well equipped for life than others. If he had a sense of belonging, his feeling inferior to others would not be so serious a handicap. But living in a competitive society, and feeling at bottom—as he does—isolated and hostile, he can only develop an urgent need *to lift himself above others*.

Even more basic than these factors is his beginning alienation from self. Not only is his real self prevented from a straight growth, but in addition his need to evolve artificial, strategic ways to cope with others has forced him to override his genuine feelings, wishes, and thoughts. To the extent that safety has become paramount, his innermost feelings and thoughts have receded in importance—in fact, have had to be silenced and have become indistinct. (It does not matter what he feels, if only he is safe.) His feelings and wishes thus cease to be determining factors; he is no longer, so to speak, the driver, but is driven. Also the division in himself not only weakens him in general, but reinforces the alienation by adding an element of confusion; he no longer knows where he stands, or "who" he is.

This beginning alienation from self is more basic because it lends to the other impairments their injurious intensity. We can understand this more clearly if we imagine what would happen if it were possible for the other processes to occur without this alienation from the alive center of oneself.. In that case the person would have conflicts, but would not be tossed around by them; his self-confidence (as the very word indicates, it requires a self upon which to place confidence) would be impaired, but not uprooted; and his relations to others would be disturbed without his having become inwardly unrelated to them. Hence, most of all, the individual alienated from himself needs—it would be absurd to say a "substitute" for his real self, because there is no such thing—something that will give him a hold, *a feeling of identity*. This could make him meaningful to himself and, despite all the weakness in his structure, give him a feeling of power and significance.

Provided his inner conditions do not change (through fortunate life circumstances), so that he can dispense with the needs I have listed, there is only one way in which he can seem to fulfill them, and seem to fulfill all of them at one stroke: through imagination. Gradually and unconsciously, the imagination sets to work and creates in his mind an *idealized image* of himself. In this process he endows himself with unlimited powers and with exalted faculties; he becomes a hero, a genius, a supreme lover, a saint, a god.

Self-idealization always entails a general self-glorification, and thereby gives the individual the much-needed feeling of significance and of superiority over others. But it is by no means a blind self-aggrandizement. Each person builds up his personal idealized image from the materials of his own special experiences, his earlier fantasies, his particular needs, and also his given faculties. If it were not for the personal character of the image, he would not attain a feeling of identity and unity. He idealizes, to begin with, his particular "solution" of his basic conflict: compliance becomes goodness; love, saintliness; aggressiveness becomes strength, leadership, heroism, omnipotence; aloofness becomes wisdom, self-sufficiency, independence. What—according to his particular solution—appear as shortcomings or flaws are always dimmed out or retouched.

He may deal with his contradictory trends in one of three different ways. They may be glorified, too, but remain in the background. It may, for instance, appear only in the course of analysis that an aggressive person, to whom love seems unpermissible softness, is in his idealized image not only a knight in shining armor but also a great lover.

Secondly, contradictory trends, besides being glorified, may be so isolated in the person's mind that they no longer constitute disturbing conflicts. One patient was, in his image, a benefactor of mankind, a wise man who had achieved a self-contained serenity, and a person who could without qualms kill his enemies. These aspects—all of them conscious—were to him not only uncontradictory but also even unconflicting. In literature this way of removing conflicts by isolating them has been presented by Stevenson in *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

Lastly, the contradictory trends may be exalted as positive faculties or accomplishments so that they become compatible aspects of a rich personality. I have cited elsewhere [3] an example in which a gifted person turned his compliant trends into Christlike virtues, his aggressive trends into a unique faculty for political leadership, and his detachment into the wisdom of a philosopher. Thus the three aspects of his basic conflict were at once glorified and reconciled each with the others. He became, in his own mind, a sort of modern equivalent to *l'uomo universale* of the Renaissance.

