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Psychohistory - The collective dimension

Arthur Mitzman betoogt dat psychologie van grote waarde kan zijn voor de geschiedwetenschap. In zijn uitwerking van deze stelling schenkt hij aandacht aan een historische subdiscipline die een psychologische methodiek reeds omarmd heeft, de zogenoemde 'psychohistory'.

At some level...primitive passions and sophisticated know-how converge in ways that give the lie to a fortified boundary, not only between "West" and "Islam" but also between past and present, us and them, to say nothing of the very concepts of identity and nationality about which there is unending discussion and debate.

Edward Said¹

Although the techniques and frameworks used by historians are purported to be 'scientific' and rational in the broader senses of these terms, the individuals and groups that are the subjects of their inquiries rarely act on the basis of purely rational considerations. The liberalism which came to dominate in most of the national states of the nineteenth century, and which underlay much of the scientific method that gave rise to scholarly disciplines, was optimistic on this score. Liberal philosophy assumed that societies as well as individuals could be educated to listen to 'reason' (because the human species had, according to Kant, innate rational capacities) and that rational self-interest was entirely compatible with the general welfare (greatest good for the greatest number).

The triumph of liberalism, however, has not been notably associated with an increase in the reasonability of humankind, nor has that of scientific rationality. Indeed, in liberal as well as illiberal polities, the fruits of scientific research have increasingly been misused for inhuman purposes. Since World War II, most large states have directed military technology against civilian populations. In several cases, illiberal mass parties and

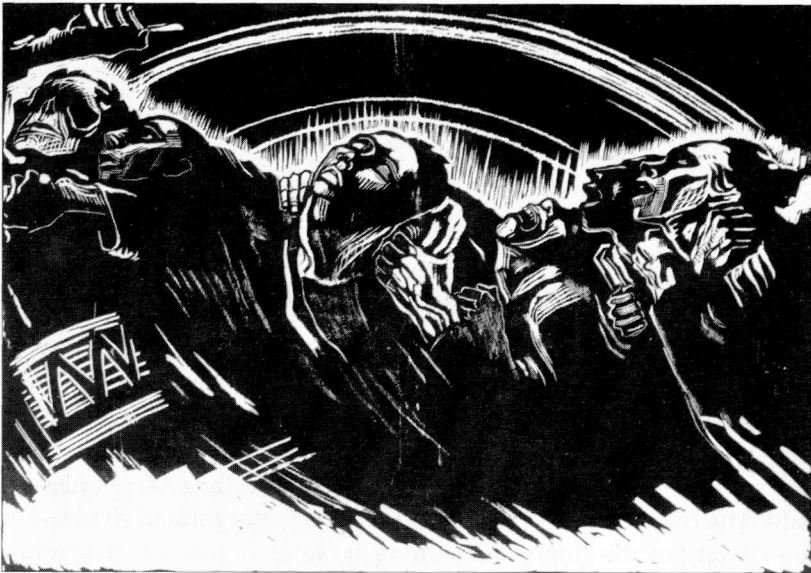
¹ Edward Said, 'The Clash of Ignorance', *Znet*, October 2001, <<http://www.zmag.org/ZNET.htm>>.

ideologies claiming 'scientific' validity have created totalitarian despotisms that used media monopolies and sophisticated surveillance systems to crush dissent. In recent decades, powerful corporations inspired by neoliberal ideology have applied 'scientific' advertising and media control to obtain public support for principles and acts that are socially and ecologically ruinous. These various abuses of instrumental rationality, particularly where they have been supported by the enthusiasm of large portions of the population, have made a mockery of the liberal faith in reason.

Nineteenth and twentieth century critics of the Enlightenment celebration of reason had more principled griefs, arguing not only that human beings were incapable of making genuinely rational decisions, but also that demands for exclusively rational behavior overlooked the emotional bases of pleasurable experience, whether in the realm of aesthetic appreciation or creativity or interpersonal relations. On the darker side, the recent return of religious belief as justification for mass murder has added to the conviction that humankind is not, in the first place, moved by purely rational considerations. Although everyone knows this, it is rare that a group or individual will admit to, or examine critically, its, his or her own irrational motivation.

Historians have long been aware of the problem of motivation, but little in their training prepares them to deal with it. Those not prepared to reach outside their discipline for tools to understand the obscurities of human motive have generally applied to it the commonplaces of their culture: 'common sense' in the Anglo-Saxon lands, 'intuition' or 'empathy' elsewhere. Lacking rigour and depth, these tools have generally been inadequate, all the more so considering that numerous potential conceptual tools are available.

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of four principal frameworks for understanding the non-rational side of human behavior: class conflict, political power struggle, individual psychology and the dynamics of social groups. Marxism, a deviant left-wing offshoot of liberal economics and philosophy, saw the economic interests of conflicting classes as the moving force of history as well as of individual and group behavior. Philosophical and political emphasis on the struggle for power - between individuals, groups and species - as a fact of nature reached its apogee in the Social Darwinism and Nietzschean philosophy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Freudian psychoanalysis looked to the ontology of individual human development for the key; the affective, largely repressed,



Litho van Käthe Kollwitz, 'Der Krieg: Die Freiwilligen' (1922/23). Uit: Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945). Tekeningen, grafiek, sculpturen, tentoonstellingscatalogus Chabot Museum (Rotterdam 1995) afbeelding 34.

etiology of family conflict and (necessarily) thwarted infantile impulses. Sociologists and anthropologists illuminated the group values and mentalities that condition individual beliefs.

