SEVEN

Applications and Implications

MATTERS OF TASTE

Freud's punishing schedule during these turbulent years raises the question just how he could find time for any private life at all. Between 1905 and 1915, deluged with clinical work, case histories, editorial chores, and the exhausting demands of psychoanalytic politics, he published papers on literature, law, religion, education, art, ethics, linguistics, folklore, fairy tales, mythology, archeology, war, and the psychology of schoolboys. Yet he punctually presented himself at one o'clock every day for the family's main meal, kept up with his weekly card game of tarock on Saturday night, unfailingly visited his mother on Sunday morning, took his walk in the evening, entertained visitors, and (though these were rare occasions) went to a Mozart opera.

Busy as he was, his growing notoriety made him increasingly the object of invitations to address or write for popular audiences, and some of these invitations he accepted. In 1907, he published, among other short essays, an "open letter to Dr. M. Fürst," the editor of a journal specializing in social hygiene, on "The Sexual Enlightenment of Children," in which he spoke out for candor. In the same year, he gave a genial talk on the place of daydreams

in the creative work of the imaginative writer, the *Dichter.* * He spoke before a largely lay audience in the salon of Hugo Heller, his acquaintance and publisher, and therefore turned the talk into an accessible exposition of just how certain cultural artifacts are made. It was also his first attempt, apart from a few hints in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* to apply psychoanalytic ideas to culture.

For all its lightness of touch, this lecture, published the next year as "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," is a serious contribution to psychoanalytic aesthetics. The work of the unconscious, the psychology of wish fulfillment, and the long reach of childhood into later life are all central to its argument. Freud began innocently and tactfully enough by posing a question that is likely to interest all laymen: What are the sources from which writers draw their material? The answer, Freud noted, never seems satisfactory and, to deepen the mystery, even if it were satisfactory, this knowledge would not make the layman into a poet or playwright. He added, in his most self-effacing manner, that one might hope to find some preliminary enlightenment about the ways of the *Dichter* if one could discover some similar activity that is common to all humans. Piling up the prudent negatives, Freud expressed the hope that his approach might "turn out to be not unfruitful."

These apologies out of the way, Freud took one of his characteristic acrobatic leaps connecting one range of human experience with another. Parallel-hunting is a dangerous sport, especially if it presses inferences beyond their capacity, but valid parallels may discover hitherto unknown relationships and, even better, unsuspected causal connections. Freud's leap was of this last sort: every child at play, he argued, behaves like a *Dichter* "in that he creates his own world for himself or, more correctly put, transposes the things of his world into a new order that pleases him." In playing, the child is very much in earnest, but he knows that what he makes is an invention: "The opposite of play is not seriousness but—reality." The poet or novelist proceeds in very much the same way; he recognizes the fantasies he is elaborating to be fantasies, but that does not make them any less momentous than, say, the child's imaginary playmate. Children find play enjoyable, and since humans are most reluctant to forgo a pleasure they have once enjoyed, they find a substitute as adults. Instead of playing, they fantasize. These two activities are virtually mirrors of one another: both are actuated by a wish. But while children's play expresses the desire to be grown-up, adults find their fantasies childish. In that sense, play and fantasy alike reflect states of dissatis-

*The handy, untranslatable German term *Dichter* applies equally to the novelist, the playwright, and the poet.

faction: "One may say, the happy person never fantasizes; only the unsatisfied one does." In short, a fantasy is, like a wish expressed in play, "a correction of unsatisfying reality." The imaginative revisions that the grownup imposes on reality involve unrealized ambitions or unrealizable sexual desires; he keeps them concealed, because these are wishes that respectable society has banished from social, even familial, discourse.

This is where the *Dichter* finds his cultural task. Driven by his vocation, he gives utterance to his daydreams and thus broadcasts the secret fantasies of his less eloquent contemporaries. Like the dreamer at night, the creative daydreamer combines a powerful experience of his adult life with a reawakened distant memory, and then transforms into literature the wish that this combination has aroused. Like a dream, his poem or novel is a mixed creature of the present and the past, and of external no less than internal impulsions. Freud did not deny the imagination a share in the making of literary works, but saw these works principally as reality refashioned, beautifully distorted. He was no romantic celebrating the artist as the nearly divine maker; his reluctance to acknowledge the purely creative aspects of the writer's and painter's work is palpable.

Freud's analysis of literary creativity, then, is sober rather than rhapsodic; it concentrates on the psychological transactions between the creator and his childhood, between maker and consumer. Since at bottom all wishes are egotistic, their publication is likely to repel the audiences busy dreaming their own self-centered daydreams. The poet overcomes these resistances by "bribing" his readers or listeners with the "forepleasure" of aesthetic form, a forepleasure that promises greater pleasures to come and permits readers to view their own daydreams "without any self-reproach or shame." It is precisely in this act of bribery, Freud thought, that "the *Ars poetica* proper" consists. In his view, "the actual pleasure in an imaginative work emerges from a liberation of tensions in our minds." The artist (one might gloss Freud's essential argument) baits his hook with beauty.

DESPITE ALL HIS BURDENS, all his activity, Freud's regular routine continued to include, as it always had, traditional family pleasures, winters and summers alike. Until 1909, when Martin was admitted to the university and went off on his own, Freud spent precious vacation time with his wife, his sister-in-law, and all his children in the mountains. That same year, 1909, marked another milestone in Freud's family life; his daughter Mathilde, the eldest, was the first of his children to marry. For all the amusement and sheer pleasure she had given her father from the moment she was born in October 1887, she had also been a cause for anxious concern. An appendectomy in 1906, apparently botched, had left her in uncertain health: two years later she came down

with a worrisome high fever that made her father suspect peritonitis, and two years after that, "brave as always," she had to undergo another serious operation. Her intermittent illnesses, somewhat heavy features, and sallow complexion wrought havoc with Mathilde's self-esteem; she worried out loud to her father that she might be unattractive. This gave Freud an opportunity for dispensing fond paternal reassurance. "I have long suspected," he wrote her in March 1908, when she was recuperating at a spa from her latest illness, "that, with all your usual reasonableness, you feel hurt that you are not beautiful enough and therefore will not appeal to any man." But, Freud told her, he had been watching her with a smile. "You seem beautiful enough to me." In any event she should remember that "for a long time now not the formal beauty of a girl but rather the impression of her personality has been decisive." He invited his daughter to look into the mirror; she would discover to her relief that her features were neither common nor repulsive. What is more—and this was the old-fashioned message her "loving father" wanted to convey—"the reasonable ones among the young men know, after all, what they should look for in a woman: sweet temper, cheerfulness, and the ability to make life pleasanter and easier for them." However anachronistic Freud's attitudes were beginning to appear, even in 1908, Mathilde Freud apparently found this letter bracing. At all events, the following February, at twenty-one, she married a fellow Viennese, a businessman twelve years her elder, Robert Hollitscher. Freud, then in the first glow of his friendship with Sándor Ferenczi, told Ferenczi that he would have preferred *him* as a son-in-law, but he never begrudged his daughter her choice: Hollitscher quickly became "Robert," a member of the Freud clan in good standing.

Four years later, in January 1913, Freud's second daughter, Sophie, also deserted him. Freud adopted her fiancé, the Hamburg photographer Max Halberstadt, with little delay. He had visited Halberstadt's studio and formed a favorable impression of his future son-in-law. In early July 1912, he still addressed him rather formally as "Dear Sir"—*Sehr geehrter Herr*—and told him a little sententiously that he was happy to see Sophie following her inclinations just as her older sister, Mathilde, had done four years before. Just two weeks later, Halberstadt had become "My dear Son-in-Law," though Freud still chose to address him with the distant *Sie*. Yet he was plainly pleased with the addition to his family. Halberstadt, Freud wrote Mathilde, complimenting her at the same time, was "evidently a very reliable, serious, tender, refined and yet not weak human being," and he thought it most likely that the Freuds would witness, for the second time, the rarity of a happy marriage among their children. By July 27, Halberstadt had become "Dear Max," and finally, two weeks after that, Freud admitted him to his inner family circle and called him *du*. Yet his sense of gain was faintly shadowed

by a sense of loss. On a postcard that Freud sent his future son-in-law from Rome in September, he signed himself with "Cordial regards from a wholly orphaned father."*

BUT PSYCHOANALYSIS retained first claim on Freud's attention. Hanns Sachs, who came to know Freud at this time, exaggerated only slightly when he saw him "dominated by one despotic idea," a devotion to work that his family supported "with the greatest eagerness, without a grumble." His single-mindedness in these expansive days was perhaps greater than ever: the time to apply the discoveries of psychoanalysis outside the consulting room was at hand. "I am more and more penetrated by the conviction of the cultural value of ψA," Freud told Jung in 1910, "and I could wish for a bright fellow to draw the justified consequences for philosophy and society from it."† He still had moments of hesitation or uncertainty, though they were rare and becoming rarer. "I find it very hard," he wrote in the same year, responding to Ferenczi's extravagant New Year's greetings, "to comment on the value of my writings and their influence on the future formation of science. At times I believe in it, at times I have doubts." He added, in a phrase that was becoming a favorite with him, "The good Lord himself perhaps does not know it yet."

But while Freud might be proud, or even a little boastful, of his gift for self-criticism, the prospects for a psychoanalytic interpretation of culture made him euphoric. His next assignment, he was confident, lay right there. By 1913, summarizing the work of explanation outside the consulting room that psychoanalysis had already done, he outlined an ambitious program for further conquests. Psychoanalysis, he reported, is able to throw shafts of light on the origins of religion and morality, on justice and philosophy. Now the "whole history of culture" was only waiting for its psychoanalytic interpreter.‡

*When Sophie's first child was born, he greeted it with an exclamation of astonishment. "Last night," he wrote Ferenczi on a postcard on March 11, 1914, "around 3 o'clock a little boy as first grandchild! Very remarkable! An elderly feeling, respect before the wonders of sexuality!" (Freud–Ferenczi Correspondence, Freud Collection, LC.)

†In his enthusiasm, Freud wrote *Welt*—"world"—for *Wert*—"value"—a slight but suggestive slip intimating how far-reaching he thought his ideas to be.

‡What he told the maverick Flemish Socialist Hendrik de Man in 1925 had been his settled conviction for a decade and a half: "I have always been of the opinion that the extramedical applications of psychoanalysis are as significant as its medical ones; indeed, that the former might perhaps have a greater influence on the mental orientation of humanity." (Freud to Hendrik de Man, December 13, 1925. Archief Hendrik de Man, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.) This was the voice of the ambivalent physician, whose heart was elsewhere.

Some of Freud's papers on applied psychoanalysis were brief, inconclusive incursions into fields in which he did not profess to be an expert. He knew that he was neither archeologist nor historian, neither philologist nor lawyer. But then, as he noted with a mixture of asperity and satisfaction, professional practitioners of neighboring disciplines, whether from ignorance or timidity, seemed unwilling to avail themselves of the insights psychoanalysts were offering them. Their resistance was as adamant as the resistance of the psychiatric establishment, but it gave Freud welcome freedom of maneuver and permitted him to indulge the luxury of a tentative, often playful tone.

FREUD NEVER DOUBTED that the bright fellow who would draw the cultural consequences of psychoanalysis was himself. But he was delighted to have other advance men among the psychoanalysts joining him. Jung had long enjoyed dwelling on the psychoanalysis of culture, especially its occult side, as though he were satisfying a sensual appetite. In the early spring of 1910, he confessed to Freud that he was indulging himself "in the virtually autoerotic enjoyment of my mythological dreams." He was so intent on gaining access to the secrets of mysticism "with the key of the libido theory," that Freud asked Jung "to return in good time to the neuroses. There," he added emphatically, "is the mother country in which we must first secure our domination against everything and everyone." For all his interest in applied psychoanalysis, Freud insisted on putting first things first.

But Karl Abraham and Otto Rank, though less mystical in disposition than Jung, were only marginally less excited. In 1911, Abraham published a small monograph psychoanalyzing the short-lived late-nineteenth-century Tyrolean painter Giovanni Segantini, then in high repute for his mystical peasant scenes. Abraham took no little pride in his pioneering effort, and in the following year added another contribution to applied psychoanalysis—a paper on the Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep IV, the historic religious innovator who would later preoccupy Freud in his book on Moses and monotheism.* At the same time Rank, that omnivorous reader and facile writer, was spreading himself thin studying the psychology of the artist, the incest motif in literature, and the myths surrounding the birth of the hero.

In 1912, in association with Hanns Sachs, Rank founded *Imago,* a periodical specializing, as its masthead proclaimed, in the application of psychoanalysis to the cultural sciences. Originally, as Freud informed Ernest Jones, this

*Fliess, making himself agreeable to Abraham, as he liked to do, responded when he received an offprint of Abraham's paper on Amenhotep by telling the author that he would now "try to think through that personality once again in light of your conception." (Fliess to Abraham [postcard], October 12, 1912. Karl Abraham papers, LC.)

"new journal, not medical at all," was to be called *Eros and Psyche.* The name its founders finally adopted was a tribute to literature; it explicitly recalled a recent novel, *Imago,* by the Swiss poet Carl Spitteler, which had celebrated the power of the unconscious in a misty love story. Freud was at first concerned that even though *Imago* would be edited by "two bright and honest boys," it would "not have so easy a career as the other organs have met with." His worries proved unjustified. *Imago,* Freud could report in June 1912, "is doing surprisingly well"; the number of subscribers, 230, mainly from Germany, seemed to him exceedingly satisfactory, though the lack of interest in Vienna troubled him. The editors found psychoanalysts everywhere only too eager to contribute, and not least among their authors was Freud himself. He superintended the "two bright and honest boys," and sent them some of his boldest exploratory papers.

The nonclinical writings of the inner circle generated opportunities for round robins of good will and mutual congratulations. Freud welcomed Jones's weighty contribution to *Imago* on the symbolic significance of salt; Jones told Abraham that he had perused his "charming study" of Segantini "with the greatest interest"; Abraham for his part read Freud's *Totem and Taboo* "twice, with ever-increasing relish." Admittedly, some of the pathographies of artists and poets produced in the Vienna circle were naive and slapdash, and at times they aroused Freud's outspoken irritation. But whether well done or bungled, applied psychoanalysis was a cooperative venture almost from the start. Freud found this widespread interest agreeable, but he needed no urging from others to put culture on the couch.

The principles governing Freud's sorties into the domain of culture were few in number, easy to state, but hard to apply: all is lawful, all is disguised, and all is connected. Psychoanalysis, as he put it, establishes intimate links between "the psychological achievements of individuals and of society by postulating the same dynamic source for both." The "principal function of the mental mechanism" is to "relieve the person from the tensions which his needs create in him." He secures relief in part by "extracting satisfaction from the external world" or by "finding some other way of disposing of the unsatisfied impulses." Hence psychoanalytic inquiry into art or literature must be, like the inquiry into neuroses, a search for hidden wishes gratified or hidden wishes frustrated.

