1 'Why War?'

It is funny about wars, they ought to be different but they are not.

Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen*, 1945

No guess
Anticipative of a wrong unfelt,
No speculation on contingency,
However dim and vague, too vague and dim
To yield a justifying cause.

Coleridge, 'Fears in Solitude', 'written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion'

Perhaps the first thing one notices on reading Freud's famous exchange with Einstein on the subject of war is the dissatisfied, impatient, self-deprecating tone with which Freud writes.[1] By all accounts, Freud found the discussion tedious and sterile. He insists at the beginning that Einstein's opening letter has already said all there is to say on the matter; he ends by apologizing in advance for the disappointment he feels sure he will have incurred. Freud's answer to the question 'Why War?' seems to be struck with the mark of futility, as if he had incorporated into his writing the epithet which most commonly attaches to his object (viz. the 'futility of war'). And yet, in this exchange of 1932, Freud writes

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as much about the necessity as about the futility of war. War does not only threaten civilization, it can also advance it. By tending towards the conglomeration of nations, it operates less like death than like eros which strives to unify. Likewise, civilization has its 'advantages and perils'; we owe to it 'the best of what we have become as well as a good part of what we suffer from' (pp. 214–15). If, therefore, war neither simply threatens nor simply advances the cause of civilization, it is because it mimics or participates in the fundamental ambivalence of civilization itself.

I want to try and use this talk to reopen the question which heads that exchange between Einstein and Freud – not in order to attempt an answer, but because I think there is something to be retrieved from Freud's at least partial sense of his own failure to produce one. War, I will be suggesting, operates in Freud's discourse, and not only in that of Freud, as a limit to the possibility of absolute or total knowledge, at the same time as such absolute or total knowledge seems over and again to be offered as one cause – if not *the* cause – of war. If war is a brake on knowledge, then to try and give a complete answer to the question – something that still seems today of devastating urgency – or rather, to try *only* to answer the question, might paradoxically involve an evasion of its force.

For Gertrude Stein, from whom the first epigraph is taken, war – or more specifically the Second World War – is an emblem of modernity. Something like Winnicott's transitional object, it straddles the space between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between childhood and adulthood, between the realist and the modernist literary text. Stein uses the war to think these transitions. In the 'dark and dreadful days of adolescence', what predominates is the fear of death or dissolution: 'Naturally war is like that. It is and it is not. One can really say that in war-time there is death death and death but

is there dissolution. I wonder. May not that be one of the reasons among so many others why wars go on, and why particularly adolescents need it?'[2] What adolescents seem to need here is not just death (or dissolution) but that suspended state – 'It is and it is not.' The familiar destructiveness of war represents not, as is commonly supposed, finality but uncertainty, a hovering on the edge of what, like death, can never be totally known. Likewise, what characterizes the twentieth century and distinguishes it from the one that came before it is randomness, coincidence, and chance: 'this coincidental war this meaningless war, this war that put an end a real end and entire end to the nineteenth century there were so many coincidences and they were the only reality in this time of unreality' (p. 12). Unreality – hence the end of realism: 'there is no point in being realistic about the here and now, no use at all not any, and so it is not the nineteenth but the twentieth century, there is no realism now, life is not real it is not earnest, it is strange which is an entirely different matter' (p. 28).

For Stein, this new unreality, this strangeness, belongs to a shift in the register of knowledge; it signals the breakdown of the nineteenth-century faith in evolution, progress, and science. If everything was understood, so it was then believed, 'there would be progress and if there was going to be progress there would not be any wars, and if there were not any wars then everything could and would be understood' (p. 40). The end of war as the end of knowledge, or knowledge as the confident *means* to a sure *end* (the circularity of the argument as laid out by Stein merely underlines the one-track purpose). The ending of war becomes the guarantee or stake of this form of knowledge, the only terms on which it can justify or perpetuate itself. In the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century – which, of course, many writers in fact situate at the time of the First World War – what has collapsed is the belief that knowledge

can bring war to an end: 'Certainly nobody no not anybody thinks that this war is a war to end war . . . they cannot take on the future, no really not, certainly not as warless certainly not as future' (p. 122).[3]

In Freud's exchange with Einstein, war could also be said to precipitate a crisis of knowledge. 'As a result of a little speculation', Freud writes, 'we have come to suppose that this [destructive] instinct is at work in every living creature' (p. 211). If Freud offers here an explanation of war, he does so by means of the death drive. But the death drive, and hence the truth of war, operates, it has often been pointed out, as the speculative vanishing-point of psychoanalytic theory, and even, more boldly, of the whole of scientific thought: 'It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology and, in the present case, not even an agreeable one. But does not every science in the end come to a kind of mythology like this? Cannot the same be said to-day of your own Physics?' (p. 211). So while Freud undoubtedly proposes at the end of this exchange a resolution of sorts to the problem of war – a constitutional drive towards pacifism in all human subjects and civilization as the advance guard against war – we could argue that he has himself undermined both these claims in advance: through his earlier stress on the ambivalence of cultural progress on the one hand ('its advantages and its perils'), by his account of the destructive instinct on the other; but more radically than either of these two, although centrally implicated in both, by the instability, the necessary failure, of knowledge as resolution that he places at the foundation, or limit, of all scientific thought.

