FREUD'S PARANOID QUEST

Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion

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Introduction

> Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members.
>
> —Emerson

Henry James spent his last afternoons as Napoleon, ordering furniture by imperial fiat. Friedrich Nietzsche late in his career assumed the titles of Caesar and of "The Crucified." August Strindberg, exhilarated by a letter from "Nietzsche Caesar," signed his reply "The One and Only God." Strindberg believed that the persecuted heroes in the plays of Henrik Ibsen were disguised portraits of him, plagiarized, infuriatingly, from his own paranoid self-portrayal. Ibsen, in turn, kept a portrait of Strindberg over his writing desk, for inspiration.

Hobbes was pathologically timorous, given to sudden flights. Maupassant suffered from bouts of persecution, as did E. T. A. Hoffmann. Schopenhauer slept with a gun beside his bed. "Stendhal" kept changing his name. Imaginary enemies pursued Hemingway. Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that he was being persecuted by the entire generation of living Frenchmen, that his every move was being carefully watched, his mail and publications controlled, to prevent him from having access to unprejudiced posterity. The second half of his *Confessions* is taken up with the plots of his enemies. He attempted to place the manuscript of *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, in which he minutely weighs the charges against his name, upon the high altar of Notre Dame. Thwarted even there, he recognized that God too was against him; in his last work, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, he attempted a final escape into the arms of nature.

The dominant figures of modern culture exhibit a strange susceptibility to delusions of grandeur and fears of persecution upon imaginary grounds—in other words, to paranoia. In many instances the condition remains within the range of ordinary behavior. It is what may be described technically as a 'paranoid slant', a penchant for over-estimating one's own importance, a

morbid concern with autonomy and control, and the finding of hostile motives in other people's behavior. But in a number of cases, such as those of Rousseau and Nietzsche—not the least important figures in modern culture—the condition reaches the level of a full-blown psychosis. Strindberg's diaries reveal him to be the maddest of authors who can still write with power.

The eminence of paranoid figures in modern philosophy and art might not be significant were it confined to the personal lives of the writers concerned. But this is hardly the case. For both Rousseau and Nietzsche, suspicion is a driving motive of the work, along with a hysterical individualism, a desperate assertion of the uniqueness, autonomy, and power of the self. The suspicious hermeneutic systems of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud

disguise the true meaning of a guilty wish. It is her hypocrisy that makes the rabbi's reply a joke: he has shown the pointlessness of her attempt at concealment. In psychoanalytic thought, this fate always awaits those who plead for the honor of human motives. Their secret wishes give them away. For Freud, suspicion is always justified. Nothing is accidental, there is no innocence. Inadvertency is a disguise of the unconscious, a form of hypocrisy, of mauvaise foi. And the purpose of psychoanalysis, like the purpose of a joke, is to reveal all such disguises and hypocrisies. Only those actions that overtly display their hostile or libidinous origins can be taken at face value. The rest are worthy to be laughed at.

It is often appropriate, we must recognize, to view the motives of our fellow human beings with suspicion. They are capable of a nearly unfathomable deviousness involving things great and small, a deviousness that goes beyond any imperatives of practical interest. This is why the rabbi's remark is funny and true. But what would it mean to live one's whole life in the bitter wisdom of the rabbi's unpleasant discovery systematically applied in the form of a science? As Freud employs them, the rabbi's words suggest that Helene Deutsch, in her attempt to plead the case of Rank, was covering over the secret pleasures of Rank's friction with Freud, his betrayal of the father; there is a further suggestion of the insincerity of Rank's protests of pain, and even of a conscious or unconscious complicity between the outcast and his intercessor. It is implied that, like the wayward student, both of them are taking advantage of the situation to carry out wishes we all would like to gratify, giving the father pain being as attractive a guilty pleasure as kissing his beautiful wife! Anyone familiar with the practice of psychoanalysis would have grasped these implications with ease. It was a startling rebuke to Deutsch. What chance, then, did her mission have to succeed, what intellectual resources could she have drawn upon to alleviate Freud's suspicions and convince him that Rank's motives were not the worst, when the theory of psychoanalysis leaves no room for such an interpretation? Its form of suspicion is not of a knowing, worldly kind, but systematic and absolute. It leaves no room for error. The unconscious makes no mistakes!

Here, then, we have Freud in his maturity, a man who knew how to turn a joke to his advantage, a genius of satiric rhetoric whose personal bent for suspicion had evolved into a worldview expressed by means of a distinctive literary sensibility, a system for decoding the motives of others, and an unflappable method of self-justification—a chilling figure, perhaps, but one, nevertheless, of great persuasiveness and uncanny fascination, one whose continuing influence in our culture needs to be understood.

