

PSYCHICAL VIOLENCE:

SUGGESTION AND THE ETHICS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Abstract

In this dissertation it is argued that the psychoanalytic debate on suggestion is primarily a debate about ethics. Freud's attempts to distinguish psychoanalysis from suggestion are motivated by a concern to maintain an ethical distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations. However, this ethical position is undermined by Freud's own theory of the emotional roots of belief (emotivism). It is proposed that one possible way of resolving this contradiction might be to construct a new basis for Freud's ethical objections to suggestion along Aristotelian lines. However, on further analysis this proposal is rejected on the grounds that Aristotelianism is not compatible with psychoanalytic theory. Finally, a different solution is proposed on the basis of a Lacanian account of ethics, and a new definition of suggestion is put forward.

Preface

The term 'suggestion' has been the focus of a debate among psychoanalysts since the very beginnings of psychoanalysis itself. A brief look at the index to the *Standard Edition* of Freud's complete works reveals it to be one of the most frequently discussed concepts in his entire *oeuvre*. Similarly, the term crops up repeatedly in the works of the 'first generation' of psychoanalysts such as Ernest Jones and Sandor Ferenczi. The discussion is continued in the fifties in the work of analysts from very disparate theoretical orientations, such as Edward Glover and Jacques Lacan. However, in the sixties the debate almost disappears; the last article in the *International Journal of PsychoAnalysis* to address the topic dates from 1962 (Lossy, 1962). In the following years, Lacan is the only analyst to return constantly to the problem of suggestion, while among his contemporaries there is an almost total silence on the subject; Laplanche and Pontalis do not even include an entry for the term in their famous dictionary of psychoanalysis (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967). In recent years the debate has been revived, but not by the psychoanalysts (of either IPA or Lacanian orientation); instead, the subject has become the intellectual province of former analysts who have become disaffected and returned to the theory and/or practice of hypnotism; Lon Chertok, Francois Roustang and Mikkel BorchJacobsen are the principle protagonists of this 'revival'.

In returning to the problem of suggestion, therefore, it might seem that I am out of step with psychoanalytic theory in general, and more in tune with the 'neohypnotic' school of Chertok, Roustang and BorchJacobsen. However, such an appearance would certainly be deceptive. For the principle focus of these three writers is the question of the therapeutic action of psychotherapy. All three are concerned to restore some principle of therapeutic efficacy which they argue psychoanalysis lost the moment that Freud turned his back on hypnotism. They are interested in the curative properties of the trance, and the possibility that when psychoanalysis cures it is due to the induction of some mild form of trancelike state in the analysand (see Chertok & Stengers, 1989; Roustang, 1980; BorchJacobsen,

1991b).

My own interest in suggestion, on the other hand, arises not from therapeutic but ethical considerations. Indeed, it is a fundamental contention of my argument in this dissertation that the psychoanalytic debate on suggestion is largely a debate about ethics. While this is not immediately obvious from many of the texts which address the problem of suggestion, when these texts are subjected to a close reading it can be seen that ethical issues do in fact constitute a vital subtext.

It is just these ethical concerns that Chertok, Roustang and Borch-Jacobsen fail to address in their passionate defence of hypnotism. They fail to realise that Freud's reasons for abandoning hypnotism were not entirely therapeutic in nature, but ethical. Freud became dissatisfied with hypnotism not, as is often maintained, because he was not a good hypnotist, but because he began to have grave moral reservations about the manipulative nature of this technique. Thus it is senseless to argue for a return to hypnotism on therapeutic grounds alone.

In this dissertation I outline Freud's ethical objections to the use of suggestion and argue that it is important to maintain these objections. However, I also argue that psychoanalysis is prevented from maintaining these objections consistently because of certain features of its theory of belief and conviction. I therefore seek to provide a more coherent ethical basis for Freud's objections to suggestion than the deontological view which is implicit in his own account. This attempt involves an examination of Aristotelian ethics and concludes with a Lacanian-inspired redefinition of suggestion. Finally, I offer some proposals for future debate and investigation.

Apart from the work of Jacques Lacan, which provided the initial pointer to the ethical nature of the debate on suggestion, this dissertation is also largely inspired by the work of the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre's (1981) highly original account of the history of moral philosophy forms the basis of chapter four, as well as providing numerous particular insights which are taken up in other chapters. The relevance of MacIntyre's work to the psychoanalytic debate on suggestion is perhaps not immediately apparent, and indeed came as surprise to me (the discovery of the book was perhaps one of those 'matters of chance' which Freud informs us are too common to be merely fortuitous; Freud, 1901b: 11). However, I hope that this relevance will become clear to the reader as the argument progresses.

During the course of writing this dissertation I found that the argument began to develop in ways that I had not even imagined at the outset. This entailed a large amount of revision and rewriting, with the result that much of the material that I had originally intended to include had to be left aside for reasons of space and relevance. Thus a

whole section comparing Freud's theory of suggestion with the theories of Bernheim, Tarde, Ribot, Le Bon, and MacDougall has had to be discarded, and the matter is only referred to in a couple of footnotes in chapter two. While this material is fascinating in itself, it does not bear directly on ethical questions, and therefore would only disrupt the thread of the argument; the demands of relevance must come first.

Even after the revision and rewriting, the argument presented in this dissertation still seems to me to have a rather ambitious scope. It moves from etymological concerns to ethical ones, it engages with the debate on whether or not psychoanalysis is a form of suggestion (which could in itself provide enough material for a whole dissertation), and engages with MacIntyre's account of the history of moral philosophy. In view of the fact that this canvas is rather broad, it is not surprising that the argument seems rather sparse at times. I only hope that what is lost in the way of detail and evidence may be partly made up for by the coherence of the logical structure.

1 Ethical objections to suggestion

The term 'suggestion' is used in psychoanalytic theory in a highly technical sense. It does not simply mean to 'bring an idea into the mind of another', or to 'put a theory or plan forward for consideration', which is the ordinary sense of the term (as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*). Rather, in psychoanalytic theory the term is used to refer to a special kind of 'psychical influence', of which the paradigm is hypnosis.

The process of semantic evolution by which the term 'suggestion' came to acquire this particular association with hypnosis occurred first in the French and English languages, since it was French and British doctors who pioneered the use of hypnosis for medical purposes. During the 1830's John Elliotson, senior physician at University College Hospital in London, began to use hypnosis to cure various conditions, including epilepsy, incontinence in children, and hysteria. In the 1840's James Esdaile, a Scottish surgeon working in Bengal, used hypnotism as an analgesia when performing surgical operations. It was at this time that another Scottish surgeon, James Braid, coined the term 'hypnosis' from the Greek word *hypnos* (which means 'sleep'); before then, the phenomenon had been referred to as 'animal magnetism' or as 'mesmerism' (after Franz Mesmer, who undertook the first serious investigations of hypnosis in the 1770's) (Britland, 1994).

French doctors were not slow to follow the example set by the work of Elliotson and Esdaile. By the 1880's, hypnosis was in regular use by esteemed physicians such as JeanMartin Charcot in Paris, and Ambroise Libeault and Hippolyte Bernheim in Nancy. It is in the writings of these doctors that the term 'suggestion' is first used in connection with hypnosis. At first it is used to refer to the words which the hypnotist speaks to the hypnotised subject. These words merit a special term to describe them because they have peculiar 'magical' effects; they can produce hallucinations and observable physiological reactions in the listener. For example, the hypnotist says to the hypnotised subject, 'You are smelling a rose', and immediately the subject has the sensation of smelling a rose. Or the hypnotist says, 'You cannot move your arm',

and at once the subject's arm is paralysed (Freud, 1890a: 2956). As well as influencing the sensory and motor functions of the body, the words of the hypnotist can affect 'certain reflexes and vasomotor processes (even to the extent of raising blisters!); and, in the psychical sphere, feelings, instincts, memory, volitional activity and so on' (Freud, 1889a: 98). Furthermore, the magical effect of the hypnotist's words can be delayed, so that the words do not take effect immediately as they are spoken, but later, when the subject is no longer in a state of hypnosis. For example, the subject is told to carry out

some action a certain length of time after waking from hypnosis, and proceeds to do so in a waking state.

It is to these 'magic words' of the hypnotist, then, that the term 'suggestion' is applied when it is first used in a technical sense by French doctors in the late nineteenth century. A suggestion is a persuasive remark made by the hypnotist; when this remark has a delayed effect, it is called a 'posthypnotic' suggestion.