In much of the psychoanalytic writing that I have read on the subject of war, the problem of war is placed in the context of mourning. For Franco Fornari, war is a 'paranoid elaboration of mourning'.[4] We project on to the alien, or other, the destructiveness we fear in the most intimate relations or parts of ourself. Instead of

trying to repair it at home, we send it abroad. War makes the other accountable for a horror we can then wipe out with impunity, precisely because we have located it so firmly in the other's place. This saves us the effort of ambivalence, the hard work of recognizing that we love where we hate, that, in our hearts and minds at least, we kill those to whom we are most closely and intimately attached. Cleaving, as Geza Roheim puts it in his *War, Crime and the Covenant*, could almost be taken as a synonym for mourning, so graphically does it conjure up the idea of an attachment which suffocates, grasps, and attacks.[5] If we mourn, therefore, it is because we know that we have destroyed as well as lost. Enemies, on the other hand, are like possessions, writes Gertrude Stein, they allow us to forget the fear of death (p. 23).

In 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', written shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, Freud places mourning at the origins of speculative thought. Against those philosophers who see the enigma of death as the starting-point of all speculation, Freud argues that 'what released the spirit of enquiry in man was not the intellectual enigma, and not every death, but the conflict of feeling at the death of loved yet alien and hated persons'.[6] Death is a problem, not because we cannot surmount its loss or imagine our own death, but because it forces us to acknowledge that what belongs to us most intimately is also a stranger or enemy, a type of foreign body in the mind: 'those loved ones are on the one hand an inner possession, components of our own ego; but on the other hand they are partly strangers, even enemies' (p. 298). Mourning appears here almost as a metaphor for psychoanalysis itself, or at least for the mental processes it describes: estrangement of conscious from unconscious thinking, the symptom as 'alien', the 'foreign body' of the repressed. More important, the thought provoked by mourning takes the form of a dissociation. It is not thought as assured knowledge, but

a form of thinking unable, in any single or singular way, to own or possess itself. This dissociation starts with the division of the individual into body and soul: 'In this way his train of thought ran parallel with the process of disintegration that sets in with death' (p. 294). Thought originates in love and hate of the dead, and mimics the falling apart of the body which it both celebrates and mourns. So if mourning initiates thinking, it also severs us once and for all from any certainty of thought. In Freud's essay 'On Transience', mourning appears as the end-point of speculation, the 'great riddle' which attracts all other forms of uncertainty to itself: 'to psychologists, mourning is a great riddle, one of those phenomena which cannot in themselves be explained but to which other obscurities can be traced back.'[7]

It is in this form of unknowing that Freud none the less grounds the origins of ethical life. The earliest ethical commandment, the first prohibition – 'Thou shalt not kill' – arises out of this fragile moment of self-recognition in contemplation of the dead: 'It was acquired in relation to dead people who were loved, as a reaction against the satisfaction of the hatred hidden behind the grief for them; and it was gradually extended to strangers who were not loved, and finally even to enemies' (p. 295). It is, paradoxically, because we hate our enemies and recognize in that hatred our psychic alienation from those we are presumed to love, that we do not kill them. Another way of putting this would be to say that we do not kill them in so far as we recognize them – their alien-ness – as internal to our own egos, as part of our relationship to ourselves. In a striking reversal, the problem then becomes not that we hate those we love, but that we do not love – we fail to recognize ourselves in – those we hate.

It is for this reason that Freud argues that one of the things that distinguishes modern from 'primitive' man – to his advantage – is that we no longer mourn our

enemies. According to Roheim, the blood avenger in the Ngatatara tribe of Central Australia takes his victim in his arms. If he does not, he too might die, 'for he himself is identical with his victim and might die of his own aggression' (p. 18). Among the Papago Indians of North America, when the war hero returns to his tribe, he is placed in isolation as if he was inflicted with a terrible disease. He sits motionless, arms folded, with his head on his breast. The parallelism between the behaviour of the hero or homicide and the mourner, writes Roheim, is 'quite evident': 'They both behave like a case of melancholia, i.e. with aggression turned inward and identification with the dead' (p. 61).