Eventually the individual may come to identify himself with his idealized, integrated image. Then it does not remain a visionary image which he secretly cherishes; imperceptibly he becomes this image: the idealized image becomes an *idealized self*. And this idealized self becomes more real to him than his real self, not primarily because it is more appealing but because it answers all his stringent needs. This transfer of his center of gravity is an entirely inward process; there is no observable or conspicuous outward change in him. The change is in the core of his being, in his feeling about himself. It is a curious and exclusively human process. It would hardly occur to a cocker spaniel that he "really" is an Irish setter. And the transition can occur in a person only because his real self has previously become indistinct. While the healthy course at this phase of development—and at *any* phase—would be a move toward his real self, he now starts to abandon it definitely for the idealized self. The latter begins to represent to him what he "really" is, or potentially is—what he could be, and should be. It becomes the perspective from which he looks at himself, the measuring rod with which he measures himself.

Self-idealization, in its various aspects, is what I suggest calling a *comprehensive neurotic solution*—i.e., a solution not only for a particular conflict but one that implicitly promises to satisfy all the inner needs that have been in an individual at a given time. Moreover, it promises not only a riddance from his painful and unbearable feelings (feeling lost, anxious, inferior,

[3] *Our Inner Conflicts*

and divided), but in addition an ultimately mysterious fulfill-
ment of himself and his life. No wonder, then, that when he
believes he has found such a solution he clings to it for dear life.
No wonder that, to use a good psychiatric term, it becomes
compulsive.[4] The regular occurrence of self-idealization in neu-
rosis is the result of the regular occurrence of the compulsive
needs bred in a neurosis-prone environment.

We can look at self-idealization from two major vantage
points: it is the logical outcome of an early development and it
is also the beginning of a new one. It is bound to have far-reach-
ing influence upon the further development because there sim-
ply is no more consequential step to be taken than the abandon-
ing of the real self. But the main reason for its revolutionary
effect lies in another implication of this step. *The energies
driving toward self-realization are shifted to the aim of actualiz-
ing the idealized self.* This shift means no more and no less than
a change in the course of the individual's whole life and de-
velopment.

We shall see throughout this book the manifold ways in
which this shift in direction exerts a molding influence upon
the whole personality. Its more immediate effect is to prevent
self-idealization from remaining a purely inward process, and to
force it into the total circuit of the individual's life. The indi-
vidual wants to—or, rather, is driven to—express himself. And
this now means that he wants to express his idealized self, to
prove it in action. It infiltrates his aspirations, his goals, his
conduct of life, and his relations to others. For this reason, self-
idealization inevitably grows into a more comprehensive drive
which I suggest calling by a name appropriate to its nature and
its dimensions: *the search for glory*. Self-idealization remains its
nuclear part. The other elements in it, all of them always
present, though in varying degrees of strength and awareness
in each individual case, are the need for perfection, neurotic
ambition, and the need for a vindictive triumph.

Among the drives toward actualizing the idealized self *the
need for perfection* is the most radical one. It aims at nothing

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[4] We shall discuss the exact meaning of *compulsiveness* when we have a more
complete view of some further steps involved in this solution.

less than molding the whole personality into the idealized self. Like Pygmalion in Bernard Shaw's version, the neurotic aims not only at retouching but at remodeling himself into his special kind of perfection prescribed by the specific features of his idealized image. He tries to achieve this goal by a complicated system of shoulds and taboos. Since this process is both crucial and complex, we shall leave its discussion for a separate chapter.[5]

The most obvious and the most extrovert among the elements of the search for glory is *neurotic ambition,* the drive toward external success. While this drive toward excelling in actuality is pervasive and tends toward excelling in everything, it is usually most strongly applied to those matters in which excelling is most feasible for the given individual at a given time. Hence the content of ambition may well change several times during a lifetime. At school a person may feel it an intolerable disgrace not to have the very best marks in class. Later on, he may be just as compulsively driven to have the most dates with the most desirable girls. And again, still later, he may be obsessed with making the most money, or being the most prominent in politics. Such changes easily give rise to certain self-deceptions. A person who has at one period been fanatically determined to be the greatest athletic hero, or war hero, may at another period become equally bent on being the greatest saint. He may believe, then, that he has "lost" his ambition. Or he may decide that excelling in athletics or in war was not what he "really" wanted. Thus he may fail to realize that he still sails on the boat of ambition but has merely changed the course. Of course, one must also analyze in detail what made him change his course at that particular time. I emphasize these changes because they point to the fact that people in the clutches of ambition are but little related to the *content* of what they are doing. What counts is the excelling itself. If one did not recognize this unrelatedness, many changes would be incomprehensible.