It is in this technical sense that the word first entered the German language, and thence Freud's vocabulary. Thus whereas in French and English the term 'suggestion' was originally an everyday term which only secondarily acquired a technical sense, in German this process was reversed; it was first imported from French and English in the technical sense and only later acquired a wider meaning (Freud, 1890a: 297, *n.1* [translator's note]). This is the reason why Freud takes so much trouble to define the term in his early writings on hypnosis, explaining carefully that 'the words spoken by the hypnotist which have the magical effects that I have described are known as a "suggestion"' (Freud, 1890a: 296). This is also the reason why Freud objects so vehemently to the 'shifting and ambiguous use of the word "suggestion"' in the writings of French doctors such as Bernheim (Freud, 188889: 82). For Freud the term is primarily technical, and so must be defined carefully and used precisely, for otherwise it loses all scientific value. He is particularly concerned to guard against any expansion of meaning, since, as with any process of inflation, this leads to devaluation. In 1921 Freud is still fighting a rearguard action against this semantic inflation, complaining that, in the German language,

...the word is acquiring a more and more extended use and a looser and looser meaning, and will soon come to designate any sort of influence whatever, just as it does in English, where 'to suggest' and 'suggestion' correspond to our *nahelegen* and *Anregung*.
(Freud, 1921c: 90)

This process of semantic slippage begins with

Bernheim's argument that suggestions are not confined to hypnosis. That is, Bernheim argues that words can sometimes affect listeners who are in a normal waking state in the same 'magical' way that they affect those in a hypnotic trance. Freud is forced to concede that this is true, at least in certain situations; such is the case of the child whose pain is immediately conjured away by his mother's assurance that there is nothing wrong (Freud, 1890a: 296). Such words are just as magical as those spoken by the hypnotist, and therefore they too deserve to be classed as a 'suggestion'. 'Suggestions' can therefore

no longer be defined simply as the 'persuasive remarks [made] during hypnosis' (Freud, 1891d: 108). Freud realises this, and thus speaks about 'suggestion in the waking state' (Freud, 1889a: 99), but all the same he is uneasy about this semantic inflation, for he intuits that it could easily lead to the term 'suggestion' referring to *any* kind of persuasive remark. This is precisely what he objects to in Bernheim:

When I was in the fortunate position of being instructed personally by Professor Bernheim on the problems of hypnotism, I seemed to see that he called *every* effective psychical influence exercised by one person on another a suggestion, and that he called *every* effort to exercise a psychical influence on someone else 'suggesting'. (Freud, 1889a: 101)

However, if Freud wishes to halt the process of semantic slippage associated with the term 'suggestion', he also unwittingly participates in a process of syntactic slippage. For from the very beginning of Freud's writings on the subject, he uses the term not only to designate a specific kind of speech act (namely, the words spoken by the hypnotist to his subject) but also to refer to the whole process of hypnotic influence. Thus he talks not only about 'suggestions', a countable noun designating a concrete, iterable act, but also about 'suggestion' (*die Suggestion*): an uncountable noun designating an abstract generalised process (eg. Freud, 188889). This second usage actually becomes the dominant one during the course of Freud's work; whereas the terms *eine Suggestion* and *die Suggestion* occur with equal frequency in Freud's early works on hypnosis in 188890, by the time of the *Introductory Lectures* in 191517 the latter term is used almost exclusively (cf. Freud, 191617: 44651). And this is the sense in which the term 'suggestion' passes into the theoretical vocabulary of psychoanalysis. Whenever the term occurs in the writings of other analysts, such as Ferenczi, Jones, Glover, and Lacan, it is always as an uncountable noun designating an abstract process.

Nevertheless, however abstract and general a process is designated by the term 'suggestion' in psychoanalytic theory, it is never so general as to be equated with

psychical influence in general. Ferenczi, Jones, Glover, Lacan and other psychoanalytic writers all follow Freud in distinguishing suggestion as a *particular form* of psychical influence.

It is worth pausing for a moment and asking why it is so important for psychoanalytic theory to restrict the term suggestion to only a certain kind of psychical influence. It is not enough to answer that the meaning of the term *must* be restricted because otherwise it simply becomes a synonym of psychical influence in general. For this reply

leaves unanswered the question of why Freud and other psychoanalysts wish to preserve the meaning of *this particular term*. What is it about the term 'suggestion' which makes them object so vehemently to equating it with psychical influence in general?

The answer surely lies in the ethical connotations of the term 'suggestion'. Suggestion has connotations of violence, of force, of manipulation, and is therefore ethically objectionable. Freud himself points this out in one of his first articles on hypnosis, a review of a book by August Forel. After defending the therapeutic use of suggestion against the criticisms of his Viennese colleagues, Freud hesitates and backtracks:

But perhaps all the same it is suggestion which is the objectionable thing: the suppression of a free personality by the physician, who also retains a directing power over the sleeping brain in its artificial sleep.
(Freud, 1889a: 94)

Freud's first objections to the therapeutic use of suggestion thus concern not its effectiveness or reliability but its legitimacy; they are not technical but ethical objections. What Freud objects to is the idea of force, 'the suppression of a free personality'. He adopts an ethical position which could be termed a libertarian one, in the sense that he defends the right of self-determination and condemns the violation of this right.

The same ethical position emerges again not long after the 1889 review of Forel's book. In the same year, Freud travels to Nancy to study hypnosis under Bernheim for a few weeks. There, during one of Bernheim's public demonstrations of hypnotism, Freud observes an event which will stick in his memory and which he will recount over thirty years later. Among the patients whom Bernheim attempts to hypnotise, one is particularly impervious to Bernheim's suggestions. Bernheim grows angry with the patient and tells him off for resisting or 'countersuggesting'. On observing this, Freud feels 'a muffled hostility to this tyranny of suggestion', and thinks to himself:

[T]his was an evident injustice and an act of violence. For the man certainly had a right to countersuggestions if people were trying to subdue him with suggestions.

(Freud, 1921c: 89)

Once again, the language used is the language not of medical efficacy but of ethics; the issue is not the patient's wellbeing but his *rights*. Even if the suggestions of the doctor are aimed at curing the patient, the patient still has a right to resist. The patient's

right to choose must be respected, Freud implies, even if he chooses to remain ill.

It now becomes clear why Freud and many other psychoanalysts have been so concerned to restrict the term 'suggestion' to a specific kind of psychological influence and not equate it with psychological influence in general. They are concerned to maintain an ethical distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations.

2 Reason and emotion

In the last chapter it was argued that the principle issue at stake in the debate over the meaning of the term 'suggestion' concerns an ethical distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations. This distinction is fundamental to many systems of moral philosophy, and is perhaps most clearly elucidated by Kant. In Kantian terms, a manipulative social relation is one in which I treat the other as a means to my own ends, whereas a nonmanipulative social relation is one in which I treat the other as an end. This is explained particularly clearly by the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre:

To treat someone else as an end is to offer them what I take to be good reasons for acting in one way rather than another, but to leave it to them to evaluate those reasons. It is to be unwilling to influence another except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good. It is to appeal to impersonal criteria of the validity of which each rational agent must be his or her own judge. By contrast, to treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my purposes by adducing whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion. The generalizations of the sociology and psychology of persuasion are what I shall need to guide me, not the standards of a normative rationality.
(MacIntyre, 1981: 234)

As MacIntyre makes clear, the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations is based on the distinction between rational argument and irrational means of persuasion. Rational argument appeals to 'impersonal criteria of validity', whereas irrational means of persuasion appeal to 'whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion'. The former leaves the subject's critical faculties intact, the latter attempts to suppress them.

The psychoanalytic debate on suggestion echoes all these themes. Thus Ferenczi, writing in 1912, underlines

the violent and forceful connotations of the term 'suggestion', and links it with the weakening of the subject's critical faculties:

To define the meaning of the word 'suggestion' is perhaps difficult, but everyone knows what the word implies; it is the deliberate smuggling of sensations, feelings, thoughts, and decisions of the will into another person's psychic world, and this in such a way that the person influenced cannot of himself modify or correct the suggested

thoughts, feelings, and impulses. Put briefly, suggestion is the forcing upon, or the unquestioning acceptance of, a foreign psychic influence.
(Ferenczi, 1912: 55)

By stressing that suggestion involves 'the *unquestioning* acceptance' of ideas, Ferenczi excludes from the concept of suggestion 'a logical conviction based on inductive proof' (Ferenczi, 1912: 64). Thus if a person persuades another to accept an idea by means of rational arguments, and the other evaluates these arguments critically before accepting the ideas, then this is not a case of suggestion. However, if a person is able to convince another without offering rational arguments to support the ideas, and the other accepts these ideas 'blindly', then this may indeed be considered a case of suggestion.

In stressing the irrational character of suggestive influence, Ferenczi anticipates Freud's later description of suggestion as 'influence without adequate logical foundation' (Freud, 1921c: 90). William McDougall also defines suggestion along these lines;

Suggestion is a process of communication resulting in the acceptance with conviction in the communicated proposition in the absence of logically adequate grounds for its acceptance.
(McDougall, 1908: 79, emphasis in original)

Such definitions of suggestion are reminiscent of Plato's distinction between false rhetoric, which convinces by means of the deceptive powers of enchanting speech, and true rhetoric (*dialktik*), which convinces the listener simply on the basis of logic and reason (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991b: 68).

It seems, then, that the psychoanalytic debate on suggestion is simply a modern version of the ancient philosophical distinction between manipulative social relations (which are not mediated by rational argument) and nonmanipulative social relations (which are). However, while this distinction is based on an opposition between rational and irrational means of persuasion, the theory of suggestion which Freud proposes ultimately undermines such

an opposition. There is thus a contradiction between, on the one hand, the assumptions underlying Freud's ethical objections to suggestion and, on the other hand, the assumptions on which his theory of suggestion is based. In order to demonstrate this, it will be necessary to examine closely Freud's theory of suggestion.

According to the various definitions of suggestion examined above, the fundamental feature of this specific form of psychical influence is that it involves a nonrational means of insinuating an idea into another person's

mind. The other person accepts an idea as true not on the basis of logical arguments, but on some other grounds. One of the main tasks of any theory of suggestion will therefore be to elucidate the nature of these other, nonrational means of persuasion.