History writing, ideologically inflected by liberal philosophy, developed in the shadow of the nation-state, and until the twentieth century normally arrogated to itself the task of justifying the nation's history to its citizens. The disastrous course of the twentieth century led many historians to distance themselves from the naive assumptions of traditional nationalism, viewed as responsible for the slaughters of two world wars. Exploring the labyrinths of group behavior they paid increasing attention to other groups than political ones. The twentieth century's most fruitful departures in historical thinking - those, for example of the French *Annales* School and of the Italian Carlo Ginzburg - have been inspired by the effort to study the history of collective consciousness in the light of sociological and anthropological perspectives. This approach, applied frequently to the medieval and early modern periods, has been dubbed 'the history of mentalities'. Analyses of collectivities, however, tended to lose sight of the individual human dimension, as always the subject historians could

understand from the inside, and the problem has arisen of how to use a 'mentalities' approach while giving due consideration to the motives and personalities of individuals. This essay will first look at the radical approach to historical motivation called 'psychohistory', and then examine the ways in which historians might combine the 'mentalities' point of departure with a psychoanalytic one, which I will call a 'social psychohistory'.²

The psychohistorical enterprise

That combination has been elusive and ephemeral. The problem is that psychoanalysis has been a tempting recourse precisely for those historians who, despite their discipline's increasing emphasis on collective explanations for major historical turning points, continued its time-honored focus on important political individuals. For scholars inclined to reduce Nazism to Hitler, Soviet Communism to Stalin or Mao, American history to the initiatives of certain presidents, recourse to psychoanalysis appeared an exciting innovation in the 1960's and '70's. Accordingly, much of what passed for 'psychohistory' was simply the application of psychoanalytic wisdom to the great men of past or present. Since the essential theoretical tool was outside the historical canon, many such studies were conducted by those schooled in political science or psychology.

On the whole, historians looked askance at these studies, even when the practitioners were their colleagues. Their criticism of such recourse to psychoanalysis was multi-faceted. Some argued that psychoanalysis itself was a pseudo-science, not much better as explanatory framework than voodoo or astrology, with a poor track record as therapy.³ Others pointed out that, even if valid as a therapy, it was impossible for the historian to

2 In the 1960's, the French psychoanalyst Gérard Mendel, developed the similar concept of 'sociopsychanalyse': See his *La révolte contre le père, Une introduction à la sociopsychanalyse* (Paris 1968); *La Crise de générations. Étude sociopsychanalytique* (Paris 1969); *Pour décoloniser l'enfant. Sociopsychanalyse de l'Autorité* (Paris 1971). In the 1930's, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research published a major work on authority problems in German society, from sociological and psychoanalytic perspectives: *Studien über Autorität und Familie. Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut für Sozialforschung* (Paris 1936). See also Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, (New York 1982, 1993).

3 David Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (New York 1980).

'analyse' historical figures, deceased or otherwise. Many decried the reductionism, in the Freudian theory of personality, of adult personality to childhood conflicts and of ethical questions of responsibility to psychological categories. Those attentive to the history of women decried the patriarchal emphasis in psychoanalysis on the father-son relationship and criticised Freud's underestimation of maternal significance as well as of the psychological character of women as distinct from male models. Still others, while recognizing the possibility of some insight into individuals who had left behind significant collections of letters, diaries, memoirs or autobiographies, rejected the basic premise of many psychohistorians: that the psyches of important individuals, properly understood, could explain the course of human history.

Psychohistory has had excellent defenders in the historical discipline, such as Peter Gay,⁴ who answered most of these questions to the satisfaction of many critical historians. Though psychoanalysis began as a treatment of the mentally ill, its therapeutic track record could be dismissed as irrelevant to its value for the understanding of character and the interpretation of motive, just as the medical diagnosis and etiology of cancer has been deemed irrelevant to the frequent inability to cure that disease. Psychohistorians could and did argue that their use of ego-documents in the analysis of historical figures permitted them to construct interpretations based on evidence that illuminated significant events and turning points. The more subtle historians could even argue that an openness to new information coming from ego-documents or more general research in the behavioral sciences could be accompanied by the same kind of awareness of the problems of counter-transference that good professional analysts worked with.⁵

In addition, most psychohistorians were aware that psychoanalytic theory had not stopped with Freud, and that a number of post-Freudian theorists had departed from Freud's implication that psycho-sexual development went no further than adolescence.⁶ Erik Erikson, for example, an original,

4 Peter Gay, *Freud voor historici* (Amsterdam 1987).

5 Thomas A. Kohut, 'Psychohistory As History', *American Historical Review* 91, 2 (1986) 336-54; Peter Loewenberg, *Decoding the Past. The Psychohistorical Approach* (New York 1985) 3-6; George Devereux, *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences* (The Hague 1967) passim.

