Chapter 2
Freud and His Followers

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It is said that Freud and his circle put so much emphasis on understanding history, art, literature, religion, and culture generally because, in that early period, they lacked sufficient numbers of patients to discuss psychoanalytic issues among themselves with any degree of scientific rigor. Their real interests were clinical and theoretical, but the only “cases” at hand lay in history, politics, and art and literature.\(^1\) While true, the early Freudians were deeply committed to gaining an understanding of the hidden motives and deeper meanings of everything human. The world of the consulting room mattered in special ways (it was the laboratory), but the data it yielded lacked broad theoretical significance unless also applied to culture in the broadest sense. Applied psychoanalysis for the early Freudians was not the frosting on the cake it that it became in later years; everything hung on it.

Freud’s own decade of splendid isolation and his break with Wilhelm Fliess merged into the conscious shaping of a movement in 1902. It was then that he first asked a number of colleagues influenced by his work to attend meetings in his house on Wednesday evenings. For the first 4 years, no record exists of the proceedings. From 1906 on, however, Otto Rank dutifully kept thorough notes on the discussions, which continued on a regular basis until 1911 and after that fitfully until 1933 (after 1918 there is no record of the scientific discussions). Rank’s notes, amazingly enough, were saved from the Nazis by Paul Federn. Paul’s son, Ernst, and Herman Nunberg later transcribed, translated, edited, and published the notes in four volumes. These *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* provide a unique glimpse into the first group for applied psychoanalysis.

The discussions were diverse and often heated. On December 4, 1907, Isidor Sadger presented some psychoanalytic thoughts on the poetry of Konrad Ferdinand Meyer. Max Graf led the discussion by dismissing Meyer as an insignificant poet and Sadger as “quite careless in supporting his hypotheses and theses.” Wilhelm

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Stekel labeled Sadger’s work as “surface psychology” and expressed his fear by saying that his work would “harm our cause”; according to Stekel, Sadger’s presentation was “nonsense,” not to mention inelegant: “the relationship to his mother should have been indicated just once and discretely, not emphasized in such an obtrusive manner.” Otto Rank tried to find some redeeming virtues in Sadger’s presentation but was quickly drowned out by Paul Federn, who was indignant about Sadger’s failure to discuss Meyer’s sexual development. “Sadger has not said a single word about the poet’s sexual development,” Federn opined.

because one just does not know anything about it; therefore, one cannot write a pathography. Meyer must have had significant sexual experiences. A neurotic person [that is, Sadger] has recognized from Meyer’s work the incestuous relationship to his sister. Meyer was probably an onanist and was ashamed of this before his mother.

Fritz Wittels, sensing that things were getting out of hand, expressed chagrin at “the personal outburst of rage and indignation on the part of Stekel and Federn.” Freud also advised moderation but went on to express the view that “Sadger’s investigation has not clarified anything.” Freud then gave his own thumbnail sketch of Meyer’s personality, his development, and the meanings of his poetry. A chastened Sadger had the last word. He had hoped for more than invective and insult, he said. Furthermore, he had learned nothing from the substantive criticisms. “It is not possible accurately to deduce a poet’s real experiences from his works because there is nothing to distinguish the real from the illusory; one does not know where truth ends and poetic imagination begins.”

A little less than a year later—on October 14, 1908—it was Stekel’s turn to be chastised. His presentation dealt with a play by Franz Grillparzer, Der Traum, em Leben (“A Dream Is Life”). We learn from Rank’s notes that Stekel apparently approached the play as a source of data from understanding the suffering and neurosis of Grillparzer himself. Stekel concluded that Grillparzer was a compulsive neurotic. The discussion was, at first, gentle, by the standards of this group. Federn saw in the presentation “the whole Stekel, with all his faults and his merits. With his customary lack of critical judgment, Stekel jumbles up everything, and is utterly arbitrary about details.” Reitler, however, liked the presentation and mentioned several interesting aspects of it. He was echoed by Wittels, Steiner, Rie, Sadger, and Rank.

Then Freud spoke. Not only did he disagree with the diagnosis, he also felt there was “not the slightest evidence that Grillparzer was an obsessional neurotic.” Furthermore, Freud felt Stekel had “misunderstood” the question of Grillparzer’s sexuality and his method was too “radical” and wildly indiscriminate. Freud’s critical views seemed to influence the remaining commentators—Albert Joachim, Adolph Deutsch, Edward Hitschmann, and Alfred Adler—who were all, except for Deutsch, quite outspoken in their dislike for the paper. Joachim doubted Stekel’s method, on the grounds that “an artist’s creating resembles only in part that of

\[\text{Ibid., 254–258.}\]
the neurotic.” Hitschmann sarcastically criticized Stekel’s argument. How, he won-
dered, could Grillparzer feel constrained in love as an adult because he had not
possessed his mother as a child, when “very many men do not possess their mother,
and yet do not become sexually impotent”? Adler ended the attack by charging
that Stekel had arbitrarily lined up single elements in the Grillparzer play and then
completely botched the interpretation. Stekel, in his “last word,” thanked only “the
professor” and noted that the paper had fulfilled its purpose because it had served as
the occasion for Freud’s reply.3