According to Plato, that which is opposed to reason is art. Thus Plato attributes the deceptive power of rhetoric to the beauty of the figures of speech which it employs; the listener becomes so fascinated by the aesthetic pleasure of the language that he automatically accepts the ideas put forward. This is similar to Henri Bergson's views on the suggestive powers of art; he states that 'art puts to sleep our active and resistant powers and makes us responsive to suggestion' (Bergson, 1889: 14).

In psychoanalytic theory, however, the general tendency has been to explain suggestion not by referring to the formal or aesthetic features of language, but to the prior establishment of an affective bond, an emotional tie (*Gefhlsbindung*). Thus Freud defines suggestion as 'a conviction which is not based upon perception and reasoning but upon an erotic tie' (Freud, 1921c: 128). It is, then, not art but emotion which is opposed to rational argument.

The first psychoanalyst to propose this theory of suggestion is not Freud, but Ernest Jones, in a 1910 paper on 'The action of suggestion in psychotherapy'. Jones distinguishes between two kinds of suggestion which he calls 'suggestion on the conceptual plane' and 'suggestion on the affective plane'. The difference between these two kinds of suggestion lies in the nature of what is influenced in the other person. In suggestion on the conceptual plane (which Jones also refers to as 'verbal suggestion', even though he states that it may be brought about by means other than speech), it is ideas which are influenced. In suggestion on the affective plane, it is the emotions which are influenced. Jones maintains that affective suggestion is more fundamental than, and the necessary condition for, conceptual suggestion. In other words, suggestion proceeds in two logically distinct phases. First the operator influences the subject's emotions, in such a way that the subject becomes positively disposed towards the operator. Then, once this emotional bond (or *rappport*) has become established, the operator can proceed to influence the subject's ideas. It is only

because of the prior establishment of an emotional tie that the operator can persuade the subject to accept ideas without rational arguments (Jones, 1910).

Jones' account embodies a classical view of the subject as a free rational being. Indeed, it seems that the concept of suggestion only makes sense when this view of subject is accepted. It is only when the subject's rationality is seen as the guarantee of his freedom that loss of freedom can be identified with the suppression of

this rationality by the establishment of an emotional tie. Suggestion is thus the emotional enslavement of one subject to another, the temporary abolition of a liberating rationality by a constraining emotional tie. In the absence of such an emotional tie, the subject is assumed to be an autonomous rational agent who can discriminate between the good and bad arguments which other subjects employ to influence him.

While this classical view of the subject is presupposed by Freud's ethical objections to suggestion, it is undermined by Freud's views on the mechanism of persuasion. For in his discussion of the process of psychoanalytic treatment in the *Introductory Lectures*, Freud argues that ultimately every kind of psychical influence must pass by way of an irrational, emotional tie. Thus he states that in the absence of a positive emotional bond, the subject 'would never even give a hearing to the doctor [or anyone else] and his arguments' (Freud, 1916/17: 445). In other words, the subject will only 'allow [logical arguments] enough room to submit them to examination' when these arguments are 'brought forward by someone he love[s]'; 'without such [emotional] supports arguments carr[y] no weight' (Freud, 1916/17: 445). 'Thus in general a man is only accessible from the intellectual side too, in so far as he is capable of a libidinal cathexis of objects' (Freud, 1916/17: 446). In this account, emotion is the basis of all belief and conviction; it is not a factor opposed to reason which impedes the proper functioning of the latter, but the 'support' of reason, that which allows it to function. This is equivalent to stating that reason is ultimately the expression of emotion, and hence to undermine the very opposition between reason and emotion on which the concept of suggestion depends.

Ferenczi argues a similar vein. He states that 'real convictions are only obtained from emotionally toned experiences' (Ferenczi, 1913: 448). In other words, 'feeling is believing' (Ferenczi, 1913: 446). He thus criticizes Dubois' psychotherapeutic method of 'persuasion' (which 'consists only of "dialectic" and "demonstration",

endeavoring to bring the patients to see "often by means of simple syllogisms" that their symptoms are psychical') on the grounds that it cannot lead to a profound sense of conviction in the patient and must therefore remain ineffectual (Ferenczi, 1913: 446). Dubois' method can only be effectual when it uses, in addition to such logical means of persuasion, certain 'concealed or patent influences upon the patients' disposition'; however, as Ferenczi immediately recognises, the method then 'ceases to be "rational" (that is, to affect the reason only by logical means) and becomes a variant ... of suggestive (emotional) influence' (Ferenczi, 1913: 447). Ferenczi is thus involved in the same contradiction as Freud. On the one hand, he objects to suggestion on ethical grounds. On the other hand, his theory about the emotional roots of all belief and conviction undermines the opposition between reason and emotion upon which the concept of suggestion rests.

The confusion in both Freud's and Ferenczi's views on suggestion is due to the coexistence in the same works of rival conceptions of the subject. As has already been pointed out, their concept of suggestion as an irrational (and therefore manipulative, unethical) form of psychical influence depends on the classical view of the subject as rational being who can discriminate between arguments which are founded upon the impersonal criteria of pure and practical reason and those which are mere expressions of subjective preference. On the other hand, the views put forward by Freud and Ferenczi as to the origins of belief and conviction rest on an alternative view of the subject in which there is no longer any real distinction between reason and emotion.

3. Psychoanalysis versus suggestion

So far I have argued that there is a contradiction between the assumptions underlying Freud's ethical objections to suggestion and the assumptions on which his theory of suggestion is based. On the one hand his objections to the therapeutic use of suggestion imply a distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations, based on an opposition between reason and emotion. On the other hand, this distinction is obliterated by Freud's theory of persuasion, in which reason is seen as a mere tool of emotion. In this chapter I will argue that this contradiction remains at the heart of the psychoanalytic debate on suggestion after Freud, and explains its extraordinary confusion. Not only are the supporters of psychoanalysis trapped in this contradiction, but so also are its critics.

The psychoanalytic debate on suggestion addresses a number of questions, such as how suggestion operates, what conditions favour its operation, and others. However, the particular strand of the debate which is of interest here concerns the opposition which analysts uphold between psychoanalysis and suggestion. This opposition is first explicitly articulated by Freud in 1904. In a paper entitled 'On Psychotherapy', Freud states that '[t]here is, actually, the greatest possible antithesis between suggestive and analytic technique', and likens this antithesis to Leonardo da Vinci's distinction between the two kinds of techniques employed in the fine arts (Freud, 1905a: 260). Jones reaffirms this antithesis a few years later in an article entitled 'The action of suggestion in psychotherapy', where he states that '[s]uggestion plays the chief part in all methods of treatment of the psychoneuroses except the psychoanalytic one' (Jones, 1910: 359). Two years later, Ferenczi delivers a lecture entitled 'Suggestion and psychoanalysis' in which he attempts to provide more indications of the differences between the two (Ferenczi, 1912). Freud returns to the subject in the *Introductory Lectures* (Freud, 1916/17: 446/53). Thus the trend is already well-established when, in 1931, Edward Glover devotes a paper to discussing the technical differences between 'suggestive procedure' and 'properly analytic procedure' (Glover, 1931).

The opposition between suggestion and psychoanalysis is explored by these analysts on several different levels. On the level of *therapeutic results*, psychoanalysis is held to produce permanent cures whereas suggestive methods are criticised for leading only to temporary symptomatic relief. On the level of *applicability*, psychoanalysis is held to work with all neurotic patients, whereas suggestion is criticised for being limited to 'suggestible' patients. On the level of *operative principles*, psychoanalysis is held to function by means of uncovering the pathogenic

memory, whereas suggestion functions by covering up this memory; psychoanalysis is thus described as a 'causal therapy' which is based on revealing the truth, whereas suggestion is described as a mere 'palliative measure' which disregards the truth. However, it is not any of these levels of the debate which is of interest here; it is the level of *technique* which is most relevant to the concerns of this study. For it is in the precise rules of how the analyst proceeds during the treatment that ethical issues are most clearly articulated; it is in the technical differences between suggestive methods and psychoanalysis that Freud's ethical position comes to the fore.

These technical differences concern both the role of the patient and the role of the analyst. On the side of the patient, the technique of psychoanalysis differs from that of suggestive treatments in two main ways. Firstly, unlike hypnotherapy, where the patient is almost completely silent and the doctor does all the talking, in psychoanalysis the situation is reversed; the analyst rarely speaks, and the patient engages in what is almost a monologue. Secondly, whereas the patient in hypnotherapy and faithcures must have complete confidence in the healer, in psychoanalysis the patient may be as sceptical as he wishes:

...in suggestion the patient's belief is the precondition of success. Now in analytic treatment we begin by explaining to the patient that the utmost scepticism on his part is permitted, nay necessary. We permit him to control all our statements; he may laugh at us, scold us, and criticize whenever anything we say seems to him incredible, laughable, or unfounded. (Ferenczi, 1912: 62)

On the side of the analyst, the principle technical difference between suggestion and psychoanalysis concerns what is known as the rule of neutrality. In suggestive treatments, the doctor issues commands and prohibitions, gives advice, and orients the treatment towards a specific predetermined objective. The analyst, on the other hand, is allowed to do none of these things. He must not attempt to direct the speech of the patient according to any

predetermined ideas. He must resist all temptations 'to play the part of prophet, saviour and redeemer to the patient' (Freud, 1923b: 50). Above all, the analyst must not attempt to take any decision on behalf of the patient or force any views upon him:

We refused most emphatically to turn a patient who puts himself into our hands in search of help into our private property, to decide his fate for him, to force our own ideals upon him, and with

the pride of a Creator to form him in our own image and see that it is good.
(Freud, 1919a: 164)

The reasons which Freud gives for this rule are the same as those which underlay his objections to suggestion in 1889: he is opposed, on ethical grounds, to manipulative social relations, to the use of 'force' or 'violence', even in the name of 'health'. Thus he rejects J. J. Putnam's proposal that the analyst urge a particular philosophical outlook on the patient for the purpose of ennobling his mind, stating that '[i]n my opinion, this is after all only to use violence, even though it is overlaid with the most honourable motives' (Freud, 1919a: 165).