6 One of the better critiques of Freud's limitations is Erich Fromm, *Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought* (New York 1980).

anthropologically oriented psychoanalyst, modified Freud's theory of such evolution and elaborated an extension of it throughout adult existence.⁷ As far as Freud's blinkered vision of the female sex was concerned, the better educated psychohistorians knew that psychoanalytic theory offered, at least since the British school founded by Melanie Klein in the thirties, more enlightened views both of female sexuality and of the significance of the mother-child relationship.⁸

The last problem - the individualist approach to history of many psychohistorians, an approach that blithely ignored the interplay of mentalities, culture and social-economic forces highlighted in the more innovative historical studies of the last hundred years - was more difficult to resolve. Psychohistorians writing about significant political figures too often seemed to assume that a thorough understanding of the psychoanalytic canon exempted them from familiarizing themselves with the broad panoply of historical research on social and cultural forces in the last half century, a research that cathects with seminal works in anthropological and sociological theory from Durkheim and Weber to Turner, Geertz and Habermas. Such disconnection is particularly lamentable, since much of this research is compatible with psychoanalytic theory and Freud and the post-Freudians have given excellent suggestions as to the broader social implications of their theorizing.

A social psychohistory?

Because of the origins of psychoanalysis as a therapy for mentally ill individuals, its more general implications for social order appeared only gradually.⁹ Freud's principal writings on the broader historical meaning of his theory date from the last two decades of his long life (1855-1940).

7 Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York 1963) 71-107, 247-274.

8 On the British School: J.A.C. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians* (Harmondsforth 1967) 56-87. Paul Roazen has revealed in his work the wide disagreement of many of Freud's early followers with his views on women in *Freud and His Followers* (New York 1975) 44, 54, 91, 190, 216, 251, 267, 398, 428, 430, 473. Careful evaluations of the significance of women in the theories of Freud and other psychoanalytic thinkers can be found in Judith van Herik, *Freud on Femininity and Faith* (Berkeley 1982) and in Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven 1989).

9 The first important one was *Totem en Taboe* (Amsterdam z.j.), whose subtitle was *Enige parallellen tussen het zieleleven der wilden en der neurotici*.

Except for his very last work, which explores the possibility of an inherited transgenerational collective unconscious (*Moses and Monotheism*, 1940), these essays are not altogether implausible. Most of them deal with religion, viewing it mainly in terms of neurotic dependency on authority, but *Massenpsychologie und Ichanalyse* (1921) examines the relation between leader and follower in political as well as religious frameworks. *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, 1930) elaborates a theory of estrangement from the consequences of developing 'civilized' repression of instinctual behavior that is clearly keyed into the rise of Nazism and fascism and anticipates Norbert Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (Basel 1939).

Freud himself, heir to the rationalism and individualism of European liberalism, rarely addressed questions of social organization or of the historically varying character of popular mentalities. In fact, to the extent that his theory originated as a therapy for the treatment of his European bourgeois compatriots, there is a certain insensitivity to the 'others' of those compatriots, in terms of class and culture as well as of historically given mentality. To the extent that such 'otherness' is recognized, it is assumed, as in the case of the tribal mind-sets studied in *Totem und Tabu*, to be comprehensible in terms of the neurotic behavior of European contemporaries.

Now a number of historians have overcome the individualist bias in Freud's thought to examine the social, cultural or political frameworks of psychological existence in psychoanalytic perspective. Peter Loewenberg's 'The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort'¹⁰ sensitively explored the significance of childhood hunger and absent fathers in World War I for the young Nazis of the 1930's. Carl Schorske has brilliantly illuminated fin-de-siècle Vienna's art, literature and ideas - including the genesis of psychoanalysis itself - from a Freudian point of view.¹¹ Peter Gay has published an excellent five-volume study of nineteenth century European and American culture from the standpoint of a history 'informed by psychoanalysis'.

Such studies point the way to a more thoroughgoing integration of psychohistory into social history, but their frameworks remain the time-honored lenses of political and cultural history. Only a few historians have

10 Originally in *The American Historical Review* (1969) and republished (abridged) in his *Decoding the Past*, 240-283.

11 Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna. Culture and Politics* (New York 1980).

gone further: one thinks of the initiatives of David Hunt and John Demos in examining, respectively, early modern French and American colonial history in psychological frameworks compatible with the history of mentalities.¹² Both historians fruitfully combined demographic studies as well as research in ego-documents with an approach to character development derived from Erikson. More recently, the French social historian Robert Muchembled has applied an historical psychology based partly on Erikson and more broadly on Norbert Elias¹³ to the progress of what he called the *mission moralisatrice* of the French Catholic Church and the absolutist state in the early modern era.¹⁴ The French-Swiss cultural historian Denis Bertholet, in a study of popular periodicals, has analyzed in psychoanalytic terms the anxieties of middle class Frenchmen of the early twentieth century¹⁵. And the late George Mosse, without mentioning either Freud or psychoanalysis, brilliantly applied psychoanalytic sensibility to the study of nationalist youth movements in his *Nationalism and Sexuality*.¹⁶

All these works are evidence that the potentiality for joining psychoanalytic theory with the history of mentalities is considerable. For about a decade, however, the attempt to bring historical practice into the purview of post-modernist philosophical and literary analysis has worked against both psychohistory and the history of mentalities, to the extent that

12 David Hunt, *Parents & Children in History. The Psychology of Family Life in Early Modern France* (New York 1970); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York 1971); Idem, *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England* (New York 1982).

