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ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF LEADER

Summary: The paper deals with two approaches to leadership. The first is the result of cultural and political anthropology and the second of psychoanalysis. Freud's main points on the primal father from his *Totem and Taboo* (1913) are compared with available data with the conclusion that his concept of the primal father and the primal patricide cannot be supported by anthropological data. Contrary to Freud anthropological findings indicate a weak and situational (episodic) leadership among early members of *homo sapiens*. Psychoanalysis provided materials on leadership in at least two other ways: 1. through psychobiographies, and 2. by analyzing cult leaders. Major psychoanalytic biographies written by W. Bullitt and S. Freud, E. Erikson, V. Volkan and N. Itzkowitz are analysed and various receptions among scholars are also treated. The studies of cult leaders by W. Meissner are analysed with reference to wider implications that they may have, especially in terms of paranoid mechanisms and paranoid constructions that find their ways to ideologies. The author concludes that anthropological and psychoanalytic approaches may be complementary and that psychoanalysis particularly contributed to the understanding of modern leaders by conceptualizing narcissistic personality and grandiose self.

Key words: situational (episodic) leaders, political leaders, Martin Luther, Woodrow Wilson, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, Richard Nixon, cult leaders, narcissistic personality, grandiose self

The Scope of Findings

Both disciplines, anthropology and psychoanalysis, originally pretended that their results could be universal. Anthropology was gradually subdivided. It was affected by particularism beginning with Franz Boas, and with cultural relativism through the Culture and Personality School. A huge variety of cultural patterns in different human societies indicated a very high malleability of human cultures and suggested that human universals would be few if they existed at all. This line produced a strong cultural relativism characteristic of cultural anthropology. It separated nature from culture and in many instances went so far as to claim that "what was human and not cultural was merely animal."[1] By the end of the 20th century, two sets of results had crystallised in cultural anthropology: bongo-bongoism and human universals. The first insists that for each general characteristic there is always at least one exception. "That characteristic does not exist in bongo-bongo tribe" is the usual

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1   Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), p. 143.

line of this approach. In other words, no characteristic is universal. The latter approach insists that there are at least some characteristics that can be found in every single human society. Donald Brown described in 1991 absolute human universals in the sixth chapter of his book. It refers to what "all peoples, all societies, all cultures, and all languages have in common."[2] He based his description very much on previous similar attempts made by G. P. Murdock, L. Tiger and R. Fox, and C. F. Hockett.[3] Steven Pinker then made the list of human universals in alphabetical order based on Brown's book and Brown's later encyclopaedic entry.[4] Pinker was able to list some 370 human universals excluding near-universals.[5] One could conclude in general terms that although many issues are culturally related and culturally relative, there are also some human characteristics that are universal or near-universal.

On the other hand Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones thought that the results of psychoanalysis were universally applicable and that their findings based on patients whom they treated in Vienna (who were not only Austrians, but also French, Russian, American...), Britain or Canada, had a comprehensive meaning and universal application to all humans. In their opinion the psychoanalytic theory was a general theory for all members of mankind. In the early stages of psychoanalysis theoreticians of this approach did not take into consideration that almost all of their patients were middle class or upper class Europeans and Americans, so they all belonged to a very similar kind of bourgeois culture in economic terms, and almost all had a Judeo-Christian cultural background.

The particular problem of psychoanalysis is that it tends to universalise the present condition of mankind and to project it back into history and even prehistory. Following psychoanalysis one would expect to find among hunters-gatherers or stone-age pastoralists the same types of neuroses as among the Viennese middle class from the beginning of the 20th century. This line of argument would see the Oedipus Complex as a universal feature of *homo sapiens*. As Ernest Jones phrased it: "We believe that every man cherishes in his unconscious the wish for sexual intimacy with his mother and the desire to remove by death any disturbing rival, particularly his father; the converse applies equally to the woman, the term 'Œdipus complex' being used in both cases. Such a statement, abhorrent as it must sound, is nevertheless the core of psycho-analysis and inseparable from it."[6] This claim may indeed

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2   *Ibid.*, pp. 130–141.

3   George Peter Murdock, "The Common Denominator of Cultures", in Ralph Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 123–142; Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, *The Imperial Animal* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971); C. F. Hockett, *Man's Place in Nature* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

4   Donald E. Brown, "Human Universals" in *MIT Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences* (Wilson and Keil, 1999).

5   Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate. The modern denial of human nature* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [2002]), 435–439.

6   Ernest Jones, "Psycho-analysis and Anthropology", in Idem, *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1951), p. 126.

be universal,[7] but it was precisely formulations of this kind that produced a rift between anthropology and psychoanalysis because cultural anthropology was, from the 1930s till the 1980s, dominated by cultural relativism and all formulations that looked essentialist were viewed with suspicion by the anthropological mainstream.

Political and Cultural Anthropology on Leadership

Among human universals listed by Donald Brown are "leaders" and "dominance/submission", but also "the concept of fairness/equity".[8] So, one could ask what kind of leaders existed in the simplest prehistoric societies known as bands or as "simple egalitarian societies", in other words in hunter-gatherer societies?

For the time being, there are two possible ways of answering this question. One is to analyse ethnographic data on bands observed by ethnographers. The other is to use archaeological evidence. The latter is very scarce for bands, and the first is not fully reliable since bands survived into 20th century mostly in those areas of the globe where climate was so hostile that hardly any invader would have wished to fully integrate them. In other words they survived mostly in Arctic areas and in certain deserts. However, all or most of Australian Aborigines lived in bands as well prior to European contact, so their cultural and political patterns could also serve as a guide to how bands lived.