And there was that urn. Until 1908, the name of each member of the group was
written on a piece of paper and placed in an urn. After the presentation, everyone
present was obliged to comment in the order in which his name was randomly drawn
from the urn. The idea was Freud’s, though it was an old Rabbinic tradition that
was intended to prevent the teacher from monopolizing discussion and encourage
the students to speak up and find their own voice. The urn, however, gave “the
professor” a subtle power to grade his pupils/followers on a weekly basis specifically
in relation to their understanding of his theories. It is no wonder the members of
the group spoke of the “tyranny of the urn.” Federn even reported later that many
members of the group were sneaking out of the meetings after the presentation and
before discussion to avoid having their name drawn.4 The first proposal in the 1908
“Motions Concerning the Reorganization of the Meetings” was to abolish the urn.
In the meeting during which the motions were discussed, February 5, 1908, there
was some sharp exchange on most of the proposals. The first motion (to abolish the
urn), however, was carried unanimously.5

From our comfortable perspective, it is rather easy to see the underlying tension
in the Vienna group and, as is often done in the biographies of Freud, to unmask
the leader of psychoanalysis for imperiously imposing his personality on the group
and forcing submission to his ideas. This aspect of the early psychoanalytic group
lent it the quality of a religious, or at least an ideological, movement. Strenuous dis-
agreement was allowed, even encouraged, but real dissent required a complete split
and separation from Freud. There was a clear and forceful leader in this group, a
leader, furthermore, who manipulated his followers and enforced submission. The
followers psychologically bought into this process as they idealized Freud the man
and the exciting new ideas of psychoanalysis. In Freud’s own subsequent formula-
tion of such relationships, the followers came to share a common ego ideal in Freud
and in this sense blended their differing and contentious personalities into a group
that was given psychological coherence by the leadership of Freud.

Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that Freud was the one with original ideas
in this group. There was also the reality of external derision for psychoanalytic
theory. It took, perhaps, a measure of enforced group cohesion to keep things mov-
ing forward and to remain focused on relevant topics of research and discussion.

3 Ibid., II, 2–12.
4 Ibid., 299.
5 Ibid., 298–303.
Nor were the members of the group wholly naive regarding the tyranny of Freud’s leadership role. They rebelled against the urn. The meetings even moved out of Freud’s home in 1908. Many presentations sharply diverged from Freud’s ideas, and so much remained unexplored that neither Freud nor his followers could easily define a single, orthodox line to follow. Stekel, for example, in these early years, was always refreshingly odd. The group process, whatever else it did, also fostered a remarkable creativity in the group.\(^6\)

Discussion of leaders, while not the central theme in the group, did occur. On April 10, 1907, Fritz Wittels presented a paper on Tatjana Leontiev, a Russian revolutionary figure who had tried to assassinate a top Czarist figure. Wittels compared Leontiev to a long list of female assassins, beginning with biblical figures (including Jael, who killed Sisera by driving a nail through his temple, and Judith, who beheaded Holofernes) and proceeding through, oddly enough, Joan of Arc. The choice of antecedent, however, is a little clearer in light of Wittels’s interpretation that Jael’s nail, for Wittels, “is a penis symbol.” The case of Judith, who used a sword to behead Holofernes in anticipation of his raping her, is similar: This act liberated

the cry of the flesh to accomplish also a praiseworthy deed. What gratification under the cloak of an idealistic motive... She may also be a virgin because blood must flow during the deed which she plans to commit. When her father was leading her to her wedding, she looked up to him and said, “Surely, Mannasseh looks quite different.” Here, for the first time, the importance of the father is indicated. We can readily assume that in all these cases the girl’s first sexual affection for her father plays its role; for this love is indeed always rejected.\(^7\)

The discussion indicated that the group had a more reasonable sensitivity to political reality than Wittels’s presentation would suggest. Both Adler and Freud were disturbed at Wittels’s failure to assess adequately the political context of a revolutionary figure. Adler stressed that ideology cannot be divorced from emotional life; ideology, he continued, cannot explain everything, though ideology itself can be analyzed. Freud was concerned with the harshness of Wittels’s condemnation of assassins and noted the limits of such unmasking of unconscious motives. A sound interpretation, he said, requires a certain tolerance for such hidden emotions. Nevertheless, Freud had begun his comments affirming the basic line of thought in Wittels’s interpretation. “It is the suppressed erotism,” he said, “which puts the weapon in the hand of these women. Every act of hate issues from erotic tendencies. Repudiated love, in particular, renders this transformation possible.\(^8\)

The content of the Vienna group’s discussion thus ranged far and wide, though the purpose was always focused—to apply Freud’s thought to culture, art, literature, and history. From the very beginning, it was apparent to the members of the group


\(^7\)Ibid., I, 160–161.

\(^8\)Ibid., 164.
that they faced special problems of method. The term that emerged early on to designate the way that they were approaching the study of the individual poet, artist, or historical figure was “pathography,” or, as the editors of the Minutes put it, “a biography written from a medical point of view with particular attention to psychic anomalies.” The term “pathography” was in common intellectual coinage then, but it clearly captured the assumptions and method of the Vienna group with particular accuracy. Isidor Sadger, for example, made a number of presentations in the early years on the sexual and emotional pathology of poets as part of his larger medical study of hereditary predisposition. Freud, as usual, set the tone. In his presentation near the end of 1909 on Leonardo da Vinci, he noted parenthetically but obviously (for this group) that: “We shall, of course, first inquire into the man’s sexual life in order, on that basis, to understand the peculiarities of his character.”