13 Norbert Elias, *Über der Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols., (Basel 1939). Elias wrote extensively about the control of affect that was demanded by the royal courts of the resident nobility. Developing the psychological implications of the Weberian postulate of a state monopoly on the means of violence, he discussed the imposition on the warrior aristocracy of self-restraint in the expression of aggression, an important aspect of libidinal affect with which he, curiously, identified human instincts tout court (that is, he suggested that the sexual instincts were part of the aggressive ones).

14 Robert Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites (XVe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris 1978); idem, *L'invention de l'homme moderne. Sensibilités, mœurs et comportement collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris 1988).

15 Denis Bertholet, *Le Bourgeois dans tous ses états. Le roman familial de la Belle Époque* (Paris 1987).

16 George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality. Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York 1985).



Sigmund Freud. Uit: Wolfgang G. Bringmann e.a. eds., *A pictorial history of psychology* (Chicago e.a. 1997) 427.

both subdisciplines worked with concepts susceptible of the accusation of being 'universalistic'. The very notion of a psychology that interrogated individual motive and sought the relationship between conscious subject and unconscious impulse was inherently incompatible with 'the death of the subject' proclaimed by postmodernism; indeed, Michel Foucault, one of the principal theorists of postmodernism, categorically rejected the notion of unconscious motivation¹⁷.

Postmodernism is a waning influence on scholarship in the humanities today. In both literature and history, the dismissal of the subject and the emphasis on deconstruction seems to be giving

way to a new discourse in which both individual experience and social organization are being reevaluated. In this changing intellectual climate, I would like to propose five areas of modern history in which historians can usefully join psychoanalytic insight to concern for the social dynamics of large historical problems. These areas constitute frameworks for social identity, building blocks of collective mentalities and group memories.

One such area would be an extension of the study of civilisatory processes from the early modern period in which Elias and Muchembled studied them to the history of western as well as non-western cultures in the last two centuries. A second area would examine the manifold enthusiasms of youth - for war, for militant group identities, for sexual experimentation, indeed for ecstatic experience in all directions, including the religious one - in the crossed searchlights of anthropological studies of youth cohorts and psychoanalytic ones of adolescent development. Another would be an examination in psychohistorical terms of the evolution of economic

17 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, I (Paris 1976).

mentalities - what it means psychologically to be a farmer, artisan, merchant, factoryworker or corporate manager; more broadly, what the difference is between identifying oneself as a producer or a consumer of goods. A fourth: the significance for men and women, and for the traditionalist mentalities that still prevail in many areas of modern society, of the breakdown of gender roles and stereotypes in personal life and in the economy. Finally, as a crucible in which all of the above can be merged and analysed, the question of cultural group identities - in particular the relationship between religion and national identity. This is a broad and rich terrain, with implications for the current crisis between 'The West' and 'Islam' which I shall discuss in my conclusion.

The next section will focus first on the evolution of religious-national identities in Europe, secondly on the juncture between this kind of consciousness and the cultures of adolescence.

Cultural identity in psychohistorical perspective

Nationalism and religion have in European and American history never been far apart. Divinely ordained 'manifest destiny' was invoked by patriotic Americans to justify the United States's nineteenth century expansion across the North American continent.¹⁸ French Jacobins gave their Revolution, seedbed of French nationalism, a 'religion of Reason', with appropriate festivals, to anchor it in public consciousness as the enlightened alternative to Catholicism. The pre-history of French nationalism is peppered with religious symbols of national pride, from Charlemagne's Christian defense of his empire against Islamic incursions to Joan of Arc's crusade against the English. The resistance of Germany's nationalists to Napoleon followed the first 'clash of civilisations', that between a philosophically and religiously profound 'Kultur' against a frivolous 'Zivilisation', which in turn harked back to Luther's defense of the persecuted German people against a corrupt and decadent Italian papacy. Stalin openly recognized the persistent tie of Russian nationalism to religion in the Second World War, when he accompanied his appeals for patriotic resistance to

18 In *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, Richard Hofstadter wrote of the use of 'manifest destiny' to justify the American attack on Spain: 'Our aggression was implicitly defined as compulsory - the product not of our own wills but of objective necessity (or the will of God)'. Quoted in Joel Kovel, *White Racism A Psychohistory* (London 1970) 210.

Nazism by a rapprochement between the atheistic Communist state and Russian orthodoxy. The Dutch Revolt against Spain was fueled by religious resentment. And the English Revolution of the seventeenth century was suffused with religious imagery and passion, in which militant Calvinists pilloried their Stuart opponents as fronts for the papacy, and the more extremist groups, such as the Diggers, propagated a Communism based on the gospels.

Now the myths of historical self-generation that provide the motor force for national/religious revolutions resonate to another myth, that of Oedipus. One might argue that the father-son conflict signalled by Freud finds a convenient safety-valve in the sense of collective oppression that is basic to all myths of national redemption.¹⁹ It is, however, essential to distinguish which aspects of the family drama are being projected onto the collective screen in which way, and what the relationship is between a particular reenactment and the phases of economic and social development.