Equipped with these essentially simple principles, Freud traveled among the higher artifacts of culture, those privileged children of mind, covering an immense area. But in all his explorations, his focus always remained psychoanalysis. What mattered to him was less what he could learn from art history, linguistics, and the rest than what they could learn from him; he entered alien

terrain as a conquistador rather than as a supplicant.* His paper on Leonardo was, as we have seen, an experiment in biography but at the same time a psychoanalytic investigation into the origins of homosexuality and the workings of sublimation. It was in this respect exemplary for all his other ventures into cultural analysis. Psychoanalysis, as he said, always remained his mother country.

FREUD ENJOYED SUCH excursions enormously. But his psychoanalytic preoccupation with the products of culture was not simply a refreshing holiday activity to beguile hours of leisure. The quality of compulsion so evident in his attitude toward case histories and theoretical investigations was also at work in his thinking about art and literature. He had, as we have seen, experienced the enigma of Leonardo and the more amusing puzzles posed by Schreber as so many obsessions to be gratified and discharged. The mysteries of *King Lear* and Michelangelo's *Moses* pursued him no less urgently. All his life, Freud felt under powerful pressure to penetrate secrets. When in 1909 Ernest Jones offered to send him his paper on Hamlet's Oedipus complex, Freud expressed great interest. Jones's paper was an extended footnote to Freud's famous pages in *The Interpretation of Dreams* on the guilt feelings aroused in Hamlet by love for his mother and hatred for his father, pages Freud recalled with evident pride: "When I wrote down what seemed to me the solution of the mystery I had not undertaken special research into the Hamlet literature but I knew what the results of our German writers were and saw that even Goethe had missed the mark." Freud found it a source of satisfaction, hard for a foreigner to appreciate, to have outdone the great Goethe himself.

Freud's earnest and driven researches, in short, were not wholly a matter of free choice. In June 1912, as his longed-for summer break was approaching, he told Abraham that "at present, my intellectual activity would be confined to the corrections for the fourth edition of my [Psychopathology of] Everyday Life if it had not suddenly occurred to me that the opening scene in Lear, the judgment of Paris, and the choice of caskets in the Merchant of Venice are really based on the same motif which I now must track down." He simply "must" track it down. No wonder he could describe his traffic with ideas in terms appropriate to suffering. "I am tormented today," he reported to Ferenczi in the spring of 1911, "by the secret of the tragic school, which will

*Reacting to Emil Ludwig's biography of Goethe, of which he thought very little, he wrote to Otto Rank, "The reproach one has raised against our ψA psychobiographies rather applies far more intensely to this [biography] as to all other nonanalytic ones." (Freud to Rank, August 10, 1921. Rank Collection, Box 1b. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.)

surely not withstand ψA." He never followed up this cryptic hint, and we may never know which tragic school he had in mind. His torment for once left him without compelling him to unravel it by strenuous intellectual work. But in general Freud's most powerful interests suspiciously resembled exigent pressures, unresolved tensions. "I have begun to study Macbeth, which has long been tormenting me," he wrote to Ferenczi in 1914, "without having found the solution thus far." Freud said more than once that he worked best when he was not feeling quite well; what he never commented on was that his necessary indispositions were at least in part the visible signs of thoughts struggling for expression.

A conundrum emerging in Freud's mind was like an alien irritant, the grain of sand in the oyster that could not be ignored and might in the end produce a pearl. Freud's view was that an adult's scientific curiosity is the belated elaboration of the child's search for the truth about the difference between the sexes and the mysteries of conception and birth. If so, Freud's own urgent inquisitiveness reflects an unusually strong need for illumination on these secrets. They baffled him all the more as he brooded on the noticeable disparity in his parents' ages and on the presence of brothers as old as his mother, to say nothing of a nephew older than himself.

PERHAPS NONE OF Freud's writings on art reveals their compulsive character more eloquently than his paper on the *Moses* of Michelangelo, published in 1914. Freud had stood fascinated before this over-life-size statue on his first trip to Rome, in 1901; he never ceased to find it baffling and splendid. No other work of art had ever impressed him quite so much. In 1912, on another of his holiday excursions to Rome, he wrote his wife that he was visiting Michelangelo's *Moses* daily and thought he might write "a few words" about him. As it turned out, he was very fond of the few words he did write, though he printed them in *Imago* as being "by * * *." Reasonably enough, Abraham wondered at the anonymity: "Don't you think that one will recognize the lion's claw?" But Freud persisted in calling the paper "a love child." In March 1914, just after "Moses" had come back from the printer, Freud still wondered to his "dear Jones" whether "it may be better not to acknowledge this child before the public," and unacknowledged it remained for ten years. Yet he cherished it almost as much as the statue it analyzes. While Freud was in the midst of work on this paper, Ernest Jones was visiting Rome, and Freud wrote him with an access of longing, "I envy you for seeing Rome so soon and so early in life. Bring my deepest devotion to Moses and write me about him." Jones, sensitive to what was wanted, rose to the occasion. "My first pilgrimage the day after my arrival," he wrote to Freud, "was to convey your greetings to Moses, and I think he unbent a little from his haughtiness. What a statue!"

What intrigued Freud most about Michelangelo's massive statue was precisely that it should intrigue him so much. Whenever he visited Rome, he visited the *Moses,* most purposefully. "In 1913, through three lonely September weeks," he recalled, "I stood daily in the church in front of the statue, studied it, measured it, drew it, until that understanding came to me that I only dared to express anonymously in the paper." The *Moses* was ideally suited to pique Freud's curiosity; it had long generated admiration and conjecture. The monumental figure displays on its forehead the mythical horns representing the radiance that visited Moses's face after he had seen God. Michelangelo, given to the heroic, the outsize, depicted Moses as a vigorous, muscular, commanding old man, with a flowing river of a beard that he grasps with his left hand and with the forefinger of his right. He is seated, frowning, looking sternly to his left and holding the tablets of the law under his right arm. The problem that fascinated Freud was just what moment Michelangelo had chosen to depict. He was pleased to quote the art historian Max Sauerlandt to the effect that "no work of art in the world has been subjected to such contradictory judgments as this Pan-headed Moses. The very interpretation of the figure is open to complete contradictions." The tension in Moses's legs suggests an action begun or recently completed; but is Moses just rising or has he just sat down? This was the puzzle that Freud felt obliged to solve. Had Michelangelo portrayed Moses the eternal emblem of the lawgiver who has seen God, or was this Moses in a moment of rage at his people, ready to break the tablets he has brought from Mount Sinai?

In 1912, Freud brought a small plaster cast of the *Moses* home with him, but he was not yet ready to put his ideas on paper. Ernest Jones was helpfully complicating matters. "Jones sent me photos of a Donatello statue from Florence," Freud told Ferenczi in November, "which have rather shaken my point of view." The photographs raised the possibility that Michelangelo had carved his statue in obedience to artistic rather than emotional pressures. Late in December 1912, thanking Jones for his help, Freud asked, almost sheepishly, for a favor: "If I may trouble you for something more—it is more than indiscrete—let me say I want a reproduction—even by drawing of the remarkable lower contour of the tables running thus in a note of mine." He explained his meaning with an amateurish but serviceable little sketch showing the lower edges of the tablets of the law. Jones promptly complied; he knew how much such details mattered.

While he was contemplating his paper on the *Moses* and taking notes for it, Freud continued to vacillate. In August 1913, he sent Ferenczi a picture

postcard from Rome showing Michelangelo's controversial statue, and in September he wrote to Ernest Jones, "I have visited old Moses again, and got confirmed in my explication of his position but something in the comparative material you collected for me, did shake my confidence which is not yet restored." Early in October he reported from Vienna that he had just returned, "still a little intoxicated from the beauty of the 17 days in Rome." But as late as February 1914, he was not yet sure: "In the Moses affair I am growing negative again."

As might be expected, Freud developed an interpretation all his own. Apart from the few who had read Michelangelo's statue as a monument to timeless grandeur, most art historians had understood it to represent the calm before the storm: coming upon the children of Israel worshiping the golden calf, Moses is about to explode in his wrath and smash the tablets. But Freud, closely investigating such details as the position of Moses's right hand and that of the tablets themselves, concluded that Michelangelo had intended to show Moses subduing his inner tempest, "not the introduction to a violent action but the remnants of a terminated movement." He was well aware that his interpretation contradicted the Scriptures; in his towering fury, the Book of Exodus records, Moses did break the tablets. But this authority could not shake Freud's ultimate conclusion: his *Moses* is a very human Moses, a man who is, like Michelangelo, given to outbursts of temper, and who is at this supreme moment manfully controlling himself. Hence Michelangelo "made his Moses for the Pope's mausoleum, not without reproach against the deceased, as an admonition to himself, raising himself with this self-criticism above his own nature."

This sounds very much as though Freud's reading of Michelangelo was a reading of himself. His life, it appears over and over, was a struggle for self-discipline, for control over his speculative impulses and his rage—rage at his enemies and, even harder to manage, at those among his adherents he found wanting or disloyal.* While he had been gripped by Michelangelo's *Moses* at first sight in 1901, he did not see the statue as an assignment for interpretation until 1912, when his association with Jung was going sour. And he drafted "The Moses of Michelangelo" in late 1913, just before he began to fashion his "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement," the "bomb" he planned to throw at Jung and Adler. In that polemic, he would keep his fury in check, just barely, the better to serve his cause.† But sorely tried as he felt,

*As we shall see later, this rage also had unconscious dimensions, most probably founded in his disappointment at being increasingly displaced from his privileged position as his mother's only child as Amalia Freud presented her first-born with sibling after sibling.

†"The winter of 1913–1914, following the unhappy Congress in Munich in the preceding September, was the worst time in the conflict with Jung. The *Moses* was written in the same month as the long essays in which Freud announced the seriousness of the divergences between his views and Jung's ('Narcissism' and 'The History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement'), and there is no doubt that at the time he was feeling bitterly disappointed at Jung's defection. It cost him an inward struggle to control his emotions firmly enough to enable him to say calmly what he felt he had to say. One cannot avoid the pretty obvious conclusion that at this time, and probably before, Freud had identified himself with Moses and was striving to emulate the victory over passions that Michelangelo had depicted in his stupendous achievement." (*Jones* II, 366–67.)

he was not at all certain whether he could muster the iron self-possession he had imputed to his favorite statue. In October 1912, he had written to Ferenczi, "In my mood, I compare myself rather with the historical rather than with the Moses of Michelangelo I have interpreted." The cardinal point of his exercise in art-historical detection, then, was to teach himself the virtue of imitating Michelangelo's restrained statesman rather than the impulsive leader of whose hot temper the Book of Exodus gives such eloquent evidence. Only some such biographical interpretation can account for Freud's daily visits to Michelangelo's statue, for his meticulous measuring, his detailed drawing, his perusal of monographs, all a little disproportionate to the results which had to be, at best, no more than a footnote in the psychoanalytic interpretation of art. But it was not only Freud the politician in search of self-discipline who spent all these hours on Michelangelo's *Moses.* It was also Freud the compulsive researcher, who was not at liberty to refuse the solicitations of a puzzle once it possessed him.

FREUD CONFINED HIS observations on aesthetics to papers and monographs. The "unriddling of the secrets of artistic creation" for which Max Graf pleaded in one of the Wednesday-night sessions late in 1907 remained a torso in Freud's writings. The failure was in large part personal. Freud's ambivalence about artists was, as we know, acute. "I have often asked myself in astonishment," he wrote to Arthur Schnitzler, thanking him for greetings on his fiftieth birthday, "whence you could have taken this or that secret knowledge, which I had acquired through laborious investigations." Nothing could be more gracious, and in letters of thanks one is not on oath. But for long years, the imaginative artist's apparently effortless psychological penetration had rankled in Freud. His was precisely the intuitive, untrammeled gift for speculation Freud felt it so necessary to discipline in himself.

To make the case more personal still, the artist's capacity to charm had aroused Freud's exasperation long ago, when he was courting Martha Bernays. As an edgy and imperious lover, consumed with jealousy of two young competitors, both in the arts, he had proclaimed that "there is a general enmity between artists and those engaged in the details of scientific work." He had noted with undisguised envy that poets and painters "possess in their

art a master key to open with ease all female hearts, whereas we stand helpless at the strange designs of the lock and have first to torment ourselves to discover a suitable key to it." At times, Freud's comments on poets read like the revenge of the scientist on the artist. The tortoise is maligning the hare. That he had certain artistic ambitions of his own, as his literary style amply demonstrates, only made his envy of the artist all the more poignant.

But his letter to Schnitzler also shows that it was envy shot through with admiration. After all, while Freud at times described the artist as a neurotic seeking substitute gratifications for his failures in the real world, he also granted him uncommon analytical gifts. After analyzing *Gradiva,* a minor novella by the German playwright and novelist Wilhelm Jensen, first published in 1903, Freud sent the author a copy of his paper. Jensen courteously replied that he accepted Freud's interpretation, but made it quite clear that he had had no acquaintance with psychoanalytic thought before writing the tale. How then could he have "psychoanalyzed" the characters he had invented for his *Gradiva,* and plotted his novella as virtually an analytic cure? Freud solved the riddle he had set for himself by concluding that "we"—the writer and the analyst—"probably draw from the same source, work on the same object, each of us with a different method." While the analyst observes the unconscious of his patients, the writer observes his own unconscious and shapes his discoveries into expressive utterance. Thus the novelist and the poet are amateur psychoanalysts, at their best no less penetrating than any professional. Praise from Freud could hardly have been more heartfelt, but it was praise of the artist as analyst.

FRAGMENTARY AS FREUD'S analytic researches into high culture remain, they touch upon the three principal dimensions of aesthetic experience: the psychology of the protagonists, the psychology of the audience, and the psychology of the maker. These dimensions necessarily implicate and illuminate one another. Thus the psychoanalyst may read *Hamlet* as an aesthetic artifact whose hero, haunted by an unresolved Oedipus complex, invites analysis in himself; as a clue to the complexes of vast audiences, deeply moved as they recognize in his tragedy their own secret history;* and as oblique testimony to its author's own oedipal drama, to the unfinished emotional business with which he is still wrestling.† In short, the psychoanalytic investigation of

*"Every listener," Freud told Fliess in an important letter, "was once in embryo and in fantasy such an Oedipus." (Freud to Fliess, October 15, 1897. *Freud–Fliess,* 293 [272].)

†It had gone through his head in passing, Freud wrote to Fliess, to wonder whether traces of the unconscious Oedipus complex "may not also be at the bottom of *Hamlet.* I am not thinking of Shakespeare's conscious intention, but believe, rather, that a real event stimulated the poet to his portrayal, in that the unconscious in him understood the unconscious in the hero." (Ibid.)