ONE

From Primal Father to Paranoid

For relaxation I am reading Burckhardt's *History of Greek Civilization*, which is providing me with unexpected parallels. My predilection for the prehistoric in all its human forms has remained the same. —Freud

The attempt to describe paranoid psychology began with a great work of comic fiction: an elderly and decrepit gentleman, crazed with the reading of vulgar romances, becomes suddenly convinced that he is a knight-errant born to restore a golden age of chivalry. Don Quixote's first adventures lead to a defeat so unambiguous as to defy explanation within the frame of his delusion, and Cervantes' story seems in danger of losing momentum within its first fifty pages. But then the hero's niece makes a saving suggestion—that Quixote's quest for glory is being thwarted by a swarm of malicious enchanters who persecute him at every step. These agents of persecution immediately become the key element in Quixote's thinking. The assumption of their existence allows him to preserve his exaggerated idea of himself and his powers while he suffers innumerable humiliations, drubbings, and defeats. For all of these his imaginary enemies are responsible.

And so the paranoid quest is capable of an almost endless satiric elaboration. It is important for our purposes to take account, as well, of the peculiar effects that Quixote's paranoid character tends to exercise upon those he encounters. First there are the ones ignorant enough to be taken in by his impersonation, which is maintained with perfect consistency. Then there are those who become infatuated with Quixote's heroic posture even though they know it to be grounded in madness. In this category we may place not only certain characters in the story but also Cervantes' Romantic and existentialist readers, who become enchanted with the absolute and self-sufficient character of Quixote's idealism; they admire the warmth, humanity, and grandeur of his delusion all the more for the fact

that it stands in contradiction to banal reality. Finally, there are those leisured and cultivated characters within the story who become intoxicated with Quixote as a figure of mirth and give themselves over to the staging and execution of his adventures. These characters appear largely in Part Two of the book; many of them have become familiar with Quixote by reading Part One. They are the audience par excellence, and Quixote is for them virtually a creature of their own fancy. In these living readers he encounters the true enchanters whose power of manipulation he has always feared.

If Cervantes' elaborate fiction seems too whimsical or too artificial a source of examples to illustrate the dynamics of a commonly occurring psychological condition, there is no shortage of well-known examples from life exhibiting the identical features. Adolf Hitler, for instance, experienced the same misguided flights of self-denying idealism, the same megalomania, suspicion, and fear of persecution as Quixote. The power to infatuate and impel by the force of heroic delusion has never been more strikingly demonstrated than in the course of his career.

Sigmund Freud is still the most influential student of this chronically grandiose and persecuted state of mind to which modern psychology has given the name of paranoia. According to Freud, paranoia occurs when an adult regresses to an early stage of psychosexual development in which he has not yet distinguished the products of his own thinking from external reality.[1] In this state only he exists, his ego contains the whole world, and, insofar as he relates to a sexual object, that object can only be himself. Freud called the thinking characteristic of this stage of development 'narcissism'. Personalities that receive their decisive stamp at this stage will be homosexual, having taken themselves as the model for the object of love. In many cases, however, the homosexual desire will be repressed from consciousness, and it is in such cases that the groundwork for paranoia is established. If the person cannot sublimate or repress his homosexual urges, he may regress to the stage of narcissistic omnipotence and self-containment. He obliterates the existing world and replaces it with one that in some sense fulfills his desire. He becomes a hero, a king, or a god. But even after achieving this regression the paranoid continues to struggle against his homosexual urges. Because he cannot allow them to come undisguised into consciousness, he experiences them in a negative form as part of the external world. The libidinal interest originating in his unconscious appears as a hostility directed toward him by others. In Freud's

formula, "what was abolished internally returns from without."[2] The "I love him" corresponding with his forbidden passion comes into consciousness as "He hates me."[3]

Freud's theory of narcissism also suggests an explanation for the way comparatively normal people respond to the paranoid. The paranoid's view of the world is bizarre and detached from reality. But it can charm and compel, because the narcissism of the paranoid resonates with the repressed narcissism active in each one of us. We have all passed through a narcissistic phase, and we all go on projecting our inner fantasies onto outer reality so long as we live. Freud believed that the subterranean narcissism of the average person was responsible for the attractiveness of artists, children, cats, great humorists, and even criminals, all of whom are figures of narcissistic self-absorption. Women, in his view, tend to be narcissistic as a rule, and this permits them to appeal to the repressed narcissism of the average male, a fact that Freud considered to be of the greatest importance for the ordinary life of the species.[4] Freud never extended his theory of narcissism to cover the attraction that could be exercised by the paranoid character; he does not seem to have taken note of this phenomenon directly, although, as we shall see in a later chapter, he was acutely susceptible to it himself; but it requires no bold extension of his theory to suggest that the narcissism of the paranoid would call up the same surges of repressed heroic fantasy as do other figures of exemplary self-sufficiency.

The theory of narcissism can even be made to yield a psychoanalytic explanation for the humorous qualities of paranoid delusion. Wit succeeds, according to Freud, when a repressed wish is given conscious expression in a sudden and unexpected way.[5] Quixote's improbable grandeur may be said to resonate with the latent narcissism of Cervantes' readers, giving to their buried heroic longings a surprising, pathetic, but still recognizable form. Furthermore, Cervantes' comical detachment and self-sufficiency in presenting the adventures of Quixote may be said to have prompted his readers to identify with him out of their own repressed narcissistic independence.