French revolutionary mythology, for example, is retold in at least two major ways in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, there is the initial scenario of the patriotic unity of 1789, which united the entire nation in the festivals of federation - largely spontaneous movements of *fraternité* between classes, villages and regions. Basically the psychic source of those movements was the feeling of union with the maternal body characteristic of the pre-oedipal phase - the 'oceanic feeling' of cosmic harmony cited by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*.²⁰ The mythic scenario of 1793, on the other hand, that of the nation in arms and the Terror, presumed several categories of natural enemies of the new nation: kings, aristocracies, non-juring clergy, and especially their foreign peers and allies. Though the fantasy of pre-oedipal union with the mother remained under the surface, the overt motor of revolutionary defense was oedipal hatred for the false

19 For the psychological iconography supporting the American War of Independence against the British, see Michael Paul Rogin, *Fathers and Children, Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian* (New York 1975) 22-30. It is of course important to distinguish between different culturally given family structures and mentalities (family life and tensions differed according to whether its roots were American, Prussian, English or French; Catholic or Protestant; aristocratic, bourgeois, petit bourgeois or peasant, etc.).

20 Jules Michelet portrayed this pre-oedipal mood of mystical unity with the maternal body of the nation in his description of the festivals of federation of 1789/90 (book 3 of his *Histoire de la Révolution Française*). See also my *Michelet Historian. Rebirth and Romanticism in 19th Century France* (New Haven 1990) 150-152.

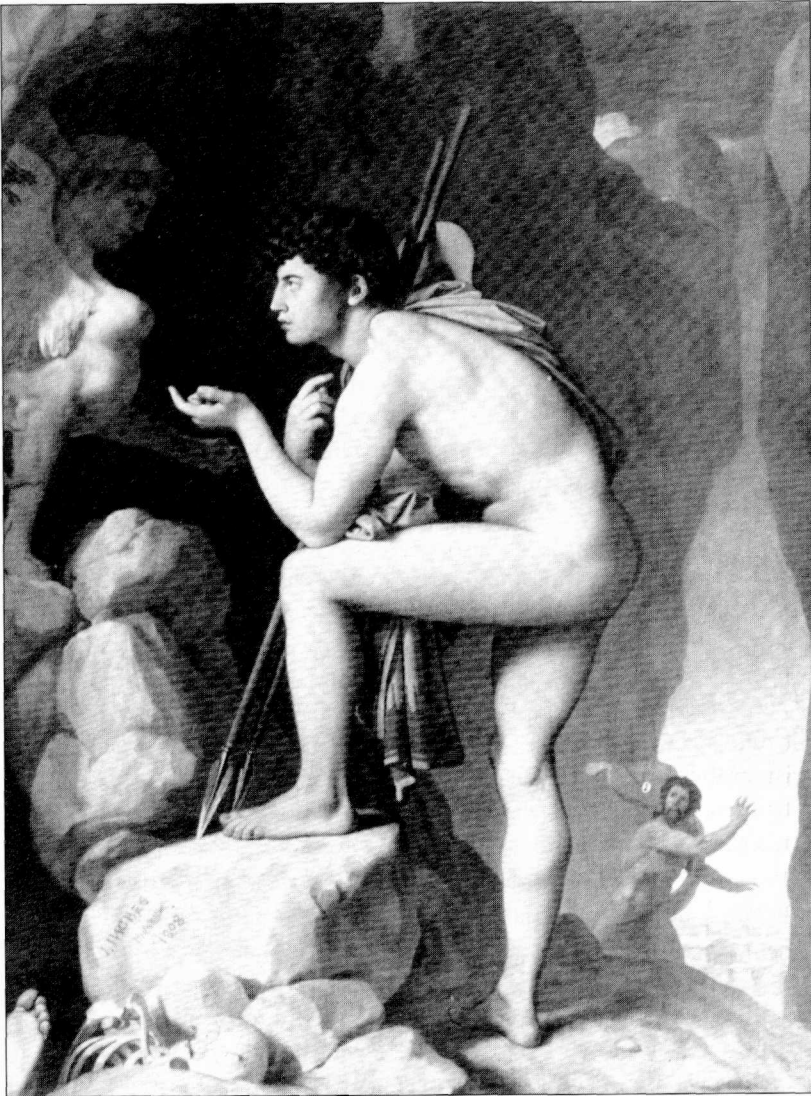
father. The omnipresence of treachery in this model justified terror against the counter-revolution.

Both of these models reappear in French cultural and political history. The model of mystical union reappears in aspects of French romanticism (just as it had earlier been prominent in English and German romanticism)²¹, in the élan of generosity and *fraternité* in the months after the February revolution of 1848, and in the notion of a 'union sacrée' during World War I. The Jacobin rage against the false father reappears in the 1830 and 1848 uprisings and in the Paris Commune of 1871.