Hamlet, a fictional character who has fascinated and puzzled so many of his later students, may account for his most obscure springs of action, for his uncanny power over centuries of admirers, and for his inventor's insight alike. Such an investigation promised a far more rounded, far more subtle reading than had been available to earlier interpreters, especially to formalist critics who (as Eitingon tersely put it) were wary of "contents and the powers that determine these contents."

Yet critics of Freud's aesthetics soon objected that psychoanalytic criticism normally suffers from precisely the reverse defect: a tendency to slight craftsmanship, form, style, in favor of contents. The psychoanalyst's determined search for concealed meanings in a poem or novel or painting is likely to seduce him into paying excessive attention to plot, narration, metaphor, and character, and to overlook the fact that cultural products issue from talented and trained hands and from a tradition that the artist obeys, modifies, or defiantly sets aside. Hence a satisfactory, rounded interpretation of a work of art or literature is likely to be far more untidy than neat psychoanalytic formulations suggest. But Freud was confident that "analysis allows us to suppose that the great, apparently inexhaustible wealth of the problems and situations the imaginative writer treats can be traced back to a small number of primal motifs, which stem for the most part from the repressed experiential material of the child's mental life, so that imaginative productions correspond to disguised, embellished, sublimated new editions of those childhood fantasies."

To draw from a work facile inferences about its creator was, therefore, a standing temptation for psychoanalytic critics. Their analyses of the makers of, and the audiences for, art and literature threatened to become, even in skillful and delicate hands, exercises in reductionism.* A Freudian may find it perfectly obvious that Shakespeare must have undergone the oedipal experience that he so absorbingly dramatized. Was he not human? When he was cut, did he not bleed? But the truth is that the playwright need not have fully shared the emotions he so grippingly portrays. Nor must these emotions, whether hidden or overt, necessarily awaken the same emotions in the audi-

*"Clinical analysis of creative artists," the psychoanalyst and art historian Ernst Kris once wrote in a salutary passage, "suggests that the life experience of the artist is sometimes only in a limited sense the source of his vision; that his power to imagine conflicts may by far transcend the range of his own experience; or, to put it more accurately, that at least some artists possess the particular gift to generalize from whatever their own experience has been." To find, say, Shakespeare in Falstaff or Prince Hal seems to be a "futile" quest, "and contrary to what clinical experience with artists as psychoanalytic subjects seems to indicate. Some great artists seem to be equally close to several of their characters, and may feel many of them as parts of themselves. The artist has created a world and not indulged in a daydream." (Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art* [1952], 288.)

ence. Catharsis, as psychoanalysts had reason to know, works not to generate imitation but to make it superfluous: to read a violence-ridden novel or watch a sanguinary tragedy may purge rather than stimulate angry feelings. There are suggestions in Freud's writings—no more—that he had some glimpse of these complexities, but his views on art, while they opened fascinating vistas, also raised problems, little less fascinating.

IN GENERAL, WHAT made Freud's readers uneasy was less his ambivalence about the artist than his certainties about art. Probably the most controversial of his suggestions was that literary characters can be analyzed as though they were real persons. Most students of literature have been wary of such attempts: a personage in a novel or a drama, they have argued, is not a real human being with a real mind, but an animated puppet lent counterfeit life by its inventor. Hamlet had no existence before, or outside, the play that bears his name; to inquire into the states of mind that preceded his first speech, or to analyze his emotions as though he were a patient on the couch, is to confound the categories of fiction and reality. Quite undaunted, though, Freud boldly waded into this morass with his charming study of Jensen's *Gradiva.* He wrote it, he told Jung, "in sunny days," and the writing gave him "a great deal of pleasure. True, it brings us nothing new, but I believe that it allows us to enjoy our wealth." Freud's analysis beautifully illustrates what this sort of literary psychoanalysis can achieve and what hazards it encounters.

The patient-protagonist of *Gradiva,* Norbert Hanold, is a digger into the unknown, an archeologist. It is most likely Hanold's profession, and his special domain, Italy, that first attracted Freud to Jensen's tale. But *Gradiva* also had psychological implications to make it interesting to Freud. Hanold is the withdrawn, unworldly product of cool northern climes who will find clarity and a very Freudian cure through love in the sun-baked south, in Pompeii. He has repressed the memory of a girl, Zoë Bertgang, with whom he had grown up and to whom he had been affectionately attached. Visiting a collection of antiquities in Rome, he comes upon a bas-relief depicting a young, lovely woman with a distinctive gait. He calls her "Gradiva," which means "the woman who steps along," and hangs a plaster cast of the bas-relief in a "privileged place on the wall of his study." Freud would later install his own plaster cast of "Gradiva" in his consulting room.

The young woman's stance fascinates Hanold, for, as he does not yet recognize, she recalls to him the girl he had loved and then "forgotten" the better to pursue his isolated, and isolating, vocation. In a nightmare he sees "Gradiva" on the day of Pompeii's destruction, and he weaves an intricate network of delusions about her, mourning her passing as though she were his

contemporary rather than just one victim among the thousands who died under the lava of Vesuvius nearly two millennia ago. His "whole science," Freud observed in the margin of his copy of Jensen's *Gradiva*, stands "in the service of f[antasy]." Under the impress of nameless feelings and inexplicable obsessions, Hanold ends up in Pompeii, where he encounters "Gradiva" and fancies himself back on that fatal day in 79 A.D. when Vesuvius erupted. But his vision is reality itself: she is, of course, the passion of his young years.

Hanold is wholly inexperienced with women—Freud comments in the margin on his "sex[ual] repression" and the "asexual atmosphere" in which he lives—but fortunately his "Gradiva" is as shrewd as she is beautiful. Zoë, the "source" of his malaise, also becomes the agent of its resolution; recognizing Hanold's delusions for what they are, she restores him to sanity, disentangling his fantasies from reality. By walking ahead of him in imitation of "Gradiva" on the plaque, she finds the key to his therapy: the young woman's unmistakable gait allows Hanold's repressed memories of her to enter consciousness.

This was psychoanalysis through archeology. One of the two passages in *Gradiva* that moved Freud to exclaim "beautiful"—*schön*—in the margin has the heroine retail a bit of wisdom that reminded him of his favorite metaphor. Hanold might find it strange, she says, "that someone must die first, in order to become alive." But, she adds, "for archeology that is doubtless necessary."* In his published paper on the novella, Freud made the metaphor explicit once more: "There is actually no better analogy for repression, which both makes something in the mind inaccessible and preserves it, than the burial that was the fate of Pompeii and from which the city could reappear through the work of the spade."† *Gradiva* demonstrates not just the triumph of repression but its unraveling as well; the young woman's cure of Hanold proves once again "the healing power of love." Reading the little book with pencil in hand, Freud made it plain that this love was at bottom sensual. "Erotic foot interest," he noted as Hanold observes Zoë's shoes; and next to the final paragraph, in which Jensen has Hanold asking Zoë to walk ahead of him and she complies with a smile, Freud put, "Erotic! Reception of fantasy; reconciliation."

Freud had some hesitations about his intrusive way with Jensen's fiction;

*As we know, he had likened his therapeutic technique to the excavation of a buried city as early as 1895, in discussing his patient Elisabeth von R. (*Studies on Hysteria, SE* II, 139.) The other passage in *Gradiva* that Freud praised as "beautiful" spoke to his vehement antireligious feelings: "If faith brought [Hanold] salvation, he put up with a considerable sum of incomprehensibilities at all points." (*Gradiva,* 140. Freud Museum, London.)

†Some three years later, Freud would explain the work of repression to the Rat Man with the same analogy.

he was, after all, analyzing and interpreting "a dream that had never been dreamt at all." He did his best to read Jensen's novella conscientiously: he carefully noted, as though he had another Dora on the couch before him, Hanold's three dreams and their consequences; he paid attention to subsidiary feelings at work in Hanold, such as anxiety, aggressive ideas, and jealousy; he observed ambiguities and double meanings; and he painstakingly traced the progress of the therapy as Hanold gradually learns to separate delusion from reality. Prudently, he concluded with a caution to himself: "But here we must stop, or we may really forget that Hanold, and the Gradiva, are only creatures of the writer."

Yet these hesitations did not stop Freud, nor, as we have seen, his followers; heedless of the perils ahead, psychoanalysts in those years saw no reason to refuse culture a place on the couch. It is true that their moves beyond clinical work with neurotics evoked some interest among aestheticians, literary critics, and reviewers of exhibitions, and generated earnest reappraisals in virtually all the specialized fields Freud had invaded. But while Freud chose to regard his talk on daydreaming and imaginative writers as "an incursion into terrain we have so far barely touched, in which one could settle down comfortably," most specialists came to think that Freud was making himself only too comfortable.

Freud's critics had some right to be anxious: the creative artist, that most cherished of human creatures, appeared in some psychoanalytic treatments as nothing better than an adroit and articulate neurotic duping a gullible world with his clever inventions. Freud's own analyses, though very ambitious, are scarcely appreciative. Freud did not merely dispute the "creativeness" of creative artists, he also circumscribed their cultural role. Shouting out society's secrets, they are little better than necessary licensed gossips, fit only to reduce the tensions that have accumulated in the public's mind. Freud saw the making of art and literature, as well as their consumption, as human pursuits much like others, enjoying no special status. It is no accident that Freud should have called the reward one obtains from looking or reading or listening by a name—forepleasure—he borrowed from the most earthy of gratifications. To his mind, aesthetic work, much like the making of love or war, of laws or constitutions, is a way of mastering the world, or of disguising one's failure to master it. The difference is that novels and paintings veil their ultimately utilitarian purposes behind skillfully crafted, often irresistible decorations.

Yet Freud was convinced that he could evade the trap of reductionism. Repeatedly and emphatically he took care to deny that psychoanalysis can shed any light on the mysteries of creativity. In his "Leonardo" he earnestly

disclaimed any intention of making "the great man's achievement comprehensible" and declared himself ready to "concede that the nature of artistic achievement is indeed psychoanalytically inaccessible to us."* To inquire into "the laws of human mental life," especially among "outstanding individuals," is most appealing, but such investigations "are not intended to explain the genius of the poet." We are entitled to take these disclaimers at their face value. Freud candidly and finely calibrated his attitudes toward his publications, ranging all the way from dogmatic certainty to complete agnosticism. At the same time, though, however greatly he respected the awesome secret powers of creativity, Freud was prepared to claim a great deal for the psychoanalytic study of an artist's character and of his reasons for choosing certain themes or fastening on certain metaphors, to say nothing of his effect on his audiences. What Freud left behind, even among sympathetic readers, was the thought that to reduce culture to psychology seems no less one-sided than to study culture while leaving out psychology altogether.

APPEARANCES TO THE contrary, Freud did not take his view of the arts in order to discredit them wholly. Whether it is made of wit or suspense, of dazzling color or persuasive composition, the aesthetic mask hiding primitive passions provides pleasure. It helps to make life tolerable to maker and audience alike. Thus, for Freud, the arts are a cultural narcotic, but without the long-range costs that other drugs exact. The task of the psychoanalytic critic, then, is to trace the various ways in which reading and listening and seeing actually generate aesthetic pleasure, without presuming to judge the value of the work, its author, or its reception. Freud needed no one to tell him that the fruit need not resemble the root and that the garden's loveliest flowers lose none of their beauty because we are made aware that they grow from malodorous manure. But Freud was professionally committed to the study of roots. At the same time, if Freud chose to read *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* as meditations on love and death, Shakespeare did not therefore become a matter of purely clinical interest to him. The Michelangelo who made the *Moses* was more than merely an interesting patient. Goethe did not lose stature as a *Dichter* in Freud's eyes even after he had psychoanalyzed a passage from Goethe's autobiography, *Poetry and Truth.* But the fact remains that with all his affection for literature, Freud was all his life more interested in truth than in poetry.

*In the late 1920s, in a much-quoted passage, he said it again: "Before the problem of the creative writer, analysis must lay down its arms." ("Dostojewski und die Vatertötung" [1928], *GW* XIV, 399/"Dostoevsky and Parricide," *SE* XXI, 177.)

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIETY

Freud's application of his discoveries to sculpture and fiction and painting was audacious enough. But it pales before his attempt to dig down to the most remote foundations of culture. In his mid-fifties, he undertook nothing less: to determine the moment when the human animal took the leap into civilization by prescribing to itself the taboos indispensable to all ordered societies. Freud had long hazarded some hints at his intentions, in papers, prefaces, and laconic observations to his colleagues. With the passage of time, this intellectual play became more and more engrossing to him. In mid-November 1908, he told the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, "The inquiry into the source of guilt feelings cannot be disposed of quickly. Undeniably, many factors are at work in it. What is certain is that guilt feelings come into being through the ruin of sexual impulses." Again, two weeks later, commenting on a paper by Otto Rank on myths clustering about the birth of the hero, he observed that the real protagonist in fiction is the ego. It rediscovers itself by going back to the time "when it was a hero through its first heroic deed: the rebellion against the father." The outlines of *Totem and Taboo,* four essays linked by a common theme, were forming in Freud's mind.

As Freud's correspondence attests, this work involved the usual fatiguing drudgery, passionately pursued. By mid-November 1911, he could tell Ferenczi, "I am again occupied from 8–8; but my heart is wholly with the Totem, with which I am getting on slowly." As usual, he canvassed the technical literature widely, but rather unwillingly, because he was fairly certain what he would find; pursuing his "totem work," he reported to Ferenczi, he was "reading fat books without real interest, since I already know the results." In important respects, he had leapt before he looked. At times, he had the visceral satisfaction of closure: "A few days ago," he wrote, again to Ferenczi, in early February 1912, "the totem-ambivalence question suddenly fitted, snapped shut with an audible 'click,' and since then I have been practically 'imbecilic.' "

His progress was dramatic enough. In March 1912, his speculative paper on the horror of incest, the first of the four essays, was published in *Imago.* That paper he told Ernest Jones in depreciation, "is by no means famous."*

*This use of "famous," one may note, is characteristic of Freud's occasional errors involving English cognates. He obviously had in mind *famos,* which is German colloquial for "wonderful" or "marvelous," but does not mean "famous."

Still he went forward. By May, he had completed the second essay and read it to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. He found the work so exacting that on occasion his English, usually so fluent, deserted him as he tried to convey his meaning with the necessary precision. "Now let me turn to science," he wrote to Jones in midsummer 1912, suddenly reduced to a mélange of two languages. "The true historical source of Verdrängung I hope to touch upon in the last of the 4 papers of which Taboo is the second in that to be called 'Die infant. Wiederkehr des Totemismus.' I may as well give you the answer now. Any internal (damn my English!)—Jede *innere* Verdrängungsschranke ist der historische Erfolg eines *äusseren* Hindernisses. Also: Verinnerlichung der Widerstände, die Geschichte der Menschheit niedergelegt in ihren heute angeborenen Verdrängungsneigungen." Then, his English recovered, Freud went on: "I know of the obstacle or the complication offered by the matter of Matriarchy and have not yet found my way out of it. But I hope it will be cleared away."*

He did not find the solution immediately. "I am all in omnipotence of thought," Freud wrote to Ferenczi in mid-December, working with his habitual obsessiveness on the third of the essays, and again, two weeks later, testifying to his absorption, "I have just been all omnipotence, all savage. That's how one must do it if one wants to get something done." By April 1913, he could report that he was writing out the "totem work," and in the following month he ventured an approving appraisal of the whole: "I am now writing on the Totem with the feeling that it is my greatest, my best, perhaps my last good thing."