Such, then, are the main technical differences between suggestive treatments and psychoanalysis. However, since the origins of psychoanalysis, many critics have argued that these supposed differences of technique are only apparent, that fundamentally psychoanalysis remains as violent and manipulative as all the other kinds of psychotherapy.

The charge that psychoanalysis is ultimately just another form of suggestion is such a common criticism of psychoanalysis that a summary of all the writers who have given expression to this idea would require a whole study in itself. Let it suffice, then, to give a few examples. An early example is given by Schroeder (1923), who quotes a 'Dr. X' as saying that the psychoanalyst 'may use a clever form of suggestion'. The same view is expressed by Coyne Campbell, who writes that '[t]o be analyzed is to be hypnotized and put under the influence of posthypnotic suggestion which robs you of intellectual freedom' and concludes that psychoanalysis is no more than 'a vicarious technique of intensive and cunning hypnosis' (Campbell, 1957, quoted in Lossy, 1962: 449). More recently, similar views have been put forward by Jeffrey Masson, who argues in *Against Therapy* (1988) that all forms of psychotherapy, including psychoanalysis, are necessarily corrupt because they can only ever change patients in accordance with the therapist's own prejudices. Masson's account, while not clearly argued, at least has the virtue of making explicit the ethical nature of the charge that psychoanalysis is simply a form of suggestion. If the idea that

psychoanalysis is suggestion is a criticism, which it clearly is for both analysts and critics, this is because suggestion is seen as a form of violence and therefore ethically objectionable.

Just as the charge that psychoanalysis is no more than suggestion is as old as psychoanalysis itself, so also are the attempts to refute this charge. Freud himself is acutely aware of this criticism, and his work is punctuated with numerous arguments and assertions to the contrary. No doubt there are many different reasons which motivate

Freud's concern to distinguish between psychoanalysis and suggestion. There is, for example, the desire to vindicate the therapeutic superiority of psychoanalysis over other forms of psychotherapy, and the desire to establish the uniqueness of his own invention. But it is difficult to understand the urgency of Freud's attempts to refute the claim that psychoanalysis is a form of suggestion unless the ethical overtones of the debate are attended to.

The problem is that Freud and other analysts are forced to concede ever more to their critics. For each argument that they put forward to support their claim that psychoanalysis is not a form of suggestion, it is not long before a devastating counterargument becomes apparent. Even at the level of technique, where precise rules of practice can be adduced as evidence, it becomes increasingly difficult to refute the charge of suggestion. This is particularly embarrassing, since, as has already been argued, it is precisely at the level of technique that the ethical questions are most clearly articulated.

The principle technical differences between suggestive treatments and psychoanalysis are, it will be recalled, the following: the verbosity of the patient and the corresponding silence of the analyst, the skepticism which is permitted to the patient, and the rule of neutrality. That the first point does not constitute a decisive difference from suggestion can be argued on the grounds that the paucity of the analyst's comments is precisely what lends them their suggestive power; the patient comes to be so desirous of hearing the analyst's interpretation that when it finally arrives it is embraced with ready acceptance.

The second point, which concerns the skepticism permitted to the patient, can be disputed along a number of lines. Firstly, it may be objected that the patient is only permitted to be skeptical *at the beginning* of a course of psychoanalytic treatment. Sooner or later, the patient is supposed to acquire a conviction in the truth of the analyst's interpretations; indeed, Freud states that the degree of success of psychoanalytic treatment is directly proportional to the 'depth' of conviction acquired by the patient (Freud, 1937c: 229). If the patient's skepticism lasts too long, it will be interpreted by the analyst as a

resistance which must be overcome. Secondly, even if analysts grant their patients the right to be skeptical at the start of the treatment, it is clear that most patients do not avail themselves of this right. Ferenczi admits as much in his paper of 1912:

Many a patient is seized after the very first explanation with an extraordinarily strong tendency to proselytize; he preaches constantly and everywhere about psychoanalysis, can talk

about absolutely nothing else and always wants to gain new adherents.
(Ferenczi, 1912: 623)

Thirdly, it can be pointed out that one of the best ways of hypnotizing someone is to tell them that one is not going to hypnotize them but merely to put them into a state somewhat like it, or even to ask them to 'pretend' to be hypnotized. The subject is then 'off his guard' and can be put into a mild hypnotic state with relative ease; this has been shown to work with subjects who are normally resistant to hypnosis (which shows that their resistance was due to their aversion to the word 'hypnosis' and not to any biological incapacity) (Britland, 1994). Such a procedure is remarkably similar to what Ferenczi states in a paper entitled 'Belief, disbelief, and conviction':

When the patient perceives that he may also be distrustful, that his thoughts and feelings are being in no way interfered with, he also begins to consider the possibility whether there might not be something worth while to be made of the doctor's statements.
(Ferenczi, 1913: 449)

In other words, it is precisely the analyst's assurance that the patient may be as skeptical as he likes that allays the patient's doubts and makes him lend an ear to the analyst's interpretations.

As to the rule of neutrality, this is easily challenged by 'a charge of subtle selfdeception' (Freud, 1918b: 53). The analyst who really believes he is not guiding the patient according to a prescriptive ideal is simply unaware of the myriad subtle hints which he gives to the patient of his expectations. Once again, Ferenczi provides a revealing insight, when he remarks on the patient's sensitivity to the subtle indications given by the analyst:

Gradually I came to the conviction that patients have an extremely refined feeling for the wishes, tendencies, moods, likes and dislikes of the analyst, even should these feelings remain totally unconscious to the analyst himself.

(Ferenczi, 1932b: 293)

For each of the three technical differences between suggestive treatments and psychoanalysis, therefore, it can be objected that the difference is merely apparent. Underneath the superficial differences, psychoanalysis, claim the critics, remains a form of suggestion, as manipulative as any other form of psychotherapy. And while analysts continue to reject this charge, they become painfully aware of the weaknesses of their own arguments. Ferenczi is not the only one whose insights seem to lend

more weight to the charge of suggestion than to the defence of psychoanalysis. A decade after his first brave remarks on the 'antithesis between suggestive and analytic technique' (Freud, 1905a: 260), Freud himself is forced to admit that 'analytic treatment ... uses suggestion' (Freud, 1916/17: 451). He is then forced to argue that psychoanalysis uses suggestion to a lesser extent and for different purposes than hypnotherapy; psychoanalysis does not employ 'direct suggestion', which is 'suggestion aimed against the manifestation of the symptoms', but merely employs suggestion to overcome internal resistances (Freud, 1916/17: 448). This, however, completely undermines his implicit claims for the ethical superiority of psychoanalysis over hypnotherapy. Once he has conceded that suggestion plays a role in psychoanalytic treatment, then it hardly matters what purpose it is used for, because psychoanalysis is no longer clearly defined as a nonmanipulative social relation. In the words of Ida MacAlpine: 'whether the aim of suggestion be that of covering up or uncovering, it is either suggestion or it is not' (MacAlpine, 1950: 193).

The most problematic point of all for Freud and the other analysts who attempt to maintain the distinction between suggestion and psychoanalysis concerns the transference. The intense feelings which the patient develops towards the analyst were originally seen by Freud as a mere unfortunate accident, but as he came to see them as an inevitable part of psychoanalytic treatment he also came to perceive that they were not entirely disadvantageous; the transference thus came to be seen simultaneously as the greatest obstacle to the treatment and the most powerful force driving the treatment on. However, the growing awareness of the importance of the transference posed serious problems for the proclaimed opposition between psychoanalysis and suggestion. For it was quickly perceived that the state of transference love closely resembled the state of hypnosis; both were characterised by that same 'credulous obedience' which Freud describes in his early papers on hypnotism (Freud, 1890a: 295). Thus Freud was forced to concede that 'in our technique we have abandoned hypnosis only to rediscover suggestion in the shape of transference' (Freud, 1916/17: 446). The same comparison is made by Ida MacAlpine:

analytic transference manifestations are a slow motion picture of hypnotic transference manifestations; they take some time to develop, unfold slowly and gradually, and not all at once as in hypnosis.

(MacAlpine, 1950: 203)

If, as MacAlpine states, the only difference between hypnosis and psychoanalytic transference concerns the speed at which the reactions develop, then it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that psychoanalysis is simply a form

of 'suggestion over the long term', to use Francois Roustang's apt expression (Roustang, 1980).