In *African Political Systems* (1940), the founding work of political anthropology, M. Fortes and E. E. Evans Pritchard identified two types of political systems in terms of existence or lack of centralised authority: Group A with centralised authority, and Group B containing "societies which lack centralized authority... and in which there are no sharp divisions of rank, status or wealth."[9] It was explained that Group B corresponded to stateless societies and that societies studied from this group were the Logoli, the Tallensi, and the Nuer. It was only with Elman Service that the division into societies with centralised authority and stateless societies was further elaborated. The stateless societies have been divided by E. Service into two groups: bands and tribes, and these two have been grouped into preindustrial non-centralised political systems. The two centralised systems are: chiefdoms and primitive states.[10]

Bands are the first preindustrial political system of *homo sapiens*. He lived in them during the major part of his evolution. Based on archaeological

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7   See section "The Oedipus Complex" in Donald Brown's book on universals with his conclusion that Malinowski's claim on the mutability of the complex "has been overstated." Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals*, pp. 32–37. Perhaps, the category of a near universal, would be more appropriate in this case since some possible exceptions have been identified in Indian and Japanese cultures.

8   Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate*, pp. 435–439.

9   M. Fortes and E. E. Evans Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 5.

10 Elman Service, *Primitive Social Organization. An Evolutionary Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1962).

evidence "probably all humans lived in such bands until at least a few tens of thousands of years ago, and most still did as recently as 11,000 years ago."[11] These societies consisted of several dozen members who all knew each other and that enabled them to have face-to-face discussions. During many millennia of their existence some bands could have been different in certain aspects in comparison with any of those that survived till modern times. Therefore a combination of ethnographic data and archaeological evidence seems to be the best approach and in the future archaeological evidence may bring some changes to the current understanding of bands.

A classical analysis in political anthropology regarding the problem of leader was provided by Morton Fried in 1967. He offered six characteristics of leadership in simple egalitarian societies. These societies correspond to what Service designates as bands. The characteristics are the following:

1. Leadership is based "upon authority and lacks connotations of power."
2. It is transient, in other words, it moves from one person of competence to another.
3. It is "less associated with persons than with situations".
4. Power is associated within very small groups such as families. It "vanishes as the scope of the group widens."
5. Authority is much more present than power but it also exhibits the same elements as power from the previous point.
6. Denser populations "have more extensive leadership areas"[12]

Fried noticed something very important about power in primitive societies that makes them rather different from the experience of modern societies. He says that ethnographers of these societies found it difficult "to find cases in which one individual tells one or more others, 'Do this !' or some command equivalent". There are no direct orders in these societies but there are statements like "If this is done it will be good." Usually the person who initiates the idea also has to do the task.

Gerard van den Steenhoven made his own ethnographic research among Caribou and Netsilik Eskimos/Inuit of Keewatin District of Northwest Territories of Canada in 1955 and 1957. "The groups visited belonged without doubt to the Eskimos least affected in their daily lives by contacts with the white man's culture."[13] His general conclusion about leadership in the groups of Eskimos/Inuit that he analysed has been that "Eskimo society completely lacks structure for leadership". Certain individuals were identified as having

11   Jared Diamond, *The World until Yesterday. What can we learn from traditional societies?* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

12   Morton H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society. An Essay in Political Anthropology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc, 1967), p. 83.

13   G. van den Steenhoven, *Leadership and Law among the Eskimos of the Keewatin District Northwest Territories* (Rijswijk: Uitgeverij Excelsior, s. a. [1962]), p. 1.

"general or socialized prestige", however, "their stars rise and fall, and to follow them remains a matter of voluntary choice for everyone else."[14] He also analysed camp headmen and what kind of authority in decisions such persons possessed. At Pelly Bay, north of the Arctic Circle, it seemed to Van den Steenhoven that a kind of headman "was a usual feature in winter sealing camps." Each morning one hunter would be followed by others. An informant explained to him what it meant in reality: "In course of time it becomes clear who is having much success in finding the right spots. *He* will be followed by the others, but only in respect of finding the best hunting grounds. If he loses his luck and another has more success, we follow that other hunter." He concluded that the nature of this kind of leadership "is so weak as barely to deserve that name."[15]

Therefore the only recognised authority (but even that one only conditionally) in this society existed within the family unit in two forms. The first is *inhumatar*, the husband of the nuclear family, and he is subordinated to his own father, or other senior male member. The other is a kind of *pater familias* and he exercises his authority over a group of related nuclear families. Even the *pater familias* makes decisions in consultation with his sons or sons-in-law if he lives with them. And he loses authority once his sons become more capable them him.[16]

The following decades did not change the picture provided by Van den Steenhoven and M. Fried. Bands, the basic human preindustrial political system in which *homo sapiens* spent an overwhelming part of its evolution, are egalitarian both in terms of economy and in terms of social and political life. Leadership in such societies is situational and based "on the personal attribute of the individual and lacks any coercive power." Similarly a headman cannot really tell anyone what to do and could be an "expert advisor in particular situations."[17] Diamond also concludes than in bands their members differed little in "wealth" and political power "except as a result of individual differences in ability of personality."[18] Even in more developed political systems known as tribes there is "weak political leadership, lack of bureaucrats, and face-to-face decision making."[19]

Donald V. Kurtz described three types of leaders identified by anthropologists. They are: 1. episodic leaders, 2. big men, and 3. chiefs. "Episodic leaders" correspond to situational leaders. They are typical for hunters and gatherers but may also be found in the most complex societies at the very local level of power. Episodic leaders are weak. "They must lead by example.