He was not always quite so sure. Only a week later he sent a bulletin to Ferenczi: "Totem work ready yesterday," paid for with "a terrible migr[aine], (rarity with me)." But in June, the headache and most of the doubts were gone—for a time: "I have been easy and cheerful since the discharge of the totem work." In his preface to the book, he modestly declared that he was fully aware of its deficiencies. Some of these were necessitated by its pioneering nature, some by its attempt to appeal to the educated general reader and to "mediate between ethnologists, philologists, folklorists etc. on the one hand and psychoanalysts on the other."

Totem and Taboo is even more ambitious in its governing thesis than in its search for an audience; in sheer ingenuity, it outstrips even the conjectures of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose famous mid-eighteenth-century discourses on the origins of human society had been explicitly hypothetical. Rousseau

*The German passage reads in translation: " 'The infant[ile] return of totemism.' . . . Every *internal* repression barrier is the historical consequence of an *external* obstacle. So: internalization of resistances, the history of mankind deposited in the dispositions to repression today inborn."

had in so many words invited his readers to set the facts aside as he imagined the time when mankind stepped from precivilization to civilization But unlike Rousseau, Freud invited *his* readers to accept his breath-taking guess as the analytic reconstruction of a long-buried, epoch-making prehistoric event. He had moved dangerously far from the intimate concreteness of his clinical inferences, but that did not slow him down.

FREUD'S *TOTEM AND TABOO* IS psychoanalysis applied, but it is also a political document. While the book was still in its early stages, in February 1911, Freud had told Jung, resorting to the weighty metaphor of generation, "For some weeks I have been pregnant with the germ of a larger synthesis, and will give birth to it in the summer." The pregnancy was, we know, far longer than Freud had anticipated, and there is a very understandable note of triumph in Freud's announcements to his friends in May 1913 that the book was essentially done. For Freud to give birth to a synthesis of prehistory, biology, and psychoanalysis was to anticipate, and to outdo, his "heir" and rival: the papers making up *Totem and Taboo* were weapons in Freud's competition with Jung. Freud was displaying in his own struggles an aspect of the oedipal wars often scanted—the father's efforts to best the son. Above all the last and most militant of his four papers, published after his break with Jung, was sweet revenge on the crown prince who had proved so brutal to him and so treacherous to psychoanalysis. The paper was due to appear in the August issue of *Imago* and, as Freud told Abraham in May, would "serve to cut off, cleanly, everything that is Aryan-religious." In September, Freud signed the preface to the book, with a flourish, in Rome, his queen of cities.

Totem and Taboo leaves evidence on page after page that Freud's current combats reverberated with his past history, conscious and unconscious. Cultural anthropology and archeology were congenial preoccupations for him all his life, as those metaphors borrowed from archeology amply document. If Schliemann, realizing in adult life fantasies from childhood, was one of the few people Freud really envied, he saw himself for his part as the Schliemann of the mind. Once his travail was over, he paid it the tribute of a postpartum depression, not dissimilar to the one he had suffered after producing *The Interpretation of Dreams.* He began to feel uncertain of his case, a sure sign of his deep emotional engagement. Fortunately, the reward of applause from his loyal supporters was not long in coming; the approval of Ferenczi and Jones, Freud wrote in late June, "is the first pleasure dividend I can register after the completion of the work." When Abraham told Freud how thoroughly he had enjoyed "the Totem work" and how completely Freud had persuaded him, Freud promptly responded with unfeigned gratitude: "Your verdict on the Totem work was particularly important to me, since I had a period of doubt in its value after completing it. But the comments of Ferenczi, Jones, Sachs, Rank, were similar to yours, so that I have gradually regained my confidence." Publishing what he recognized to be scientific fantasies, he particularly welcomed Abraham's attempt to corroborate his work with "contributions, additions, inferences." He told Abraham that he was prepared for "nasty attacks," but that he would of course not allow them to disconcert him. One wonders how much of this was serenity recaptured, how much of it bravado.

THE INTELLECTUAL PEDIGREE of *Totem and Taboo* is impressive, somewhat tarnished in retrospect only by the passage of time and the increasing sophistication of the cognate disciplines that had fed Freud some of his most subversive conjectures. He had, he said, derived the first impulse for his investigations from Wilhelm Wundt's "nonanalytic" *Völkerpsychologie,* and from the psychoanalytic writings of the Zurich school, of Jung, Riklin, and the others. But he noted with some pride that while he had profited, he had also dissented, from them both. He had drawn as well on James G. Frazer, that prolific encyclopedist of primitive and exotic religions; on the eminent English biblical scholar W. Robertson Smith, for his writings on the totem meal; and on the great Edward Burnett Tylor, for his evolutionary anthropology;* to say nothing of Charles Darwin, for his picturesque surmises about the social condition of primitive man.

R. R. Marett, the first British anthropologist to review the English edition of *Totem and Taboo,* in early 1920, called it a "just-so story," a characterization that Freud found witty enough to acknowledge with some amusement. "Marett, the critic of T & T," he told Ernest Jones, "is well entitled to say, ψA leaves anthropology with all her problems as it found it before as long as he declines the solutions given by ψA. Had he accepted them he might have found it otherwise." But Marett's joke about the "just-so story," Freud thought, was "really not bad. The man is good, he is only deficient in phantasy." It was not a deficiency of which anyone would accuse Freud, not after *Totem and Taboo.* But Freud mingled boldness with prudence; after all, he observed in 1921, he had only advanced "a hypothesis like so many others with which prehistorians have attempted to light up the darkness of archaic

*Sounding much like Auguste Comte nearly a century before him, Freud postulated a sequence of three stages of thought, the animistic or mythological, the religious, and the scientific. (See *Totem and Taboo, SE* XIII, 77.) This scheme implies succession in time as well as a hierarchy of values. By the time Freud was writing, and certainly in the decades after the publication of *Totem and Taboo,* cultural anthropologists rejected this scheme, sometimes scornfully.

times." Surely, he added somewhat more confidently, "it is honorable to such a hypothesis if it shows itself suitable for creating coherence and understanding in ever new domains."

Freud did not rest his case on his formidable nonanalytic authorities alone. Without his clinical experience, his self-analysis, and his psychoanalytic theories, he would never have written *Totem and Taboo.* The ghost of Schreber, too, hovers over it, for in that case history of an exemplary paranoiac, Freud had investigated the relations of men to their gods as derivatives of their relations to their fathers. *Totem and Taboo* is, as Freud had told Jung, a synthesis; it weaves together speculations from anthropology, ethnography, biology, the history of religion—and psychoanalysis. The subtitle is revealing: *Several Congruences in the Mental Life of Savages and Neurotics.* The first of the essays, the shortest, on the horror of incest, ranges from Melanesians and the Bantu to boys in the oedipal phase and neurotic women living in Freud's own culture. The second explores current theories in cultural anthropology and connects taboo and ambivalence with the obsessive commands and prohibitions Freud had observed in his patients. The third essay examines the relevance of animism, at the time widely thought to be the primitive precursor of religion, to magical thinking and then links both of these to the child's wishful belief in the omnipotence of thoughts. Here, as throughout *Totem and Taboo,* Freud went beyond the contract he had made with his readers in its subtitle. He was interested in more than the congruence between what he called "primitive" and neurotic ways of thinking; he wanted to discover what light the primitive mind-set can shed on all thinking, even on "normal" thinking—and on history. He concluded that the mental style of "savages" reveals in the starkest contours what the psychoanalyst has been driven to recognize in his patients and, observing the world, in everyone: the pressure of wishes on thought, the utterly practical origins of all mental activity.

All this is imaginative enough, but in the last and longest of his four essays, in which Freud moved from taboo to totem, he launched his most ingenious flight. His critics thought it the reckless, fatal flight of Icarus, but for Freud it was, if not quite commonplace, far from intimidating. Totems are, after all, taboo—holy objects. They matter to the historian of culture because they dramatize what Freud had already canvassed in the opening essay—the horror of incest. The most sacred obligation imposed on tribes practicing totemism is that they must not marry members of their own totem clan, and in fact must shun all sexual contact with them. This, Freud observes, is "the famous and mysterious *exogamy,* linked to totemism."

Freud's rapid excursion through contemporary theories explaining the origins of totemism is not without some appreciative glosses. But after its

detour through conjectures by Charles Darwin and Robertson Smith, his own explanation winds its way back to the analytic couch. Darwin had supposed that prehistoric man lived in small hordes, each governed by a domineering, sexually jealous male; Robertson Smith had hypothesized that the ritual sacrifice in which the totem animal is eaten is the essential ingredient in all totemism. Adopting the comparative strategy typical of his theorizing, Freud linked these unsubstantiated, quite insecure guesses to the animal phobias of neurotic children and then ushered the Oedipus complex, which had been hovering in the wings, to center stage. He enlisted none other than Little Hans, that intelligent and appealing five-year-old afraid of horses and in deep conflict about his father, as mediator between early-twentieth-century Vienna and the most distant, most obscure epochs in the human past. He added two other youthful witnesses to his own little favorite: a boy with a dog phobia studied by the Russian psychoanalyst M. Wulff, and a case that Ferenczi had communicated to him, "Little Arpad," who simultaneously identified with chickens and rejoiced in seeing them slaughtered. The behavior of these troubled youngsters helped Freud to interpret the totem animal as representing the father. This reading made it exceedingly likely to Freud that the whole "totemic system" would, "like the animal phobia of 'Little Hans' and the poultry perversion of 'Little Arpad,' have arisen from the conditions of the Oedipus complex."

The sacrificial meal, Freud argued, is a vital social cement; in sacrificing the totem, which is of the same substance as the men who eat it, the clan reaffirms its faith in, and identity with, its god. It is a collective act, drenched in ambivalence: the killing of the totem animal is an occasion for grief followed by rejoicing. Indeed, the festival, the sequel to the killing, is an exuberant, uninhibited saturnalia, a peculiar but necessary pendant to mourning. Once Freud had reached this stage in the argument, there was no stopping him; he stood ready to offer his historical reconstruction.

Freud had the grace to recognize that this reconstruction must appear fantastic to everyone, but to his mind it was perfectly plausible: The fierce, jealous father who dominated the horde and kept the women for himself drove away his sons as soon as they grew up. "One day the brothers who had been driven out got together, beat their father to death, and devoured him, and thus put an end to the patriarchal horde. United, they dared and managed to do what would have remained impossible for the individual." Freud wondered whether it was perhaps some cultural acquisition, like the capacity to handle a new weapon, that had given the rebellious brothers a certain sense of superiority over their tyrant. That they should have made a meal of the potent father they had killed, Freud thought, went without saying; that is how these "cannibal savages" were. "The violent primal father

had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the fraternal troop. Now, in the act of devouring, they carried through their identification with him; each of them appropriated a piece of his strength." Its origins once understood, the totem meal, "perhaps the first festival of mankind," would turn out to be "the repetition and the commemoration of this memorable criminal act." This, according to Freud, is how human history must have originated.

He warned that vagueness must be inherent in any reconstruction of this prehistoric crime committed and celebrated: "It would be as nonsensical to strive for exactitude with this material, as it would be unreasonable to demand certainty." He "explicitly emphasized" that his breath-taking derivations should not be taken as evidence that he had overlooked the "complex nature of the phenomena"; all he had done was to "add another element to the sources, already known or still unknown, of religion, morality, and society." Yet, emboldened by his psychoanalytic reverie, Freud drew the most astonishing inferences. He supposed that the murderous band of brothers was "dominated by the same mutually contradictory feelings about the father" that psychoanalysts can demonstrate in "the ambivalence of the father complexes" haunting children and neurotics. Having at once hated the formidable father and loved him, the brothers were smitten with remorse, which showed itself in an emerging "consciousness of guilt." In death, the father became more powerful than he had ever been in his lifetime. "What he had previously prevented by his very existence," his sons "now prohibited to themselves in the psychological situation—*'deferred obedience'*—so familiar to us from psychoanalyses." The sons now, as it were, erased their act of parricide "by declaring the killing of the father-substitute, the totem, impermissible and renounced its fruits by denying themselves the women who had been freed." Thus, oppressed by their guilt, the sons established the "fundamental taboos of totemism, which had to correspond precisely with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex"—the killing of the father and the conquest of the mother. In becoming guilty and acknowledging their guilt, they created civilization. All human society is constructed on complicity in a great crime.

This stark and grandiose conclusion invited yet another inference that Freud found irresistible: "An event like the elimination of the primal father by the band of brothers," he wrote, "must leave ineradicable traces in the history of mankind." Freud thought it demonstrable that such traces pervade all culture. The history of religion, the appeal of tragic drama, the exemplars of art, all point to the immortality of the primal crime and its consequences. But this conclusion, Freud admitted, depends upon two extremely controversial notions: the existence of a "collective mind which undergoes mental processes as though it were an individual," and the capacity of this mind to hand on "across many thousands of years" the sense of guilt first oppressing one murderous prehistoric band. In short, human beings can inherit the burden of conscience from their biological ancestors. This was sheer extravagance, piled upon the earlier extravagance of the claim that the primal murder had been a historical event. But reviewing the strenuous road he had traveled, Freud firmly stood by his improbable reconstruction. Primitives are not quite like neurotics; while the neurotic takes the thought for the act, the primitive acts before he thinks. Freud's peroration, quoting *Faust,* is so felicitous that it is tempting to wonder whether he had not gone all this distance in order to close his text with Goethe's famous line: "In the beginning was the act."

FOR FREUD, AS we have seen, the deed of the sons, that "memorable criminal act," was the founding act of civilization. It had stood at the beginning of "so much" in human history: "social organization, moral constraints, and religion." Without doubt, Freud found all these domains of culture of absorbing interest, as he undertook to explore the history of culture from his psychoanalytic vantage point. But the domain he listed last—religion—was, it seems, the one that engaged him most. To uncover its foundations in a prehistoric murder allowed him to combine his long-standing, pugilistic atheism with his new-found detestation of Jung. With the concluding essay of *Totem and Taboo,* we may recall, he hoped he could free himself from "everything that is Aryan-religious"; he would lay bare the roots of religion in primitive needs, primitive notions, and no less primitive acts. "In Ernst Barlach's tragic novel of family life, *Der Tote Tag,*" Jung wrote in criticism of Freud, "the mother-daemon says at the end: 'The strange thing is that man will not learn that God is his father.' That is what Freud would never learn, and what all those who share his outlook forbid themselves to learn."