Faced with the problem of the transference, the classic defence argued by analysts is that psychoanalysis differs from suggestive techniques in that in the former the transference is resolved by the end of the treatment, whereas in the latter the transference is allowed to persist. In 1917 Freud is already referring to this argument as 'the fundamental distinction between analytic and purely suggestive therapy' (Freud, 1916/17: 453), and by 1950 MacAlpine can state confidently that 'this is regarded as the essential difference between psychoanalysis and all the other psychotherapies' (MacAlpine, 1950: 193). Thus the debate over whether psychoanalysis is merely a form of suggestion ends up by revolving around the question of whether the transference is in fact truly resolved in psychoanalytic treatment. This question has been asked in less technical terms in recent press articles which accuse psychoanalysis of encouraging dependency in the patient and thus being interminable:

[Psychoanalysis] is also the method that is least likely to be 'over when it's over' ... it seems to produce a good many more converts than cures. (Crews, 1993: 55)

Whether one agrees with the analysts that the transference is resolved or whether one concurs with the critics that the transference is interminable, it is at least clear that the debate itself has an air of interminability. Freud himself seems to have recognised this as far back as 1914; after rehearsing the various arguments for and against the view that psychoanalysis is a form of suggestion, he concludes that 'it will be impossible to arrive at a decision' (Freud, 1918b: 53). In other words, the debate on suggestion is characterised by precisely that feature which, according to Alasdair MacIntyre, typifies all contemporary debate about ethics:

It is precisely because there is in our society no established way of deciding between these claims that moral argument appears to be necessarily interminable. From our rival conclusions we can argue back to our rival

premises; but when we do arrive at our premises argument ceases and the invocation of one premise against another becomes a matter of pure assertion and counterassertion.

(MacIntyre, 1981: 8)

MacIntyre's contention is borne out in Freud's own writings; after each attempt to prove that psychoanalysis is not merely a form of suggestion, he confesses the impossibility of convincing his critics, and is reduced to pure assertion: 'I can *assert* without boasting that such

an abuse of "suggestion" has never occurred in my practice' (Freud, 1937d: 262, emphasis added). The critics, meanwhile, are reduced to pure counterassertion, which usually takes on the aspect of what MacIntyre has identified as another 'distinctive moral feature of the modern age': *protest*, characterised typically by tones of selfassertive shrillness and indignant selfrighteousness (MacIntyre, 1981: 71).

It thus seems that in many respects the supporters and the critics of psychoanalysis are in the same boat. Neither group can appeal to an established way of deciding between their rival claims. Both groups want to be able to distinguish between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations: the critics, in order to argue that psychoanalysis is in the former category; the supporters, in order to argue that it is in the latter category. But each group is unable to make a clear distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations because they share an underlying belief in the emotional roots of all conviction.

The arguments of the critics of psychoanalysis boil down to what could be described as 'the vampiric hypothesis'. That is, if, as they contend, analysts never consult anything other than their own desires and prey on others to satisfy them, then the perfect image of the analyst is the vampire. As the vampire sucks his defenceless victims dry purely in order to satisfy his own voracious appetite for blood, so the analyst laps up the fantasmatic discourse of his patients solely in order to satisfy his thirst for knowledge (as well as relieving the patients of their money to satisfy his avarice). And just as the precondition for becoming a vampire is being the victim of another vampire, so the precondition for becoming an analyst is being the patient of another analyst. However, the problem with the vampiric hypothesis is that it cannot point to any clear example of a nonvampiric relation; we are thus forced to conclude that *everyone* is a vampire, in which case there can be no justification for singling out the analyst for accusations of vampirism.

A good example of this argument is provided by Masson in *Against Therapy* (1988). He claims that all psychotherapeutic relationships are necessarily

exploitative and abusive because the therapist is always ultimately guided by his own prejudices. Nevertheless, at the end of another book, Masson argues that this does not mean we need give up social relations altogether and become hermits; we can turn to our friends instead:

There are no experts in loving, no scholars of living, no doctors of the human emotions and no gurus of the soul. But we need not be alone; friendship is a precious gift, and all that we need do to see is remove the blinders.

(Masson, 1990: 212)

But it is difficult to see what gives Masson so much confidence in friends, for according to his own argument they must be just as guided by their own prejudices and selfinterest as psychotherapists. Indeed, were one to accept Masson's premises, it could even be argued that therapists are slightly more ethical than friends, in that by charging for their services they at least make no pretense to be 'doing it for love'.

If the arguments of the critics of psychoanalysis can be reduced to the vampiric hypothesis, the arguments of the supporters could be described in corresponding terms as 'the titanic hypothesis'. The patient is an invincible titan, and thus it is impossible for the analyst to manipulate him. The problem with this is exactly the same as with the vampiric hypothesis; when the argument is taken to its logical conclusion, it must be accepted that *everyone* is a titan. But in this case there can be no such thing as suggestion and thus no grounds for ethical objections to nonpsychoanalytic forms of psychotherapy.

Hence another similarity between the critics and supporters of psychoanalysis: each group universalises one of these kinds of social relation and therefore cannot point to an example of the other kind. Their ethical claims thus break down. The critics are finally unable to contend that analysis is manipulative because they are unable to point to an example of a nonmanipulative social relation. The supporters are unable to contend that analysis is nonmanipulative because they are unable to point to an example of a manipulative social relation.

4. Rights and utility

The debate over whether or not psychoanalysis is simply a form of suggestion is, I have argued, primarily a debate about ethics. Both sides in the debate share the same ethical presupposition: namely, that manipulative social relations are unethical. However, the ethical claims of both the critics and the supporters of psychoanalysis are frustrated by their underlying belief in the identity of reason and emotion, since this prevents them from formulating the distinction between manipulative and nonmanipulative social relations which their ethical claims imply.

It would seem, therefore, that both the critics and the supporters of psychoanalysis are faced with a stark choice: either to give up their ethical objections to suggestion or to reject the idea of an identity between reason and emotion. In order to clarify the issues involved in this choice, let us return to that moment in Nancy in which Freud felt those ethical objections particularly intensely. Freud, it may be recalled, was observing Bernheim give a demonstration of the use of hypnosis for therapeutic purposes. However, this demonstration was disrupted at one point by a patient whom Bernheim seemed unable to hypnotise. Bernheim grew angry and reprimanded the patient for 'countersuggesting'. Freud immediately feels indignant at the 'tyranny of suggestion'. Suggestion is, he states, 'an evident injustice and an act of violence' which infringes the subject's rights; the patient, argues Freud, 'certainly had a right to countersuggestions', and it was unethical of Bernheim not to respect this right (Freud, 1921c: 89).

By invoking the concept of *rights*, Freud aligns himself with a deontological rather than a utilitarian view of ethics. That is, he holds that suggestion is wrong in and of itself, irrespective of whatever consequences it may lead to. Thus Freud rejects any appeal to utility; even if Bernheim's suggestions are aimed at increasing the happiness of the patient, it is not permissible to violate the patient's right to expect rational justifications for any attempt to influence him. In siding with rights against utility in this way, Freud adopts a slightly

unusual form of protest, for whereas protest 'characteristically occurs as a reaction to the alleged invasion of someone's *rights* in the name of someone else's *utility*' (MacIntyre, 1981: 71, emphasis in original), Freud is here reacting against an invasion of the patient's rights which is being carried out in the name of the patient's *own* utility. This is an absolutely categorical defense of the patient's rights, which includes the right to refuse medical treatment.

The problem with any view of ethics which is based on the concept of rights is that 'every attempt to give good reasons for believing that there *are* such rights has failed' (MacIntyre, 1981: 69, emphasis in original). The classical deontological view is that statements about the possession of rights are selfevident truths. The American constitution is a typical example of such a view, but Freud's description of the event at Nancy also implicitly adopts this position; suggestion is, he states, 'an *evident* injustice', for the patient '*certainly* had a right to countersuggestions' (Freud, 1921c: 89, emphasis added).

However, any appeal to selfevident truths is doomed to failure because there are no selfevident truths. The very existence of fundamental disagreement over what would constitute such truths is proof that none of them really is selfevident. If rights were selfevident, then one would expect to find a broad measure of agreement on them not only at the present moment but throughout history. However, not only is such agreement absent, but the concept of right only arose fairly recently; there is no expression in any ancient or medieval language which corresponds to our concept of 'a right' until the beginning of the fifteenth century (MacIntyre, 1981: 69). It must be concluded, then, that the concept of natural or human rights is kind of fiction; it purports to provide an objective and impersonal criterion for making ethical judgements, but it does not.

If natural rights are mere fictions, then Freud's invocation of 'a right to countersuggestions' is not a tenable basis for an ethical objection to suggestion. However, it is clear that other major moral fiction of the modern world utility provides even less of a basis for this ethical objection. Indeed, the concept of utility is more likely to be invoked by those who defend the use of suggestion in psychotherapy than by those who oppose it. Does it therefore follow that all ethical objections to suggestion must be abandoned? This conclusion would only follow if rights and utility were the only possible conceptual frameworks for ethics. Now, while most moral argument today is indeed staged exclusively in terms of an opposition between rights and utility, it has not always been thus. Long before the advent of deontology and utilitarianism, Aristotelianism was the dominant ethical

system in Europe and elsewhere.

Aristotelianism is fundamentally a teleological system. That is, it is based on a view of man as having an essence which defines his true end. There is thus 'a fundamental contrast between man as he happens to be and man as he could be if he realised his essential nature' (MacIntyre, 1981: 52). Aristotle thus conceives of ethics as a set of precepts which instruct us on how to make the transition from the former to the latter. This is, then, a schema involving three interrelated elements:

(1) A concept of what human nature is like in its untutored state.

(2) A concept of what human nature could be if it realised its potential.

(3) A set of precepts which inform us how to move from (1) to (2).