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14   *Ibid.*, p. 65.
15   *Ibid.*, p. 60.
16   *Ibid.*, p. 65.
17   Ted. C. Lewellen, *Political Anthropology. An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), p. 23.
18   Diamond, *The World until Yesterday*, p. 14.
19   *Ibid.*, p. 15.

They cannot command or order."[20] This type of leadership is characterized by the lack of long-term planning. Still, even this type of weak leaders has "some access to rudimentary tangible power, if only momentarily."[21]

For the time being one may conclude that *homo sapiens* spent most of its evolution in bands. In the period prior to the current inter-glaciation humans may have had only minor groups who lived in tribes and this type of political systems includes as its typical forms of leadership "a charismatic headman with no power but some authority in group decision making."[22]

Additionally to situational leadership one could identify in some tribes the existence of big men. They were detected in societies of New Guinea. Although authority or power of a big man may very much oscillate in different tribes the ideal model of this type "falls between and corresponds to the image of the big man as a *primus inter pares*, a first among equals."[23] Kurtz finds that on all their incarnations big men aim at "augmenting their power" and they are also "notorious manipulators of their political economies."[24] Lewellen notices that their position is "inherently unstable, because it is dependent on their ability to buy followers through gift giving and loans".[25] Under such conditions any misfortunate event shifts authority to a new contender. Overall, prehistoric human societies at this stage of research seem to have been rather egalitarian and with a minimal or small leadership.[26]

Freud naturally could not have been aware of all these anthropological findings that were all formulated after his death. He operated within the theories of armchair anthropologists and one of their theories was that humans originally lived in primitive hordes. To this he added some mainstream ideas of his own time. Roazen has correctly noticed: "Anthropologists have never been able to confirm the existence of these primitive hordes; in such bands that can be verified there is little of the possessiveness Freud described, or the jealousy, or anything like the institution of one dominant male monopolizing females."[27]

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20 Donald V. Kurtz, *Political Anthropology. Paradigms of Power* (Boulder Co.: Westview Press, 2001), p. 47.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

22 Ted. C. Lewellen, *Political Anthropology*, p. 20.

23 Donald V. Kurtz, *Political Anthropology*, p. 47.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

25 Ted. C. Lewellen, *Political Anthropology*, p. 28.

26 One should, however, add that Donald E. Brown mentions among human universals "*a de facto* oligarchy". He acknowledges that "the UP [Universal People] have leaders, though they may be ephemeral or situational", and that no such leader "has complete power lodged in himself alone." He also claims that "the UP never have complete democracy, and never have complete autocracy", and therefore "they always have a de facto oligarchy." Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals*, p. 138.

27 Paul Roazen, *Freud and his Followers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 269.

Freud's trans-historical Generalisations

In comparison with the knowledge from the 1960s and later, the level of anthropological knowledge on leadership prior to World War I was very low. That affected both anthropological theories and those scholars who used the anthropological data available in their time.

Freud had a tendency to depict phenomena from the previous decades and centuries as contemporary phenomena. Writing about Paris from the 1880s he compares it to Paris described in Victor Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (*Notre-Dame de Paris*) from 1831, which in turn describes the French capital in the 15th century. About Parisians Freud stated: "... they haven't changed since Victor Hugo wrote *Notre-Dame*."[28]

Freud could see all around him the patriarchal Victorian incarnation of a castrative *pater familias*. He generalised this present condition of bourgeois societies into the human condition in general. In Freud's theory the *pater familias* received its prototype in the form of an envious, aggressive and suppressive primal father. This was most clearly expressed in his major anthropological work *Totem and Taboo* from 1913, in which he postulated that the totem animal was the substitution for the primal all-powerful and envious father who had been devoured and killed by his sons. In his interpretation human religion and moral restrictions were created from the sense of sin resulting from the primal patricide.[29] Similarly to Freud's temporal generalisations of Hugo's novel, it is not clear at all when the primal father was supposed to have lived. Was he a member of the *homo sapiens* species or some of his ancestors? Naturally the level of knowledge of human ancestry was limited and Freud could not speculate in chronological terms about subsequent periods. At the beginning of the 20th century, the development of the *homo* genus was known only in a rudimental form. For Freud the primal father essentially lived *eo tempore* or "in those days" and that could be any time in the past. There is cumulative evidence that Freud projected back onto prehistory his contemporaries and the circumstances faced by his own psychoanalytic movement. There was a negative reaction of anthropologists to this theory, even those who had an open or implicit sympathy for psychoanalysis.[30]

Some other findings of psychoanalysis that seemed to have a universal application may also be culturally specific. It was recently pointed out that the culture of Ringstrasse in Vienna produced some specific features.

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28 Sigmund to "Dear Minna [Bernays]", Paris, 03.12.1885, in Ernst L. Freud (ed.), *Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873–1939* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 199.

29 S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 13 (London: Vintage and the Hogarth Press, 2001[1913]), pp. 131–142.

30 A. L. Kroeber, "An Ethnologic Psychoanalysis", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 22, No 1 (Jan.–Mar., 1920), pp. 48–55. A. L. Kroeber, "Totem and Taboo in Retrospect", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Nov., 1939), pp. 446–451. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (New York: Meridian, 1955, 1st ed. 1927).