The idea is that the rules of the clinic spill over to culture. Sadger noted unabashedly that he wrote pathographies “purely out of medical interest, not for the purpose of throwing light on the process of artistic creation, which, by the way, remains unexplained even by psychoanalytic interpretation.” Freud guarded against any mechanistic applications of his ideas on the neuroses to classify culture material, but he never questioned that psychoanalytic theory can be used to illuminate “pathographic material.” The only one of the Vienna group ever to raise a serious methodological objection to the group’s approach to psychobiography was Max Graf, who once distinguished a case history from a psychological portrayal. “The case history,” he said, “is a pathography and it is only possible where the sources are rich and when pathology exists. Pathography, however, tells little of the creative process.” To understand that, he noted, gilding the lily, “requires the artistic sensitivity of Freud himself.”

Nevertheless, there was some sensitivity to the limits of applying psychoanalytic theory. The group knew they were searching for clinical relevance in the nonclinical world. If they were not exactly humble about that, they were often cautious. No one could get away unscathed in talking about repression in reference to a nation’s psychic life. Furthermore, Freud recognized a fundamental distinction between his enterprise and that of what we should now call the social sciences and humanities. Freud believed that psychology was ultimately grounded in biology and chemistry. He had abandoned his “Project for a Scientific Psychology” only because he knew too little of brain function and neurological processes at the cellular level to carry forward his investigations fully. Instead, he turned to a world of metaphors in psychology. His life’s work, as he said later with a degree of false humility, was only a

9Ibid., I, 169.
10Ibid., 98.
11Ibid., II, 338–352.
12Ibid., I, 267–268.
13Ibid., 179–180.
14Ibid., 259–269.
15Ibid., 8, for example.
detour. History and literature, however, are not way stations to a deeper, more fundamental reality in the natural sciences. Freud knew that, although he sometimes acted otherwise, and whether or not the group seemed to realize it at all.

II

After the early period of meeting in Freud’s home, his followers for the most part directed their energies in the area of applied analysis and leadership into Imago, which was founded in 1912 and published continuously until 1937. The editor (until 1927) was Otto Rank, the secretary of the earlier group. Imago, subtitled Zeitschrift für der Psychoanalyse auf der Geisteswissenschaften, deserves special consideration.

Imago dealt mostly with literary topics, with frequent mention of religion and only occasional forays into history and issues of leadership. In this respect, Imago closely reflected the orientation of the early group (of which, most of the authors represented in Imago had been members). Thus, in the first decade of publication, Imago published only five articles (out of a total of 138) that dealt with issues directly relating to leadership. This figure would be approximately tripled if one were to include articles on religion and anthropology. Freud, for example, published Totem and Taboo in several parts in Imago as it emerged. Alice Balint submitted Der Familienvater in 1913, arguing that the prairie Indians were unable to resolve their Oedipus complex successfully and were therefore stuck, as a culture, in early adolescence. For the most part, however, Imago continued in its publication of formal articles in contrast with what had been looser and more wide-ranging in the Vienna discussion group. Isidor Sadger wrote for it a series of articles on poets that reflected his long-standing interest in pathographies. Ernest Jones wrote a two-part article on the psychology of salt. Theodor Reik analyzed humor. Lou Andreas-Salomé wrote on the “female type.” The few gems we have in these years merit close scrutiny.

In the very first issue of the Imago in 1912, Carl Abraham wrote a psychoanalytic study of Amenhotep IV in which he focused attention on Amenhotep’s religious activities, which, he argued, can be seen as the successful sublimation of the Egyptian monarch’s aggression toward his father. Like that of many dynasties, Abraham wrote, Amenhotep’s family history showed increasing decadence after initial strength. His forefathers were warriors who established a great Egyptian empire. His father, Amenhotep III, was a weak ruler whose prowess was as a hunter. The physically weak Amenhotep IV, last in the direct line, was a dreamer, whose history resembled that of Freud’s neurotics.

Amenhotep IV’s mother, Teje, surpassed his father in intelligence, energy, and beauty, and she managed the government as Amenhotep III grew old, and was active as regent after he died. Abraham argues that Amenhotep IV’s libido was clearly

fixated on his mother and that, as in many such cases, the mother was substituted for by an adored wife, Nefertiti. Amenhotep IV never took a harem, contrary to custom, even when Nefertiti bore only daughters, and in surviving inscriptions and artwork he emphasized monogamous love. After Amenhotep III’s death, Teje had begun to favor the worship of Aton over the traditional high god Amon. Amenhotep IV carried this further, completely replacing the god of his fathers with a new, single god: Aton. Typically, the father was rejected and replaced by an even more powerful figure. Aton was created by Amenhotep IV as a spiritual (not anthropomorphic) god of peace and was accompanied by an ethos of peace and the sublimation of sadistic human offerings. He was represented as a sun whose rays ended in hands embracing the king. Amenhotep IV changed his name to Ikhnaton and called himself the son of Aton, just as neurotics often fantasize that they really have highborn fathers.

The only aggression in Amenhotep’s reign, Abraham continues, was that against his father. He persecuted the priests of Amon and had Amon’s name erased from all inscriptions—which, of course, included inscriptions naming his father. When Teje died, Amenhotep buried her not beside his father, but in the tomb in which he expected to be buried himself. In fact, Amenhotep IV rejected much of the tradition his father had supported, even moving the capital city north toward the old Lower Egypt.

Abraham concludes that Amenhotep IV religion of one god (to replace one father), a peaceful god of love (a father sharing his own personality), represents a successful sublimation. His choice of Aton in particular is significant: The sun is often a father figure (it is a single one, unlike the myriad stars, and its warmth represents love), and Aton was related to Adonis, who like Amenhotep IV, was young, died young, and preferred beauty to war. And, like the neurotic, Amenhotep IV lived in a dream world, ignoring the reality of evil and the necessity of protecting his empire.