Here again, it seems that, as much as an issue of militarism and its ethics, something about knowledge or the possibility of acquired and definitive certainty is at stake. One of Roheim's main informants in Normanby Island explained to him that they were 'different from the white people because their anger [the Islanders'] was never finished' (p. 98). The idea that one can have done with, or finish with, anger could be seen as a parallel to the idea of a final end to knowledge, the belief that knowledge, like war, can be brought to a definitive end. The idea of an end to war would then appear not as conclusion, but as repetition. As one of the soldiers puts it in Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire*, his account of the front line in Artois and Picardy during the Great War, ' "War must be killed . . . war must be killed in the belly of Germany. War must be killed; war itself." '[8]

In probably the most famous text ever to be written on war, Clausewitz's *On War*, the question of war and the question of knowledge bear the most intimate and troubled relation to each other.[9] Clausewitz is famous for the theory he proposes of total or absolute war – that is, war which aims for the total destruction or subordination of the enemy (a 'massive Clausewitzian deployment of force' is what, we were told, we witnessed in the

buildup to the Gulf War).[10] War, Clausewitz states on the first page, is 'an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will' (p. 101). Violence forces the enemy to fulfil our purpose and simultaneously drives war to the realization, or fulfilment, of its own conception of itself: 'The more violent the excitement which precedes the War, by so much the nearer will the War approach its abstract form' (p. 119). Yet, to experience Clausewitz's text is above all to experience an abstract concept constantly failing to achieve its aim. In Clausewitz's discourse on war, theory always falls short. It is incapable of calculating, or mastering, the chaos, inconsistency, and randomness of the object it is meant to predict and represent: 'in this labyrinth [logic] sticks fast . . . This inconsistency . . . becomes the cause of the War being something quite different to what it should be, according to its concept [*Begriff*] – a half-and-half production, a thing without perfect inner cohesion' (pp. 368–9). 'Why', Clausewitz asks, 'is the philosophical conception not satisfied?' (p. 368).

For Clausewitz, theory founders first and above all on the moral factor. Wrongly omitted, from previous discourse on war, he argues, this moral element is war's first 'peculiarity': 'as soon as the moral activities begin their work, as soon as moral pressures and feelings are introduced, the whole set of rules dissolves into vague ideas' (p. 185). The moral element is 'most fluid'; rather like Freud's image of the libido, it distributes itself and spreads 'through all the parts' (p. 134). Not just a complicating factor in the sure calculation of war, the moral becomes the very image of complication, partiality, or dissemination, indicating what cannot – either for the theory or for war itself – be held to its proper place. The particularity of war is a moral factor which slides and deceives. Like the body – an 'indefinite', 'elastic' quantity 'the friction of which is well known to be difficult to calculate'; or the dubious, contradictory, and false na-

ture of all information in war; or the 'living', 'reciprocal' reaction of the forces acted on in war which 'by its nature opposes anything like a regular plan' (pp. 161–2, 189). All these 'impediment effects' (p. 167) are what make for the 'difficulty' or 'impossibility' of theory ('Positive theory is impossible', the title of sect. 25, ch. 2, Bk. 2, pp. 189–90). War thus becomes the failing or imperfection of its own form.

Friction, dissolution, fluidity – it is easy to recognize in these terms, as they surface in defiance of a resistant totalization, the concepts which will appear at the heart of the yet to emerge language of psychoanalysis. For psychoanalysis could be said to display the same isomorphic relation between its meta-discourse (some would say the impossibility of any meta-discourse) and the intangible, theoretically recalcitrant entities and processes which it seeks to describe. In Clausewitz's text, war seems to figure as the the violent repressed of its own rationalization. It becomes, so to speak, the unconscious of itself:

> We must therefore decide to construe War as it is to be, and not from pure conception, but by allowing room for everything of a foreign nature which mixes itself up with it and fastens itself upon it – all the natural inertia and friction of its parts, the whole of the inconsistency, the vagueness and hesitation (or timidity) of the human mind. (p. 369)

I am sure I don't have to underline the nature of the metaphors involved here – war as an intruder or foreign body that fastens and destroys. It is the perfect image of the alien-ness that Freud places at the heart of human subjectivity, the alien-ness whose denial or projection leads us into war. In Clausewitz's text, the theorization of war seems finally to be taken over by its object. The attempt to theorize or master war, to subordinate it to absolute knowledge, becomes a way of perpetuating or

repeating war itself. But to suggest that war is in some sense the repressed of its conceptualization – that is, of any attempt to think it – might be one way of explaining why we are never prepared for the full horror of war.

The issue then seems to be not so much what might be the truth about war, but the relationship of war to the category of truth. 'Truth', writes Franco Fornari (and not of course only Fornari), 'becomes the first casualty of war.' In war, he suggests, killing becomes the sole criterion of truth (p. 147). If truth is destroyed by war, truth as abstraction on the other hand is identified by several psychoanalytic writers as one of the determinants of war. According to a note on strategy that Clausewitz wrote in 1809, more than twenty years before *On War*, abstraction kills – it is a 'dry skeleton' or 'dead form' (the destructive element here is not the invasive reality, but the constricting, suffocating theory of war). For Money-Kyrle, our psychic commitment to 'personified abstraction' is a central problem of our political life: 'The ordinary individual who is realistic enough in his domestic world of concrete objects is very apt to think irrationally as soon as he moves into the political world of personified abstractions.'[11] In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud describes politics as a world of false conviction, as fully delusional as that of sex: 'Must not the assumptions that determine our political regulations be called illusions? . . . and is it not the case that in our civilisation the relations between the sexes are disturbed by an erotic illusion or a number of such illusions?'[12] *As* delusional, or even *more so*. Ernest Jones comments wryly on the fact that, in the field of political controversy (as opposed to that of personal relations), people who have been analysed seem to be no different from people who have not.[13] In an article 'How can Civilisation be Saved?' written in 1943 right in the middle of the war, he relates such delusion to the category of the absolute, the conviction of a total, omnipotent form of truth: 'The French