For the purposes of this discussion, the particular area of activity which the specific ambition covets is of little interest.

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[5] *Cf.* Chapter 3, The Tyranny of the Should.

The characteristics remain the same whether it is a question of being a leader in the community, of being the most brilliant conversationalist, of having the greatest reputation as a musician or as an explorer, of playing a role in "society," of writing the best book, or of being the best-dressed person. The picture varies, however, in many ways, according to the nature of the desired success. Roughly, it may belong more in the category of power (direct power, power behind the throne, influence, manipulating), or more in the category of prestige (reputation, acclaim, popularity, admiration, special attention).

These ambitious drives are, comparatively speaking, the most realistic of the expansive drives. At least, this is true in the sense that the people involved put in actual efforts to the end of excelling. These drives also seem more realistic because, with sufficient luck, their possessors may actually acquire the coveted glamor, honors, influence. But, on the other hand, when they do attain more money, more distinction, more power, they also come to feel the whole impact of the futility of their chase. They do not secure any more peace of mind, inner security, or joy of living. The inner distress, to remedy which they started out on the chase for the phantom of glory, is still as great as ever. Since these are not accidental results, happening to this or that individual, but are inexorably bound to occur, one may rightly say that the whole pursuit of success is intrinsically unrealistic.
Since we live in a competitive culture, these remarks may sound strange or unworldly. It is so deeply ingrained in all of us that everybody wants to get ahead of the next fellow, and be better than he is, that we feel these tendencies to be "natural." But the fact that compulsive drives for success will arise only in a competitive culture does not make them any less neurotic. Even in a competitive culture there are many people for whom other values—such as, in particular, that of growth as a human being—are more important than competitive excelling over others.

The last element in the search for glory, more destructive than the others, is the drive *toward a vindictive triumph*. It may be closely linked up with the drive for actual achievement and

success but, if so, its chief aim is to put others to shame or defeat them through one's very success; or to attain the power, by rising to prominence, to inflict suffering upon them—mostly of a humiliating kind. On the other hand, the drive for excelling may be relegated to fantasy, and the need for a vindictive triumph then manifests itself mainly in often irresistible, mostly unconscious impulses to frustrate, outwit, or defeat others in personal relations. I call this drive "vindictive" because the motivating force stems from impulses to take revenge for humiliations suffered in childhood—impulses which are reinforced during the later neurotic development. These later accretions probably are responsible for the way in which the need for a vindictive triumph eventually becomes a regular ingredient in the search for glory. Both the degree of its strength and the person's awareness of it vary to a remarkable extent. Most people are either entirely unaware of such a need or cognizant of it only in fleeting moments. Yet it is sometimes out in the open, and then it becomes the barely disguised mainspring of life. Among recent historical figures Hitler is a good illustration of a person who went through humiliating experiences and gave his whole life to a fanatic desire to triumph over an ever-increasing mass of people. In his case vicious circles, constantly increasing the need, are clearly discernible. One of these develops from the fact that he could think only in categories of triumph and defeat. Hence the fear of defeat made further triumphs always necessary. Moreover, the feeling of grandeur, increasing with every triumph, rendered it increasingly intolerable that anybody, or even any nation, should not recognize his grandeur.

Many case histories are similar on a smaller scale. To mention only one example from recent literature, there is *The Man Who Watched the Train Go By*.[6] Here we have a conscientious clerk, subdued in his home life and in his office, apparently never thinking of anything but doing his duty. Through the discovery of the fraudulent maneuvers of his boss, with the resultant bankruptcy of the firm, his scale of values crashes. The artificial distinction between superior beings, to whom every-

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[6] By Georges Simenon, Reynal and Hitchcock, New York.

thing is allowed, and inferior ones like himself, to whom only the narrow path of correct behavior is permitted, crumbles. He too, he realizes, could be "great" and "free." He could have a mistress, even the very glamorous mistress of his boss. And his pride is by now so inflated that when he actually approaches her, and is rejected, he strangles her. Sought by the police, he is at times afraid, but his main incentive is to defeat the police triumphantly. Even in his attempted suicide this is the chief motivating force.