Two years later, Ludwig Jekels produced another psychobiographical sketch in the pages of *Imago*. This one dealt with the turning point in the life of Napoleon I. Jekels’s concern in his article is to explain Napoleon’s abrupt shift from being a Corsican to Frenchman. As a child, Napoleon had hated the French conquerors and invented schemes to overthrow them. He idealized Paoli, an older patriot who had been regent of Corsica before the French Occupation. But Napoleon returned to Corsica in 1793, when the king of France was out of power and the French had declared war on England. At that time, Paoli was dishonored for his connections with England. Then, Napoleon abruptly accused Paoli of treason, took the side of his rival Saliceti, and, since the populace still supported Paoli, had his house burned and left Corsica. Jekels expressed disagreement with the traditional political explanation for this sudden shift of loyalties on the part of Napoleon. He claimed, instead, that a purely political explanation fails to explain the speed or intensity of the change in Napoleon’s loyalties.

In this regard, Jekels argued that Napoleon’s patriotism resulted from his bond with his mother, and that the earth itself, for Napoleon, was a mother figure. Thus, Napoleon’s ideal was the patriotic woman of Sparta (his own mother was a Corsican patriot), and he insisted that it was wrong for sexual love to replace patriotism in the modern era. In general, the women in Napoleon’s life were often mother substitutes, women who were older than himself and often widows. Napoleon’s mother was rumored to have had an affair with Marbeuf, the French governor who had befriended the family. As in both family and politics, outsiders conquered. Jekels notes that Napoleon in general hated women, with the great exception of Josephine, whose infidelity he accepted, although he demanded chastity in other women. While Napoleon was ambivalent toward his own father, he identified especially with Charlemagne, who also founded a dynasty and planned to conquer Spain and Italy. (Jekels notes that Napoleon’s father’s name was “Charles Marie.”) Also, after the death of his father, Napoleon took his father’s role in the family and supported the family, even though he was the second son.

Jekels concluded that Napoleon’s fixation on his mother and ambivalence toward his father are clear. The ambivalence led him to have two kinds of father figures—those of love and those of hate—Paoli, on the one hand, and Marbeuf and the king, on the other. After the king was executed in January 1793, Napoleon was much more a Frenchman. The father who had kept him from his mother but had shared her with foreigners was now gone; now his Oedipus complex urged him to possess that mother. France before had symbolized Marbeuf (a rival) to Napoleon; now it meant his mother. Paoli had been the idealized father who protected his mother (Corsica) from a stranger. But after Louis was killed, Napoleon wanted all his father figures to fall, especially since Paoli supported the English, who had played the role of bringing foreigners to the mother. Napoleon thus turned against Paoli, thereby imitating his own father, who had abandoned Paoli when he (the father) worked with the French occupiers. From then on, Napoleon had no more patriotism for Corsica but had a series of mother substitutes (Italy, the Near East) he was driven to possess and authority figures he was driven to defeat. Thus, Jekels neatly links an event in Napoleon’s personal history with significant large-scale political developments of the French Revolution. That the connections in Jekels’s article are arbitrary and superficial go without saying.

It was six more years before *Imago* published another psychological study of leadership. This one, in 1920, was by Emil Lorenz and dealt with the question of political mythology.¹⁸ Lorenz’s concern was the psychology, or inner dynamics, of politics, and how in the quest for power rational and irrational motives mix.

A state, Lorenz argued, is founded both upon a sense of community among its citizens and upon a set hierarchy with a leader at its apex. Lorenz saw two forces at work, both of which mirrored the Oedipus complex: ambivalence toward the leader, who is a father figure, and love for the nurturing “motherland.” In this regard, Lorenz cited Livy’s description of Brutus, who recognized that “the mother” mentioned in

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an oracle was the land, and proceeded to kill the tyrant ruler and to take his place, so that the ruler became the son and husband of the earth.

Then, oddly, Lorenz examined a series of plays by Schiller to develop his argument. These plays dealt with regicide, revolution, and freedom fighting. In general, Lorenz saw the freedom fighter as the son of the land, fighting the father-tyrant and taking his place. He notes the frequency with which the freedom fighter is also an idiot figure (Brutus, Tell, Don Carlos), just as the hero of fairy tales is often the youngest or dumbest of the group. Lorenz believed that this relates to the child’s game of pretended ignorance.

Lorenz went on to repeat that all rulers, priests, and magicians are father figures, and that the earth is the “mother” of all people, who are thus brothers. During revolutionary times, there is a return to the potency of the mother. If the people have a strong relationship to the land, libido freed by revolution can end up as loyalty or have other positive qualities. Where is no such strong relationship between the people and “mother” earth, however, the hatred directed at the ruler/father can lead to horrors like the barbarism of the French Revolution. Lorenz also argued that the negativism and the misogyny of assassins and revolutionaries are caused by their overpowering bond with their mothers.

Finally, Lorenz delineated three historical phases in the development of political realities. At first, monastic tribes had male leaders, but females were also worshipped. In time, cultures came to be characterized by bonds to both the land/mother and the leader/father. Finally, mass movements arose when there was overpopulation and land could be bought and sold. These developments could lead to socialism and a new, leaderless, “female” community.