proverb "*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*" would make better psychology if it were reversed into: the good, that is the absolutely good, is the enemy of the better.'[14] Likewise, Edward Glover, anticipating the outcry over his refusal to distinguish between the 'evil' of militarism and the 'virtues' of pacifism at the level of the drives, comments: 'The Virtuous like the Beautiful and the True shelters under the wing of the Absolute.'[15]

The conviction of absolute truth, or of truth as an absolute, appears here as the ultimate delusion. Conviction, Money-Kyrle writes, saves us from the work of mourning, since it offers a way of being without flaw. It is only in so far as we believe absolutely in our own virtue, for example, that we are able to go to war (pp. 173–4); which is why Winnicott will argue in his 1940 article 'Discussion of War Aims' that it is crucial that 'we should win a military and not a moral victory': 'If we fight to exist we do not claim to be better than our enemies.'[16] But of course we always do. Only if Hussein was evil personified could Bush – in what appeared so often as a battle of wills between the two men – claim the right to go to war ('Sheriff Bush and the outlaw Saddam approaching high noon'[17]). The absolute veils the more troubling forms of ambivalence and mutual implication: the shadow of self-interest (oil), the fact that the West had at the very least armed, and could in some sense be said to have created, Saddam Hussein.

If, therefore, psychoanalysis has something to say about war, one might also reverse the proposition and suggest that war has something to say about psychoanalysis, or at the very least about its own relationship to knowledge, its own conception of what constitutes the truth. War does not only appear as an object of psychoanalytic investigation, of course. It provides the living context for key moments in the history of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has also found itself at war. In the heat of the controversial discussions, which took place

between Melanie Klein, her supporters, and her critics at the British Psycho-Analytical Society in 1943–4 (see chapters 5 and 6 below), Joan Rivière comments: 'The conflict is extraordinarily like that which is taking place in many countries and I feel sure that it is in many ways a tiny reverberation of the massive conflict which pervades the world.'[18] Not just because the manifest conflict between democracy and autocracy inside the analytic community seemed to reproduce, or was experienced as reproducing, the central conflict of the Second World War; nor because the war provided the framework for the questions the Society asked of itself (Who governs in war? Should constitutional changes be permitted in war? How long can change be suspended? What is the duration – the potential interminability – of war?); but because of the way that the dispute took on, assimilated, or incorporated, the language and discourse of war. If war is present here as the most concrete of references (Freud's emigration to England, the absence of Klein from London during the blitz and her subsequent return), it is no less strikingly present as trope, running – spreading – through the language of the British Society, like the moral element that Clausewitz took as the first 'peculiarity' of war. 'Hostile camps', 'front lines', 'closing ranks', 'ramparts', 'weapons', 'sabotage', the controversy itself as an 'evil' that 'kills', the fight between democracy and autocracy as the acknowledged repetition of the external, global war – the 'political militarisation of differences', to use Riccardo Steiner's term.[19] The 'scientific discussions' themselves then appear as an attempt to resolve in the register of knowledge or doctrine the interminable problem of war. Only an 'armistice' – 'A strange peace descended on the committee' (p. 147) – can produce the conditions under which controversy can transmute itself into science: 'Following the military analogy, one can sincerely hope for a fair plebiscite under an armistice till all armies of occupation

have withdrawn to the frontiers' (p. 186). The question of training, of governance, of power, gives way, temporarily, to the question of knowledge ('It is the main object of the Society to discover the truth', p. 177). For somebody looking in from the outside, it is hard to avoid the impression that science or truth (science *as* truth) was being asked to settle – suspend, repress? – the problem of war.

This is not just my reading, but that of a number of the key protagonists involved. 'Scientific truth can never be absolute,' Brierly states in 1942 (p. 926). For Strachey, in his key memorandum of 1943, there can be no legislating in the field of scientific difference without imposing an omniscient leader, a legislator precisely, whose function would be to bring all controversy, all knowledge, to a close (p. 604). The issue of knowledge is therefore inseparable from that of power, and the attempt to separate them, to resolve the second by means of the first, therefore futile. A science claiming the status of absolute truth can only be a dictator in its own home. Conflict submits to the higher authority of truth, only to find that all it has reproduced is authority – the sure guarantee that conflict will start all over again. The right to open up the Freudian corpus, to transform it, to recognize its interminability, is the sole condition for the continuation of Freud's own work – even if that means 'continual disruption'; even, therefore, if it means war. Perhaps, then, we remain 'truer' to the spirit of psychoanalysis if we don't try to solve the problem of war.