Each of these three elements requires reference to the other two in order to be intelligible. They are like the three rings of the Borromean knot; if one is removed, the other two also fall apart. Thus, as MacIntyre has argued, the Enlightenment rejection of the teleological view of human nature 'leaves behind a moral scheme composed of two remaining elements whose relationship becomes quite unclear' (MacIntyre, 1981: 55). On the one hand we are left with a view of what human nature is like in its untutored state without any corresponding view of what it might otherwise be. On the other hand we are left with a set of precepts deprived of their teleological context.

Now since these precepts were originally part of a scheme in which they were designed to correct and improve the untutored state of human nature, they will obviously be antagonistic to that state. Hence any attempt to find a rational basis for these precepts in an account of human nature as it is must inevitably fail. This is, according to MacIntyre, exactly what happened with the moral philosophy of the Enlightenment. It attempted the impossible task of justifying (3) in the light of (1) after having excluded (2).

This impossible task was attempted in two quite different ways: on the one hand by recourse to the concept of rights, and on the other hand by appealing to the concept of utility. Given the logical impossibility of the task, it was only a matter of time before both attempts were seen to have failed, leaving the field of moral debate open to the charge of emotivism. Emotivism is defined by MacIntyre as 'the doctrine that all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling' (MacIntyre, 1981: 1112). He argues that the popularity of this doctrine today is due to the fact that it is an accurate description of the current situation of

moral debate. He thus rejects the pretensions of emotivism to universality, but accepts it as a true account of a particular moment in the history of moral philosophy.

If MacIntyre's account is right, it becomes easier to understand why Freud and Ferenczi should have adopted a theory of belief and persuasion that is at such odds with their ethical objections to suggestion. For both their attempts to justify these ethical objections by appealing to human rights *and* their theory of the emotional roots of

belief (which is simply a version of emotivism) can then be seen as logical consequences of the historical vacuum left in moral philosophy by the Enlightenment rejection of Aristotelian teleology. This hypothesis also suggests a way to respond to the choice posed at the beginning of this chapter: the choice between giving up the ethical objections to suggestion and rejecting the emotivist thesis of an identity between reason and emotion. For if Freud's ethical objections to suggestion fall down *for the same reason* as that which explains the general popularity of emotivism namely, the demise of Aristotelianism then perhaps the best way to both reinstate those ethical objections *and* reject emotivism is by returning to an Aristotelian view of ethics.

5 Aristotle revisited

In the last chapter it was argued that neither a deontological rightsbased system of ethics nor a utilitarian approach can provide a secure basis for Freud's ethical objections to suggestion. The tentative conclusion was advanced that it might be possible to provide a more secure basis for these ethical objections by returning to an Aristotelian account of ethics.

What would an Aristotelian account of suggestion look like? How could we construct, along Aristotelian lines, a rational basis for Freud's ethical objections to suggestion? We would have to begin by defining suggestion as a vice. The next step would be to identify the sphere of action in which this vice represented either an excess or a deficiency. Such terms as 'right influence' or 'good argument' might be used to describe this sphere of action; but whatever term were chosen, it would then be necessary to class it among the virtues. Suggestion could then be described as the vice of excessive influence by unjust means.

However, before rushing into any such attempt to construct an Aristotelian account of suggestion, it is first necessary to answer an important preliminary question: namely, to what extent is an Aristotelian account of ethics in general compatible with psychoanalytic theory? For if we discover that there are fundamental differences between the basic assumptions of Aristotelian ethics and those of psychoanalytic theory, then there will clearly be no point in attempting to construct an Aristotelian basis for the ethical objections which psychoanalysts have against the use of suggestion.

At first sight it might seem that this question is misplaced. For it might be objected that there can be no possible conflict between Aristotelian ethics and psychoanalytic theory for the simple reason that they are completely separate fields of enquiry. One is a system of moral philosophy, and the other is a theory of mental functioning.

There is a certain amount of truth in this objection.

Psychoanalysis is indeed a theory of mental functioning and not a system of moral philosophy. Indeed, if psychoanalytic theory already embodied a full ethical system then it would not be necessary to look to other systems of thought such as Aristotelianism in order to provide a basis for Freud's ethical objections to suggestion. However, it is too strong to state that moral philosophy and psychoanalytic theory are *completely separate* fields of enquiry, for there is a degree of overlap. On the one hand, all systems of moral philosophy make some claims about human nature which embody certain

views on mental functioning, and Aristotelian ethics is no exception here. On the other hand, psychoanalytic theory both has something to say about the pathological effects of certain moral systems and informs a practice which is ordered according to certain implicit ethical values. Thus the question of whether psychoanalytic theory is or is not compatible with a moral philosophy such as that of Aristotle is in fact a reasonable question to ask.

In fact, it is precisely this question which Jacques Lacan addresses in the early part of his seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 195960). He begins with some very favourable remarks, classing Aristotle 'among the most exemplary and certainly the most valid' of all moral philosophers, and recommending his audience of psychoanalysts and trainees to read the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Lacan, 195960: 22). Lacan goes on to argue that there are some important points of convergence between psychoanalysis and Aristotelianism. For example, both these systems of thought are teleological, in that both Aristotle and Freud see man as tending towards a goal, which both identify as happiness (Lacan, 195960: 13). Another point of convergence arises when one compares the Freudian account of the way that the reality principle regulates the pleasure principle with Aristotle's ideas concerning the problem of incontinence (*akrasia*); an inadequate intervention by the reality principle can, Lacan argues, be likened to an error of a particular judgement relative to the minor premise in the practical syllogism (Lacan, 195960: 29; cf. Aristotle, 1955: 2334 [1147ab]). Such points of convergence may not be entirely coincidental; Freud attended Brentano's lectures on Aristotle in 1887, and Lacan suggests Freud may simply be 'transposing here the properly ethical articulation of the problem on to a hypothetical, mechanistic point of view' (Lacan, 195960: 30).

However, in addition to such points of convergence between psychoanalysis and Aristotelianism, there are also various points of divergence, of which Lacan discusses three. First, there is a subtle but important difference in the way these two systems regard the phenomenon of repetition. For Aristotle, repetition is largely understood as a voluntary process which is part of an educative process; by repeating good actions the subject

acquires those good habits which Aristotle calls virtues. For Freud, however, repetition is primarily understood as the involuntary persistence of a psychic trauma. By speaking in terms of trauma rather than habit, 'psychoanalytic thought defines itself in very different terms' to Aristotelianism (Lacan, 1959/60: 10). One consequence of this difference is that the two systems of thought lead to very different approaches to education. Aristotelian ethics is a science of character which explicitly recommends an inculcation of habits; psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is characterised by 'the

fundamental, constitutive reservations of the Freudian position concerning education in the broad sense' (Lacan, 195960: 10).

A second point of divergence between psychoanalysis and Aristotelianism which Lacan remarks on concerns the links between Aristotelian ethics and the function of the master. Lacan states that Aristotelian ethics are in fact governed by this function, though the master in question is not the Hegelian master as dupe but the Athenian gentleman (Lacan, 195960: 11). In order to back up his contention, Lacan cites the contemplative ideal which Aristotle places at the pinnacle of the virtuous life; such an ideal is only possible for one who avoids manual work as much as possible (Lacan, 195960: 23). Lacan's claim is backed up by MacIntyre, who states that 'according to Aristotle certain virtues are only available to those of great riches and of high social status' (MacIntyre, 1981: 182). Now not only does this restrict Aristotelian ethics to a certain social type whom Lacan calls the 'privileged representative of leisure' (Lacan, 195960: 23), but it also sets this ethical system at odds with psychoanalysis, at least on Lacan's account. For as Lacan goes on to argue a decade after the ethics seminar, the discourse of the analyst is diametrically opposed to the discourse of the master (Lacan, 196970). Indeed, psychoanalysis involves the subversion of all attempts at mastery and domination.

While these two points of divergence between psychoanalysis and Aristotelianism are not insignificant, it is the third point of divergence identified by Lacan which is most decisive. This point concerns man's *telos*. As we have already seen, Lacan asserts that both Aristotelianism and psychoanalysis are teleological systems of thought; both see man as tending towards a goal, and both describe this goal as happiness. However, whereas Aristotle sees this goal as achievable, Freud does not (Lacan, 195960: 13, 2923). For Aristotle there is a cosmic order with which man can bring himself into harmony. However, this presupposes a view of human nature which excludes perverse desires; such desires are 'unnatural', and arise only 'through injury or through habit or through congenital depravity' (Aristotle, 1955: 237 [1148b1719]). Thus Aristotle excludes a wide range of sexual desires from the field of morality; they are simply 'monstrous

anomalies' which have 'nothing to do with moral evaluation' (Lacan, 195960: 5). However, as Lacan points out, 'these very desires are nothing less than those notions that are situated in the forefront of our [psychoanalytic] experience' (Lacan, 195960: 5). In psychoanalytic theory, polymorphous perversity is an essential characteristic of human desire. Conflict is built into the human psyche, and complete harmony and happiness are thus impossible. In this respect, psychoanalysis has more in common with a Sophoclean ethics than an Aristotelian ethics; as MacIntyre points out, whereas Aristotle believes in the

unity of the virtues, Sophocles can envisage situations in which there is an irreducible moral conflict (MacIntyre, 1981: 1423). Lacan supports this view by centring his own attempt to construct a psychoanalytic account of ethics on Sophocles' *Antigone*; the ethics of psychoanalysis must, he argues, be conceived of in terms of tragedy.