Behind its façades, running of salons was considered a woman's job. During the course of the 19ᵗʰ century, in Viennese upper classes women gradually disappeared from business life and were confined to social life. This reduced role proved to be an impossible burden for many women. As Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz concludes: "For many women in the nineteenth century the escape into hysteria was the only way they could give expression to their discomfort in the golden cage."[31] Thus, hysteria, a phenomenon that led to the discovery of psychoanalysis, may be seen merely as a feature of bourgeois life and not as something universal. Many other culturally specific features seemed universal to early psychoanalysts.

In terms of how much Victorian morality was repressive there are also conflicting opinions. The leading specialist Peter Gay took a middle line.[32] He does not view this era as entirely repressive in relation to the sexual. His Victorians are restrained, but they are not abstinent with regards to sexual life. They rather believed in what psychoanalysis named sublimation.[33] At the same time Gay admits: "Many in the Victorian middle classes felt a good deal of hesitation about Eros, tugged one way by the teachings of the churches and cultural traditions and another by the attractions of skepticism about time-honoured social habits and of natural urges."[34] In Gay's assessment, the Victorian ideal of the girl as a sexless angel wasn't perhaps driven "by high standards but by unacknowledged anxiety."[35]

Sigmund Freud and Politics

Although Freud always displayed sympathies for liberal political views, he rarely voted in elections and seems to have avoided dealing with political issues. Peter Gay noticed about Freud's correspondence from the 1890s that the "Jewish question", at that time very acute in Austria, was very rarely featured in it.[36]

During the last two decades of his life Freud witnessed the rise of totalitarian leaders such as Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. This did not prompt him to join or even publicly endorse any party. When

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31 Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz, "Family Stories. The Ringstrasse palaces and their occupants", in *Ringstrasse. A Jewish Boulevard* (Vienna: Amalthea and Jewish Museum, 2015), p. 45.

32 Gay has written a five-volume history of the period entitled *From Victoria to Freud*. Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud*, vol. I, *Education of the Senses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Vol. II, *The Tender Passion* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1986); Vol. III, *The Cultivation of Hatred* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1993); Vol. IV, *The Naked Heart* (London: Harper Collins, 1996); Vol. V, *Pleasure Wars* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

33 Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 2002), p. 80.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Peter Gay, Freud. *A Life for our Time* (London: Max, 2006, 1ˢᵗ ed. 1988), p. 598.

asked by Max Eastman: "What are you politically", he replied: "Politically I am just nothing."[37]

That said, one should add that he openly opposed political fanaticism and thus political extremism of any kind. He could have seen in totalitarian regimes a dogmatism and zeal similar to religious dogmatism and religious obsession. In his letter to Arnold Zweig from 1930 he informed him that he could not support the communist ideal. The first decade of the Soviet rule eliminated any hope in Freud that it could lead to improvement, and therefore he admitted to A. Zweig: "I remain a liberal of the old school." He added that in *Civilization and its Discontents* he "criticised uncompromisingly the mixture of despotism and Communism."[38] His liberal views are confirmed by his preferred newspapers. He gladly read the liberal Viennese daily *Die Neue Freie Presse*, and the *Manchester Guardian*, a leading British liberal daily in the first decades of the 20th century.[39]

In his conversation with Hans Herzl, the son of Theodor Herzl (the father of Zionism), Freud gave a puzzling comment. He mentioned politicians of psychosynthesis and said about them: "They are robbers in the underground of the unconscious world... Stay away from them, young man... stay away even if one of them was your father... perhaps because of that."[40] What did he really have in mind? Freud very clearly had "a powerful aversion to prophets and religious fanatics."[41] His opposition to psychosynthesis was not only ideologically motivated. Freud had a deep mistrust of politics that stemmed from his relationship with his father. In a dream Freud associated his father with Garibaldi, whom he considered another dangerous dreamer. As McGrath noticed: "By burying the ghost of his father's political legacy within himself, Freud aimed to set himself free from a political world which seemed to threaten the very existence of freedom."[42] By the end of the 1890s, after abandoning his early political ambitions, politics became for Freud something less than dignified. The rise of the leaders of psychosynthesis such as Karl Lueger who became the mayor of Vienna in 1897 proved to him that politics had a dangerous potential. Yet, he never refrained from political activism and the foundation of the international psychoanalytic movement later provided a roundabout way for Freud to satisfy his repressed political ambitions.

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37 Paul Roazen, *Freud. Political and Social Thought* (London: Hogarth Press, 1969), p. 243.

38 S. Freud to A. Zweig, Vienna, 26.11.1930, in Ernest L. Freud (ed.), *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1970), p. 21.

39 Peter Gay, *A Life for our Time*, p. 17, Freud's housewife Paula Fichtl was for many years in charge of buying *Manchester Guardian* "professor's favourite newspapers." Detlef Berthelsen, *Alltag bei Familie Freud. Die Erinerungen der Paula Fichtl* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1987), p. 50.

40 William McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis. The Politics of Hysteria* (Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 315.

41 Peter Gay, *Freud. A Life for Our Time*, p. 560.

42 McGrath, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

Psychoanalytic Studies of Political Leaders

Both Freud and his disciples discussed many figures and works from intellectual history and endeavoured to analyse their psychological aspects. At the gatherings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society specific meetings were dedicated to some historical persons, but mostly to writers and philosophers. In April 1907, the Russian revolutionary Tatjana Leontiev and later the German writer Jean Paul (1763–1825) were discussed. In 1908 the neurosis of the Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer, and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, were dealt with. In 1909, special meetings were dedicated to the psychopathology of Hauptmann's *Griselda*, to the German poet Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811), and to a fantasy of Leonardo da Vinci. And, in 1912, the German poet Christian Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863) and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) were discussed.[43] However, there was no particular interest in psychoanalysing great historical figures such as rulers, generals, prime ministers, religious leaders etc. There are only occasional references to Napoleon and Luther.