Taking all of this together, it is impossible not to admire the beautiful economy and completeness of the theory of narcissism with regard to the phenomena of paranoia. It accounts not only for the paranoid character itself but for the range of responses it evokes in others. The protean flexibility of the theory seems a little uncanny, and calls upon us to admire the mind that devised it. But this reaction too can be accounted for by the

theory of narcissism itself. The sense of the 'uncanny', according to Freud, originates in the resonance of conscious events with historically repressed, unconscious motives, and the mastery of psychological researchers over their materials can be attributed to such motives of a narcissistic origin.[6] So even the theory of narcissism has a certain narcissistic appeal. This is plausible enough within the logic of psychoanalysis: making theories about paranoia, as we shall see, is one of the narcissistic alternatives to becoming paranoid.

An examination of Freud's thinking about the eccentric figure of the paranoid has led us directly to his conception of the ordinary human character. If he is right, we are all swollen with secret grandeur. Our delusion does not manifest itself only in the inflated moral image we have of ourselves: we are even prone to suspecting that the very structure of the world in which we live accords with our desire and that the thoughts and feelings comprising our mental universe actually constitute a part of the external world. Although most of us hold these grandiose feelings in check at the boundaries of the conscious mind, they give constant direction to our attention. They exert their influence in a multitude of forms—in daydreams, in religion, in fantasy, in humor, and in love. When a self-inflated being like Quixote appears, we laugh, admire, or become enthralled, and in so doing we betray a recognition of our essential selves. The apparent strangeness of the paranoid evokes a deeper recognition of common narcissism.

Freudians of the later twentieth century attribute the state of affairs I have been describing to the fixed nature of the human psyche and to the Oedipus complex, its signature. For them, the dialectic of narcissism and repression is nothing other than the standard operation of our human equipment.[7] Freud did not hold this view. For him, the Oedipus complex had been brought about by specific events within the course of human history. He believed that the dramatic tension visible within the psyche, the struggle for power between narcissistic and repressive impulses, was the residual effect of conflicts that had taken place between groups of men and great individuals in history. These conflicts, over the millennia, had left a permanent impression upon the human mind, an impression preserved from generation to generation through the mechanisms of biology and culture. As a consequence of this belief, Freud observed that the heroic and narcissistic impulses that still animate the psyche in our time are not entirely lacking in connection with reality, for they embody the

memory of a historical reality that we continuously relive in psychological terms.[8] The condition of the paranoid, more than that of other neurotics, shows an obvious affinity with the historical struggles for dominance that produced the Oedipus complex. The paranoid's grandiosity and fear, originating in a disturbance of the psyche, give the clearest evidence of the memories of primordial heroism and strife that remain active in the species as a whole. We all bear within us, Freud tells us, "the impressions left behind by the personalities of great leaders—men of overwhelming force of mind or men in whom one of the human impulsions had found its strongest and purest, and therefore often its most one-sided, expression."[9] The paranoid's delusion and the social reaction that it produces are the aftereffects of these "impressions." In order, then, to understand the deepest social significance of paranoia in psychoanalytic thinking and to set the theory of paranoia into the widest perspective, it will be necessary to reconstruct from Freud's writings a consecutive account of human biohistory.

Freud presents the story of human origins in seemingly cautious terms, calling it a "scientific myth," a "Just-So Story."[10] As with all myths of origin, the early parts of the story remain fragmentary and obscure, while the later have the clarity of dogma. Although the events to which it refers are historical, the certainty of the whole was grounded, Freud thought, not in the evidence provided by history but upon what he had discovered from his patients about the course of individual development.[11] Freud believed, according to a mistaken assumption of Victorian biology, that the individual, in the process of maturing, recapitulates the development of the species. This assumption permitted him to extrapolate from clinical observation to universal history and to fill the gaps in the observation of clinical experience with the *Urphantasie* of the human race. What he set forth, then, was a double history—a historical narrative of evolution recapitulated in individual development from childhood to maturity.

Freud begins the "scientific myth" of human history by adopting Darwin's suggestion that the earliest human groups must have been dominated by a single father who suppressed the sexual activities of his male children in order to monopolize the supply of females.[12] This group, the 'primal horde', was held together in bonds of simple power, with no need for symbolic representations of authority. The father was simply the father, a figure of absolute self-assertion. In him we find the original instance of the psychology of narcissism:

> The father of the primal horde was free. His intellectual acts were strong and independent even in isolation, and his will needed no reinforcement from others. Consistency leads us to assume that his ego had very few libidinal ties; he loved no one but himself, or other people only in so far as they served his needs. . . . Here at the very beginning of the history of mankind, was the 'superman' whom Nietzsche only expected from the future. Even to-day the members of the group [in typical group psychology] stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by the leader; but the leader himself need love no one else, he may be of a masterful nature, absolutely narcissistic, self-confident and independent.[13]

It may seem surprising that the father, with his authentic power, should have been a figure of 'absolute narcissism', since we normally associate narcissism with a withdrawal of libido from the world. Presumably the primal father could sustain his narcissistic self-fulfillment while keeping a firm grasp upon reality because reality offered no checks to his desire. For him, ought was identical with is, his absolute narcissism coinciding with absolute power. The father experienced few libidinal ties with his slave family because ties of this kind are based upon a component of sublimation; such a diversion of libido would have been quite incompatible with the father's privileged state. Still more foreign to his nature would have been the conversion of sexual into social interest that sustains the psychology of the group. The father's mastery lay precisely in not having submitted to the social ties that give value to other people as objects of regard. The superhuman freedom of the father depended upon his being the sole object of regard in a world that could offer no resistance to his desire. Such was the perfect narcissistic self-enclosure and total sexual fulfillment of the primal human consciousness. It was the only true state of freedom Freud ever imagined.