Lacan's discussion of Aristotle's moral philosophy leads to the conclusion that it is not compatible with psychoanalysis. While there are some interesting points of convergence between these two systems of thought, there are too many significant points of divergence to permit any reconciliation. Thus while Lacan admits that Aristotelian ethics 'still remains full of resonances and lessons' and states that 'the schemas it proposes are not useless', he concludes that it remains of limited use to psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1959/60: 23).

6 An ethics of desire

The position reached at the end of the last chapter seems to be particularly problematic. After rejecting both a rightsbased system of ethics and a utilitarian approach as suitable foundations for psychoanalytic objections to suggestion, it seemed that the only alternative ethical position was an Aristotelian one. However, after looking at Lacan's critique of Aristotelian ethics it now appears that this too must be rejected, since it is incompatible with important axioms of psychoanalytic theory. Does this mean that we must conclude by resolving the choice posed in chapter four in favour of emotivism? Must psychoanalysis abandon its ethical objections to suggestion?

In this chapter I will argue for a negative answer to this question. I will argue that even though neither rights nor utility nor Aristotelianism can provide a suitable basis for Freud's ethical objections to suggestion, this does not mean that psychoanalysis has to abandon these objections. For there is an alternative ethics, one which is neither deontological nor utilitarian nor Aristotelian, one which *can* provide a secure basis for objecting to suggestion. This alternative ethics is that formulated by Jacques Lacan, and may be termed 'an ethics of desire'.

We have already had occasion in the previous chapter to refer to the text in which Lacan formulates his proposals for an ethics of desire. The text is that of his seminar entitled *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. The boldest remarks come toward the end of the seminar, when Lacan proposes a new, specifically psychoanalytic form of ethical judgement. This judgement takes the form of a question which bears on the relationship between action and desire: 'Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?' (Lacan, 195960: 314). Given this form of judgement, it follows that 'the only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one's desire [*ceder sur son dsir*]' (Lacan, 195960: 321).

The first thing to be said about this form of ethical judgement is that it is not simply another version of what Lacan calls 'the naturalist liberation of desire' (Lacan,

195960: 3). In other words, it is not to be inscribed in the Enlightenment project of the man of pleasure who attempts to relativize the moral imperative and thus lighten the burden of guilt. On the contrary, Lacanian ethics begins with the realisation that 'the naturalist liberation of desire has failed historically' (Lacan, 195960: 4). The proof of this is that today, two centuries after the Enlightenment, the problem of guilt and its attendant pathologies has not diminished;

We do not find ourselves in the presence of a man less weighed down with laws and duties than before the great critical experience of so-called libertine thought.
(Lacan, 195960: 4)

Thus psychoanalysis does not aim at 'the calming of guilt'; it does not attempt 'to soften, blunt or attenuate the sense of guilt', but rather takes it very seriously (Lacan, 195960: 34). On the basis of the form of judgement already referred to, the analyst assumes that 'what a subject really feels guilty about when he manifests guilt at bottom always has to do with ... the extent to which he has given ground relative to his desire' (Lacan, 195960: 319).

The motives for which the subject has given ground relative to his desire are often good motives. For example, a father may give up his desire to write in order to take a job which will provide food for his family (this example is not fictional; it is taken from my own clinical practice). But this does not really matter; indeed, the findings of psychoanalysis show that, whether done for a good motive or not, giving way on one's desire always leads to guilt and thus to neurosis (Lacan, 195960: 319). Thus in the case of the patient of mine who gave way on his desire to write in order to provide for his family, the abandoned desire returned in the form of panic attacks. These panic attacks always involved a sudden loss of motor control in his hands; whenever he had to *write* something in public, his hands would start to shake uncontrollably.

The problem is, of course, that desire is polymorphous and thus inherently conflictual. In the example of the father who gives up his desire to write so as to earn money for his family, two desires are at stake. If he had not given way on his desire to write, he would have given way on his desire to provide for his family. The perfect solution would of course involve satisfying both desires by writing a bestseller. This is why the only thing in Freud's work that alludes to the possibility of the happy satisfaction of the drive is the notion of sublimation; the example which Freud gives is that of the successful writer, which implies that, at bottom, sublimation 'literally means that man has the possibility of making his

desires tradeable or salable in the form of products' (Lacan, 1959/60: 293). One must concur with Lacan when he states that such a frank, even cynical view has much to recommend it. One merit of this view is that it points to a possible convergence between the ethics of desire and 'the service of goods'. The latter phrase is Lacan's term for the safe, ordered existence envisaged by 'the bourgeois dream'; a 'situation of individual comfort' which revolves around 'private goods, family goods, domestic goods, other goods that solicit us, the goods of our trade or our

profession, the goods of the city, etc.' (Lacan, 195960: 303).

However, while the creative artist may, by virtue of sublimation, be able to achieve the remarkable feat of reconciling the ethics of desire with the service of goods, this happy solution is certainly not available to everyone. Clearly, only very few reach the position of being a successful artist or bestselling author. For the rest of humanity, there is no reconciliation between the ethics of desire and the service of goods. For them, the service of goods generates a different moral injunction, one which is diametrically opposed to the ethics of desire, one which takes the following form: 'As far as desires are concerned, come back later. Make them wait' (Lacan, 195960: 315). Lacan terms this 'the morality of power' or 'traditional ethics', and links it to 'the morality of the master' which, as we saw in the previous chapter, is inherent in Aristotelian ethics. However, he takes care to specify that he is not opposed to this morality *per se* he is not advocating the politics of anarchism but is simply concerned to clarify the limits of this morality with respect to the ethics of desire. For it is the ethics of desire, and not the morality of power, by which the analyst must be guided in conducting the treatment.

To illustrate the implications of the ethics of desire for psychoanalytic practice, let us return to the example of the father who has given way on his desire to write in order to provide for his family. The man goes into psychoanalysis and is eventually confronted with the question of whether he has acted in conformity with his desire. Now, while it is certain that he must reply negatively to this question, he may also be able to reply positively, on the grounds that he has acted in conformity with his desire to provide for his family. However, it may be the case that he has never really confronted this as a choice; he may regard it as something that he has been forced to do. By confronting him with the question of his desire, the analyst refuses to allow him this excuse; he presents the patient with a particular ethical demand; to take responsibility for those actions which he has not hitherto recognised as voluntary. In other words, the patient now makes a conscious decision where he has previously decided unconsciously. Even if the decision has

the same outcome (in our example, even if the father still decides to carry on working in a job he hates in order to provide for his family), the patient has at least made what Lacan terms 'an act'. This does not solve all his problems; his desires remain in conflict, and he is not spared the consequences of this conflict. As in a

Sophoclean play, there are irreducible conflicts in which different desires make rival and incompatible claims upon us; but 'our situation is tragic in that we have to recognise the authority of both claims ... [so that] to choose does not exempt me from the authority of the claim which I choose to go against' (MacIntyre, 1981: 143). The point is that in the course of psychoanalytic treatment, the analysand may come to the point where he chooses the inevitable, and unreservedly accepts the tragic dimension of human experience. This is why Lacan chooses Antigone as the perfect example of one who acts according to the ethics of desire. She chooses to obey one ethical imperative (to bury her brother) knowing full well that this does not exempt her from the other imperative (to obey Creon's law), and unreservedly accepts the consequence of this choice (death). And this complete acceptance of the death drive, the refusal to give way on one's desire even when this desire is revealed in its ultimate form as a desire for death; this is the most radical aspect of Lacan's ethical position.

Despite the brevity of the foregoing account of Lacanian ethics, it is now possible to raise the question of whether this alternative ethics can provide a firm basis for psychoanalytic objections to suggestion. I will argue that it can.

Given that the ethics of desire is almost always opposed to the morality of power and the service of goods (*almost* always, because in the case of the successful artist the two are reconciled), it seems plausible to identify suggestion with the latter. Suggestion, in other words, can now be equated with the injunction to defer one's desire, the command: 'Make your desires wait!' Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, confronts the subject with the relation between his actions and his desires in the immediacy of the present. Consequently, psychoanalysis differs from all other forms of psychotherapy in that it places questions of desire before questions of a safe, ordered existence. It focuses attention on the unconditional nature of desire, the impossibility of putting one's desires aside with impunity.

Support for this way of understanding suggestion can be found in other texts by Lacan. In 'The direction of the treatment', for example, Lacan makes the following assertion:

When the subject's resistance opposes suggestion, it is only a desire to maintain the subject's desire. As such, it would have to be placed in the ranks of the positive transference, since it is desire that maintains the direction of analysis, quite apart from the effects of demand. (Lacan, 1958: 271)

This dense paragraph sketches a conceptual scheme in which a number of options are envisaged for both analyst and analysand. On the side of the analyst there is the possibility of either practicing true psychoanalysis or practicing suggestion. On the side of the patient there is resistance, but this resistance is assigned a different value depending on whether it opposes psychoanalysis or suggestion. If it opposes psychoanalysis, this resistance is to be seen as negative transference; but if it opposes suggestion, it is 'to be placed in the ranks of the positive transference'. (The adjectives 'negative' and 'positive' which qualify the term 'transference' are not to be understood here in the Freudian sense, i.e. as referring to the nature of the affect, but as designating the effect of the transference on the treatment. Resistance to suggestion can thus be described as 'positive transference' because it 'maintains the direction of analysis'.) If resistance to suggestion is described as 'a desire to maintain the subject's desire', this can only be because Lacan takes suggestion to be an attempt by the other to get the subject to give way on his desire. Thus it seems that the foregoing reading of the ethics seminar, in which suggestion was identified with the morality of power, is borne out by attention to Lacan's other work.