But what Freud had learned, and was teaching in *Totem and Taboo,* though he formulated the matter more impiously, was that man *makes* a god of his father. Quoting James G. Frazer and Robertson Smith at some length, he led up to his account of the primitive parricide by noting that the earliest of religions, totemism, established taboos that could not be violated on the direst of penalties, and that subsequently the animal sacrificed in ancient sacred rites was identical with the primitive totem animal. That animal stood for the primitive god himself; the rite recalled, and celebrated, the founding crime in disguised form by reenacting the slaying and eating of the father. It "confesses, with a sincerity hardly to be exceeded, that the object of the act of sacrifice had always been the same, the same that is now worshiped as god—that is, the father." Religion, Freud had already suggested in some

of his letters to Jung, was founded in helplessness. With *Totem and Taboo,* he complicated this suggestion by adding that religion arose as well from a rebellious act against that helplessness. Jung came to believe that to recognize God as man's father required a sympathetic understanding, and rediscovery, of the spiritual dimension. Freud took his findings in *Totem and Taboo* as further proof that such a demand was a retreat from science, a denial of the fundamental facts of mental life, in a word, mysticism.

Rather, the fact of life on which Freud most insisted in *Totem and Taboo,* and which organizes the book, is the Oedipus complex. In that complex, "the beginnings of religion, morality, society, and art converge." This, we know, was not a sudden or a new discovery for Freud; his first recorded hint at the oedipal family drama had come in 1897, in one of the memoranda he sent to Fliess concerning hostile wishes against parents. In the next few years, though it increasingly dominated his thinking, he referred to the concept rather sparingly. Yet it inevitably informed his thinking about his analysands; he briefly explicated it in the case history of Dora, and thought of Little Hans as a "little Oedipus." However, he did not plainly identify the "family complex" as the "Oedipus complex" until 1908, in an unpublished letter to Ferenczi; he did not call it *"the nuclear complex of the neuroses"* until 1909, in his case history of the Rat Man; and he did not employ the memorable term in print until 1910, in one of his short papers on the vicissitudes of love. By this time, Freud had learned to invest the emotional tension of ambivalence with considerable importance; this was one of the lessons that Little Hans had imparted. He now saw that the classic Oedipus complex, the little boy loving his mother and hating his father, was actually a rarity in this pure, simple form. But the very diversity of the complex only underscored, for Freud, its centrality in the human experience. "Every human newcomer has been set the task of mastering the Oedipus complex," Freud later said, summing up the argument he had been developing since the late 1890s. "Whoever cannot manage it falls prey to neurosis. The progress of psychoanalytic work has sketched the significance of the Oedipus complex ever more sharply; its recognition has become the shibboleth that separates the adherents of psychoanalysis from its opponents." Certainly it separated Freud from Adler and, even more decisively, from Jung.

As STUDENTS OF the human animal refined their methods and revised their hypotheses, the flaws compromising the argument of *Totem and Taboo* emerged more and more obtrusively—except to Freud's most uncritical acolytes. Cultural anthropologists demonstrated that while some totemic tribes practice the ritual of the sacrificial totem meal, most of them do not; what

Robertson Smith had thought the essence of totemism turned out to be an exception. Again, the conjectures of Darwin and others about the prehistoric horde governed autocratically by a polygamous and monopolistic male did not stand up well to further research, especially the kind of research among the higher primates that had not been available when Freud wrote *Totem and Taboo.* Freud's stirring portrayal of that lethal fraternal rebellion against patriarchy seemed increasingly implausible.

It came to appear all the more fantastic because it required a theoretical underpinning that modern biology discredited decisively. When Freud wrote *Totem and Taboo,* some responsible students of man were still ready to believe that acquired traits can be genetically handed on through the generations. The science of genetics was still in its infancy around 1913, and could accommodate the most varied conjectures about the nature of inheritance. Darwin himself, after all, though caustic in his references to Lamarck, had been something of a Lamarckian in hypothesizing that acquired characteristics may be inherited. But quite apart from the fact that Freud could legitimately lean on the remaining, though dwindling, prestige of this doctrine, he remained partial to it because he believed it would help to complete the theoretical structure of psychoanalysis.

Ironically, the historical reality of the primal crime was by no means essential to Freud's argument. Guilt feelings can be handed down by less fanciful, scientifically more acceptable mechanisms. Neurotics, as Freud himself pointed out in *Totem and Taboo,* fantasize about oedipal killings but never carry them out. If he had been willing to apply this clinical insight to his story of the primal crime as he employed other knowledge gleaned from the couch, he would have anticipated and disarmed the most devastating criticisms to which *Totem and Taboo* would be exposed. Presenting his stunning tale not as fact, but as a fantasy that has plagued the young through the centuries as they confront their parents, he could have dropped his Lamarckian thesis. The universality of family experience, of intimate rivalries and mixed feelings—in short, of the ubiquitous Oedipus complex—would have been sufficient to account for the recurrence of guilt feelings and to fit them perfectly into his theory of mind.* In the late 1890s, moving from reality to fantasy had saved Freud from the absurdity of the seduction theory of neurosis. But now, though he hesitated over his assertion and dutifully presented the evidence against it, he finally held fast: in the beginning was

*Psychoanalysts were not alone in suggesting such an alternative. As the American anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber said in his reconsideration of *Totem and Taboo* in 1939 (he had first reviewed the book in 1920), "Certain psychic processes tend always to be operative and to find expression in human institutions." (*"Totem and Taboo* in Retrospect," *American Journal of Sociology,* LV [1939], 447.)

the act! It did not exactly increase the prestige of Freud's visionary construct that his account of the way the feeling of guilt arose should strikingly resemble, of all things, the Christian doctrine of original sin.

This obstinacy strongly contrasts with Freud's earlier doubts, to say nothing of his scientific ideal. What he wanted from the experts was corroboration; he pounced on their arguments when they sustained his own, disregarded them when they did not. He had drawn, he told Ferenczi in the summer of 1912, "the best confirmations for my Totem hypotheses" from Robertson Smith's book on the religion of the Semites. He feared that Frazer and his other authorities would not accept his solutions to the mysteries of totem and taboo, but this did not shake his confidence in conclusions to which he was already committed—did not shake it then or later.* There can be little question that his tenacity sprang from the same psychological source as his early doubts. His first readers suspected as much: both Jones and Ferenczi confronted him with the possibility that the painful reservations he expressed after publishing *Totem and Taboo* might have deeper personal roots than just uncomplicated, understandable author's anxiety. The two had read proofs of the book and were persuaded of its greatness. "We suggested he had in his imagination lived through the experiences he described in his book," Jones writes, "that his elation represented the excitement of killing and eating the father and that his doubts were only the reaction." Freud was disposed to accept this bit of intramural psychoanalysis but not to revise his thesis. In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* he told Jones, he had only described the wish to kill the father; in *Totem and Taboo* he had described the actual parricide, and "after all it is a big step from a wish to a deed." It is a step that Freud, of course, had never taken. But to represent the primal crime as a unique event casting an immortal shadow, rather than as a pervasive, all-too-human fantasy, allowed Freud to remain at some distance from his own oedipal struggles with his father; it allowed him to plead, as it were, for the acquittal that a rational world should grant the true innocents who only fantasize about committing parricide. In view of Freud's own showing that

*"I still hold fast to this construction today," he wrote near the end of his life. "I have repeatedly had to listen to vehement reproaches for not having changed my views in later editions of my book, after more recent ethnologists have rejected Robertson Smith's hypotheses unanimously and have in part brought forward other, quite differing theories. I must reply that I am fully acquainted with these supposed advances. But I have been persuaded neither of the correctness of these innovations nor of Robertson Smith's errors. A contradiction is not a refutation, an innovation not necessarily an advance." He concluded with an apology that suggests some unanalyzed component to his thinking on this point: "Above all, I am not an ethnologist, but a psychoanalyst. I had the right to pick out of the ethnological literature what I could use for my analytical work." (*Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion. Drei Abhandlungen* [1939], *GW* XVI, 240/*Moses and Monotheism, SE* XXIII, 131.)

the world of mind is anything but rational, this is a somewhat pathetic attempt to flee the murderous implications of his oedipal aggressions.

Whatever the objective value of Freud's attempt to discover the foundations of religion in the Oedipus complex, then, it is highly plausible that some of the impulses guiding Freud's argument in *Totem and Taboo* emerged from his hidden life; in some respects the book represents a round in his never-finished wrestling bout with Jacob Freud. It was an episode, too, in his equally persistent evasion of his complicated feelings about Amalia Freud. For it is telling that in his reconstruction Freud said virtually nothing about the mother, even though the ethnographic material pointing to the fantasy of devouring the mother is richer than that for devouring the father. Ferenczi's Little Arpad, whom Freud borrowed as a witness for *Totem and Taboo,* wanted to make a meal of his *"preserved mother";* as he graphically put it, "One should put my mother into a pot and cook her, then there would be a preserved mother and I could eat her." But Freud chose to ignore this piece of evidence. Still, like so much else in Freud's work, *Totem and Taboo* productively translated his most intimate conflicts and his most private quarrels into material for scientific investigation.

MAPPING THE MIND

Freud found his investigations of art, literature, and prehistory both enjoyable and important. They served to confirm his image of himself as the explorer who is the first to describe inhospitable, mysterious terrain that has baffled and frustrated all his predecessors. But his intellectual raids were neither digressions nor departures from his essential theoretical work. One preoccupation fed others. Case histories led him to questions of culture; reflections on literary creation sent him back to the Oedipus complex. For all the diversified calls on his time, Freud therefore never slighted what he considered his central task: to refine his map of the mind. While he was not aware of it at the time, he was also taking tentative steps to revise this map.

Among the theoretical papers he published between 1908 and 1914, three—on character, on the fundamental principles of the mind, and on narcissism—command particular attention. The first two in this trio are very short, the last not very long, but their succinctness is no measure of their

significance. In "Character and Anal Erotism," Freud took off from his clinical experience to propose some general hypotheses about character formation. He had supposed as early as 1897 that excrement, money, and obsessional neurosis are somehow intimately linked; a decade later, he had suggested to Jung that patients who obtain pleasure from withholding their feces typically display the character traits of orderliness, stinginess, and obstinacy. Together these traits are, "as it were, the sublimations of anal eroticism." In his report on the Rat Man, Freud had offered further observations on this constellation. Now, in his paper on character marked by anal eroticism, drawing on a considerable number of his analytic patients, he ventured to generalize his conjecture. In psychoanalytic theory, character is defined as a configuration of stable traits. But this orderly grouping does not necessarily connote a persistent serenity; as a cluster of fixations to which the individual's life history has tethered him, character often stands as the organization of inner conflicts rather than their resolution.* What Freud was particularly interested in, and had already investigated in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* three years before, was the part these traits play in the making of what he would soon call the ego. Like other papers of these years, "Character and Anal Erotism" offers both a summing up of ideas long held and a prospect of revisions to come.

WITH HIS "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," Freud threw his net of generalization wider still. Seeking a far larger catch than anal erotics, he aimed to gather in nothing less than the relation of the drives to developmental experience. He read the paper to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society on October 26, 1910, but found the discussion unrewarding. "Dealing with these people is steadily becoming more difficult," he confided to Ferenczi the next morning. What one got was "a mixture of shy admiration and stupid contradiction." Undismayed, Freud plunged on. Once again, while restating ideas he had adumbrated in the mid-1890s and developed in the seventh chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams,* he was at the same time looking ahead to future formulations.

The paper sharply distinguishes between two ways the mind works: the

*"Psychoanalytic characterology," Otto Fenichel wrote in his classic textbook of 1945, "is the youngest branch of psychoanalysis," because psychoanalysis began with "the investigation of neurotic symptoms, that is, with phenomena that are ego alien and do not fit into the 'character,' the customary mode of behavior." It was only when it "undertook the consideration of surface mental experiences" that psychoanalysis could "begin to understand that not only unusual and suddenly erupting mental states but also ordinary modes of behavior, the usual manner of loving, hating, and acting in various situations can be comprehended genetically as dependent on unconscious conditions." And only then is the systematic analytic study of character possible. (Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* [1945], 463.)

primary process, the first to emerge, is characterized by an inability to tolerate the modulation of wishes or any delay in their gratification. It obeys the pleasure principle. The other, the secondary process, which ripens with the course of maturation, develops the human capacity for thought and is thus an agent of judiciousness, of beneficial postponement. It obeys the reality principle—at least some of the time.

Every child must experience the enthronement of the reality principle as "a consequential step," one that life forces it to take. Once it has discovered that hallucinating the fulfillment of its desires is not enough to secure their real satisfaction, it begins to cultivate its gift for understanding and, if possible, manipulating and controlling, the outside world. This means, concretely, that the child learns to remember, to pay attention, to judge, to plan, to calculate, to treat thinking as an experimental form of action, to test reality. There is nothing easy, let alone automatic, about this secondary process: the heedless, imperious pleasure principle is slow to surrender its hold on the growing youngster and at intervals reasserts that hold. Indeed, the child, with its poignant conservatism, recalls pleasures once enjoyed and is unwilling to give them up even for the prospect of later, greater, more secure gratifications. The two principles therefore coexist uneasily, often in conflict.

Freud did not describe such conflict as inescapable and in fact surrendered momentarily to unaccustomed optimism: "In actuality, the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle signifies not the deposition of the pleasure principle but only its safeguarding." The ultimate relationship between the two principles is bound to shift from issue to issue, but "external reality" acquires "increased significance" with the passage of time. Yet Freud recognized that the sexual drives are particularly resistant to education, since they may be gratified by autoerotic activity, in the person's own body. And the reluctance of these drives to accept the constraints of reality fertilizes the soil for later neuroses. This is why it is essential for culture to negotiate with the pleasure principle in the service of the reality principle, to make the *"pleasure-ego"* yield, at least in part, to the *"reality-ego."* This, too, is why consciousness has important work to do in mental functioning: to secure the hold of reality on the mind is principally its business. For, Freud reminded his readers, in the unconscious, in the dark realm of repression and fantasies, reality testing has no leverage. The only currency valid in that country, Freud noted in his best metaphorical manner, is *"neurotic currency."* Hence all the moments of truce cannot obscure the fact that mental life is, in Freud's judgment, a more or less continual warfare.

The paper on mental functioning dealt with the individual mind, chiefly the troubled commerce between its unconscious and its conscious domains. But implicitly, Freud was paving the way for a psychoanalytic social psychol-

ogy. The forces propelling the child to traffic with the reality principle early, when its grasp on reason is still tentative and intermittent, are for the most part external—actions by authoritative others. The mother's temporary absence, the fatherly punishment, the inhibitions imposed on the child by anyone, whether nurse, older sibling, or schoolmate, are the great social No: they frustrate wishes, channel appetites, compel delays in gratification. After all, even that most intimate of experiences, the Oedipus complex, emerges and runs its course in an exquisitely social situation.