Much more frequently the drive toward a vindictive triumph is hidden. Indeed, because of its destructive nature, it is the most hidden element in the search for glory. It may be that only a rather frantic ambition will be apparent. In analysis alone are we able to see that the driving power behind it is the need to defeat and humiliate others by rising above them. The less harmful need for superiority can, as it were, absorb the more destructive compulsion. This allows a person to act out his need, and yet feel righteous about it.

It is of course important to recognize the specific features of the individual trends involved in the search for glory, because it is always the specific constellation that must be analyzed. But we can understand neither the nature nor the impact of these trends unless we see them as parts of a coherent entity. Alfred Adler was the first psychoanalyst to see it as a comprehensive phenomenon, and to point out its crucial significance in neurosis.[7]

There are various solid proofs that the search for glory is a comprehensive and coherent entity. In the first place, all the individual trends described above regularly occur together in one person. Of course one or another element may so predominate as to make us speak loosely of, say, an ambitious person, or of a dreamer. But that does not mean that the dominance of one element indicates the absence of the others. The ambitious person will have his grandiose image of himself too; the dreamer will want realistic supremacy, even though the

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[7] See the comparisons with Adler's and with Freud's concepts in Chapter 15 of this book.

latter factor may be apparent only in the way in which his pride is offended by the success of others.[8]

Furthermore, all the individual trends involved are so closely related that the prevailing trend may change during the lifetime of a given person. He may turn from glamorous daydreams to being the perfect father and employer, and again to being the greatest lover of all time.

Lastly, they all have in common *two general characteristics*, both understandable from the genesis and the functions of the whole phenomenon: their compulsive nature and their imaginative character. Both have been mentioned, but it is desirable to have a more complete and succinct picture of their meaning.

Their *compulsive nature* stems from the fact that the self-idealization (and the whole search for glory developing as its sequel) is a neurotic solution. When we call a drive compulsive we mean the opposite of spontaneous wishes or strivings. The latter are an expression of the real self; the former are determined by the inner necessities of the neurotic structure. The individual must abide by them regardless of his real wishes, feelings, or interests lest he incur anxiety, feel torn by conflicts, be overwhelmed by guilt feelings, feel rejected by others, etc. In other words, the difference between spontaneous and compulsive is one between "I want" and "I must in order to avoid some danger." Although the individual may consciously feel his ambition or his standards of perfection to be what he *wants* to attain, he is actually *driven* to attain it. The need for glory has him in its clutches. Since he himself is unaware of the difference between wanting and being driven, we must establish criteria for a distinction between the two. The most decisive one is the fact that he is driven on the road to glory with an utter *disregard for himself, for his best interests.* (I remember, for example, an ambitious girl, aged ten, who thought she would rather be blind than not become the first in her class.) We have reason to wonder whether more human lives—literally and

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[8] Because personalities often look different in accordance with the trend which is prevailing, the temptation to regard these trends as separate entities is great. Freud regarded phenomena which are roughly similar to these as separate instinctual drives with separate origins and properties. When I made a first attempt to enumerate compulsive drives in neurosis they appeared to me too as separate "neurotic trends."

figuratively—are not sacrificed on the altar of glory than for any other reason. John Gabriel Borkman died when he started to doubt the validity and the possibility of realizing his grandiose mission. Here a truly tragic element enters into the picture. If we sacrifice ourselves for a cause which we, and most healthy people, can realistically find constructive in terms of its value to human beings, that is certainly tragic, but also meaningful. If we fritter away our lives enslaved to the phantom of glory for reasons unknown to ourselves, that assumes the unrelieved proportion of tragic waste—the more so, the more valuable these lives potentially are.

Another criterion of the compulsive nature of the drive for glory—as of any other compulsive drive—is its *indiscriminateness*. Since the person's real interest in a pursuit does not matter, he *must* be the center of attention, *must* be the most attractive, the most intelligent, the most original—whether or not the situation calls for it; whether or not, with his given attributes, he *can* be the first. He *must* come out victorious in any argument, regardless of where the truth lies. His thoughts in this matter are the exact opposite of those of Socrates: ". . . for surely we are not now simply contending in order that my view or that of yours may prevail, but I presume that we ought both of us to be fighting for the truth." [9] The compulsiveness of the neurotic person's need for indiscriminate supremacy makes him indifferent to truth, whether concerning himself, others, or facts.