If, as I have been suggesting, the category of absolute truth is troubled by war, so – I want to suggest now – is that of reality, a category often associated with truth, but to which, in the psychoanalytic literature, it is more often opposed. We have already seem this opposition in Clausewitz – between theory as abstraction and the unmaneageable reality, or friction, of war. Clausewitz's

distinction corresponds to the philosophical opposition between the ideal and the empirical (one which a dialectical account of war should manage to resolve). It also reflects the clash between the Enlightenment philosophy of war as reason and an emergent romanticism which stresses the unique and singular instance, the place of the incalcuable and imaginative in the human mind (Clausewitz is read by one of his most recent commentators as above all encapsulating this shift[20]).

But when the same distinction appears within the psychoanalytic accounts of war, it brings with it a new opposition between fantasy and reality, between – in the case of Money-Kyrle, for example – a self-blinding allegiance to personified abstraction and the reality-seeking principle of the rational, normal mind. The aim of psychoanalysis then becomes to correct the distortions of unconscious life. Paranoia – and hence the likelihood of war – will diminish if the ego is allowed to take its measure of the real world. And yet, that seemingly secure distinction between projection and reality is just what is disturbed, according to his own account, by the phenomenon of war. Paranoia crosses over into reality where it comes out as unavoidable truth. If I project aggression on to the other, she or he is likely to become – in reality – the mirror or embodiment of the aggression I am trying to displace on to her or him. In other words, paranoid impulses don't just project on to reality as delusion; they affect reality and become a component of it. At which point, to deny the real danger, even though you may have created it, would be as pathological as to imagine, falsely, that danger is there: 'It is as easy to deny a real danger as to imagine one that doesn't exist' (p. 161).

How can you recognize the real enemy in this scenario? Or rather, how can you distinguish, with any absolute certainty, between your own projections and real external danger? If you produce the enemy, then you

must fight him. The category of reality is unable to secure the political distinctions or effects it is being required to perform. One could in fact say that, instead of a just appreciation of reality being the means whereby one cures the individual and the culture of its propensity to war, it is war which, in this argument, has the victory, by undermining the undiluted appeal to reality which is meant to bring it to an end. The distinction between fantasy and reality cannot withstand, or is revealed in its most difficult relation under, the impact of war. We can never finally be sure whether we are projecting or not, if what we legitimately fear may be in part the effect of our own projection. How much of the preamble to the Gulf War turned on the seemingly unanswerable question of to what extent Hussein was really evil (Hitler reborn) and to what extent a projection, the newly desired enemy – post-cold war – of the West? (Both of course can be true.) Certainly, in more than one analysis, the problem for Bush was that, having called up the image of Hussein as utter monstrosity, he *had to* go to war; that is, war became inevitable in so far as he could not leave his own creation, or to the extent that he could not leave his own creation, in place. Money-Kyrle himself asks in a footnote added to his 1934 broadcast 'A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of War' why its tone was so mild, why he did not say that, in his view, by 1934 Hitler was already beyond the point of no recall, and wonders whether one reason was 'the fear of making things worse'.[23]

For Money-Kyrle, the benevolence of the real parents and a benign humanist state are the means – in reality – of countering the delusions of our unconscious life. It is because reality is finally (really) benign that there can be a solution to the problem of internal and external war. But, as if symptomatically, in *Psychoanalysis and Politics*, a very different vision of reality erupts at one extraordinary moment in his text. There is a common

myth, he writes, especially prevalent at the end of an unsuccessful war, that one had always wished to live in peace and treat the whole world as a brother: 'In order to support this myth, the very limitations of our world are themselves denied. In reality, there has never been enough for all and we have lived by competition' (p. 167). It is a myth to believe that 'our own desires can be met without depriving others'; but, he adds in a footnote, 'Any reference to the concept of an optimum population is almost taboo in political debate' (pp. 167–8). Each against all, and each for himself. The reality that Money-Kyrle opposes to the delusional precipitates of war is already, and irreducibly, at war. This is a combination of Malthus and Darwin – a violent struggle for survival legitimated by the limited resources of the real world. And as if in reply, Malthusianism erupts inside German war propaganda as proof of the unusual cruelty of the English. Listening to the radio during the occupation, Gertrude Stein hears the Germans offering two examples of enemy excess: birth control ('the killing of unborn children') and, 'almost more frightful', 'Malthus one of their great men who says people should be killed off by plagues, by famine, and by wars' (p. 79). One man's truth is another man's poison, one might say. Or, what is the projection, what the reality in this case?

For Winnicott, of course, not to know whether something is real or not (whether you have made it up), to leave the question in suspense, is a form of creativity. It is the fundamental characteristic of transitional space. Fornari uses this very property – 'beyond reality testing' – to characterize the peculiarity (the pathology) of the group. As in the dream, as in mourning, 'the problem of whether or not mourning as a social phenomenon corresponds to an objective reality does not arise' (p. 142).