German nationalism knows comparable phenomena, of course, but similar models of oedipal projection may, if one ignores the specific historical circumstances, conceal fundamental differences. This is where the context of a nationalist movement in its conditioning phases of economic development becomes crucial. The fanaticism, for example, of the French revolutionary nationalist model of 1793 (which reappears in 1830, 1848 and 1870) and of the far-right populist models of revolutionary nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century in France as well as Germany can both be understood psychoanalytically as projections of Oedipal hatred. The two cases are, however, far apart in terms of their social-historical settings and differ significantly in their depth-psychological implications.

French revolutionary nationalism begins in a pre-capitalist era, in which most working men are peasants, artisans and shopkeepers, and non-aristocratic local elites - masters, small capitalists and even parish priests - often originated in such popular strata. Wealthy bankers and merchants could claim to represent them. The idea of 'the nation' then was coterminous with virtually all its social strata except for the aristocracy and the bishops. The pre-1848 Republican and romantic revolutionaries, who had fluid

21 See M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York 1971) 151, 194. Abrams, who has an evident reluctance to introduce Freudian categories, never makes explicit the depth-psychological corollary of these ideas, but he implies them repeatedly, as when he writes about the quest of German romantic poets and philosophers for 'an imminent culmination of history...a recovered paradise or golden age': 'The beginning and end of the journey is man's ancestral home, which is often linked with a female contrary from whom he has, upon setting out, been parted.' (255) Or (297): 'Wordsworth's favored model is maternal love, and the development of relationship in *The Prelude* is from the babe in his mother's arms to the all-inclusive "love more intellectual", which is higher than any love that "is merely human".'



Gustave Moreau 'Oedipe et le Sphinx' (1864). Uit: Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustav Moreau. *Complete edition of the finished paintings, watercolours and drawings* (Oxford 1977) 82.

lines of connection to the liberal bourgeoisie, shared this inclusive ideal. The social romantic mentality propagated by their ideologies in that early period, reflecting the ideal of mystical union underlying the ideal of revolutionary *fraternité*, was correspondingly open, not just to workers, but to women, children, Jews and the natural world.

German as well as French right-populist models appear in a later phase of socio-economic development (after the mid-nineteenth century introduction of industrial capitalism), when a major part of the hated 'other' is identified less with aristocracy than with aspects of a mature capitalist system that jeopardize the pre-industrial *Volk* or *peuple* of artisans, shopkeepers and peasants. Such hated products of capitalist modernity include both the uncivilized, immoral urban proletariat - thus the propertyless lowest stratum of what in 1793 and subsequent French revolutions was considered 'people', the banks and the department stores (both identified conveniently with Jews, considered as foreign to the national culture) and emancipated women, whose demands to participate in political and cultural life were perceived as threatening. However, the fact that this right-populist nationalism appears in *fin-de-siècle* France only after the most active phase of the original national-revolutionary myth has run its course - that is, after 1870 - deprives it of the élan possessed by the concurrent German *völkisch* mythology, which only began in 1848 and remained active until 1945.

For this belated start of the national-revolutionary movement in Germany, two generations after the corporate society of the ancien régime had been undermined by a liberal political economy (during the Napoleonic occupation), meant that there was no honeymoon period of harmony between forward-looking liberal bourgeois and backward-looking pre-industrial segments of the population such as had occurred repeatedly in France between 1789 and 1848. Psychohistorically, it meant that there was no linkage of the popular revolutionary movement to pre-oedipal sentiments of cosmic harmony with the *entire* body politic. Ideologically that movement grew in hostility to bourgeois avatars of Enlightenment rationalism and tolerance. To the contrary, from the inception of the German revolution of 1848, these two crucial elements of the new nationalism - modernizing bourgeois and pre-industrial *Volk* - violently opposed one another, a disunity that underlay the subsequent political feebleness of bourgeois liberalism, never able to appeal to the common people to resist authoritarian incarnations of the Old Regime, as did its

French counterpart throughout the long period of revolutionary nationalism. It also underlay the fear of the working class, of women, Jews and foreigners that characterized right-populist nationalism.

Until now, my example of evolving and contrasting national-religious identities shows the conjoined influences on group memory of stages of collective economic and individual psychological development. To these influences, we may add two others: the assimilation into nationalist movements and ideologies of the dissatisfactions of adolescent males, and the significance for nationalist consciousness of the civilisation processes identified by Norbert Elias and others.

Anthropologists and social historians have long been aware of the importance of village youth groups for local religions and rituals.²² Those writing about youth and nationalism in the period after the French Revolution, however, have rarely taken these omnipresent anthropological data into account, and neither historians nor anthropologists have shown much inclination to integrate a psychoanalytic understanding of the adolescent experience into their work.²³ If, however, one considers the totality of the experience of youth, there are discernible overlaps between the significance of youth for pre-modern and for modern mentalities, and in all cases, the significance of adolescence as a separate period of psycho-sexual development is powerfully present.

In general, the age between the onset of puberty and the acceptance of adult work and marital responsibilities is a period in which young males (and in modern societies, females) channel newly discovered sexual and creative energies into group actions and the support or reconstruction of group mentalities. Where integrated into traditional village societies, youth groups function as the punishers of transgressions against traditional morality (*charivari*) and the organizers of recurrent festivals of a religious nature (carnival, for example). While cultivating uniquely close emotional

22 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca 1969); Natalie Zemon David, 'The Reasons of Misrule' in: *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford 1979) 98-123; Jean-Claude Schmitt and Jacques Le Goff eds., *Le Charivari* (Paris 1981).