The scope of Lorenz’s comments on politics was not to be repeated for some time in the pages of *Imago*. In the next couple of years, there was a return to the more familiar and comfortable use of psychoanalytic theory in interpreting individual leaders. Thus, in 1921 J. C. Flügel wrote an interesting study of the character and life of Henry VIII. According to Flügel, the marital problems of Henry VIII were caused by three powerful and conflicting desires, all derived from the Oedipal complex: First, he required and hated rivals in love affairs; second, he desired and was repulsed by incestuous relationships; and third, he demanded that his women be chaste. Henry’s Oedipal complex was particularly powerful because he was the son of a king and had seen his father neglect a beautiful wife; also, his mother’s Yorkish relatives viewed her offspring as more legitimate rulers than the Tudor Henry VII. Henry VIII’s feelings were transferred to his older brother, Arthur, whose widow, he married. Henry’s father had also considered marrying Katherine of Aragon, thus making Henry, Henry’s father, and Henry’s brother sexual rivals.

When Henry became king, he achieved a balance between his egotistic and sexual desires, as exemplified by his self-assurance and his need for the pope’s approval, respectively. However, the egotistical side of his character became dominant after his first divorce, when, as the head of the Church of England, he became his own

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father/pope/God figure. His horror of Katherine seems to have been genuine—she was, after all, his sister—but he chose another sister as his next wife (he had had an affair with Anne Boleyn’s sister Mary). Furthermore, while Anne had led Henry on for years, refusing to sleep with him, Henry grew bored with her almost as soon as they were married. He needed some hindrance to keep him interested, which Flügel argues is a fairly obvious Oedipal need. The accusations with which Henry condemned Anne were his own projections: that she had slept with her brother (as Henry had wanted to commit incest) and that she had planned to kill him (as Henry had wanted to kill his father and brother).

His next wife, Jane Seymour, was also a relative, whom Henry had met in her brother’s house. While she was probably not a virgin, Henry shut his eyes to her past. Jane died soon after the marriage. His next marriage, to Anne of Cleves, was political and was ended when Henry no longer needed a Protestant alliance. His next wife, Katherine Howard, was also beheaded for infidelity, this time undoubtedly real; Henry had blinded himself to her past sexual relationships and went through a personal crisis when he had to face the truth. Finally, Katherine Parr, twice widowed, was a nearly perfect match, given Henry’s Oedipal drives: She had been engaged to Jane Seymour’s brother (and was thus a “sister”), and she shared his brother’s wife’s name.

The next year William Boven published a study of Alexander the Great, which returned to the exaggerated speculation of the earlier period. Boven’s goal was to discover the source of Alexander’s megalomania, and he argued that Alexander conquered Asia basically as a compensatory effort to conquer his father. Alexander was close to his mother, Olympias, who was reputedly involved with magic in certain erotic cults. There were rumors that she slept with strange beasts. She also hated her husband, Philip, who was both autocratic and unfaithful to her. Alexander was a promising boy—smart, talented, and brave—and competed actively with his father, taking satisfaction in being a better warrior.

When Philip took a new wife, Alexander’s position as heir was threatened, and he and his mother Olympias went into exile. Eventually, Alexander returned and regained his father’s graces before the latter was murdered. Alexander began his reign with energy, first murdering any possible pretenders to the throne, and then proceeding with his ambitious conquests.

Boven contends that Alexander was in fact avenging his mother on his father. He notes that Alexander was famed for his kindness to women. On the other hand, he spontaneously murdered an old friend for praising Philip (again “killing his father”). As his megalomania grew, Alexander claimed to be a son of Zeus, which was an obvious rejection of Philip and was perhaps based on Olympias’s cult activities. Eventually, Alexander placed himself with Heracles and Dionysius, below no one but Zeus himself, and he wanted his mother also to be given a place among the gods. Alexander’s final triumph, then, over his father, Philip, came in the conquest of Asia, which he equated with his father.

In that same first decade of *Imago*’s publication, a number of writers published psychoanalytic studies relating to leadership in other journals and some in full-length books. It was a time of general fertility in applied psychoanalytic work, after the closed period of the Vienna meetings but before the vast expansion of the work after the late 1920s. For example, Hans Sachs wrote a short analysis of a dream that Bismarck had had in 1863. Sachs published his article in the *International Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse* in 1913.21 In the dream that Bismarck reported in his journal, he was riding on an Alpine path that got progressively narrower, with a cliff on one side and a gorge on the other, until there was no room to go forward, turn around, or dismount. Bismarck got angry, hit the cliff on his left with his whip, and called on God for help, at which point the whip got infinitely long and the cliff fell away like a curtain to reveal a road, a landscape like Bohemia with Prussian troops. The dream ended with Bismarck wanting to tell the king about it immediately.

On one level, Sachs interprets the dream as a masturbation fantasy: The whip is held in the left hand, meaning something is forbidden, and it grows to enormous length. But on another level, he argues that Bismarck was comparing himself to Moses, for, like Moses, he was trying to free an ungrateful people. The Bible story in which Moses knocked against a rock and water sprang forth is also partly sexual: Moses, acting against God’s will, got the water but was punished. Bismarck’s wish to tell the king what had happened was like bragging of a sexual conquest or asking for punishment—but he was protected because of the overt political message.

The Napoleons fascinated the early Freudians. Ernest Jones in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* in 1913 wrote about Louis Bonaparte, who he argued was worthy of study because he helped cause his brother Napoleon’s downfall.22 Napoleon, intending to bring Holland more completely under his control, had made Louis king of Holland in 1806. When Napoleon wanted a blockade against England, which would have been a great sacrifice for Holland, Louis took an independent, pro-Dutch position. Napoleon eventually absorbed Holland in the greater France, but chronic discontent persisted there until his overthrow.