Several psychobiographies written by prominent psychoanalysts and published after WW2 had rather different receptions ranging from affirmative assessments to a total rejection of their findings. Four such cases will be analysed in the following pages.

a) Freud's and Bullitt's Study of Woodrow Wilson

In the period between 1930 and 1932 Freud co-authored the only psychobiography of a contemporary of his. It was a book on the American President Woodrow Wilson, which he wrote together with the American diplomat William C. Bullitt (1891–1967). The book could not be published as long as Edith Wilson (1872–1961), the widow of Woodrow Wilson, was alive due to a possible libel suit and was published in 1966/67 only.[44] It received overwhelmingly negative reactions and its reputation never improved. Gay calls it a "caricature of applied analysis" and "debacle."[45]

There are, however, several points that could be applied in analysing some leaders and some points can be usefully extracted from this book. Bullitt prepared a section reviewing data on Woodrow Wilson's childhood and youth. He notes that "he was so serious about himself that others took him

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43 Nunberg, Herman, and Ernst Federn (eds.), *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, Vol. I: 1906–1908, min. 1–53, translated by M. Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1962), meetings 19 and 20, pp. 159–174. Idem, Vol. 2: 1908–1910 (1967), meetings 54b, 56, 74, 78, 89, pp. 2–12, 25–33, 185–194, 220–226, 338–352. Idem, Vol. 4: 1912–1918 (1975), meetings 156 and 172, pp. 1–6, 101–102.

44 For details of how the collaboration between Freud and Bullitt went see: Peter Gay, *Freud*, pp. 556–558.

45 Peter Gay, *Freud*, pp. 560, 561.

seriously".[46] Wilson in his youth compared himself with great historical figures like Lee and Washington. "He never doubted his kinship with the greatest man", and "felt that God has chosen him for a great work."[47] In chapter one, Freud and Bullitt discuss the fundaments of psychoanalysis. In explaining the Super-Ego the authors discuss what the demanding and non-demanding Super Ego could produce. In the first case "a Super-Ego which does not demand much from the libido does not get much." But there can be an opposite case as well, when ideals of the Super-Ego are "so grandiose that it demands from the Ego the impossible. A Super-Ego of this sort produces a few great men, many psychotics and many neurotics."[48]

The book was not well received. Among other things it contains extensive theoretical explanations that are likely to discourage any reader interested chiefly in Woodrow Wilson from reading the book. One of the most influential historians at the time of the publication of the book was A. J. P. Taylor. He ridiculed it. "How did anyone ever manage to take Freud seriously?" asked Taylor in his book review in 1967.[49] This book had a tremendous negative impact on psychoanalytically oriented biographies of politicians. Some two decades later, Peter Gay noticed that since the publication of this book "the psychoanalysis of detested politicians, living or dead, has become a minor and irritating cottage industry."[50]

b) E. Erikson's Study of Young Luther

Probably the most successful fusion of psychoanalysis and history was achieved by Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994). In 1958, he published a study on young Luther.[51] In it he applied Freudian postulates but also the results of his own clinical work in terms of crises of adolescents. He made no psychoanalytic introduction but rather explained its key positions only in those sections where he found them necessary. He also endeavoured to view Luther in his own time and culture, rather than to analyse an individual taken out of historical and social contexts. In this regard he stated that his interest was not in "the validity of the dogmas", but rather "with the spiritual and intellectual milieu which the isms of his time – and these isms *had* to be religious –

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46 Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson. A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966 [1932, 1939]), p. 9.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

49 Quoted from: Peter Gay, *Freud for Historians* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1985), p. 93. Gay admits that in this book, which was largely written by Bullitt "but approved by the aged Freud, he [Freud] permitted his aversion to the self-appointed, intrusive Messiah from the West to override his carefully cultivated analytic neutrality." *Ibid.*, p. 141.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

51 Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther. A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958, the first paperback edition in 1962 and was reissued in 1993).

offered to his passionate search."[52] What Erikson did in this book was to try to reconcile religion and psychoanalysis. He concludes in this book that among the various ideological systems "only religion restores the earliest sense of appeal to a Provider."[53]

He made occasional references to leaders and their followers that deserve special mention. Erikson observed that late adolescent personalities were "the best subjects for indoctrination." He warned that if at certain times the human unconscious could not find creative ways of manifestation, then "we are easy prey to the experts and the leaders who somehow know how to exploit our unconscious without understanding the magic reasons for their success; and consequently their success contributes to their being corrupted by leadership." Erikson views dogmatic leaders as the worst "for they combine a moral scrupulosity with a deadly unscrupulousness, a mixture which permits them to take command of our conscience."[54]

His young Martin is a man who seeks to be justified and that is Luther's "stumbling block as a believer, his obsession as a neurotic sufferer, and his preoccupation as a theologian."[55] He described the way in which young Luther recovered his ego and defined a new theology. But he admitted that his book described "the decline of a youth, and not the ascendance of a man", and that the latter would have to be done in another book.[56]

What makes this work very personal is the author's own self-analysis and quest for identity. It is this quest that makes the pages of the book so convincing. A part of that is Erikson's insistence on some parallelisms between Luther's and Freud's ideas. In his interpretation they "came to acknowledge that 'the child is in the midst.' Both men perfected introspective techniques permitting isolated man to recognize his individual patienthood."[57]

Erikson later also wrote a biography of Ghandi,[58] but his *Young Man Luther* remained more influential. It received very favourable reviews from persons like theologian Reinhold Niebuhr who called it "a very profound study", but also from the *American Sociological Review*, but there were also negative comments. Gay described the book as "pioneering though severely flawed."[59] Church historians were particularly harsh in their criticism of this book.[60]

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52 Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: Norton, 1993), p. 22.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 142.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 253.