23 As mentioned, the late George Mosse came closest in *Nationalism and Sexuality*, but refrained from any explicit reference to psychoanalytic theory. French scholarship influenced by the *Annales* school has come closest to integrating anthropological vision into 19th century historiography. See for example Maurice Crubellier, *Histoire culturelle de la France, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris 1974) and idem, *l'enfance et la jeunesse dans la société française. 1800-1950* (Paris 1979).

ties between their members and a certain distance from adult society, they are also responsible for less innocent phenomena: violent sexual socialization (the group rapes of isolated village girls documented by Jacques Rossiard in late medieval France, for example²⁴), and the development of the martial spirit (either in intertribal conflict or in the much documented brawls between youth groups of neighboring villages²⁵).

When traditional societies are disrupted by centralizing religious or political powers or by economic modernity and urbanization, the impulses of youth to do the things I have mentioned may be smothered by the need to earn a living in circumstances that inhibit adolescent group formation, but in many cases the autonomous role of the adolescent cohort persists. During the early stages of industrialization, for example, apprenticeship continues to exist in urban settings. We know through Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* that eighteenth century Parisian printers' apprentices maintained considerable group solidarity and playful aggression with regard to their masters. And, from ego-documents of figures in the illegal *compagnonnages* that filled the gap between the corporate organization of artisans under the Old Regime and the development of modern trade unions, we know that early nineteenth century organizations of itinerant, mostly young artisans in the building trades, organized in secret workingmen's societies, supplied not only local shelters and fraternal warmth to their members but also the thrill of semi-organized riots with rival groups of workers in the same trade.²⁶

Young middle and upper class European males in the period since the French Revolution sometimes maintained close emotional relationships with peers, but they were often isolated and normally kept away from the violent group activities of adolescents from the lower orders by the pressures of their families and religious authorities. The latter proffered both internalized civilisatory processes and the reward for conformity of adult social superiority. If most of the youth of the upper crust conformed to expectations, however, a significant minority reacted otherwise. They

24 Jacques Rossiard, 'Fraternités de jeunesse et niveaux de culture dans les villes du Sud-Est à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Cahiers de l'histoire*, XXI (1976) 67-102.

25 The presence of such village brawls in mid-nineteenth century France is attested in Jules Vallés's autobiographical *L'enfant* (1878) and in Louis Pergaud, *La guerre des boutons* (1912).

26 See Agricol Perdiguier, *Livre du compagnonnage* (1839) and *Mémoires d'un compagnon* (1854); George Sand based her *Le Compagnon du Tour de France* (1840) on the oral testimony of Perdiguier.

formed intense, semi-secret adolescent friendships, based on mockery of their teachers and parents and the cultivation of intense emotion in art and love. Out of such bonding arose the pre-romantic *Sturm und Drang* writers of the 1780's, the various *Kreisen*, *cenacles* and circles of young poets and artists of the Romantic movement itself, as well as such later phenomena as the Bohemias of twentieth century Schwabing, Montparnasse and the Quartier Latin and the youth revolt of the 1960's.

Similar groups of young people, however, whose fervour took the form of an obedience to adult ideals which they felt their elders had betrayed, have been crucial to the creation of ethnic and religious myths of oppression and resistance. Examples are the German nationalist *Freischar* of the Napoleonic era and the various 'young' nationalist and liberal groups all over Europe that struggled against the Old Regime's repression of revolutionary nationalism in the nineteenth century. Less benign examples are the German youth movement of the early twentieth century that merged with Nazism after World War I, and the young men in the contemporary Middle East - the leaders are often the children of the successful middle class - who are presently active in resisting, in the name of nation and true religion, the oppressive weight of the Western 'Satan'.

In most such cases, the mentality of social zealotry, whether motivating movements of national liberation or of religious purification, has been based on the projection of libidinal energy, particularly powerful in adolescence, into religiously colored social ideals. Such ideals constitute escapes from the repression of instinctual impulse and affect discussed by Freud in his *Civilisation and its Discontents* and implied by Max Weber in his discussion of the inexorable process of rationalization and centralization. This combination of projection and repression of instinctual impulse in the framework of political and religious pressures to rationalize and centralize human existence has constituted a potentially explosive seed in the formation of centralized nation-states and their myths of collective identity.

At the present critical moment, in which the polemic over globalization threatens to metamorphose into one over rival 'civilizations', it is useful to recall that the merging of national identities into religious fundamentalist ones which we demonize in the Islamic world has Western antecedents. The processes of rationalization described by Max Weber are planetary, producing comparable traumas in different places at different times.