In the light of this account of suggestion and the ethics of desire, it is now possible to tackle the question of how the analyst is, in practice, able to avoid suggestion. For it is one thing to discriminate *in theory* between psychoanalysis and suggestion, and quite another *to act* on this theory. Many people have remarked on the position of power in which the analyst finds himself; he

is confronted with a patient who becomes progressively credulous and obedient as the positive transference develops. The difference between suggestion and psychoanalysis consists precisely in whether or not the analyst *uses* this power:

For [Freud] recognized at once that the principle of his power lay there, in the transference in which respect it was not very different from suggestion but also that this power gave him a

way out of the problem only on condition that he did not use it...

(Lacan, 1958: 236)

Not to use the power granted to him by the patient; this is the task facing the analyst. Not using power means, specifically, not using it in the service of 'the morality of power', not using it to force the patient to defer his desires. But, as many have also pointed out, power corrupts, and we must ask if it is humanly possible to refuse to use this power. As Herman Nunberg has put it, '[o]ne can imagine what mastery over his narcissism the analyst must have gained in order not to be intoxicated by the powers granted him by the patient' (Nunberg, 1951: 233). How is the analyst to gain this mastery over his narcissism?

The answer is, of course, by going through a training analysis. Lacan adds that it is not sufficient for the analyst to have a brief experience as a patient; it is necessary that he go through the whole process of psychoanalytic treatment, right up to its logical endpoint. He must traverse the barrier of his fantasy, and confront the utter nullity of his narcissistic pretensions. Only in this way will the trainee analyst acquire the fundamental requisite to practise psychoanalysis: the desire of the analyst.

The desire of the analyst (*le dsir de l'analyste*) is not simply any desire which the analyst might experience, but specifically that kind of desire which must animate the analyst as he directs the treatment. In the course of a training analysis (which is to say, *any* analysis conducted properly and taken to its endpoint), there is a mutation in the economy of desire in the analyst; his desire is restructured, reorganised in such a way that it allows him to function as an analyst (Lacan, 1960/61: 2212). That is, the prior analysis of the analyst is what establishes in him the ability to conduct a course of psychoanalytic treatment without falling into suggestion.

The concept of the desire of the analyst allows Lacan to respond to what otherwise might be a devastating objection to his ethics of desire. If the ethical injunction of psychoanalysis concerns not giving way on

one's desire, it could have been objected, then this does not present an objection to suggestion when the analyst desires that the patient conform to the service of goods. This objection can now be refuted on the grounds that an analyst who desires that the patient conform to the service of goods is not inspired by the desire proper to an analyst; consequently, he is not a true analyst. The ethics of desire thus provides a perfectly consistent way of supporting the psychoanalytic objections to suggestion.

I will conclude this brief incursion into Lacanian ethics by pointing out one interesting but littleobserved consequence for the debate on suggestion. It follows from the preceding account of ethics that, if the analyst acts in conformity with the desire of the analyst, it will be the analysand who is usually guilty of practicing suggestion. The analysand typically goes into analysis with 'a demand for happiness' (Lacan, 195960: 300). He wants the symptom that has perturbed his bourgeois dream to go away quietly so that he can return to the service of goods; despite what he says, he has no intention of confronting his desire. When the analyst, acting on the desire which is proper to his function, confronts the analysand with the question of whether he has acted in conformity with his desire, the analysand resists. He attempts to parry the question, and in so doing expresses the morality of power, for it is as if he were telling the analyst: 'Make your desire wait!' The analysand attempts to get the analyst to defer his desire, since this desire aims at nothing less than the exposure of the analysand's own desire, which is what the analysand most recoils from. In this situation, which is that of every analysis, the desire of the analyst maintains the direction of the treatment by refusing to wait; in this way, the analyst resists the power of suggestion exerted by the analysand. This is not resistance in the sense in which this term is usually understood in psychoanalytic theory. It is not resistance to the process of psychoanalysis. On the contrary, it is resistance to suggestion, and therefore drives the treatment forward, on to that moment which Lacan calls the 'Last Judgement' (Lacan, 195960: 314): the moment when the analysand confronts the relationship between his actions and his desire in the unbearable, unavoidable light of the present.

Conclusion

Before concluding with some final remarks on the Lacanian approach to suggestion proposed in the last chapter, I will briefly summarise the argument put forward in this dissertation. I began by examining the various definitions of suggestion put forward by Freud and others, and argued that his constant concern to limit the meaning of this term was motivated by an ethical objection to manipulative social relations. I then went on to show that there was a contradiction between this ethical concern and Freud's theory of the emotional roots of intellectual conviction (which is a form of emotivism). A look at the debate over whether or not psychoanalysis is a form of suggestion proved that it was not only the supporters of psychoanalysis who were mired in this contradiction, but also the critics.

It thus appeared that there was a simple but stark choice facing both the supporters and the critics of psychoanalysis: either to give up their ethical objections to suggestion or to abandon their emotivism. A brief examination of Alasdair MacIntyre's account of the history of moral philosophy led to the conclusion that the same historical event lay behind both the inadequate ethical theory implied in Freud's objections to suggestion and the emotivist thesis of an identity between reason and emotion. This historical event was the Enlightenment rejection of Aristotelianism, and it therefore seemed that a possible solution to the problem of suggestion was offered by a return to an Aristotelian view of ethics.

I then went on to argue that such a return was in fact not an option available to psychoanalysis because of certain fundamental discrepancies between Aristotelian thought and psychoanalytic theory. However, the incursion into Aristotelianism was not in vain because it led to a consideration of the alternative ethics proposed by Jacques Lacan. In the final chapter it was argued that this alternative which I dubbed 'the ethics of desire' did in fact provide a firm and consistent basis for psychoanalytic objections to suggestion.

As is evident from the foregoing summary, the various

twists and turns taken by the argument have inevitably resulted in a number of loose ends and unanswered questions. In particular, it is not clear where the Lacanian solution to the problem of suggestion leaves us with respect to the thesis of an identity between reason and emotion. In chapter two it was argued that all the classic definitions of suggestion rest upon an assumed opposition between reason and emotion, an opposition which is obliterated by Freud's emotivist theory of belief and conviction. It thus seemed that it was necessary to abandon this theory in order to retain the ethical

objections to suggestion. However, the Lacanian-inspired definition of suggestion which I proposed in the final chapter seems to sidestep the whole problem of the opposition between reason and emotion. If suggestion is defined in terms of the morality of power, as the attempt to get the other to give way on his desire, then it does not matter whether rational or irrational means of persuasion are used in this attempt, nor even whether such a distinction is in fact tenable. Thus I may be excused for leaving the question of reason versus emotion aside in this dissertation. However, this is not to say that the issue is irrelevant for psychoanalysis. Indeed, it is still worth asking if the Lacanian-inspired definition of suggestion which is offered here really *does* sidestep this issue or not. It is clearly beyond the limited scope of a conclusion to discuss this question any further, and I therefore leave it pending for future investigation.

Another loose end which would need to be tied up in order to maintain the validity of the ethical solution proposed in the last chapter concerns the matter of technique. In chapter three I listed three principle ways in which the technique of psychoanalysis differs from suggestive technique: the verbosity of the patient, the scepticism permitted to the patient, and the neutrality of the analyst. I also outlined several ways in which a critic of psychoanalysis could argue that these technical rules did not in fact constitute a difference from suggestion but merely served to disguise the identity between psychoanalysis and suggestion. As all these arguments were conducted in a non-Lacanian framework, a useful way of testing the Lacanian solution proposed in chapter six would be to go back and reexamine the arguments in the light of this new solution. Unfortunately this too is beyond the scope of this conclusion and must therefore also be left for future discussion.

One additional matter that cannot be discussed here and which would be interesting to pursue further elsewhere is the question of the (in)compatibility of Aristotelian ethics with psychoanalytic theory. In chapter five I argued that these two systems of thought were incompatible because of the existence of various 'points of divergence' between their fundamental axioms, and (following Lacan) I listed three such points. However, this argument could be

challenged in a number of ways. Firstly, it could be argued that the points of divergence listed do not constitute a fundamental incompatibility but merely a minor disagreement on points of detail. This certainly seems plausible with regard to the first point of divergence which I discussed: namely, the different approaches to the concept of repetition. However, it does not seem that the same can be said of the second and third points of divergence; these really do seem to constitute fundamental discrepancies between Aristotelianism and psychoanalytic theory. But then a second argument can be deployed; that

is, it can be argued that the aspects of Aristotelianism which are incompatible with psychoanalytic theory are not in fact essential to the Aristotelian system. In respect of the third point of divergence, which concerns the inability of Aristotelian ethics to envisage genuine moral conflict, Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) has argued that while it is true that Aristotle himself ascribed to this position, the Aristotelian system (as it has been developed throughout a long tradition of thought) can in fact accommodate a conflictual account of the virtues. That is, Aristotelianism as a system of ideas is not necessarily committed to a belief in the unity of the virtues, despite what Aristotle himself says. If this is so, then perhaps Aristotelianism can after all offer a firm basis for ethical objections to suggestion, and one which is compatible with the principles and findings of psychoanalytic theory. This question deserves greater attention, particularly in the light of the revised definition of suggestion proposed in chapter six.

By attending to these three unanswered questions it might be possible for the debate on suggestion to avoid repeating the circular moves which, as we saw in chapter three, have been a depressingly familiar feature of so much of the debate on suggestion up to now. If so, this will be an achievement in itself.

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