In addition to the dominant consciousness of the father, Freud's description of the primal horde included, as the quoted passage makes clear, a second original psychology—the psychology of the sons.[14] The sons differed from the father in two ways. The first was in an absolute disadvantage of power relative to him, for he compelled their obedience by force and deprived them of all sexual satisfaction. The second difference was entirely a psychological one: the sons loved the father, and they loved their mothers, sisters, and each other. They had given up a part of their libido to social ties. This psychological surrender of libido to the sublimations of love and social attachment marks the enslavement of the sons fully as much as the sexual abstinence imposed upon them by the father through the use of force. In fact, their psychological attachment to others was created out of

the energy diverted from sexual activity by the interdictions of the father. The experience of love in the children of the primal horde was the psychic equivalent of their disadvantage in power.

At some point, the sons banded together to kill the primal father. The motive for their action was simple—they wanted sexual access to their mothers and sisters, hitherto kept in a paternal harem. But the consequences of their revolt were complex, just as their enslavement had been. In the long run it was easier for them to destroy the physical might of the father than it was to escape from the repression of the libido that he had imposed by means of it. For as much as the sons hated their father and his rule, they had also come to love him. And so, along with the satisfaction of killing him and eating his body, there came a sense of guilt. And this guilt resulted in a stronger investment than ever before in the restrictions of social life. It gave rise to prohibitions against the repetition of the primal crime of murder and also of incest, its fruits.[15] In this manner was established the Oedipus complex, rooted in the repression of these two fundamental wishes. The unity of the group no longer depended upon the brute force of the father; from this point the group secured itself by means of the taboos and totemic rituals established in commemoration of his death: "Society was now based on complicity in the common crime" (146). The primal crime was not a single event; Freud believed that it must have occurred many times in order to have left such a deep impression upon human nature. The Oedipus complex, which resulted from the collective force of these experiences, formed the basis for civilization: "the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex" (156). At the end of *Totem and Taboo* where he first described this sequence of events, Freud quotes Faust's revision of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Deed" (161).

The brothers of the primal horde killed their father because they wanted to be like him; they wanted to enjoy the power to gratify their narcissistic fantasies as part of reality. But the guilt they experienced as a result of their psychological enslavement to the father forced them to suppress their own narcissistic urges. The pleasure-seeking part of the father in them led them to kill him, but this act left them prey to the guilt urged by the punishing part of the father, which had also become an ineradicable part of their nature. Thus, the antisocial and narcissistic motives of the primal crime led, paradoxically, to the strengthening of the social order. The structure of the primal horde gave way to a communal, democratic society based upon collective guilt and renunciation. Each of the primal brothers

renounced the pleasures enjoyed by the father and the wish to be like him. It was even possible, Freud believed, that a period of matriarchy intervened. But the longing for the father could not be permanently repressed. Communism eventually gave way to a new patriarchal structure—the family as we know it, with its single father and mother. There was a great difference, however, between this new paternal regime and that of the primal horde: Oedipal restrictions remained in force, keeping the father and the sons from gratifying the urge to commit murder and incest. The "social achievements" of the fraternal clan were preserved. Furthermore, the return of patriarchy to the family did not remove the need for the totemic or religious reenactments of the primal murder that had developed in the wake of primal father's death: "the gulf between the new fathers of a family and the unrestricted primal father of the horde was wide enough to guarantee the continuance of the religious craving, the existence of an unappeased longing for the father."[16] The existence of the new family was sustained by a repression that now included fathers as well as sons.

In his early formulation of the return of the father, Freud emphasized the simple longing created by his departure as the cause of his return. But in his later work he emphasized, as I have noted, the effects of the individual heroism originating in the "personalities of great leaders." In his work on group psychology, which gives the fullest treatment of these themes, Freud particularly emphasizes the poetic origins of the father myth and the fact that, in restoring the father, the poet put himself in his place. In this version, Freud makes emphatic use of the idea of a transitional matriarchy presiding over a vague and weak family, setting the stage for the next decisive development:

> It was then, perhaps, that some individual, in the exigency of his longing, may have been moved to free himself from the group and take over the father's part. He who did this was the first epic poet; and the advance was achieved in his imagination. This poet disguised the truth with lies in accordance with his longing. He invented the heroic myth. The hero was a man who by himself had slain the father—the father who still appeared in the myth as a totemic monster.[17]