58 Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the origins of militant non-violence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

59 Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience. Victoria to Freud. Education of the Senses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 465.

60 R. H. Bainton, "Luther: A psychiatric portrait", *The Yale Review*, vol. 48 (1959), pp. 406–410. R. H. Bainton, "Psychiatry and history: An examination of Erikson's Young man Luther", *Religion in Life*, vol. 40 (1971), pp. 450–478.

Overall, Erikson showed in this work, unlike his predecessors, "a perfectly acceptable Luther."[61] Gay's remark seems to be overcritical. During the course of half a century that followed the publication of this book, it only gained in importance. At the beginning of the 21st century, Donald Capps calls it "a classic in psychology of religion and related fields", and admits: "I can personally testify to the fact that Erikson's account of Luther lives on in the hearts and minds of many of us who have read *Young Man Luther* and have experienced the reading itself as life-changing."[62] After the publication of such a profound study it was misfortunate enough for the genre of psychohistory that Freud's and Bullitt's study appeared only eight years later.

c) Volkan's and Itzkowitz's Studies

1) Studies on Ataturk

Vamik Volkan (1932–), a psychoanalyst and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Virginia Medical School, a Cypriot Turk by origin, was fascinated with the personality of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881–1938), military leader, revolutionary, politician, the founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic (1923–1938). He was himself a witness of the development of his cult. Volkan first published his study in the well-known annual *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society* and later expended it into a book.[63] His intention was to analyse "the ways in which a high level narcissistic personality can adapt to the external world and shape it to meet the requirements of his grandiose self."[64] The concepts of the self and of narcissistic personality disorders that were elaborated by Heinz Kohut (1913–1981) and the notion of pathological narcissism defined by Otto Kernberg (1928) have particularly influenced Volkan's interpretations.[65]

Mustafa Kemal's father died when he was a young man and his mother became increasingly religious. She remarried which made him rather jealous. Volkan noticed that already as a student at War College Mustafa "began to declare himself as a special being." He constructed grandiose schemes in which "he was to be a central figure and his adherents were to be but

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61   S. v. „Erik ERIKSON", in Elisabeth Roudinesco et Michel Plon, *Dictionnaire de la Psychanalyse* (Paris: Fayard, 1997) p. 255.

62   Donald Capps, "Erik H. Erikson's *Young Man Luther: A Classic Revisited*", *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 64 (2015), pp. 329, 341.

63   Vamik D. Volkan, "'Immortal' Atatürk. Narcissism and Creativity in a Revolutionary Leader", *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Vol. 9 (1981), pp. 221–255.

64   *Ibid.*, p. 221.

65   Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self. A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (New York: International University Press, 1971); H. Kohut, *The Psychology of the Self* (New York: International University Press, 1977); Otto Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1975).

extensions of him."[66] His mother left Mustafa's stepfather at some point and began living in Istanbul with her daughter and son-in-law. There was an orphan adopted by the family. It was curious that both Mustafa's mother and he considered him as their own son. In that way he and his mother had a shared child and "were symbolically united as parents".[67]

Volkan explains the usual family background of patients with the grandiose self and that could be applied to leaders with the same problem as well. Such patients "have had a cold, narcissistic mother who induced in her infant a self-concept of 'hunger' and an image of the world devoid of 'food' and love." Exactly that type of mother sees in their children something special. "It is around this concept of being special that the grandiose self is crystallised." In instances when that kind of self is "a defensive pathological development, its cohesiveness must be maintained throughout life."[68] It is also interesting that such leaders need to be immortalised during their lifetime. This is connected with another element of the grandiose self and of narcissistic individuals. What terrifies them the most is a possibility of losing their beauty and adoration in old age. In this sense Volkan remarks on Ataturk: "In his last year of life he had episodes of irritability and suspiciousness. Who knows? He may not have wanted to shun death since he was already an immortal to his people."[69] He also found something that made Ataturk's narcissistic personality unique and that was "his internalization of the idealized father who could then limit his narcissistic demands."[70]

Later he expended this study into a book. His associate in this task was a historian Norman Itzkowitz who co-authored the book.[71] Both of them had completed psychoanalytic training, but also had to undergo autoanalyses in writing this study, and they explained them in the introduction. "Volkan's regard for the Turkish leader swung from a defensive strengthening of his idealization to extreme devaluation. In the end, however, he gained a balanced view that fostered a genuine appreciation of how Atatürk accomplished what he did... By the time the study was completed Dr. Volkan has greatly changed." An Ottoman historian and professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, Norman Itzkowitz (1931–) became a psychoanalytic candidate at the National Psychological Association in New York. Volkan understood Ataturk through his father, Itzkowitz, on the other hand, through his mother. His "comprehension of aspects of the Turkish

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66 Vamik D. Volkan, "'Immortal' Atatürk. Narcissism and Creativity in a Revolutionary Leader", p. 225.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 242.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

70 *Ibid.*

71 Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, *The Immortal Atatürk. A Psychobiography* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986 [1984]).

leader's personality was broadened by his inner voyage that focused on the mother-child dyad."[72]

The authors had to deal with a series of dilemmas and two such dilemmas will be discussed here. The first is how to reconcile the great emphasis that psychoanalysis puts on the early years of everyone's development with the fact that the main contributions of characters analysed in biographies occurred many years later. For this they followed the theory of Peter Bios[73] in whose interpretation a person "coalesce in childhood and then crystallizes in adolescence, which provides a second chance to complete the work of the earlier stages of psychosexual development."[74] In this way there is "a second chance" for the individual, and after adolescence "the individual will relate to the world around him, and to his inner world, in his own idiosyncratic way."[75] This kind of approach does not reduce someone's psychobiography to his or her early years only but views the lives of protagonists in their fullness.