Furthermore, like any other compulsive drive, the search for glory has the quality of *insatiability*. It must operate as long as the unknown (to himself) forces are driving him. There may be a glow of elation over the favorable reception of some work done, over a victory won, over any sign of recognition or admiration—but it does not last. A success may hardly be experienced as such in the first place, or, at the least, must make room for despondency or fear soon after. In any case, the relentless chase after more prestige, more money, more women, more victories and conquests keeps going, with hardly any satisfaction or respite.

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[9] From Philebus, *The Dialogues of Plato*, translated into English by B. Jowett, M.A., Random House, New York.

Finally, the compulsive nature of a drive shows in the *reactions to its frustration*. The greater its subjective importance, the more impelling is the need to attain its goal, and hence the more intense the reactions to frustration. These constitute one of the ways in which we can measure the intensity of a drive. Although this is not always plainly visible, the search for glory is a most powerful drive. It can be like a demoniacal obsession, almost like a monster swallowing up the individual who has created it. And so the reactions to frustration must be severe. They are indicated by the terror of doom and disgrace that for many people is spelled in the idea of failure. Reactions of panic, depression, despair, rage at self and others to what is conceived as "failure" are frequent, and entirely out of proportion to the actual importance of the occasion. The phobia of falling from heights is a frequent expression of the dread of falling from the heights of illusory grandeur. Consider the dream of a patient who had a phobia about heights. It occurred at a time when he had begun to doubt his established belief of unquestioned superiority. In the dream he was at the top of a mountain, but in danger of falling, and was clinging desperately to the ridge of the peak. "I cannot get any higher than I am," he said, "so all I have to do in life is to hold on to it." Consciously, he referred to his social status, but in a deeper sense this "I cannot get any higher" also held true for his illusions about himself. He could not get higher than having (in his mind) a godlike omnipotence and cosmic significance!

The second characteristic inherent in all the elements of the search for glory is the great and peculiar role *imagination* plays in them. It is instrumental in the process of self-idealization. But this is so crucial a factor that the whole search for glory is bound to be pervaded by fantastic elements. No matter how much a person prides himself on being realistic, no matter how realistic indeed his march toward success, triumph, perfection, his imagination accompanies him and makes him mistake a mirage for the real thing. One simply cannot be unrealistic about oneself and remain entirely realistic in other respects. When the wanderer in the desert, under the duress of fatigue and thirst, sees a mirage, he may make actual efforts to reach

it, but the mirage—the glory—which should end his distress is itself a product of imagination.

Actually imagination also permeates all psychic and mental functions in the healthy person. When we feel the sorrow or the joy of a friend, it is our imagination that enables us to do so. When we wish, hope, fear, believe, plan, it is our imagination showing us possibilities. But imagination may be productive or unproductive: it can bring us closer to the truth of ourselves— as it often does in dreams—or carry us far away from it. It can make our actual experience richer or poorer. And these differences roughly distinguish neurotic and healthy imagination.

When thinking of the grandiose plans so many neurotics evolve, or the fantastic nature of their self-glorification and their claims, we may be tempted to believe that they are more richly endowed than others with the royal gift of imagination—and that, for that very reason, it can more easily go astray in them. This notion is not borne out by my experience. The endowment varies among neurotic people, as it does among more healthy ones. But I find no evidence that the neurotic per se is by nature more imaginative than others.

Nevertheless the notion is a false conclusion based upon accurate observations. Imagination does in fact play a greater role in neurosis. However, what accounts for this are not constitutional but functional factors. Imagination operates as it does in the healthy person, but in addition it takes over functions which it does not normally have. It is put in the service of neurotic needs. This is particularly clear in the case of the search for glory, which, as we know, is prompted by the impact of powerful needs. In psychiatric literature imaginative distortions of reality are known as "wishful thinking." It is by now a well-established term, but it is nevertheless incorrect. It is too narrow: an accurate term would encompass not only thinking but also "wishful" observing, believing, and particularly feeling. Moreover, it is a thinking—or feeling—that is determined not by our *wishes* but by our *needs*. And it is the impact of these needs that lends imagination the tenacity and power it has in neurosis, that makes it prolific—and unconstructive.