The heroic myth invented by the first epic poet brought back the father in a double form, as head of the family and as hero. Oedipal desire thus attained satisfaction by two means: in the reconstitution of the family and in the new life of imagination. The creativity of the new family gave multiform expression to heroic projections of the 'family romance'. Freud and Rank traced the miraculous birth of the hero and his magical adven-

tures in fairy tales and myths, romantic narratives and popular fiction.[18] In tragedy Freud found the reenactment of his death, the memory of the primal crime.[19] In religion the father-hero eventually achieved the status of God: "The lie of the heroic myth culminates in the deification of the hero."[20] The self-aggrandizing imagination of the epic poet thus produced the entire patriarchal culture that has come down to us through tradition. In the monotheism instituted by Moses the Egyptian among the ancient Hebrews, Freud discovered the final symbolic return of the father as a single, dominating force. The religion of Moses and his Egyptian predecessor, Ikhnaton, represents the most concentrated effort of the narcissistic impulse to reincarnate the primal father.[21]

With the return of the father and the arrival of the family and religion, the communal psyche of the fraternal clan was replaced by an individual psychology based upon social inequality. Each person felt a strong identification with the father of the family and with the father-God; each felt as well a strong libidinal bond with the other members of society based upon a shared, ideal image of the father. And the libidinal bond of the group operated as a limitation upon the narcissistic independence of its individual members.[22] The epic poet and his religious imitators exacted in the name of the father the most extraordinary sacrifices. These sacrifices constituted the basis of civilized life, for every achievement of civilization, in Freud's view, depends upon the denial of instinctual gratification. There is a paradox here, for was not the father myth itself a form of instinctual gratification? So it was, but the greatest pleasure accrued to the one who created it. For the rest, the followers, it demanded sacrifice in return for patriarchal love. Human progress actually depends upon this social inequality. The epic poet, having freed himself from the restraints of the group, reintroduced the double psychology of dominance and submission that had existed in the primal horde. He took for himself the place of the father-hero:

> The myth, then, is the step by which the individual emerges from group psychology. The first myth was certainly the psychological, the hero myth; the explanatory nature myth must have followed much later. The poet who had taken this step and had in this way set himself free from the group in his imagination, is nevertheless able to find his way back to it in reality. For he goes and relates to the group his hero's deeds which he has invented. At bottom this hero is no one but himself. Thus he lowers himself to the level of reality, and raises his hearers to the level of imagination. But his hearers understand the poet, and, in virtue of their having the same relation of longing towards the primal father, they can identify themselves with the hero.[23]

This passage delineates the economy of social imagination as Freud understood it. A repression has occurred and been accepted by the group. One individual, the poet, frees himself in imagination and returns to a narcissistic state of gratification that appeals to others because of their own repressed narcissism. But the satisfaction gained by the poet far exceeds what is given to his audience. And when it comes to religion, the discrepancy between the poet-prophet and his followers widens immeasurably: out of his own sense of heroism, the religious leader demands an absolute renunciation from those who believe in him. All pleasures, all happiness must be delayed in anticipation of an ideal future. With the triumph of religious consciousness, humankind had achieved, according to Freud, a truly heroic level of renunciation.

In the passage on the 'first epic poet' that I have just discussed, Freud mentions that the heroic form of mythological consciousness instigated by the poet came long before the 'nature myth'. The 'nature myth' in question was animism, which Freud had earlier placed alongside heroic mythology as the most primitive social form of narcissistic thinking. Freud linked these two together in a typically positivist historical scheme, recognizing "three great systems of thought: animistic (or mythological), religious and scientific."[24] The precedence given to mythology in Freud's later work seems to stem from the fact that mythology shows the traces of its origin in an individual heroic fantasy and so is linked more closely with a heroic founder. Animism, on the other hand, is anonymous and does not suggest the inequality of the social order. It expresses the narcissism of the entire group, thus displaying in an uninhibited way the full cognitive potential of narcissistic thinking rather than simply its heroic tendency. This makes it for us an especially important object of study, for in animism Freud gives the fullest description of the unbridled narcissism of primitive social imagination. Of the three great systems of human thought, Freud writes, "animism, the first to be created, is perhaps the one which is most consistent and exhaustive and which gives a truly complete explanation of the nature of the universe. The first human *Weltanschauung* is a psychological theory" (77).

The reader should not be misled by this unexpected tribute to the completeness of animism as an explanatory system, for animism has a fundamental flaw: it fails to recognize the psychological origin of its materials. It is supremely guilty of the sin of 'projection'. Freud quotes the words of Sir James Frazer: "Men mistook the order of their ideas for the order of nature, and hence imagined that the control which they have, or seem to

have, over their thoughts, permitted them to exercise a corresponding control over things" (83). Because primitive men could not distinguish the internal experience of thought from their perceptions of the outside world, their manner of conceptualization provides Freud with what he considers to be a unique example of the mind's own tendency of operation before a language of abstract thought had been developed to separate the outer and inner worlds: "Before that, owing to the projection outward of internal perceptions, primitive men arrived at a picture of the external world which we, with our intensified conscious perception, have now to translate back into psychology" (64).