This is not of course to argue that there can be no such thing as a justified war. In fact, Money-Kyrle wrote *Psychoanalysis and Politics* in 1951 as an answer to the

ethical relativism whose inadequacy (ethical and political) was for him – and not only for him – established by the Second World War. But this very fact seems to be what places his own psychoanalytic argument under the greatest strain. To take the status of guilt in his account: war, he argues after Freud, can be seen as the acting out or projection on to the other of an inner guilt which the other is then required to carry and which legitimates the non-guilty aggression of the one who projects. What is involved, therefore, is a denial of a component of psychic reality, a denial of guilt in the mind. For psychoanalysis there is no aggression without guilt. But there are wars – for example, the Second World War – which we would be guilty of *not* participating in, where 'an aggressive country launches an unprovoked and brutal war against its inoffensive neighbours' (p. 101). (This of course, was one language of Bush in relation to the Gulf War.) To be guiltless in this case appears not as projection, but as a just measure of our own justified intervention in the real: 'we would feel acutely guilty if we did *not* unleash it' (p. 102).

Again, at a late point in the book, Money-Kyrle talks of the advance of conscience in the service of liberating groups from oppression, which, although it may carry unconscious projections (magnification of cruelty, scapegoating, disavowal of callousness at home), is none the less evidence of what he calls 'different types of conscience' which have achieved 'many positive reforms to humanise our culture' (the education of children and the freeing of slaves) (p. 118). Guilt projection is therefore the driving force of cultural humanization *and* the basis of the destruction of all culture. It is incapable as a concept of distinguishing between socially desirable and socially undesirable effects.

I want to go back now to that image of truth as dictator in its own home. For this is the image which Virginia Woolf places at the heart of *Three Guineas*, her famous

essay on war.[22] For Woolf, the question of war is inseparable from that of gender, or sex. The 'fear which forbids freedom in the private house' simultaneously holds down women and leads men to war (p. 162). That fear, that lack of freedom, also gives the lie to the moral superiority of the democratic world: ' "My husband insists that I call him 'Sir'," said a woman at the Bristol Police Court yesterday when she applied for a maintenance order . . . In the same issue of the same paper Sir E. F. Fletcher is reported to have "urged the House of Commons to stand up to dictators" ' (p. 200). For Woolf, women are not innocent of war: 'Thus consciously she desired "our splendid Empire"; unconsciously she desired our splendid war' (p. 46). (To paraphrase Lacan on women and the phallus, 'they are not not in it not at all, they are in it right up to the hilt.') But if at one level women find themselves bolstering up the system that maintains them ('our splendid Empire'), and then supporting war as one of the few opportunities to escape the tyranny of the home ('our splendid war'), they none the less – because they are regularly excluded from the great fact of civilization – have a different take: 'What is this civilisation in which we find ourselves?' (p. 73). Robbed of all sensual being in the world, the successful professional man is a 'cripple in a cave' (p. 84); dominated by the fear which drives him to dominate, he is 'an infant crying in the night' (p. 161). Start with sexual difference – it is the quickest way of calling the bluff on the superiority of the so-called democratic, civilized world, the quickest way of severing, as Winnicott puts it, the moral and military victory of war: 'What right have we, Sir, to trumpet our ideals of freedom?' (p. 62).

Winnicott himself had a great deal to say about the myth of freedom in relation to war. In 'Discussion of War Aims' he writes: 'It is commonly assumed that we all love freedom and are willing to fight and die for it. That such an assumption is untrue and dangerous is

recognised by a few – who nevertheless fail, it seems to me, to understand what they describe. The truth seems to be that we like the idea of freedom and admire those who feel free, but at the same time we are afraid of freedom, and tend at times to be drawn towards being controlled.'[23] As Virginia Woolf put it in relation to that housewife from Bristol and Sir Fletcher's injunction to the House: 'This would seem to show that the common consciousness that includes husband, wife, and House of Commons is feeling at one and the same time the desire to dominate, the need to comply in order to keep the peace, and the necessity of dominating the desire for dominance – a psychological conflict which serves to explain much that appears inconsistent and turbulent in contemporary opinion' (p. 200).

According to Winnicott, freedom is something that has to be 'forced' (his word) on people; the trouble with freedom, unlike cruelty and slavery, is that it is not sexy enough: 'There is but little bodily gratification, and none that is acute, to be got out of freedom.'[24] Writing ten years later on 'The Meaning of the Word "Democracy" ', Winnicott suggests – although he does not himself make explicit the link to his earlier text – that this fear of freedom and the fear of woman might stand in the most intimate relation to each other: 'the tendency of groups of people to accept or seek *actual* domination is derived from a fear of domination by *fantasy woman*.'[25] '*One of the roots of the need to be a dictator can be a compulsion to deal with this fear of woman by encompassing and acting for her*'.[26] Which is why dictators demand not only obedience, but also love. Freedom may not be sexy, but fear of it is wholly determined by sex. Thus Bush on Hussein: 'Saddam is going to get his arse kicked' (an expression we hadn't heard that publicly since Bush used it, to considerable feminist objection, to describe his debate with Geraldine Ferraro during Reagan's second election campaign). The *Sunday Sport* headline of January 13,

1991, 'Saddam in Gay Lover Storm', is of course merely the flip side, or extension, of this. Compare, too, Saddam's comment that the ultimate evil of the West was demonstrated by the presence of American women in shorts in the desert – women in shorts, women baring their bodies in the desert, women at war.