The role imagination plays in the search for glory may show unmistakably and directly in daydreams. In the teen-ager they

may have a frankly grandiose character. There is for instance the college boy who, although timid and withdrawn, has daydreams about being the greatest athlete, or genius, or Don Juan. There are also in later years people like Madame Bovary, who almost constantly indulge in dreams of romantic experiences, of a mystic perfection, or of a mysterious saintliness. Sometimes these take the form of imaginary conversations in which others are impressed or put to shame. Others, more complicated in their structure, deal with shameful or noble suffering through being exposed to cruelty and degradation. Frequently daydreams are not elaborate stories but, rather, play a fantastic accompaniment to the daily routine. When tending her children, playing the piano, or combing her hair, a woman may for instance simultaneously see herself in much the way a tender mother, a rapturous pianist, or an alluring beauty would be presented in the movies. In some cases such daydreams show clearly that a person may, like Walter Mitty, constantly live in two worlds. Again, in others equally engaged in the search for glory daydreams are so scarce and abortive that they may say in all subjective honesty that they have no fantasy life. Needless to say, they are mistaken. Even if they only worry about possible mishaps that might befall them, it is after all their imagination that conjures up such contingencies.

But daydreams, while important and revealing when they occur, are not the most injurious work of imagination. For a person is mostly aware of the fact that he is daydreaming, i.e., imagining things which have not occurred or are not likely to occur in the way he is experiencing them in fantasy. At least it is not too difficult for him to become aware of the existence and the unrealistic character of the daydreams. The more injurious work of imagination concerns the subtle and comprehensive distortions of reality which he is not aware of fabricating. The idealized self is not completed in a single act of creation: once produced, it needs continuing attention. For its actualization the person must put in an incessant labor by way of falsifying reality. He must turn his needs into virtues or into more than justified expectations. He must turn his intentions to be honest or considerate into the fact of being honest or considerate. The bright ideas he has for a paper make him a great scholar.

His potentialities turn into factual achievements. Knowing the "right" moral values makes him a virtuous person—often, indeed, a kind of moral genius. And of course his imagination must work overtime to discard all the disturbing evidence to the contrary.[10]

Imagination also operates in changing the neurotic's beliefs. He needs to believe that others are wonderful or vicious—and lo! there they are in a parade of benevolent or dangerous people. It also changes his feelings. He needs to feel invulnerable—and behold! his imagination has sufficient power to brush off pain and suffering. He needs to have deep feelings—confidence, sympathy, love, suffering: his feelings of sympathy, suffering, and the rest are magnified.

The perception of the distortions of inner and outer reality which imagination can bring about when put to the service of the search for glory leaves us with an uneasy question. Where does the flight of the neurotic's imagination end? He does not after all lose his sense of reality altogether; where then is the border line separating him from the psychotic? If there is any border line with respect to feats of imagination, it certainly is hazy. We can only say that the psychotic tends to regard the processes in his mind more exclusively as the only reality that counts, while the neurotic—for whatever reasons—retains a fair interest in the outside world and his place in it and has therefore a fair gross orientation in it.[11] Nevertheless, while he may stay sufficiently on the ground to function in a way not obviously disturbed, there is no limit to the heights to which his imagination can soar. It is in fact the most striking characteristic of the search for glory that it goes into the fantastic, into the realm of *unlimited possibilities*.

All the drives for glory have in common the reaching out for greater knowledge, wisdom, virtue, or powers than are given to human beings; they all aim at the *absolute,* the unlimited, the infinite. Nothing short of absolute fearlessness, mastery, or saint-

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[10] *Cf.* the work of the Ministry of Truth in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*

[11] The reasons for this difference are complicated. It would be worth examining whether crucial among them is a more radical abandoning of the real self (and a more radical shift to the idealized self) on the part of the psychotic.

liness has any appeal for the neurotic obsessed with the drive for glory. He is therefore the antithesis of the truly religious man. For the latter, only to God are all things possible; the neurotic's version is: nothing is impossible to *me*. His will power should have magic proportions, his reasoning be infallible, his foresight flawless, his knowledge all encompassing. The theme of the devil's pact which will run through this book begins to emerge. The neurotic is the Faust who is not satisfied with knowing a great deal, but has to know everything.