Conclusion

In the epigraph preceding this essay Edward Saïd refers to the convergence of 'primitive passions and sophisticated know-how' in the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States. Saïd's reference to the absence of a 'fortified boundary' between 'us and them' was a major point in his critique of Samuel Huntington's concept of a 'Clash of civilizations': the notion that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new challenge to Western secular values would come from militant believers in non-western religions, in particular, Islam. Interestingly, Huntington's term is a literal translation of *Kulturkampf*, Bismarck's word for the struggle between Prussia and political Catholicism, in a period in which he tried to oppose the latter by associating German nationalism with Protestant militancy. And it has further echoes to the already-noted antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* crafted by German romantic nationalists in the Napoleonic era. Indeed, the tie between national identity and group memory of religious or ethnic persecution has often inspired a sense of solidarity in Western culture. Zionism arose out of this, as did many of the nationalisms of Eastern Europe: Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Serbs and Croats, despite their notorious mutual animosities, all have this in common. Each ethnic group had its own religio-ethnic myth, usually of a fall from grace, of persecution and redemption, which gave its members a group identity.

The same phenomenon exists among Moslems. The Israelis' Zionist legend of persecution by Europeans and Arabs is paralleled by the Palestinians' belief that they have been oppressed by Europeans and Jews. In both cases, an historical reality of suffering fuses to unavowable Oedipal hostilities within authoritarian family situations. This is where the social/political experience of suffering, energized by the personal conflicts of young men, merges with traditional belief to form religio-national identities. The resultant mixture creates a cultural superego fueled by huge amounts of moral indignation and capable of the kinds of violence we have witnessed in the mutual cruelties of Serbs and Croats, Israelis and Palestinians, and, since September 11, of what is portrayed as 'Islam' and 'the West'.

Psychoanalysis applied sensitively in a social historical framework can deepen our understanding of the 'otherness' of terrorism, which may be less 'other' than we would like to acknowledge. After all, the very concept of religious fundamentalism is Western. That such Christian fundamentalism - virulent in the bible-based mutual hatreds of the early modern periods and still persisting in contemporary America - shares a common puritan

intolerance of otherness with its Islamic counterparts is evident in the denunciation by its leaders, immediately after the September 11 holocaust, of supporters of abortion, homosexuals, feminists and members of the American Civil Liberties Union, as those responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center.

While there may be many good reasons - political, social and cultural - for opposing Western dominance over the non-Western world, none of them justify the murderous hatred of the terrorist. But that hatred has nothing to do with a 'clash of civilizations'. To the contrary, in dissecting the motives of militant Islamic fundamentalists for hating us, we may find ourselves looking into the mirror of the Euro-American past. Instead of a 'clash of civilisations', a social psychohistory of the evolution of Islamic fundamentalism could show instructive parallels between the motor force of national identities in Europe and of religious/ethnic ones in today's Middle East.

NETWORK OF CONCERNED HISTORIANS

'EEN WOEDEND GEDICHT VAN TUSSEN DE ZWAARDEN'

De foto van een ex-leider in een Albanese stadsgids afdrukken. Als studentenvoorman oproepen tot meer democratie in China. Als lid van een Rwandese culturele vereniging gunstig verwijzen naar een voormalig regime. De geschiedenis van een Burmese studentenbeweging schrijven. Tot een fundamentalistische Palestijnse groep gerekend worden. Archiven bijhouden over Mexicaanse indianen. Schrijven over Oromogeschiedenis in Ethiopië. Een Guatmalteekse waarheidscommissie voorzitten. Een Palestijnse petitie tegen corruptie ondertekenen. Gedrukt materiaal verzamelen over de Culturele Revolutie. Als geschiedenislerares de vrouw zijn van een ongrijpbare Burmese pro-democratie-activist. De redactie voeren over een seculiere serie over de Indiase onafhankelijkheid. Als geschiedenisstudent opgepakt worden na een etnische rel in Ethiopië. Als archeologiestudent lid zijn van een legale pro-Koerdische partij in Turkije. Onderzoek doen naar Oeighoer geschiedenis in China. De rol van het leger in de lokale Guatmalteekse politiek doorgronden. Redenen waarom historici, geschiedenisstudenten en anderen moeilijkheden kregen met de overheid. Hun namen: *Elvira Shaplo en Vladimir Qiriaqi. Wang Dan. Philomène Mukabarali. Ko Aung Tun en U Myo Htun. Wael Ali Farraj. Andres Aubry en Angélica Inda. Moti Biyya, Garuma Bekele en Tesfaye Deressa. Juan Gerardi. Abdulsittar Qassem. Yongyi Song. Ma Khin Khin Leh. Basudev Chatterji. Badada Bayene. Emrullah Karagoz. Tohti Tunyaz. Matilde Leonor González Izas.*

Sinds oktober 1995 heeft het *Network of Concerned Historians* (NCH) actie gevoerd voor deze mensen. NCH doet mee aan alle campagnes van internationale mensenrechtenorganisaties voor historici. Daarnaast publiceert het jaarlijks een elektronische nieuwsbrief met informatie over het lot van vervolgte historici in tientallen landen.

Toen hij hoorde over de executie van vijf jonge schrijvers, noteerde de Chinese auteur Lu Xun in 1931: 'Ik sta hier en kan slechts toekijken hoe mijn vrienden nieuwe geesten zijn geworden. Ik zoek een woedend gedicht van tussen de zwaarden.' Doe mee. Laat je stem horen. Lidmaatschap kost niets.

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