There is, I want to suggest by way of conclusion, a very close link between this issue of sexuality and the problem of knowledge with which I began. Winnicott writes: 'with no more wars, males find themselves high and dry; yet they hate getting killed unless sure of the cause.'[27] The cause, however, is of course the problem. What is Winnicott saying about freedom if not that we think we are fighting for freedom, whereas the fear of freedom may be what drives us to war? If freedom is the cause we fight for, fear of freedom may also be the origin – the cause in its other sense – of war. What is Money-Kyrle describing if not the virtual impossibility of deciding who started it, or where it all began? If war, like the unconscious, troubles the concept of absolute truth, as well as the clear distinction between reality and fantasy, it troubles no less the category of cause. Fornari writes: 'war serves to defend ourselves against the "Terrifier" as an internal, absolute enemy . . . in this manner we arrive at the incredible paradox that the most important security function is not to defend ourselves from an external enemy but to find one' (p. xvii). So if we ask what causes war ('Why War?'), we find ourselves up against the problem of the cause. In his essay 'War and Individual Psychology', Jones quotes Nietzsche: 'Ye say it is the good cause that halloweth every war? I say unto you: it is the good war that halloweth every cause.'[28] This quote from the Iranian cleric Ayatollah Ali Meshkini graphically illustrates the problem: 'If war starts in the region, the Iranian people will regard America as the main enemy and aggressor and will definitely fight with this cause of corruption and crime, which trained warmongers

such as Saddam.'[29] If war breaks out, he seemed to be saying, we will fight on the side of the effect to destroy the cause.

But Winnicott's comment – 'with no more wars, males find themselves high and dry; yet they hate getting killed unless sure of the cause' – links this problem of the cause and its certainty to the problem of sex. I don't think this is inadvertent, although when he talks of the 'mutual respect of maturing men who have fought each other' (war as a kind of initiation rite for boys), I am not sure.[30] Compare Winnicott's statement with this one from Clausewitz: 'logic sticks fast in this labyrinth . . . Why is the philosophical conception not satisfied? . . . What is the non-conducting medium that prevents the complete discharge?' (p. 368). (Remember that he is not even talking about the conduct of war, but about the challenge of war to knowledge, the failure of the theory to match up to its object or fulfil itself.) Likewise Freud, to go back to the exchange with Einstein, talks of the advance of war in terms reminiscent of the gradual completion, cohering, mastering of the polymorphous or partial drives: 'Hitherto, the unifications created by conquest, though of considerable extent, have only been *partial*, and the conflicts between these have called out more than ever for violent solutions' (p. 207). Unification becomes a necessary violence like, we might say, the subordination of a partial, multifarious, or even perverse sexuality to the dictates of a one-track, singular, and unified genital sex.

I am not, suggesting, however, that there is a monolithic and militarist culture grafted on to the body of the man, one with which all men automatically, and by dint of that body, cannot fail to identify. In fact, one of the remarkable features of Freud's own writings on culture is not just the ambivalence (eros and thanatos) of culture, but the way that, at several key moments in the theory, men's participation in culture is feminized by

Freud. Of course Freud regularly excluded women from the bounds of culture. But he also states that it is for fear of a loss of love that men submit to the authority of cultural law (the fear that he elsewhere makes the distinguishing mark of femininity, as opposed to the castration fear of the boy); and much as the oedipal injunction which lays down the law of sexual difference, so he describes the ethical sense as something which does not arise internally but is given – imposed – from the outside.[31] And compare this comment on culture: 'perhaps we may also familiarise ourselves with the idea that there are difficulties attaching to the nature of civilisation which will not yield to any attempt at reform,[32] with this famous comment about sexuality: 'we must reckon with the possibility that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavourable to the realisation of complete satisfaction.'[33] Like sexuality, Freud hints, the law of culture is arbitrary, uncertain, incapable of completing itself. Thus Freud expels women from the bounds of culture (Woolf and other women of course turn this to their advantage) only to have his own account of the feminine and of the aporia of sexual difference return at the heart of his theorization of it. Only by acting as women – only if men, like women, fear a loss of love – will they internalize the cultural law in which their masculinity is so fiercely invested.