This soaring into the unlimited is determined by the power of the needs behind the drive for glory. The needs for the *absolute* and the *ultimate* are so stringent that they override the checks which usually prevent our imagination from detaching itself from actuality. For his well-functioning, man needs both the vision of possibilities, the perspective of infinitude, *and* the realization of limitations, of necessities, of the concrete. If a man's thinking and feeling are primarily focused upon the infinite and the vision of possibilities, he loses his sense for the concrete, for the here and now. He loses his capacity for living in the moment. He is no longer capable of submitting to the necessities in himself, "to what may be called one's limit." He loses sight of what is actually necessary for achieving something. "Every little possibility even would require some time to become actuality." His thinking may become too abstract. His knowledge may become "a kind of inhuman knowing for the production of which man's self is squandered, pretty much as men were squandered for the building of the Pyramids." His feelings for others may evaporate into an "abstract sentimentality for humanity." If, on the other hand, a man does not see beyond the narrow horizon of the concrete, the necessary, the finite, he becomes "narrow-minded and mean-spirited." It is not, then, a question of either-or, but of *both*, if there is to be growth. The recognition of limitations, laws, and necessities serves as a check against being carried away into the infinite, and against the mere "floundering in possibilities." [12]

The *checks on imagination are malfunctioning* in the search

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[12] In this philosophical discussion I roughly follow Sören Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death,* Princeton University Press, 1941, written in 1844. The quotations in this paragraph are taken from this book.

for glory. This does not mean a general incapacity to see necessities and abide by them. A special direction in the further neurotic development may make many people feel safer to restrict their lives, and they may then tend to regard the possibility of being carried away into the fantastic as a danger to be avoided. They may close their minds to anything that to them looks fantastic, be averse to abstract thinking, and overanxiously cling to what is visible, tangible, concrete, or immediately useful. But while the conscious attitude toward these matters varies, every neurotic at bottom is loath to recognize limitations to what he expects of himself and believes it possible to attain. His need to actualize his idealized image is so imperative that he must shove aside the checks as irrelevant or nonexistent.

The more his irrational imagination has taken over, the more likely he is to be positively horrified at anything that is real, definite, concrete, or final. He tends to abhor time, because it is something definite; money, because it is concrete; death, because of its finality. But he may also abhor having a definite wish or opinion, and hence avoid making a definite commitment or a decision. To illustrate, there was the patient who cherished the idea of being a will-o'-the-wisp dancing in a ray of moonlight: she could become terrified when looking at a mirror—not because of seeing possible imperfections, but because it brought to bear on her the realization that she had definite contours, that she was substantial, that she "was pinned down to a concrete bodily shape." It made her feel like a bird whose wings were nailed to a board. And at a time when these feelings emerged to awareness, she had impulses to smash the mirror.

To be sure, the development is not always so extreme. But every neurotic, even though he may pass superficially for healthy, is averse to checking with evidence when it comes to his particular illusions about himself. And he must be so, because they would collapse if he did. The attitude toward external laws and regulations varies, but he always tends to deny laws operating within himself, refuses to see the inevitability of cause and effect in psychic matters, or of one factor following from the other or reinforcing the other.

There are endless ways in which he disregards evidence which he does not choose to see. He forgets; it does not count; it was

accidental; it was on account of circumstances, or because others provoked him; he couldn't help it, because it was "natural." Like a fraudulent bookkeeper, he goes to any length to maintain the double account; but, unlike him, he credits himself only with the favorable one and professes ignorance of the other. I have not yet seen a patient in whom the frank rebellion against reality, as it is expressed in *Harvey* ("Twenty years I have fought with reality, and I have finally overcome it"), did not strike a familiar chord. Or, to quote again the classic expression of a patient: "If it were not for reality, I would be perfectly all right."

It remains to bring into clearer relief the difference between the search for glory and healthy human strivings. On the surface they may look deceptively similar, so much so that differences seem to be variations in degree only. It looks as though the neurotic were merely more ambitious, more concerned with power, prestige, and success than the healthy person; as though his moral standards were merely higher, or more rigid, than ordinary ones; as though he were simply more conceited, or considered himself more important than people usually do. And, indeed, who will venture to draw a sharp line and say: "This is where the healthy ends, and the neurotic begins"?