In 1911, the year he published this paper on the pleasure-ego and the reality-ego, Freud was fully persuaded that individual and social psychology are impossible to separate.* Three years before, he had already made the same point in an informal essay, " 'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness." There he had suggested that what he saw as the prevalence of nervous malaise in his time sprang from the excessive self-denial that respectable middle-class society imposed on the sexual needs of ordinary humans. The unconscious, in short, cannot escape culture. His paper on the two principles of mental functioning, then, in company with the one on nervousness, subtly hinted at new departures.

THE JANUS-FACED CHARACTER of Freud's writings in the years before the First World War, aiming at summation and edging toward revision, is most spectacular in his subversive paper on narcissism—subversive, that is, of his own long-held views. In his characteristic style, Freud labeled it as introductory. This was not false modesty; he complained that writing the paper was unpalatable work and that he had difficulties containing his exploding thoughts within its framework. He was certain, though, that he could use it as a weapon in his crusade against his opponents: "The Narcissism will, I suppose, ripen during the summer," he wrote Ferenczi just before he left Vienna for the summer holiday of 1913; it was, to his mind, "the scientific settling of accounts with Adler."† By early October, just back from his "17 delicious days" in Rome, he could report that the paper was virtually ready. He told Ernest Jones that he "would be glad to talk it over" with him, as well as "with Rank and Sachs."

His adherents were only too anxious for whatever clarification Freud might have to offer; Jones has testified that they all found the essay "disturbing." Actually Freud himself was uneasy about it, more uneasy than usual. Giving

*Freud would discuss the relation of individual to social psychology in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.* See p. 404.

†"On Narcissism" was a settling of accounts with Jung as well, though, as Abraham observed upon reading a draft of the paper, Freud could have emphasized the contrast between "Jung's therapy and psychoanalysis" even more strongly. (Abraham to Freud, April 2, 1914. *Freud–Abraham,* 165 [169].)

a gloomy cast to one of his favorite metaphors, he told Abraham in March 1914 that the essay "had been a difficult birth and shows all the deformations of such. Naturally I don't especially like it, but now I cannot offer anything else." Its completion brought him no relief but, on the contrary, disagreeable physical symptoms: headaches and intestinal troubles. Hence he was delighted to have Abraham reassure him that the paper was really brilliant and convincing—delighted, touched, but not wholly reassured. "I have a very strong feeling of serious inadequacy there." To be sure, during these months Freud was in a pugnacious mood; he was drafting his blast against Adler and Jung at the very time he was polishing his paper on narcissism. But something more elusive was stirring in him. He was standing on the verge of rethinking the psychology he had been planning merely to explain.

"On Narcissism" carries further, and suitably complicates, the ideas about mental development that Freud had launched some five years before. As early as November 1909, commenting on a paper by Isidor Sadger at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, he had suggested that narcissism, "the infatuation in one's own person (= in one's own genitals)," is "a necessary stage of development in the transition from autoeroticism to object love." As we have seen, he had first floated this proposition in print in his paper on Leonardo; he mentioned it again in his case history of Schreber, and once more, tersely though suggestively, in *Totem and Taboo.** "Narcissism" was an appealing term that recalled one of Freud's prized Greek myths—of the beautiful youth who had died of self-infatuation; he had borrowed it, with acknowledgments, from the German psychiatrist Paul Näcke and from Havelock Ellis. Its explosive possibilities, though, did not emerge until the paper he devoted to it in 1914.

Freud had observed in *Totem and Taboo* that the narcissistic stage is never wholly overcome and that it appears to be a very general phenomenon. Now he spelled out the implications of his fragmentary thoughts. Originally the name "narcissism" was applied to a perversion: narcissists are deviants who can secure sexual satisfaction only by treating their own bodies as erotic objects. But, Freud observed, these perverts have no monopoly on this kind of erotic self-centeredness. After all, schizophrenics too withdraw their libido from the outside world and do not extinguish it; rather, Freud argued, they invest it in their own self. This was not all: psychoanalytic observers had also discovered massive evidence of narcissistic traits among neurotics, children,

*Tracing back evolving sexual energy—libido—to childhood, he had written there, psychoanalysts had been driven to divide its earliest stage, autoeroticism, into two. In the first, a set of independent, partial sexual drives seek primitive satisfaction in the body, while in the second the sexual drives, now unified, take the self as their object. It is this second phase that is properly the stage of *"narcissism."* (*Totem und Tabu, GW* IX, 109/*Totem and Taboo, SE* XIII, 89.)

and primitive tribes. In *Totem and Taboo* Freud had already added lovers to this growing list. He could not evade the conclusion that in this more comprehensive sense, narcissism is "not a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egotism of the self-preservative drive." The word gained a rapidly enlarging sphere of signification, first at Freud's hands and then far more irresponsibly in general usage, much to its damage as a diagnostic term. When "narcissism" entered educated discourse in the 1920s and after, it came to be casually employed not just as a label for a sexual perversion or a developmental stage but also for a symptom in psychosis and for a variety of object relations. Some in fact exploited it as a handy term of abuse for modern culture or as a loose synonym for bloated self-esteem.

Even before this inflation of meanings had virtually ruined its precision, "narcissism" raised some inconvenient issues, which Freud showed some reluctance to address: "One resists the idea of leaving observation for sterile theoretical controversies." Yet, he added dutifully, one had an obligation to make "an attempt at clarification." This attempt compelled the recognition that the self can, and does, choose itself as an erotic object no less than it chooses others. There is, in short, an "ego-libido" as well as an "object-libido." The narcissistic type, under the sway of the ego-libido, loves what he is, what he once was, what he would like to be, or the person who had been part of his own self. But he is not a curiosity or a rare aberration: some narcissism, it seems, lies concealed in every closet. Even parental love, "moving, fundamentally so childlike," is "nothing other than the reborn narcissism of the parents." As Freud compiled his growing, somewhat tendentious list, he wryly acknowledged that the world seemed to be awash in narcissists—including women, children, cats, criminals, and humorists.*

It was only reasonable for Freud to wonder just what happens to all the narcissistic investment of early childhood. After all, having greatly enjoyed the self-love that seems so natural, the child is, as Freud always insisted, unable to give up this satisfaction, like others, without a struggle. The question propelled Freud into issues he would not fully resolve until after the war. In "On Narcissism," Freud argued that the growing child, confronted with criticisms from its parents, its teachers, or "public opinion," relinquishes narcissism by setting up a substitute to which it may then pay homage in place of its imperfect self. This is the famous "ego ideal," the censorious voices of the world made one's own. As a pathological aberration, it emerges

*The most offensive entry on that list is, of course, "women," as Freud acknowledged: "Perhaps it is not superfluous to assert, that" in describing woman as a narcissist, "I am far from any tendency to a denigration of woman." And he disclaimed the slightest inclination to tendentiousness of this sort. ("Narzissmus," *GW* X, 156/"Narcissism," *SE* XIV, 89.) But see pp. 501–22.

as the delusion that one is being watched—here is Schreber again—but in its normal form it is first cousin to what we call the conscience, which acts as the ego ideal's guardian.

Reading the paper, Abraham was particularly impressed with Freud's pages on the delusion of being watched, on the conscience, and on the ego ideal. But he had no immediate comment on Freud's modification of his theory of the drives. Yet this was the aspect of the paper that Ernest Jones found most unsettling. If there is an "ego-libido" as well as an "object-libido," what is to become of the distinctions on which psychoanalysts had hitherto relied? Here was the difficulty: Freud had long implied, and made explicit in 1910, the view that human drives may be sharply divided into two classes—the ego drives and the sexual drives. The former are responsible for the individual's self-preservation; they have nothing to do with the erotic. The latter press for erotic gratification and serve the preservation of the species. But if the self, too, can be erotically charged, then the ego drives must be sexual in character as well.

If this conclusion holds true, radical consequences for psychoanalytic theory must follow, for it palpably contradicts Freud's earlier formulation, according to which the ego drives are nonsexual. Were the critics who called Freud a pansexualist, a voyeur who detected sex everywhere, right after all? Freud had repeatedly, and vehemently, denied that. Or did Jung have a point when he defined libido as a universal force that indiscriminately pervades all mental effort? Freud professed to be unperturbed. Invoking the authority of his clinical experience, he pronounced the categories of ego-libido and object-libido which he had just introduced to be an "indispensable extension" of the old psychoanalytic scheme and insisted that there was nothing very new and certainly nothing at all troubling about them. His adherents were by no means so sure; more clearly than the author of the paper, they glimpsed its radical implications. "It gave," Ernest Jones recalls, "a disagreeable jolt to the theory of instincts on which psychoanalysis had hitherto worked." Freud's "On Narcissism" made Jones and his friends very nervous.

These conflicting appraisals reach down to the fundamentals of psychology as a science. Freud was never completely happy with his theory of the drives, whether in its early or its late form. In "On Narcissism" he lamented the "complete lack of a theory of the drives"—*Trieblehre*—that might provide the psychological investigator with a dependable orientation. This absence of theoretical clarity was in large part due to the inability of biologists and psychologists to generate a consensus on the nature of drives or instincts. Lacking their guidance, Freud constructed his own theory by observing psychological phenomena in the light of whatever biological information was

available. To understand a drive one needs both disciplines, for it stands, in his words, at the border between the physical and the mental.* It is an urge translated into a wish.

At the time "On Narcissism" appeared, Freud still proclaimed himself more or less resigned to a classification of the drives into those aiming at self-preservation and those aiming at sexual satisfaction. Since the 1880s, we know, he had liked to quote the line from Schiller that love and hunger move the world. But he came to see that by reading narcissism as sexual self-love rather than just a specialized perversion, he had effectively ruined the simplicity of his old scheme. Try as he might, he could no longer maintain the clear separation between the two classes of drives that had served him for two decades: the fact is that love for the self and love for others differ only in their object, not in their nature.

By the spring of 1914, the need to reclassify the drives, and to make other equally unsettling adjustments in psychoanalytic theory, was becoming only too obvious. But with unexpected, ungracious suddenness the world intruded and for a time disrupted Freud's thoughts in the most spectacular, most brutal way imaginable. He had completed "On Narcissism" in March 1914 and published it in the *Jahrbuch* toward the end of June. Exhausted from a long hard year of political infighting and a crowded schedule of patients, Freud was looking forward to a long holiday in Karlsbad and to some time for work of his own. Within a month, though, he discovered that he had little time, and less taste, for exploring the subversive direction his thinking was taking. While Freud was edging toward great revisions, Western civilization was going mad.

THE END OF EUROPE

On June 28, 1914, the Wolf Man took a long stroll through the Prater, musing about the instructive and in the end profitable years he had spent under Freud's care in Vienna. It was, he recalled later, "a very hot and sultry Sunday." He was about to terminate his analysis and to marry a woman of whom Freud approved; all seemed well, and he returned from his walk in a hopeful frame of mind. But he had scarcely got home when

*See p. 364.

the maid handed him an extra with stunning news: Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his consort had been assassinated at Sarajevo by young Bosnian militants. The event was a shocking commentary on that rickety anachronism, the Austro-Hungarian multinational empire, defiantly surviving into an age of feverish nationalism. The consequences of Sarajevo were not immediately clear. Writing to Ferenczi "under the impress of the surprising murder," Freud thought the situation unpredictable and observed that in Vienna, "personal sympathy" with the imperial house was small. Just three days before, Freud had signaled the appearance of his "History of the Psychoanalytic Movement" with an aggressive flourish to Abraham: "Now the bomb has exploded." It would, after Sarajevo, appear a very private, very paltry bomb indeed. The outbreak of the First World War was only six weeks away.

For the cultural historian, the impact of that catastrophe is something of a paradox. Most of the artistic, literary, and intellectual movements that would make the 1920s such an exciting, innovative decade had originated well before 1914: functional architecture, abstract painting, twelve-tone music, experimental novels—and psychoanalysis. At the same time, the war destroyed a world, forever. Looking back late in 1919 at the epoch before the great insanity, the English economist John Maynard Keynes pictured it as an age of stupefying progress. Most of the population, he wrote in a famous passage, "worked hard and lived at a low standard of comfort, yet were, to all appearances, reasonably contented with this lot. But escape was possible, for any man of capacity or character at all exceeding the average, into the middle and upper classes, for whom life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comforts, and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchs of other ages."

Any observant social worker or principled radical could have told Keynes that this was far too benign a view of the creature comforts and social mobility open to the poor. But for the sizable middle classes, it was accurate enough. "The inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth, in such quantities as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep; he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural resources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share, without exertion or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and advantages." If he wished, this Londoner could taste similar pleasures abroad, "without passport or other formality." He "could despatch his servant to the neighboring office of a bank for such supply of the precious metals as might seem convenient," and then "proceed abroad to foreign quarters, without knowledge of their religion, language, or customs, bearing coined wealth upon

his person, and would consider himself greatly aggrieved and much surprised at the least interference." Beyond that, "most important of all," Keynes concluded his nostalgic catalogue, "he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain, and permanent, except in the direction of further improvement, and any deviation from it as aberrant, scandalous and avoidable." Militarism and imperialism, racial and cultural rivalries, and other troubles, "were little more than the amusements of his daily newspaper," and had no real influence on his life.

The very lyricism of this obituary for an extinct way of life documents how much devastation and despair the war would leave in its wake; in comparison, the world before August 1914 shone like a happy land of fantasies fulfilled. It was a time when Freud could dispatch a letter from Vienna to Zurich or Berlin on Monday and expect, without fail, a reply on Wednesday; a time when he could decide on the spur of the moment to visit France, or any other civilized country, without any preliminaries or formal documents. Only Russia, deemed an outpost of barbarism, required a visa from entering tourists.

During the relatively peaceful half century preceding August 1914, there had been militarists praying for war, generals planning for it, prophets of doom predicting it. But their voices were a distinct, if noisy, minority; when, in 1908, the brilliant English social psychologist Graham Wallas warned that "the horrors of a world-war" were a realistic danger, most of his contemporaries refused to credit his appalling fancy. True, the forming of hostile power blocs, with Britain and France confronting the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, was a menacing portent; the armaments race, especially the intensified naval rivalry of Britain and Germany, was another. It is true, too, that Kaiser Wilhelm craved what he called a place in the sun, and that meant a Germany competing for colonies with other great powers in Africa and the Pacific, and challenging Britain's traditional supremacy at sea. The Kaiser's blustering speeches and his loose talk about a fight to the death between the Teutonic and the Slavic races were additional reasons for nervousness. His rhetoric echoed an established, vulgarized interpretation of Darwin's teachings, which read them as a commendation of sanguinary struggles between peoples or "races" as a way to health, indeed as necessary to national survival.