There is much to instruct us in this account of animism. Let us first take up the question of its completeness. Animism is complete because it is based entirely upon psychological principles of causation, and because it makes no attempt to censor these on the basis of reality. Thus its picture of the external world is a mirror image of the psyche. In this sense it is "a psychological theory." But so, for Freud, are all other non-scientific theories, whether they know it or not. The true significance of the completeness of animism is that it is a mirror image of psychology itself and so testifies to its power.

The completeness of animism, its unawareness of limit, leads to a second point of interest. The very self-enclosed quality of animism that leads it to confuse thoughts with things, also provides the animist with his illusion of control. Freud, elaborating upon Frazer's initial formula, observes that in primitive magic,

> relations which hold between the ideas of things are assumed to hold between the things themselves. Since distance is of no importance—since what lies furthest apart both in time and space can without difficulty be comprehended in a single act of consciousness—so, too, the world of magic has a telepathic disregard for spatial distance and treats past situations as though they were present. In the animistic epoch the reflection of the internal world is bound to blot out the other picture of the world—the one which we seem to perceive (85).

In animism Freud discovers the true psychological cause of human megalomania, which lies in the inability to distinguish thought from reality. The same dysfunction occurs in the thinking of paranoids and neurotics. The "Rat Man," one of Freud's famous patients, gave it a name. He called it the 'omnipotence of thoughts' (85). We can see that in this magical omnipotence the narcissistic fulfillment of the primal father is partly retained. For the father, as for the animist, wish is identical with act. But while the primal father's narcissism was enacted in reality, magical think-

ing preserves only the 'omnipotence of thoughts'. This same overvaluation of the intellect is visible in religion and in the systems of the philosophers. In all these forms of consciousness, the narcissist invests an excess of libido in the ego, with the result that he attaches too great a value to himself as a thinking being. The paranoid, we shall see, is a person who has reverted to the 'omnipotence of thoughts' that once belonged to the whole of humankind but that the majority have now renounced.

It is probable that Freud imagined animism as always coexisting with some type of father mythology or totemism. He recognized in it, nevertheless, a fully developed social narcissism, and considered religion to be a transformation from out of it. In religion, men transferred the 'omnipotence of thoughts' from themselves to their god (88). They revived the memory of the father in the form of a divine imago. We need not be concerned whether this occurred directly, as Freud first surmised, or whether the heroic action of the epic poet intervened, as he later thought. In either case, the arrival of religion depended upon a truly extreme repression. The submission exacted by the father-God was a small thing compared with the renunciation that brought him into being.

There was still, however, a third phase of renunciation to come. For as much as religion may have sought to curtail the satisfaction of desire, its view of the world still preserved the character of its origins in narcissistic projection. Humankind still lived at the center of a cosmos that the human mind had made. The race of beings that could do without such narcissistic comforts was a long time coming to birth. It was led by a new kind of hero—the scientist. While the primal father and the first epic poet retained the facelessness of myth, and while the true characters of Moses and of his precursor, Ikhnaton, the founders of monotheism, remained hidden in the obscurity of early times, these new heroes stood forth in the light of modernity. Freud identified Leonardo da Vinci as "the first modern natural scientist," the first man to free himself from narcissistic projections in order to adopt the study of nature on the basis of experiment alone and without the benefit of 'presuppositions'. In order to understand how this strange mutation of human nature could have occurred, Freud investigated the painter's psyche with special interest, devoting to him the most detailed of his case studies. He exerted all of his ingenuity and all of his literary gifts in the attempt to explain how the accidents of Leonardo's childhood could have freed him from dependence upon the myths of the father and actually allowed him to channel his narcissistic libido into the pursuit of knowledge. These accidents accounted, in Freud's mind, for the mystery and power

of Leonardo and the incomprehension of his motives attributed to his contemporaries.[25] And Leonardo was only the first of the great and misunderstood revolutionary heroes of modern science:

> In the course of centuries the *naive* self-love of men has had to submit to two major blows at the hands of science. The first was when they learnt that our earth was not the center of the universe but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system of scarcely imaginable vastness. This is associated in our minds with the name of Copernicus, though something similar had already been asserted by Alexandrian science. The second blow fell when biological research destroyed man's supposedly privileged place in creation and proved his descent from the animal kingdom and his ineradicable animal nature. This revaluation has been accomplished in our own days by Darwin, Wallace and their predecessors, though not without the most violent contemporary opposition. But human megalomania will have suffered its third and most wounding blow from the psychological research of the present time which seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind. We psycho-analysts were not the first and not the only ones to utter this call to introspection; but it seems to be our fate to give it its most forcible expression and to support it with empirical material which affects every individual. Hence arises the general revolt against our science, the disregard of all considerations of academic civility and the releasing of the opposition from every restraint of impartial logic.[26]

In this reconstruction of Freud's account of human development, the scientific hero, and particularly the psychoanalyst, naturally falls into place as the successor of the primal father, the first epic poet, the religious prophets, and the great personalities of history. Freud never gave his myth such a systematic exposition and so avoided putting himself in quite so invidious a position. But in the passage I have just quoted, and in many other places in his work, he casts the scientist and, indeed, the psychoanalyst, in this heroic mold. The scientist determines the psychological character of the modern, scientific phase of social existence, just as the primal father and the epic poet had determined the psychological character of its precursors.