Jones claims that Louis’s incompetent political behavior was the result of introjection, and it mirrored his personal life and his relationship with his brother. Louis, Napoleon’s favorite brother, had been educated by him personally, and was on his staff at an early age. When he was twenty, though, an attack of venereal disease led to a character change; from then on, he was a moody hypochondriac and complainer who constantly resigned from positions of leadership to go to spas. Napoleon’s attitude toward Louis—first his overestimation, then his increasing annoyance—was in fact reasonable and consistent, but was interpreted by Louis as the vacillation of an overfond, over stern parent.

Louis’s homosexual attraction to Napoleon was his main conflict. He was noticeably effeminate, which he counteracted by sexual exploits. Napoleon married Louis off to Josephine’s daughter. The marriage was a failure, for Louis was jealous of Napoleon’s fondness for his eldest son, who was rumored to be Napoleon’s own. Louis sued for divorce at the same time Napoleon was divorcing Josephine, a decision which Jones sees as an indication of his feelings of identity with Napoleon. He was extremely bitter when Napoleon finally did have a son of his own.

In Jones’s view, Louis’s jealousy and delusions of persecution stemmed from his repressed homosexuality. In such cases, the original love turns to hate, and the hater then assumes that the love object hates him in return. Louis’s alternating love and hatred for Napoleon were consistent with his syndrome, and his tendencies affected his behavior. For example, after having shown jealous suspicion that his wife had slept with Napoleon (which was probably not true), Louis claimed years later that Napoleon had never been unfaithful to Josephine, although that was known to be false. Jones concludes that Louis’s obsession with his personal relationship with Napoleon kept him from being a competent leader.

In general, the widening scope of applied psychoanalytic work in this period represented an increase in the quantity of work that was done without significant advances in method or theoretical approaches. In general, the interpretations now read as somewhat wooden, though there is no question the psychological approach to leadership had become its own subfield.

III

Freud’s own formal efforts at applied psychoanalytic work covered an enormous range after the early period of incubation. Only music did not interest him. Two of his books touched directly on questions of leadership: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and, with William Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson*:

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Leadership, if somewhat more broadly considered, however, was a major concern of Freud. His extensive theoretical writings on the Oedipus complex in a sense describe the psychological process of leading and following in a family. A study like his of Leonardo da Vinci in 1910 focuses on a major leader in the world of art. *Totem and Taboo* (1913) argues that the origins of civilization lay in the struggle with the clan leader of primitive cultures. *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) explores the complex mechanisms of guilt and repression in modern life that fuel the dynamics of mass behavior. And, finally, in his grand study of Moses, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud returned at the end of his own life to a leader who helped shape the beginnings of Western civilization.

In terms of leadership, probably the single most important generalization to make about Freud’s work is the centrality of the family model for him. The father of the family defines the psychological world of leadership, all else in metaphor. For Freud himself, this had great personal significance in his understanding of his own relationship with his father, Jacob, who died in 1897. It was his father’s death that prompted Freud’s own self-analysis. Of the many insights that emerged from that experience, none was of greater significance than his own ambivalence toward his father and, by extension, toward figures of authority in general. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, if read as an autobiography, shows Freud’s intense unconscious struggle with the multiple meanings of leadership in his own experience.

The extent to which Freud’s major dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* center on the interrelated issues of Freud’s own rightness in response to criticism, and his ambitious assertiveness toward figures of authority, for example, is remarkable. In the Irma dream, Freud constructed an elaborate defense for himself in response to his perceived criticism from his friend, Otto, who had reported to Freud on the dream day that Irma, Freud’s patient, was “better, but not quite well.”

Freud’s dream blames Irma, because she is recalcitrant; Dr. M., his senior colleague, whom Freud emasculates but who confirms his diagnosis; and Otto, who has really caused the problem anyway because he thoughtlessly gave an injection with a dirty syringe. In the preamble to the Count Thun dream, Freud explains the slight he felt when the Austrian politician marched past him on the railroad platform on the way to an audience with the emperor. Count Thun waved aside the ticket inspector with a curt motion of his hand and without any explanation. Freud then situated himself on the same platform, hummed a rebellious tune from an opera, recalled the French comedy with the line about the great gentleman who had taken the trouble to be born, and pushed the train officials (without success) for a compartment with

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a lavatory. He also dreamed of revolution and associated to his dream of urinating in his parents’ bedroom, to which his father’s response was to say, “The boy will come to nothing.”

Freud noted, “This must have been a frightful blow to my ambition, for references to this scene are still constantly recurring in my dreams and are always linked with an enumeration of my achievements and success, as though I wanted to say, ‘You see, I have come to something.’”

Freud, however, argued from his own self-analysis how his—and therefore everyone’s—rivalry with the male figure of authority in the family was rooted in his libidinal attachment for his mother. The favored son of a young mother, he was to say, has a special kind of self-confidence. The tension in mediating the young boy’s love for his mother and the rivalry with his father are captured in the complex that Freud labeled after the story of Oedipus Rex. In the first formulation of the Oedipus complex (in *The Interpretation of Dreams*), Freud uses Hamlet’s story to illustrate the deadening effect of overpowering ambivalence (Hamlet is “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought”). Hamlet can act in all ways except one: He cannot take “vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father’s place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized.”