What is more, from 1900 on, it was a commonplace to call the Balkans a tinderbox: the long agony of the Ottoman empire, which had been relaxing its hold on its African and Balkan dependencies for a century, tempted adventurous politicians into bellicose displays and rash expeditions. Moreover, the cheap daily press in the great metropolitan cities did its share by supplying dry kindling to feed the flames of chauvinist excitement. On

December 9, 1912, with the Balkans once again in an uproar, Freud commented to Pfister, in passing, that while all was well at home, "the expectation of war almost takes our breath away." On the same day, he reported to Ferenczi that "the war mood dominates our daily life." Yet the talk of confrontations in the making, and anxious armament to match, did not make a great war inevitable. Nor would the First World War in any way resemble, in its length and its cost, the fears—or hopes—of those who had predicted it.

There had long been persuasive arguments for peace, including that of sheer self-interest. The expanding network of world commerce made war a calamitous prospect for merchants, bankers, and industrialists. The lively traffic of art, literature, and philosophical ideas across frontiers had established a civilized international fraternity, in itself an informal agent of peace. Psychoanalysis was not the only cosmopolitan intellectual movement. One had hoped, Freud would write sadly, looking back, that the "educational element" of the compulsion to morality might do its work, and that "the splendid community of interests produced by trade and production would make a beginning of such a compulsion." The great powers, still tied to one another in the concert of Europe, worked to keep local wars local. They found a rather incongruous ally in the international Socialist movement, whose leaders confidently predicted that the machinations of malevolent warmongers would be frustrated by a strike of class-conscious proletarians everywhere. The wishes of pacific merchants and pacifist radicals proved pathetically wrong; during a few frenetic weeks, aggressive, downright suicidal forces were let loose that most had thought forever under control.

IN THE WEEKS FOLLOWING Sarajevo, Austrian politicians and diplomats took a hard line, their backs stiffened by German reassurances. Had he had access to their confidential dispatches, Freud could have read them as the utterances of anxious men feeling themselves under pressure to display their virility. They talked of violently hacking through the Gordian knot, doing away with the Serbians once and for all, the need to act now or never, the fear that the world might interpret a conciliatory Austrian policy as a confession of feebleness. Plainly, they felt it essential to escape the stigma of indecisiveness, effeminacy, impotence. On July 23, the Austrians confronted the Serbians with an imperious note, virtually an ultimatum; five days later, though the response had been prompt and placatory, Austria declared war.

The move was immensely popular in Austria. "This country," the British ambassador observed, "has gone wild with joy at the prospect of war with Serbia, and its postponement or prevention would undoubtedly be a great disappointment." At long last one could stand up straight. "There are really

great rejoicings and demonstrations," Alexander Freud reported from Vienna to his brother Sigmund, who had been at Karlsbad for some two weeks. "But," he added, rather weakening the impression of general joy, "in general people are very dejected, since everyone has friends and acquaintances who are being called up." This did not keep him from a certain pugnacity. He was glad that, "despite all the misery," Austria had decided to act, and to defend itself. "Things couldn't have gone on like this." This stance, as Alexander Freud did not fail to note, was also his brother's at the time; Freud was suffering an unexpected bout of patriotism. "Perhaps for the first time in thirty years," he told Abraham late in July, "I feel myself an Austrian, and would like just once more to give this rather unpromising empire a chance."* He hailed the stiff Austrian attitude toward Serbia as courageous, and welcomed German support for his country's stand.

By no means all the diplomatic maneuvers of these days were parades of militancy and manliness; to the end, the British and French sought to cool tempers. To no effect: policy makers in the Central Powers—Austria-Hungary and Germany—had more devious, less pacific intentions. They schemed to keep Britain neutral and, what was more sinister, they tried to foist responsibility for the imbroglio on the Russians, whom they portrayed as intransigent and impulsive. Still, only a few believed that a great conflagration was in the offing, and Freud was not among them. If he had been, he would have insisted that his daughter Anna cancel the trip she was making to England in mid-July; and he would not have left Vienna about the same time and invited Eitingon with his new wife to visit him in Karlsbad in early August.

His mind was, as we shall see, on Anna, and on psychoanalysis, not on international politics: finding Ferenczi's emotional letters a strain, he told him frankly that he would stop corresponding for a while, to concentrate on work, "for which I cannot use sociability." Yet the world did not let him alone. "What do you say there about the chances for war and peace?" his daughter Mathilde inquired on July 23. He was evidently anticipating—or, perhaps more accurately, hoping for—a strictly limited conflict. "Should the war remain localized to the Balkans," he wrote to Abraham on July 26, "it won't be too bad." But with the Russians, he added, one never knew.

Freud's uncertainty echoed the general feeling of suspense. As late as July 29, he wondered out loud whether perhaps in two weeks the world would not look back at all this excitement half ashamed, or whether the long-threatened

*Almost three decades earlier, during his stay in Paris, Freud had presented himself as something of a patriot, making invidious comparisons between himself and light-headed Parisians. But even then his national allegiance had been far from unequivocal. He had declared himself to a French patriot, we will remember, as neither Austrian nor German, but as a Jew.

"decision of destinies" was now at hand. Abraham, as usual, remained sunny. "I believe," he wrote Freud on the same day, "that no great power will bring about a general war." Five days later, on August 3, Sir Edward Grey, Britain's foreign secretary, warned the Germans against the consequences that their violation of Belgian neutrality would bring. At dusk, Grey stood at the window of his office, gloomily watching with a friend the lamps being lit outside. "The lamps are going out all over Europe," he said, and memorably prophesied, "we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

In Vienna tension centered on what Britain would do. Italy had declared its neutrality, citing legalistic justifications for its failure to honor its obligations to the Triple Alliance. This move, Alexander Freud wrote his brother on August 4, had been expected. But now "everything depends on England's attitude; the decision will become known here tonight. Romantics maintain that England will not join in; a civilized people will not take the side of the barbarians, etc." An Anglophobe—unlike his brother—Alexander Freud was no romantic, at least on this point. "My good old hatred against English perfidy will probably turn out to be right; they won't be embarrassed to take the side of the Russians."* Perfidious or not, on that day, August 4, after Germany's invasion of Belgium was confirmed, Britain went to war. The old European order was gone.

THE WAR THAT ERUPTED in late July and spread in early August 1914 engulfed most of Europe and adjacent lands: the Austro-Hungarian empire, Germany, Britain, France, Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey. The cause of the Allies would be strengthened later by the participation of Italy and the United States. Few suspected that the war would be a very extended affair; most observers, certainly in the camp of the Central Powers, predicted that the efficient German armies would reach Paris by Christmas. Alexander Freud's bleak prognosis of a long and costly conflict was something of a rarity. "No reasonable man doubts that in the end success will be on the side of the Germans," he wrote to his brother on August 4. "But how long it can last before the final success is won, what immense sacrifices in life, health, and fortune the business will cost, that is the question that no one dares to approach."

The most extraordinary thing about these calamitous events was less that they happened than how they were received. Europeans of all stripes joined

*The two brothers, who agreed on much, did not agree on England, which, as we know, Freud greatly admired. So did his son Martin. "The news that England is on the side of our opponents," he wrote his father two days after war had been declared, "was expected, but it remains a heavy blow to our feelings." And he added, "Do you have news of Annerl?" (Martin Freud to Freud, August 6, 1914. Freud Museum, London.)

in greeting the advent of war with a fervor bordering on a religious experience. Aristocrats, bourgeois, workers, and farmers; reactionaries, liberals, and radicals; cosmopolitans, chauvinists, and particularists; fierce soldiers, preoccupied scholars, and gentle theologians—all linked arms in their bellicose delight. The ideology triumphant was nationalism, even for most Marxists, nationalism driven to the highest pitch of hysteria. Some hailed the war as an opportunity to settle old scores; but, more sinister, for most it established their own nation's virtue and the enemy's viciousness. Germans liked to depict the Russian as an incurable barbarian, the Englishman as a canting shopkeeper, the Frenchman as a low sensualist; the English and the French in their turn suddenly discovered the German to be a malodorous amalgam of abject bureaucrat, woolly-minded metaphysician, and sadistic Hun. The European family of high culture was torn apart as professors returned honorary degrees from enemy countries and lent their scholarship to proving that their adversaries' claims to cultivation were only masks covering greed or the lust for power.

This was the primitive style of thinking that Freud would come to find so incredible. Orators, in prose and in verse, saluted the war as a rite of spiritual cleansing. It was destined to restore the ancient, almost lost heroic virtues, and to serve as a panacea for the decadence that cultural critics had long noted and deplored. The patriotic war fever attacked novelists, historians, theologians, poets, composers, on all sides, but perhaps most fervently in Germany and Austria-Hungary. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, a unique mixture of sophisticate and mystic, celebrated the outbreak of hostilities with "Five Songs," dated August 1914, in which he visualized the "most remote incredible God of War" rising again: "At last a God. Since we often no longer grasped the peaceable one, the Battle-God suddenly grasps us, flings the firebrand." Hugo von Hofmannsthal, that prolific Viennese aesthete, made himself into an assiduous official propagandist for the Austrian cause and boasted—or allowed others to boast in his behalf—of his military valor. Even Stefan Zweig, later a vociferous pacifist, had military ambitions in the early days of the war and until his shift to pacifism cheerfully served the Austrian propaganda machine, much as Hofmannsthal was doing. "War!" Thomas Mann exclaimed in November 1914, "it was purification, liberation we felt, and an enormous hope"; it "set the hearts of poets aflame" with a sense of relief: "How could the artist, the soldier in the artist, not praise God for the collapse of a peaceful world with which he was fed up, so exceedingly fed up!"*

*There were touches of this excitement even among those very few, like Arthur Schnitzler, who heroically refused to trade in their humanity for this easy, self-intoxicated patriotism. Fritz Wittels recalled coming upon Arthur Schnitzler after that rare thing, an Austrian victory over the Russians, and was astonished to see this most astringent of writers moved and delighted: "He said to me, 'You know how much I hate almost everything in Austria, yet, when I heard that the danger of a Russian invasion was over, I felt like kneeling down and kissing this soil of ours.' " (Wittels, "Wrestling with the Man," 5.) This was not chauvinist excitement, but the kind of anti-Russian animus that nearly all Austrians, including Freud, shared.

As their scathing critic Karl Kraus delighted to point out, the writers who issued these frantic, almost demented-sounding calls to arms, struggled energetically and successfully to evade serving at the front. But this contradiction did not trouble, certainly did not silence, them. Their outbursts were a fitting climax to decades of irritation with what they and their avant-garde ancestors had been pleased to denounce as dull, safe, threadbare bourgeois culture; they epitomized a playful, sophisticated, irresponsible infatuation with unreason and purification and death. In the summer of 1914, this sort of talk swept across whole populations in a contagious war psychosis. It was a telling instance of how susceptible to collective regression presumably sensible and educated people can be.

AT FIRST, GERMAN and Austrian optimists, frenzied or not, drew ample support from the military communiqués. Toward the end of August, Abraham announced "dazzling news" to Freud. "German troops are scarcely 100 kilometers from Paris. Belgium is finished; England, on land, no less so." Two weeks later he reported that "we," in Berlin, "have been greatly reassured by the total defeat of the Russians in East Prussia. In the very next few days we hope for favorable news from the battles on the Marne." Once these have been won, "France is essentially finished." In mid-September, Eitingon exclaimed to Freud about the "incomparably splendid beginning in West and East," though he confessed that "the tempo seems to have slowed somewhat."

Like his followers, Freud too for a time indulged himself in partisan credulity, as cheerful, even triumphant bulletins kept pouring in from the front. But he never quite yielded to the irrational, quasi-religious exaltation of a Rilke or a Mann. In September, visiting his daughter Sophie Halberstadt to see his first grandson, Ernst, he discovered that his responses were once more regaining a certain complexity. "I am not in Hamburg for the first time," he wrote to Abraham, "but for the first time not as though I were in a foreign city." Yet, he confessed, he would "speak of the success of 'our' war loan and discuss the chances of 'our' battle of millions," and these quizzical quotation marks suggest a certain astonishment at himself.

While Freud was preparing for his journey to Hamburg, he wondered

whether he might be in Germany when "the news of a victory before Paris" arrived. Yet from the very beginning of hostilities, he was too much of a skeptic to abandon the analytic stance entirely. "One observes in everyone," he had noted in late July, "the most authentic symptomatic acts." Besides, his lifelong attachment to England got in the way of full-throated chauvinism. He would, he wrote to Abraham on August 2, support the war "with all my heart, if I did not know that England is on the wrong side." Abraham, too, found this line-up awkward, especially since among those on the wrong side was their good friend and indispensable ally Ernest Jones. "Is it a strange feeling for you, too," he asked Freud, "that he is among our 'enemies'?" Freud felt the strangeness keenly. "It has been generally decided," he told Jones in October, "not to regard you as an enemy!" As good as his word, he kept up his correspondence with Jones, the enemy who was no enemy, through neutral countries like Switzerland, Sweden, and the Netherlands, only making the gesture of switching to German.

NO DOUBT THE PRINCIPAL reason why Freud's zeal for his country soon began to fade was that the war came home to him from the start. Before it was over, all three of his sons had seen action, two of them a good deal of it. What is more, the outbreak of hostilities virtually ruined his practice; potential patients were drafted into the armed services or thought about the war more than about their neuroses. "These are hard times," he wrote as early as August 14, "our interests depreciated for the time being." In the spring of 1915, he estimated that the war had already cost him more than 40,000 kronen. Indeed, the war posed an acute danger to the very survival of psychoanalysis. The first casualty was the congress of psychoanalysts planned for Dresden in September 1914. Then, one after the other, Freud's followers were called up; most of them were physicians and hence eminently usable fodder for the military Moloch. Eitingon was drafted early; Abraham was detailed to a surgical unit near Berlin. Ferenczi was sent to the Hungarian hussars, in the provinces, for duty which turned out to be more boring than demanding; he had more time to himself than the other analysts in uniform. "You are now really the only one," Freud wrote Ferenczi in 1915, "who is working alongside us. The others are all militarily paralyzed."*

Yet the service to which the physicians among his followers were called was burdensome rather than dangerous; it gave them enough stolen leisure to respond to the ideas he poured out to them. Naturally it interfered with

*From early 1916 on, Ferenczi was even less paralyzed than before: transferred to Budapest as a part-time psychiatrist in a military hospital, he could resume some of his psychoanalytic activity. (See Michael Balint, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," in Sándor Ferenczi, *Schriften zur Psychoanalyse*, 2 vols. [1970], I, xiii.)

their analytic practice; nor could they keep up their writing and editing with the old efficiency. Freud cared enough about the future of psychoanalysis to report blithely that the nearsighted Hanns Sachs had been rejected for military service. Meanwhile his dependable amanuensis, Otto Rank, worked valiantly to stay out of the army, "defending himself like a lion," Freud told Ferenczi, "against the fatherland." The needs of psychoanalysis, like the news from his sons at the front, tested the limits of Freud's patriotism.