From the standpoint of the twentieth century, Freud could look back upon what he took to be the psychological effects of almost three hundred years of scientific revolution. What he saw was the progressive development of individual psychology at the expense of the social and religious institutions that sustained the patriarchal culture of the past. The scientist had brought these institutions under attack by uncovering their delusory under-

pinnings, the effect of scientific injunction being to force the educated members of society to detach themselves from religion and other forms of group idealization. We can see in the scientist's gesture of separation from the group a recapitulation of the gesture of the epic poet, who withdrew from the fraternal clan, then replaced its bonds with those of the new family and its patriarchal god. The scientist undid this second bond without attempting to replace it with anything but the pride of repression and adherence to the truth of reality. In exacting this final repression, the culture of science removed the protection that religion had furnished against neurosis. Religion is indeed, Freud tells us, the "most powerful protection against the danger of neurosis."[27] The reason for this is that the neurotic, deprived of religion, has to create "his own world of imagination, his own religion, his own system of delusions."[28] When he does so, the product shows its origin in neurotic destitution:

> The neuroses exhibit on the one hand striking and far-reaching points of agreement with those great social institutions, art, religion and philosophy. But on the other hand they seem like distortions of them. It might be maintained that a case of hysteria is a caricature of a work of art, that an obsessional neurosis is a caricature of a religion and that a paranoiac delusion is a caricature of a philosophical system. The divergence resolves itself ultimately into the fact that the neuroses are asocial structures; they endeavor to achieve by private means what is effected in society by collective effort. If we analyze the instincts at work in the neuroses, we find that the determining influence in them is exercised by instinctual forces of sexual origin; the corresponding cultural formations, on the other hand, are based upon social instincts, originating from the combination of egoistic and erotic elements. Sexual needs are not capable of uniting men in the same way as are the demands of self-preservation. Sexual satisfaction is essentially the private affair of each individual.[29]

The scientist, with his capacity for heroic repression, created a perilous set of conditions for the individual. He undermined the emotional bases of social life by exposing the irrational origins of social institutions. At the same time, he enjoined a strict adherence to reality, a reality holding no attraction for the libido. To depart from reality was now to lapse into private delusion, for the public space of social imagination had been destroyed. Those who attempt to preserve it in a private form take on a comical character. We can see in their illusion the outline of the noble forms of culture that sustained the meaning and value of life in the past, but foolishly and selfishly distorted. And the resemblance works both ways, for the pathological distortions of neurosis, displaying their origins in sexual

repression, reveal the libidinal character of the traditional institutions that they mimic. The "Just-So Story" has arrived at the modern culture of irony.[30]

This is the account of human evolution Freud contrived out of his experience analyzing a few dozen patients in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Vienna.[31] The movement out of idealistic or 'narcissistic' self-enclosure marks, he thought, both the progress of the species and of the individual. Its dynamic element is repression. Only by means of repression can power over others and over the natural world be gained. The heroism of repression was peculiarly symbolized for Freud in the myth of Prometheus. Prometheus' conquest over fire was in fact a great sexual repression because, as the works of Swift and Rabelais suggested to Freud, urinating on fire is a great megalomaniacal fantasy, rooted in homoerotic pleasure. The myth of Prometheus thus symbolizes the heroism of the first man to capture fire by restraining his homoerotic desire to put it out with his urine, as Gulliver did when he doused the burning chambers of the Lilliputian palace. In Prometheus' fate the myth also reveals the hostility that greets the heroes of renunciation among those weaker souls who would preserve their pleasures.[32]

Before we go on to reinterpret Freud's bio-history of the species, it is important that we should present his account of development and repression in individual consciousness, the object of study from which he originally devised it. Freud analyzed the dynamic of repression as it relates to the development of consciousness in a classic psychoanalytic essay, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," composed during the same period as his theoretical analysis of paranoia.[33] In it he describes our early stage of mental development, the 'primary processes', which operate according to the 'pleasure principle', *'Lust-Unlust'*. The pleasure principle expresses itself merely in the seeking of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. "Our dreams at night and our waking tendency to tear ourselves away from distressing impressions are remnants of the dominance of this principle and proofs of its power" (219). Freud does not tell us so, but the narcissistic stage obviously comes under the pleasure principle, with its tendency to be content with ideal or hallucinatory satisfactions.

At a certain point in an individual's development, Freud goes on to say, the passive state of the pleasure principle can no longer satisfy, and a second principle emerges, the 'principle of reality'. This principle admits to consciousness whatever is real, whether it produces pleasure or unplea-

sure. It begins to mobilize the sense-organs toward the external world and to develop the function of attention, the active seeking of sense impressions, as well as a system of notation, or memory, to preserve the results of attention (220–21). The repression of unpleasurable ideas is now superseded by an impartial passing of judgment true or false based upon comparison with the memory traces of earlier impressions. At this point as well, action and the delay of action in deliberation become possible, and the individual has a fully developed capacity to test his or her ideas against reality (221).