Which is why I want to end with something I will call 'the ethics of failure'. At an early stage in the controversy in the British Society, Susan Isaacs commented: 'We feel we ought to be better . . . because we see how much we fail; and this paradoxical but familiar fact tends to make us worse' (p. 59). War breaks out, uncontrollably, because – she seems to be suggesting – we are not willing to fail *enough*. Winnicott, in his first long intervention in the dispute, argued – after Freud – that scientific work would be possible only if 'we are not afraid to fail to cure' (p. 88). Knowledge will be possible only if we are

willing to suspend the final purpose and ends of knowledge in advance. It is, in fact, remarkable how Jones, Money-Kyrle, and Glover (as well as Woolf) in their writing on war all propose not years, not decades, but millennia for the solution of the problem of war. According to Jones, Lord Davies asked him how much psychoanalytic research would be needed to bring war to an end, and when he answered a couple of centuries, Lord Davies said he would take a shorter cut and went for the League of Nations instead (the concept of interminability takes on whole new meaning here).[34] As if war is the place where the problem of the psychoanalytic cure – the idea that it is a problem – receives its most dramatic recognition.

Virginia Woolf proposes ridicule, censure, and contempt as the great antidotes to vanity, egotism, and megalomania, and then poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalites (all mostly imposed on the female sex) as the conditions for women's entry into a world of professionalism which, without them, will inevitably lead to war (p. 90). Hang on to failure, hang on to derision – a failure and derision that would not invite a reactive triumphalism but pre-empt it – if you want to avoid going to war.

NOTES

First delivered as a Squiggle (Winnicott Foundation) Lecture, 19 January, 1991, two days after the outbreak of the Gulf War.

1 Sigmund Freud, 'Why War?' 1933 (1932), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey London: Hogarth, Vol. 22, pp. 195–215 (subsequent references are cited in the text). (Where two dates are given, the first is the date of composition, the second the original date of publication.) For an

indispensable account of the place and conceptualization of war in European culture from Clausewitz to Freud, see Daniel Pick, *War Machine: the rationalisation of slaughter in the modern age* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

2 Gertrude Stein, *Wars I Have Seen* (London: Batsford, 1945), p. 8 (subsequent references are cited in the text).

3 For a discussion of the First World War in relation to modernity, see Eric Leed, *No Man's Land – Contact and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

4 Franco Fornari, *The Psychoanalysis of War* (Bloomington, Ind., and London: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. xviii (subsequent references are cited in the text).

5 Geza Roheim, *War, Crime and the Covenant*, Journal of Clinical Psychopathology Monograph Series, No. 1 (New York (Monticello): Medical Journal Press, 1945), pp. 113, 116 (subsequent references are cited in the text).

6 Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', 1915, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 14, p. 293 (subsequent references are cited in the text).

7 Freud, 'On Transience', 1916 (1915), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 14, p. 306.

8 Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire*, trans. F. Wray (London and Toronto: Dent, 1916), p. 332.

9 Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 1832, Pelican Classics Edition Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) (subsequent references are cited in the text).

10 Andrew Stephen, 'Who Blinked First?', *Observer*, 9 December 1990.

11 Roger Money-Kyrle, *Psychoanalysis and Politics, A Contribution to the Psychology of Politics and Morals* (London: Duckworth, 1951), p. 98 (subsequent references are cited in the text).

12 Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, p. 34.

13 Ernest Jones, 'The Concept of the Normal Mind', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 23, 1 (1942), p. 4; cited in Money-Kyrle, *Psychoanalysis and Politics*, pp. 98–9n.

14 Jones, 'How can Civilisation be Saved?', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 24, 1 & 2, p. 4.
15 Edward Glover, 'Pacifism in Eclipse', in *War, Sadism and Pacifism, Further Essays on Group Psychology and War*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1935), p. 133.
16 D. W. Winnicott, 'Discussion of War Aims', 1940, in *Home Is Where We Start From* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 210.
17 Paul Wilkinson, A Way to Avoid the No-Win War', *Guardian*, 3 January 1991.
18 Joan Rivière, in *The Freud–Klein Controversies 1941–45*, ed. Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner, New Library of Psychoanalysis, vol. 11, (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991), p. 110 (subsequent references are cited in the text).
19 Riccardo Steiner, Editorial Comments (2), in *ibid.*, p. 917.
20 Azar Gat, *The Origins of Military Thought from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
21 Money-Kyrle, 'A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of War', 1934, in *The Collected Papers of Money-Kyrle*, ed. Donald Meltzer (Strath Tay, Perthshire: Clunie Press, 1978), p. 137.
22 Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, 1938 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) (subsequent references are cited in the text).
23 Winnicott, 'Discussion of War Aims', p. 214.
24 Ibid.
25 Winnicott, 'Some Thoughts on the Meaning of the Word "Democracy" ', 1950, in *Home Is Where We Start From*, p. 253; emphasis original.
26 Ibid.; emphasis original.
27 Winnicott, 'This Feminism', 1964, in *Home Is Where We Start From*, p. 193.
28 Jones, 'War and Individual Psychology', 1915, in *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 1, (London: Hogarth and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1951), p. 67.
29 'Sayings of the Week', *Observer*, 19 August 1991.
30 Winnicott, 'Discussion of War Aims', p. 220.
31 Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents* 1930 (1929), in *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, p. 124.

32 Ibid., p. 115.
33 Freud, 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love', 1912, in *Standard Edition*, vol. 11, pp. 188–9.
34 Jones, 'War and Individual Psychology', Postscript, p. 76.