Similarities between healthy strivings and the neurotic drives exist because they have a common root in specific human potentialities. Through his mental capacities man has the faculty to reach beyond himself. In contrast to other animals, he can imagine and plan. In many ways he can gradually enlarge his faculties and, as history shows, has actually done so. The same is also true for the life of a single individual. There are no rigidly fixed limits to what he can make out of his life, to what qualities or faculties he can develop, to what he can create. Considering these facts, it seems inevitable that man is uncertain about his limitations and, hence, easily sets his goals either too low or too high. This existing uncertainty is the base without which the search for glory could not possibly develop.

The basic difference between healthy strivings and neurotic drives for glory lies in the forces prompting them. Healthy strivings stem from a propensity, inherent in human beings, to de-

velop given potentialities. The belief in an inherent urge to grow has always been the basic tenet upon which our theoretical and therapeutic approach rests.[13] And this belief has grown ever since with ever-new experiences. The only change is in the direction of more precise formulation. I would say now (as indicated in the first pages of this book) that the live forces of the real self urge one toward self-realization.

The search for glory, on the other hand, springs from the need to actualize the idealized self. The difference is basic because all other dissimilarities follow from this one. Because self-idealization in itself is a neurotic solution, and as such compulsive in character, all the drives resulting from it are by necessity compulsive too. Because the neurotic, as long as he must adhere to his illusions about himself, cannot recognize limitations, the search for glory goes into the unlimited. Because the main goal is the attainment of glory, he becomes uninterested in the process of learning, of doing, or of gaining step by step—indeed, tends to scorn it. He does not want to climb a mountain; he wants to be on the peak. Hence he loses the sense of what evolution or growth means, even though he may talk about it. Because, finally, the creation of the idealized self is possible only at the expense of truth about himself, its actualization requires further distortions of truth, imagination being a willing servant to this end. Thereby, to a greater or lesser extent, he loses in the process his interest in truth, and the sense for what is true or not true—a loss that, among others, accounts for his difficulty in distinguishing between genuine feelings, beliefs, strivings, and their artificial equivalents (unconscious pretenses) in himself and in others. The emphasis shifts from being to appearing.

The difference, then, between healthy strivings and neurotic drives for glory is one between spontaneity and compulsion; between recognizing and denying limitations; between a focus upon the vision of a glorious end-product and a feeling for evo-

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[13] By "our" I refer to the approach of the whole Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis.

In the introduction to *Our Inner Conflicts* I said: "My own belief is that man has the capacity as well as the desire to develop his potentialities. . . ."

Cf. also Dr. Kurt Goldstein, *Human Nature,* Harvard University Press, 1940. Goldstein, however, does not make the distinction—which is crucial for human beings—between self-realization and the actualization of the idealized self.

lution; between seeming and being, fantasy and truth. The difference thus stated is not identical with that between a relatively healthy and a neurotic individual. The former may not be wholeheartedly engaged in realizing his real self nor is the latter wholly driven to actualize his idealized self. The tendency toward self-realization operates in the neurotic too; we could not in therapy give any help to the patient's growth if this striving were not in him to begin with. But, while the difference between the healthy and the neurotic person in this respect is simply one of degree, the difference between genuine striving and compulsive drives, despite surface similarities, is one of quality and not of quantity.[14]

The most pertinent symbol, to my mind, for the neurotic process initiated by the search for glory is the ideational content of the stories of the devil's pact. The devil, or some other personification of evil, tempts a person who is perplexed by spiritual or material trouble with the offer of unlimited powers. But he can obtain these powers only on the condition of selling his soul or going to hell. The temptation can come to anybody, rich or poor in spirit, because it speaks to two powerful desires: the longing for the infinite and the wish for an easy way out. According to religious tradition, the greatest spiritual leaders of mankind, Buddha and Christ, experienced such temptation. But, because they were firmly grounded in themselves, they recognized it as a temptation and could reject it. Moreover, the conditions stipulated in the pact are an appropriate representation of the price to be paid in the neurotic's development. Speaking in these symbolic terms, the easy way to infinite glory is inevitably also the way to an inner hell of self-contempt and self-torment. By taking this road, the individual is in fact losing his soul—his real self.

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[14] When in this book I speak of "the neurotic" I mean a person in whom neurotic drives prevail over healthy strivings.