The pleasure principle must sacrifice mightily in order that the reality principle can come into force. But the pleasure principle is not destroyed in the process. It maintains its strongholds in the domain of fantasy and also that of sexuality, a function that always preserves a strongly auto-erotic and infantile character (222). The purpose of the reality principle is not to supersede the pleasure principle but to safeguard it, to lead the organism to surer pleasures than it can achieve at the prompting of pleasure alone. The demand for renunciation, Freud tells us, made by the reality principle with the promise of future rewards, has been projected onto external reality in the form of religious myths, which, with the doctrine of the afterlife, seek "absolute renunciation of pleasure in this life." But it is science that comes closest to overcoming the "ancient pleasure principle." Science, not religion, furnishes the true institutional expression of the principle of reality (223). The culture of science provides the standard of reality for modern people. We can see, then, the perfect convergence of science as a historical movement and the reality principle as the outcome of individual mental development.

While science throws its weight behind the reality principle, the pleasure principle, it is not surprising to discover, also has a mature expression in culture, one that preserves its rights upon the higher ground of reality:

> Art brings about a reconciliation between the two principles in a peculiar way. An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy. He finds the way back to reality, however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality. Thus in a certain fashion he actually becomes the hero, the king, the creator, or the favourite he desired to be, without following the long roundabout path of making real alterations in the external world. But he can only achieve this because other men feel the same dissatisfaction as he does with the renunciation demanded by reality, and because that dissatisfaction,

which results from the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle, is itself a part of reality. (224)

In the role of the modern artist we recognize the pattern established by the epic poets and prophets of history. All of these figures separate themselves from the group in imagination. By means of this separation they reclaim for themselves some part of the primal father's narcissistic omnipotence. And with the force of their imaginings, they induce others to take as part of reality what they have only dreamed. Others participate in the father through them. The difference between the epic and the modern poet is that the epic poet presents his vision of the hero as a true one while the modern poet presents it as a fantasy, though a fantasy that will become a treasured addition to the real social world.

Freud explained in another classic essay how the artist goes about making his fantasies accessible to others. His "innermost secret," his "ars poetica," consists of divesting his erotic and ambitious wishes of all those qualities that reveal a personal origin. The artist softens the egotistical character of his daydreams and adds aesthetic enhancement, by this means preventing others from experiencing the shame and repulsion Freud expects private fantasies to evoke.[34] As the clearest example of the artist's technique, Freud cites the popular romances, with their indestructible and irresistible main characters. They are thinly disguised versions of "His Majesty the Ego, the hero of all daydreams and all novels" (149–50). Were the artist to fail in disguising the private, egotistical sources of his heroic fantasy, the results would be comical, a parody. We would laugh to see heroism and the 'omnipotence of thoughts' expressed in such an undisguised form. We would recognize with contemptuous pleasure our own egotistical wishes being given an outward expression we would not permit to ourselves. Such a failed artist would seem to be verging on paranoia, for it is the same narcissistic wishes that animate the paranoid's delusion and the artist's vision. The difference is that the artist knows his heroism to be nothing more than an illusion, while the paranoid, like the prophets of old, mistakes his for the truth. Thus, under the regime of the reality principle, he produces a parody of romance or of speculative thinking, a parody that displays in an undisguised form the libidinal drives that motivate our heroic longings.

It is instructive to note that, in purifying his heroic fantasies of their egotistical character, the artist must in some measure undo the work of the scientist in his previous undermining of the social imagination. Once the culture of the reality principle has taken hold, sanity demands that one

should keep fantasy confined to the private recesses of the psyche, where its libidinal origins will not embarrass. But the artist learns to mimic the socially objective quality of religion, philosophy, and romance and, by a kind of camouflage, to produce an effect that is like theirs even though it takes full account of the reality principle. He thus regains the level of the social in imagination. This is the secret of his success. But given that the artist's success depends upon disguising the private to imitate the social, it is obvious that psychoanalysis, which unmasks this secret, stands in a somewhat hostile relation to art.

The artist, the scientist, and the paranoid stand as the last three incarnations of the father-hero, the sole representatives of the heroic to survive in the intellectual regime of modern culture. The artist plays the hero in a make-believe world disguised to look like the one in which we live, the paranoid retreats into a world of his own device, and the scientist becomes a hero by renouncing imagination, narcissism, pleasure, and the ideal. The scientist takes for his aim the mastery of the real world, and he, like the heroes of the past, exacts great sacrifices to further his cause. It is by this process of heroic renunciation that civilization has matured and grown, harnessing greater and greater energy by means of instinctual sacrifices exacted by great leaders, until the power of collective repression achieved a mastery of the physical world that made the modern individual into a "prosthetic god," with all the advantages and hazards of that position.[35]