The second dilemma concerns the relation between authors as changing subjects and their characters as their objects. There is a very important point in the introduction to the book on Ataturk. It is that the relation between biographers and their characters is one of mutual influence. A good biographer should be aware of this since he or she will either identify or oppose the main protagonists. This process is both conscious and unconscious and without psychoanalysing oneself it is indeed difficult to understand its unconscious part. In this respect the authors provided a candid assessment of their own self-analyses during the course of writing their biography of the founder of modern Turkey.

At the end of the book the authors included a very important typology of narcissistic leaders. They can either be destructive or reparative. The destructive leader "attempts to protect the cohesion of his grandiose self chiefly by devaluing others in order to feel superior." This kind of leader poses a huge danger because a need to devalue a group "often leads to the destruction of that group." They view Ataturk as an example of the reparative leader who "wants adoration from his 'valued' followers and may attempt to uplift them in order to build his support on as impressively high a level as possible."[76] They also warn that this division may be artificial since both types of leaders may interchange under some circumstances. The final assessment of the Turkish leader is more favourable in the book than in the study. At the end of the book he is seen as a reparative leader "because of the great 'fit' between him and the people."[77]

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72   V. Volkan and N. Itzkowitz, "Introduction", in *Ibid.*, pp. xx–xxi.

73   Peter Bios, *The Adolescent Passage* (New York: International Universities Press, 1979).

74   V. Volkan and N. Itzkowitz, "Introduction", p. xviii.

75   *Ibid*.

76   Vamik D. Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz, *The Immortal Atatürk. A Psychobiography*, p. 358.

77   *Ibid.*, p. 358.

2) Richard Nixon

In 1997 Volkan and Itzkowitz, together with Andrew Dod, published a psychobiography of US president Richard Nixon.[78] He is a particularly interesting case study since psychological parts of his biography have been widely debated ever since the Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation in August 1974. The authors felt that through their work they "had come to know him intimately, even though none of us had personally met him."[79]

A conference was held in 1987 at Princeton University on "Leadership in the modern presidency." On that occasion Wilbur Cohen, with experience of having worked for every US administration since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, said: "To be President, you need to have a good mother. The father doesn't matter. You need a good mother." This produced laughter in the audience. This laughter is not an unusual response of academic circles to psychobiographies and to efforts to psychoanalyse historical personalities. Reacting to this kind of attitude Volkan, Itzkowitz and Dod emphasized the relevance of psychoanalytic psychohistory and psychobiography. In their opinion those disciplines "can offer a great deal of insight, especially in the field of presidential leadership studies. Leadership is, at least in part, a derivative of unconscious motivations." Since not only actions but also decisions, style, and speeches "are all influenced by such aspects as unconscious drives and defenses against them, by personality organization, and by intelligence and physical condition." They did not want to reduce the understanding of someone's person and therefore they admitted that "social, legal, military, economic, and historical factors must, of course, be taken into account, in order to see how one's internal world intertwines with external realities."[80] Yet, the business of psychobiographies did not seem to have had a good reception and the authors could only express some hope for its future status: "If the laughter ever stops, and if those who engage in writing psychoanalytic biography can recognize and control their own countertransferences to their subjects, the frontiers of presidential leadership studies may be expanded. Such an expansion might not only broaden our understanding of a particular President's repeated or irrational actions and decisions, but also contribute to our understanding of all leaders in general."[81]

It was admitted in book reviews that the authors were "especially insightful on the narcissistic aspect of Nixon's personality",[82] and some mainstream journals dedicated to the issues on American presidents published positive assessments of the book.[83]

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78 Vamik D. Volkan, Norman Itzkowitz, Andrew W. Dod, *Richard Nixon: a Psychobiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

79 V. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, A. Dod, *Richard Nixon*, p. 2.

80 V. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, A. Dod, *Richard Nixon*, p. 144.

81 *Ibid*.

82 Henry Lawton, "Richard Nixon: A Psychobiography", *The Journal of Psychohistory*, vol. 26, Iss. 2 (Fall 1998), p. 633.

83 Charles H. Zwicker, "Richard Nixon: A Psychobiography", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 442–444.

One should also mention that Erich Fromm made a significant contribution to the analysis of the destructive character based on sadism and of the necrophilous character based on necrophilia. He described Joseph Stalin as an example of the first type, and Adolf Hitler as an example of the second type, but these descriptions are psychological sketches rather than psychobiographies and are given within his wider discussion on human destructiveness.[84]

Psychoanalysis and Studies of Cult Leaders

William Meissner, SJ (1934–2010) was particularly focused on analysing cults in the context of the paranoid process which he himself defined in clinical terms.[85] He later connected it with the cult phenomenon. His understanding of the paranoid process is based on introjects, "the drive-dependent and defensively motivated internalizations drawn from significant object relationships." When these introjects have pathological origin "they provide a core formation of pathogenic structures around which one organizes one's inner world and pathological sense of self."[86] Paranoid constructions find their ways to reach various forms of ideologies and belief systems.