The sense one has here, as well as in case histories like Little Hans, Dr. Paul Schreber, and the Rat Man, is that the boy’s attraction for the mother has a thin edge of danger, but that the real family source of ambivalence, struggle, and competition lies in the relationship with father. For it is the father, who is everyone’s own private leader, who mediates the delicate transition from inner to outer, from psychology to politics, from the family to culture.

Erikson, whose father abandoned his mother before his birth and who later, in his thirties, adopted himself as his own father (Erik, son of Erik), said of fathers, “A man must confront his childhood and, above all, give an account of his conflicts with his father.” And, further, leaders, who were once children, “have to become their own fathers and in a way their father’s fathers while not yet adult. This spells special conflicts and special tasks.” If the mother regulates the private sources of the self—love and sex most of all—one can only become something in a public world in relation to the father. A nice clinical expression of this idea in Freud is the case of Little Hans, who literally could not leave home (mother) because of his phobia that the father/horse would bite him for falling down. The world was too dangerous even to enter until Hans could resolve his conflicts with his father.

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27 Ibid., 139–154.
28 Ibid., 241–247.
29 Ibid., 298–299.
31 Ibid., 102.
Hans was later reincarnated in Woodrow Wilson, whose excruciating ambivalence toward papa led to (disastrously, in the view of Freud and Bullitt) redrafting the map of Europe in the Treaty of Versailles. Wilson thus never worked through the gnawing resentments that lay buried under his intense idealization of his impressive and articulate father; he simply acted them all out, first in the Princeton fight with Dean West, then with the world at Versailles. By then, time and disease had aggravated his own grandiosity and his ambivalence toward his father. He became the Jesus of the world in lieu of God and his dead father. The stage for his theatrical enactments shifted, but the psychological conflicts that cast the play never altered. Whatever indelicacies of exposition justify the attribution of actual authorship to Bullitt, there is equally no question that the ideas expressed in the book belong to Freud. Wilson’s behavior was neurotic in Freud’s view precisely because it carried the private family issues of the son’s ambivalence toward the father directly into the public realm.

In Freud’s view, the general family issues with the father cluster around certain core conflicts which can be clearly identified and form the basis for the prediction of one’s behavior. For Freud, these conflicts were largely instinctive and drive-related in nature. They cannot be avoided. The libidinal attachment to the mother that generates rivalry with the father is, in a sense, encoded. Because they come so early and are so central, such conflictual beginnings necessarily carry over to the public realm. To paraphrase Lincoln, we cannot escape our own history. Freud’s world is, in essence, one of conflict, in which behavior is firmly rooted in pathology. It is a grim, pessimistic view of the world. The hidden and renounced in everyone are the pathological products of an average and expectable family environment. We may grow beyond our origins, but only with difficulty, and we are always subject to regression in the face of difficulties, and to what Freud called the return of the repressed.

As he commented in his introduction to the Wilson book:

Fools, visionaries, sufferers from delusions, neurotics and lunatics have played great roles at all times in the history of mankind and not merely when the accident of birth had bequeathed them sovereignty. Usually they have wreaked havoc; but not always. Such persons have exercised far-reaching influence upon their own and later times, they have given impetus to important cultural movements and have made great discoveries. They have been able to accomplish such achievements on the one hand through the help of the intact portion of their personalities, that is to say in spite of their abnormalities, but on the other hand it is often precisely the pathological traits of their characters, the one-sidedness of their development, the abnormal strengthening of certain desires, the uncritical and unrestrained abandonment to a single aim, which give them the power to drag others after them and to overcome the resistance of the world.33

This pathological model also defined for Freud the misty origins of culture itself. In Totem and Taboo, Freud argued that the powerful father dominated the primal horde and retained for himself sole possession of the women while excluding the young males. Resentment and envy eventually drove the other males to band

33 Freud and Bullitt, Wilson, xvi.
together and kill the father. This deed required massive repression and atonement, which Freud felt was the basis for religion and civilization. Freud’s conclusions to the book stressed that these phylogenetic beginnings of civilization resulted in the neurotic’s inhibition of action, in sharp contrast with primitive man, who is uninhibited and whose “thought passes directly into action,” according to Freud. In other words, first there is historical reality, which for various reasons requires repression and the creation of new psychological structures. Culture and civilization as we know them evolve from this process. The residue of the historical event, however, appears embedded ontogenetically in everyone’s experience. The drives, according to Freud, activate ingrained phylogenetic memories which become, for the individual, fantasies of what the human race once acted out.\textsuperscript{34}

Carl Jung pushed these ideas to their ultimate conclusion. But even with Freud, one cannot understand the individual in the family or in civilization generally without close attention to the deeply embedded unconscious memories from the group’s collective past. As Heinz Kohut has often argued, Freud’s model is an elegant and consistent whole. It all hangs on drives and the notion of pathology as a “normal” part of the soul (\textit{die Seele}). What is true for the individual is likewise valid for the group. Ontogeny and phylogeny must logically and psychologically be interrelated. The problem is how to define the link. Fathers, presidents, and kings must lead, and individuals and groups follow, largely in response to internal messages from long-lost events. We are free, perhaps, but not quite as free as we might imagine.