It was strained to those limits in 1915, if not before, when Rank was finally caught in the military dragnet; with the Austrian forces facing a new enemy, Italy, they could use even the unusable. He was made to serve for two years, miserably enough, as the editor of a newspaper in Kraków. Rank "is sitting tight as prisoner of the editorship of the *Krakauer Zeitung,* and is feeling pretty low," Freud reported to Abraham late in 1917. He found this tedious assignment for Rank nothing less than criminal waste.

Not surprisingly, there was little time, and less money, available for psychoanalytic journals; the *Jahrbuch* ceased publication, while *Imago* and the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse* (founded in 1913) soldiered on, much reduced in size. The Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, which had for years faithfully assembled every Wednesday night, now convened once every two weeks and, from early 1916 on, once every three weeks or even more sporadically. There was, of course, no opportunity for mounting the international congresses of psychoanalysts which Freud and his followers considered the lifeblood of their science. In a glum Christmas letter to Ernest Jones during the first year of the war, Freud sketched a somber balance sheet and a no less somber forecast: "I do not delude myself: the springtime of our science has abruptly broken off, we are heading for a bad period; all we can do is to keep the fire flickering in a few hearths, until a more favorable wind makes it possible to light it again to full blaze. What Jung and Adler have left of the movement is now perishing in the strife of nations." Like everything else that was international, the psychoanalytic association now no longer seemed viable, and psychoanalytic periodicals were moribund. "Everything one wanted to cultivate and watch over one must now let grow rank and wild." He professed confidence in the long-run fortunes "of the cause to which you are devoting such a touching attachment." But the immediate future looked dark, hopeless. "I will not blame any rat when I see it leaving the sinking ship." Some three weeks later, he summed it all up tersely: "Science sleeps."

All this was troubling enough, but, far more important, Freud's children were not spared. His youngest daughter, Anna, who had gone to England on a visit in mid-July, was caught there by the outbreak of hostilities. With Jones's assiduous help, she managed to get home in late August by a circuitous

route that included Gibraltar and Genoa. Freud's gratitude was eloquent. "I have not yet had the opportunity," he wrote Jones in October, "in these miserable times that impoverish us in ideal as in material goods, to thank you for the adroit and expedient way of sending my little daughter back to me, and for all the friendship behind it." It was a great relief.

Once the possible danger to his daughter was off his mind—it had never really been very acute—Freud had three grown sons to brood about. Each of them was eligible, and it turned out eager, for the army. Even in the first blush of his new-found sentiment for Austria, Freud had thought more protectively about his boys than about the needs of the Austro-Hungarian war machine. "My three sons are fortunately not affected," he confided to Abraham late in July 1914; the Austrian authorities had rejected two of them definitely, and exempted the third. He repeated the same good news, in virtually the same words, in a letter to Eitingon two days later, noting that his sons were "fortunately and undeservedly" safe.* But Martin, the eldest, volunteered early in August. "It would have been intolerable for me," he wrote his father, "to remain behind alone when all others are marching off." Besides, he added, serving on the eastern front would be "the best opportunity to give blunt expression to my aversion to Russia"; this way, as a soldier, he could cross the Russian frontier without the special permission that the czarist empire required of Jews. "By the way, since I have become a soldier," he told his father the next day, "I have been looking forward to the first military action as to a thrilling mountain climb." He need not have worried; he managed to secure admission to the artillery, in which he had served in peacetime, and was soon in battles on the eastern and southern fronts.

Oliver, Freud's second son, was rejected for service until 1916, but then did his part—generally remaining less exposed than his brothers—in a variety of engineering projects for the army. Ernst, the youngest, volunteered in October (rather late to see action, his comrades thought) and served on the Italian front. Freud's son-in-law Max Halberstadt, Sophie's husband, saw action in France, and in 1916 was wounded and invalided out. To judge from their decorations and promotions, the bravery and the gusto of these young men matched their rhetoric.† All Freud could do was to send his boys money and food packages, and hope for the best. "Our mood," he could still write to Eitingon early in 1915, "is not so brilliant as in Germany; the future seems to us unpredictable, but German strength and confidence has its influence."

*Late in 1912, when there were noisy rumors of war, Freud had already worried that "it may happen to me to have 3 sons at the front at the same time." (Freud to Ferenczi, December 9, 1912. Freud–Ferenczi Correspondence, Freud Collection, LC.)

†As it turned out, the Freud family was more fortunate than most; just one of its members—Hermann Graf, the only son of Freud's sister Rosa—died in action.

Yet the prospects for victory distinctly retreated to the margins of Freud's interest as he worried about the safety of his sons, his sons-in-law, his nephew. References to their military adventures provide a touching paternal counterpoint to the business matters that fill his letters. Freud rarely wrote to his associates, even to Ernest Jones, without reporting on how the soldiers in his family were faring. When they came home on leave, they would pose in uniform for family photographs, trim and smiling.

DESPITE ALL HIS ANXIOUS reservations, he continued to identify the cause of the Central Powers as his own, and was irritated by Jones's unfailing confidence in the eventual victory of the Allies. "He writes about the war like a real Anglo," Freud complained to Abraham in November 1914. "Sink a few more superdreadnoughts or carry through a few landings, otherwise their eyes won't be opened." The British, he thought, were animated by "an incredible arrogance." He warned Jones not to believe what the newspapers said about the Central Powers: "Don't forget that there is a lot of lying now. We are suffering under no restrictions, no epidemic, and are in good spirits." At the same time, he acknowledged that these were "miserable times." By late November, no longer sounding like a tendentious amateur strategist, he made a poignant declaration of measured despair to Lou Andreas-Salomé: "I have no doubt that humanity will get over this war, too, but I know for certain that I and my contemporaries will see the world cheerful no more. It is too vile." What Freud found saddest was that people were behaving precisely the way that psychoanalysis would have predicted. That is why, Freud told her, he had never shared her optimism; he had come to believe that mankind is "organically not fit for this culture. We have to leave the stage, and the great Unknown, he or it, will some day repeat such a cultural experiment with another race." His rhetoric is a little overcharged, but it records his dismay and mounting misgivings about his commonplace loyalty to the German-Austrian cause.

Nor did it take Freud long to begin wondering whether that cause, quite apart from whatever merit it might possess, had much of a future. The unimpressive performance of the Austrian armies against the Russians gave him pause. In early September 1914, after only a month of fighting, he had told Abraham, "Indeed, things seem to be going well, but there is nothing decisive, and we have given up the hope for a rapid disposition of the war" through overwhelming victories. "Tenacity will become the principal virtue." Soon even Abraham permitted a certain prudence to invade his letters. "At the front," he wrote to Freud in late October, "these are hard days. But on the whole one remains full of confidence." That was a new tone for Freud's "dear incurable optimist." In November, Abraham reported that the mood

in Berlin "is at present very positively expectant." By this time, Freud had ceased being either positive or expectant. "There is no end in sight," he told Eitingon in early January 1915. "I continue to think," he wrote gloomily a little later that month, "it is a long polar night, and one must wait until the sun rises again."

His metaphor was pedestrian but only too apt. The war dragged on. Refusing to credit Ernest Jones's repeated well-meaning forecasts of an Allied victory, Freud clung to his tepid patriotism. In January 1915, thanking Jones for a New Year's greeting, he repeated an earlier caution: "I would be sorry to think that you too should believe all the lies spread against us. We are confident and are holding out." Intermittently, he recharged the fading batteries of his faith in the Germans' prowess by celebrating news of their exploits. In February 1915, he still hoped for the victory of the Central Powers and allowed himself a moment of "optimism." Three months later, the threatened defection of neutral Italy to the Allies troubled his hopes, but, as he told Abraham, "our admiration for our great ally grows daily!" In July, he attributed nothing less than his "increased capacity for work" to "our beautiful victories."

But by the summer of 1915, for all the extensive military operations on all fronts, the adversaries had long since reached a devastating stalemate, as bloody in its attrition as the fiercest battle. And battles, too, continued to exact their heavy price, as commanders ordered offensives no less costly than they were futile. "Rumors that there will be peace in May refuse to subside," Freud told Ferenczi in early April 1915. "Manifestly they arise from a deep urge, but they seem absurd to me." His habitual pessimism would no longer be denied. "If this war lasts another year, as is probable," he wrote to Ferenczi in July, "there should be nobody left over who had been present at its outbreak." Actually, it would last more than three years longer, taking a toll from which Europe never fully recovered.

FOR A DREAMER like Freud it was perhaps inevitable that Martin and Oliver and Ernst should invade his nocturnal life. During the night of July 8–9, 1915, he had what he called a "prophetic dream," which had as its manifest content "very clearly the death of my sons, Martin first of all."* A few days later, Freud discovered that on the very day he dreamt this dream, Martin was actually wounded at the Russian front—though, fortunately, only slightly on the arm. It made him wonder, as he sometimes did, whether reports about occult occurrences were not indeed worth investigating. Without ever declaring himself convinced, Freud had for some years taken a reserved, groping

*For another part of this important dream, see p. 163.

interest in such phenomena. The human mind, as he had good reason to know, was after all capable of such extravagant, unexpected tricks! But as the months went by and the war went on, Freud thought not so much about the strangeness of the mind as about the depths to which humanity could sink. The war seemed a piling up of distasteful symptomatic acts, a horrifying venture into collective psychosis. It was, as he had told Frau Lou, too vile.

Hence, in 1915, speaking for himself and other rational Europeans, Freud published a pair of papers on the disillusionment the war had generated and on the modern attitude toward death—an elegy for a civilization destroying itself. We had assumed, he wrote, that as long as nations existed on differing economic and cultural planes, some wars might be unavoidable. "But we dared to hope for something else," to hope that the leaders of the "great world-dominating nations of the white race" who were "occupied with the cultivation of world-spanning interests" would be able to settle "conflicts of interest in other ways." Jeremiahs had proclaimed war as man's lot. "We did not want to believe it, but how did we imagine such a war, if it should come?" It would be a gallant affair, sparing civilians, "a chivalrous passage at arms." This was a perceptive insight: most of those looking forward to the cleansing power of a great war had had in their minds a sanitary, romanticized version of battles fought long ago. In reality, Freud added, the war had degenerated into a conflict more bloody than any of its predecessors and had produced that "virtually inconceivable phenomenon," an outburst of hate and contempt for the enemy. Freud, a man astonished at very little, was astonished at the hideous spectacle of human nature at war.

Freud's papers on war and death show him coming to terms with these harrowing events. He began bleakly enough in the first paper, describing the sense of unease and uncertainty besetting so many of his contemporaries—and himself: the sketch he drew was at least in part a self-portrait. "Seized by the whirlwind of this wartime, tendentiously informed, lacking distance from the great changes that have already taken place or are beginning to take place, and without having wind of the future that is in the process of forming, we begin to be confused about the significance of the impressions that intrude upon us and the value of the judgments we form." These are indeed terrible times: "It seems to us as though never before has an event destroyed so many precious common possessions of humanity, confused so many of the clearest intellects, debased the highest so thoroughly. Science itself," Freud went on implacably, "has lost its dispassionate impartiality." He was saddened to see "her most deeply embittered servants" borrowing weapons from science. "Anthropologists feel it necessary to declare the adversary inferior and degenerate; psychiatrists, to proclaim the diagnosis of his mental or spiritual sickness." In this situation, the person who has not been caught up in warfare

directly, and has "not become a small particle of the gigantic war machine," must feel at once bewildered and inhibited in his capacity for work The predictable consequence is disappointment, disillusionment.

Freud judged that psychoanalysis might somewhat mitigate these feelings by putting them into perspective. They rest on a view of human nature that cannot withstand realistic examination. Elemental, primitive human impulses, neither good nor bad in themselves, seek expression, but are inhibited by social controls and internal brakes. This process is universal. But the pressure of modern civilization for taming the drives has been excessive, and so have its expectations of human behavior. At least, the war has deprived everyone of the illusion that humanity is originally good. In truth, our fellow citizens "have not sunk so low as we feared, because they had not at all risen so high as we had thought."

Freud's paper is an essay in consolation, an unwonted exercise for a stoic who refused to believe that psychoanalysis could, or should, traffic in that commodity. "My courage sinks to stand up before my fellow humans as a prophet," he would tell them sternly in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "and I bow before their reproach that I do not know how to bring them consolation—for that is fundamentally what they all demand, the wildest revolutionaries no less than the most conformist pious believers." But that was in 1930. In 1915, he could have used a little consolation himself. For all his awareness that there might be a "biological and psychological necessity of suffering for the economy of human life," Freud could yet "condemn war in its means and aims, and yearn for the cessation of all wars." If the war has destroyed that hope, has exhibited that yearning to be an illusion, psychoanalytic realism might, he thought, help his readers to survive the war years less depressed, less despairing.

Freud's paper on death, somber as its subject may appear, also mentions the contributions of psychoanalysis to an understanding of the modern mind, and takes the calamities of the war as one more proof that psychoanalysis is close to the essential truth about human nature. Modern man, Freud argued, denies the reality of his own death and resorts to imaginative devices to mitigate the impact that the death of others might have upon him. That is why he finds the novel and the stage so agreeable: they permit him to identify with a hero's death while surviving him. "In the realm of fiction we find the plurality of lives we need."

Primitive man, too, finds his mortality unreal and unimaginable, but in one respect he is closer to hidden psychological realities than repressed, cultivated modern man can be: he openly rejoices at the death of enemies. It was only with the emergence of conscience in civilized societies that the injunction "Thou shalt not kill" could become a fundamental law of conduct. But

modern man, much like primitive man, is at bottom, in his unconscious, nothing better than a murderer. Deny it as he will, aggressiveness lies concealed behind courtesy and kindliness. Still, aggression is not simply a liability; as Freud noted in a much-quoted passage, primitive aggression that is converted into its opposite by the defensive stratagem of reaction formation can serve civilization. "The strongest egotists as children can become the most helpful citizens, those most capable of self-sacrifice. Most enthusiasts for compassion"—*Mitleidsschwärmer*—"friends of humanity, protectors of animals, have evolved from little sadists and animal tormentors."

What the Great War has done, Freud concluded, has been to make these unpalatable truths highly visible by exposing cultivated evasiveness for what it is. The war has "stripped us of our later cultural superimpositions, and has let the primeval man within us into the light." This exposure may have its uses. It makes men see themselves more truthfully than before and helps them discard illusions that have turned out to be damaging. "We recall the old proverb *Si vis pacem, para bellum.* If you want to preserve peace, arm for war. It would be timely to paraphrase it: *Si vis vitam, para mortem.* If you want to endure life, prepare yourself for death." The time would come in the next few years when Freud could test his prescription on himself.