Cults are small religious groups that are centred around charismatic leaders. Their followers show similarities with the authoritarian personality including the surrender of freedom and the submission to the power of the leader.[87] Idealisation and identification with a charismatic leader has libidinal and hysterical components. Meissner observes: "We can infer that the more total the acceptance and subjection to the leader is built into the cult ethic, the more profoundly disturbed is the level of narcissistic and personality defect in the followers who accept it."[88] Meissner points out that "in a variety of more pathological cult contexts", cult leaders "tend to exploit this narcissistic attachment", but finds it premature to conclude that "all members of such cults were narcissistic personalities." He, however, does conclude that "the cult phenomenon tunes in on basic narcissistic needs", and that individuals with narcissistic pathology "may, indeed, be more susceptible to the cult influence."[89] Qualities attributed to the cult leader reveal projections since such leaders are objects of idealisation and aggrandizement. Therefore "attachment to and perfect subjection to the power and idealized leader"

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84 Erich Fromm, *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (New York: Holt, Reinehart and Winston, 1973).

85 W. W. Meissner, *The Paranoid Process* (New York: Aronson, 1978).

86 William Meissner, "The Cult Phenomenon and the Paranoid Process", in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, vol. 12 (1988), p. 71.

87 W. W. Meissner, S. J., "The Cult Phenomenon: Psychoanalytic Perspective" in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, vol. 10 (1984), p. 95.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

provide double salvation "from the evil external projective forces and from the inner sense of helplessness and vulnerability."[90]

Weston La Barre offered an analysis of the cult leader Beauregard Barefoot, one of the leaders of the Southern Snake-Handling Cult. In this case what happened was an introjection of a punitive and compulsive father. The intolerable superego introject prompted a defence which "appeared as a re-externalization in the form of external superego or paranoid prosecutors", and the list of these "prosecutors" included God, the police, the courts etc.[91] This is a case with a clear clinical picture, but one wonders if some form of paranoid process could be found more generally in many political and religious leaders?

Since the cult phenomenon is both influenced by and influences the culture in which it exists Meissner poses a far-reaching dilemma as to the extent to which the paranoid mechanisms that he discussed "may be found to be endemic not merely in deviant cultic religious expressions, but more generally within socially accepted and culturally adapted religious systems, as well as within the more general matrix of social and cultural processes themselves."[92] In Meissner's interpretation the followers of a cult or the cult phenomenon, as he calls it, are connected with the paranoid process because their self-structures "are organized around intrapsychic introjective mechanisms" making such persons to feel "weak, powerless, victimized, disadvantaged, inadequate, inferior." Meissner believed that a need for paranoid construction was "not necessarily pathological", but rather "endemic to the human condition", since it is connected with meaning and purpose.[93] It would then easily follow, although Meissner does not say it explicitly, that there would be a link between paranoid mechanisms of cult leaders and other social leaders and the human condition.

A type of religious leader is also a prophet, and Max Weber identified charisma as the most important feature of the prophetic role.[94] This brings us back to Freud's politicians of psychosynthesis who are focused precisely on offering meaning and purpose to their followers and in that sense they may not be essentially separated from charismatic religious leaders.

Psychoanalytic and Anthropological View of Leader

Anthropological findings clearly confirmed that *homo sapiens* could live in egalitarian societies with minimal or small leadership and that, according to current findings, he actually spent most his time in such pre-industrial

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90   *Ibid.*, p. 104.

91   W. W. Meissner, S. J., "The Cult Phenomenon: Psychoanalytic Perspective", p. 106. W. La Barre, *They Shall Take Up Serpents. Psychology of the Southern Snake-Handling Cult* (New York: Shocken Books, 1969).

92   W. W. Meissner, S. J., "The Cult Phenomenon: Psychoanalytic Perspective", p. 109.

93   *Ibid.*, p. 110.

94   W. W. Meissner, "The Origins of Christianity" in *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Vol. 13 (1988) pp. 32–33.

political systems. Therefore the original patricide, omnipotence and possessiveness of Freud's primal father could all be refuted.

Still, it is precisely psychoanalysis that has offered excellent insights into the unconscious motives that can influence leadership. This has given some results in the analysis of historical and political figures, and various other leaders. In addition to concepts of classical Freudian psychoanalysis, some notions developed by subsequent psychoanalysts, such as the notions of narcissistic personality and of grandiose self, have proven to be very relevant in analysing certain types of political leaders. The psychoanalysis of cults also offers insights both in terms of the specific kind of leaders developed in these groups but also of specific types of followers.

Leadership, particularly strong leadership, is an institution that was not vital during the most of human evolution. Does it mean that strong leadership could disappear with human development? This question remains open. With the creation of chiefdoms and early states leadership and civilisation went hand in hand. Since leadership, among other things, includes the possibility of imposition of someone's will on others, and since in democracies it is open for all citizens, it is important to analyse if political leadership attracts certain types of psychological characters. Judging from studies on narcissism, one could hypothesise that modern political leadership could be particularly attractive to persons who need power to keep their self coherent and meaningful. This is exactly something that represents a fertile ground for psychoanalytic studies and for studies of other forms of dynamic psychology.

In answering the main dilemma of whether the future of mankind may provide less authoritarian and narcissistic leaders cultural and political anthropology and psychoanalysis may indeed offer complementary stories.

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