Another feature of the family model for leadership in Freud’s thinking was that it centered on maleness. For Freud, the leader in the family and politics, not to mention the broader spheres of culture, art, and civilization, is always male. Freud always examines the unfolding of the Oedipus complex from the boy’s point of view, adding only parenthetically that the analogue of the boy’s conflicts occurs in girls. Only in Lecture 33 of his \textit{New Introductory Lectures} did Freud systematically review the question of femininity, which he considers a “riddle.”\textsuperscript{35} He argues that the clitoris is an atrophied penis, and that psychologically femininity seeks passive aims.\textsuperscript{36} The real dilemma, however, for girls, as opposed to boys, is the task of shifting libidinal excitation from the clitoris to the vagina and the special complications of exchanging the maternal love object for the paternal as the Oedipus complex unfolds. All this, in Freud’s view, profoundly affects superego formation in girls, “which cannot attain the strength and independence which give it cultural significance.”\textsuperscript{37} Basically, it seems from Freud’s argument, because psychosexual development is more complicated for females, they are more prone to neurosis. It is not a huge step in logic to assume that they would also be unfit to fill positions of leadership, either in the family or in politics.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 114–115.
\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 129.
Freud’s most important and, in fact, his only systematic discussion of leadership per se was the 1921 monograph, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. The opening paragraph makes clear Freud’s intention to use clinical psychoanalytic insights to understand group phenomena. It states the assumption that governed the Vienna meetings:

In the individual’s mental life, someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, and an opponent; and so from the very first individual psychology, in this extended but entirely justifiable sense of the words, is at the same time social psychology as well.\(^{38}\)

Freud then dissects at length Gustave Le Bon’s *Psychologie de Foules* (1895) as a way of separating his own views from those of the most significant thinker to date on the same issues. What most interested Freud about Le Bon’s work was his idea of a primitive group mind. Groups, for Freud, reduce differences to their lowest common denominator, so that the individual seems to be lost in an almost hypnotic way. A group is impulsive, changeable, and irritable. As Freud had noted in *Totem and Taboo*, a group “cannot tolerate any delay between its desire and the fulfillment of what it desires. It has a sense of omnipotence; the notion of impossibility disappears for the individual in a group.”\(^{39}\) Furthermore, a group never doubts its sense of rightness or strength. It is both intolerant of differences and somewhat ironically obedient to authority. It demands leaders who are strong and even violent, seeking domination and oppression from them. “A group,” for Freud, “is an obedient herd, which could never live without a master. It has such a thirst for obedience that it submits instinctively to anyone who appoints himself its master.”\(^{40}\) Freud discusses other theorists on the subject—such as W. McDougall, author of the 1920 study, *The Group Mind*—but finds nothing as evocative as Le Bon’s study.

In a general sense, the fundamental fact of group behavior for Freud lies in the interrelated ideas of intensification of affect and inhibition of intellect as the psychological influences on individuals in groups.\(^{41}\) Both these aspects of group behavior are derived from the libidinal ties that bind people together in the mass: “... a group is held together by Eros, which holds together everything in the world.”\(^{42}\) To lose one’s place in the group is terrifying, precisely because such loss threatens one’s basic libidinal organization; group fear is thus directly analogous to anxiety in the individual.

Fear in an individual is provoked either by the greatness of a danger or by the cessation of emotional ties (libidinal cathexes); the latter is the case of neurotic fear or anxiety. In just the same way panic arises either owing to an increase of the common danger or owing to

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\(^{39}\)Ibid., 77.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 81.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., 88.

\(^{42}\)Ibid., 92.
the disappearance of the emotional ties which hold the group together; and the latter case is analogous to that of neurotic anxiety.\textsuperscript{43}

The question then becomes how to define more precisely the exact nature of the libidinal ties among individuals in groups. This leads Freud to a discussion of identification, which “endeavors to mould a person’s own ego after fashion of one that has been taken as a model.”\textsuperscript{44} Identification describes both the first form of a tie with an object and a regressive substitute for a libidinal object relation. It may also, however, represent a “new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct.”\textsuperscript{45} It is in this “new” sense that identification serves as the basis of group cohesion. In this, and indeed in any of the meanings of identification, the loved object is placed within one’s own ego as an ideal. In individual psychology, one can observe the force of such developmental structuralization in various breakdown products as homosexuality, depression, hypnosis, and the normal state of being in love (where the object is intensely idealized). In groups, there is a pooling of ego ideals in regard to the figure of the leader: “A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.”\textsuperscript{46}

The leader of a group is heavily invested by all members of the group, whose attachment provides the raison d’être for their emotional survival. As such, a group revives the primal horde and its psychology is “the oldest human psychology.”\textsuperscript{47} A group regressively re-creates the original bonds in human affairs. In a phylogenetic sense, individual structuralization that establishes one’s own object sources as an inner voice (the ego ideal) represents a differentiation of the primitive relation of group members to the idealized leader. It seems, however, to be a historical process marked by frequent backsliding.\textsuperscript{48} We keep forming groups and creating idealized leaders.

In Freudian terms, therefore, leaders are not altogether welcome in human society. We suffer under them and bear the consequence of their actions. Collective pooling of ego ideals in a group forces regressive idealization of the external leader that is primitive and archaic in its form and meanings. Freud never addresses the specific role of the leader in enhancing this process. The leader seems to be created largely out of collective need, an almost accidental by-product of group process. Furthermore, the leader’s power is immense, for the psychological bond of groups to him gives license to all peremptory needs of the leader himself. For at least what was to come in Germany, and in some other extreme historical circumstances, Freud’s approach was prescient.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 97.  
\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 106.  
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 108.  
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 116.  
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 123.  
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 123.