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PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

At the end of the nineteenth century medical and psychological knowledge was already being used for sketching out biographies of «geniuses» and «great men. « Medical writers, such as Lombroso, Magnan, Moreau, Morel, Mobius, and Nordau wrote these «pathographies. «Being at the interface of medical/psychological text and literary texts, they included descriptions of «exceptional degenerates. «In the early twentieth century, pioneer psychoanalysts modified psychopathological excursions in their case studies («histories»). Although psychoanalytic theory, method and practice were formulated in the medical setting, and became then gradually more attached to psychology, they also have a close contact with the historical («genetic,» or developmental) point of view. In the analytic situation, the history of the analyst and is constructed and reconstructed. This clinical or psychotherapeutic situation is largely focused on personal developmental history (actually fantasies of it). As Erik H. Erikson¹ expressed it, the «therapeutic encounter» is a historical process.

Psychoanalytic theory was routinely applied to cultural and historical subjects, although Freud himself warned historians and psychoanalysts that they should take into account that «it is impossible to understand the past for sure because we cannot guess the motives of men, their psychic essence, and thus we cannot interpret their actions. People of the past are like dreams of which we do not have any associations, and only laymen can demand that we should interpret such dreams»². Freud analyzed historical figures in his letters, but in his published works he did not much venture into psychobiography, except perhaps in *Moses and Monotheism* (first called by Freud a «historical novel») and in a dubious collaboration with William Bullitton Thomas Woodrow Wilson. Freud's essays on Jensen's novel *Gradiva*,

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Leonardo da Vinci and Dostoevsky contain fragments of psychoanalytic biography, but they are not exactly historical studies. Rather, they exemplify psychoanalytic approaches to art and literature³.

Despite Freud's reservations, many of his followers, unacquainted with historical research, did not hesitate to present psychoanalytic studies of historical personalities. This «Freudian festival» produced intuitive and impressionistic case histories in the clinical psychopathological tradition. Life histories were invaded by clinical case histories, and historical records were infiltrated by patient records. The primacy of early childhood experiences remained the corner stone of these studies. Ideographical subjective features were raised to homothetic and universal proportions, without any effort at evaluating sources or reflecting on the plausibility of conclusions.

Psycho historical perspectives trace historical motivations to the development of human desires, emotions, fantasies, defenses, dependencies, and self/object representation and relations. Psycho historical conceptions (for example, child rearing mode, group fantasy, psycho class, the lead eraser delegate and a poison container, traumatic reliving) are used in connection with biographical information about childhood, youth and family background of the subjects/actors (both individual and collective) of history. Psychohistory was first heavily oriented toward psychoanalysis, and thus to unconscious motivation and in traps chic under currents of historical (lateral so current) events. Rudolph Bunion⁴ has called this applied psychoanalysis a «false start, »since it easily led psycho historians to neglect the close reading of historic records while reading into them psychoanalytic patient records. Clinical concern for the assessment and psycho diagnosis of personality ended to infiltrate psycho historical-psycho biographical research, thus stressing individual psychological issues instead of large-scale human group processes and interactions⁵.

Psycho history, as formulated by Lloyd de Mause (1975), one of its leading proponents, comprises the history of childhood, psycho biographical approaches and group psycho history. As the science of historical motivation, it has been introduced as the antidote to traditional history. In term so fits academic ranking, de Mause⁶ considered it necessary for psycho history «to split off from history and form its own department within the academy in much the same way that sociology broke off from economic and psychology from philosophy in the late 19-th century. «Psycho historical research has been carried out by many scholars other than historians. «The choice of problems — not the material studied— defines the discipline,» de Mause (ibid.) reminded his readers. Political science,

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Economics and sociology have faced severe theoretical and methodological difficulties in trying to cope with psychological assumptions. While these fields have mainly kept political, economic and social fact or sap art from

psychological factors in interpreting history, psycho history has reversed the paradigm: historical motivations can only be studied when we accept the fact that there are no political, economic or social «forces,» «powers, » «organizations» or «systems» without the concomitant psychological, psycho historical processes. The talk about «social impacts» on human action, history and politics rhetorically by passes the human being as a self-regulating, psychically and experientially developing and interacting agent, who also modifies his or her environmental and societal relations. Political and cultural theories have their share of sterile abstractions, but also psycho historical interpretations have had their fixations that may partly be blamed for «psychologism»⁷.

Freud (1921) already recognized the difficulties in carrying individual psychological conceptions over to analyzing «mass psychological» phenomena. He pioneered the psychoanalytic study of a mass leader and the led. Psycho historians are in a demanding position because they need to use their own emotions, fantasies, identifications and transferences as working tool in order to reach, discover and recognize what is «out there» on the basis of what is «in here. «Analyzing all the world «on the couch» means taking into account issues of the self and others in individual, group, nation-wide and even global interactions and communications. The research transferences of a psycho historian should be open to detecting blind spots in one's own and others' previous research. Such transformative endeavors include co-constructing fruit full research project sand co-operating in them⁸.

Early researchers of budding psychohistory were psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and psychologists who often lacked this skills for sound historical research. During and after World War II, man yearly psycho biographical studies focused on Hitler and the Nazis⁹. For example, Erik H. Erikson¹⁰ studied the appeal made by the imagery of Hitler to the unconscious passions of German youth. In the United States, A. Bronson Feldman (1952/1959) investigated the mythology of revolution and war as manifested by the popular cult of Lincoln the Liberator. Bruce Mazlish, Robert Waite and William L. Langer were early academic historians positively tuned into psycho history. American political leaders such as Richard Nixon¹¹, Theodore Roosevelt¹², Henry Kissinger¹³ and Jimmy Carter¹⁴ have been case-studied from psychohistorical-psychobiographical perspectives¹⁵. Historical records usually have a short age of detailed data on childhood and sometimes even on youth. Thus, psycho biographical developmental interpretations of ten have to be made from scant data, but related to the care full study of historical records

they may give in triggering and unique in sights in to the doings of man.

Different kinds of psychological the oriels may be used for psycho historical and psycho biographical purposes¹⁶. No pre given theory should totally determine psychological interpretations of history. These theories were traditionally mostly psychoanalytic or, more broadly, psycho dynamic. This theoretical orientation reached saturation in the 1970. Since then there have been more eclectic currents, mixing and modifying earlier traditions with ego-psychological, object-relations, humanistic and phenomenological, as well asocial-psychological, cognitive-psychological and even evolutionary-psychological and neuro-psychoanalytic impacts, and linking them to personality, developmental, motivational and social-interactional issues. Psycho historical material sand ways of interpreting are now a days of ten included in biographies. The history of mentalities, gender history, gay and lesbian history as well as the history of emotions also often verge on psychohistory¹⁷. In the future there may be a shift toward more interdisciplinary research projects among psycho historians. Because it is in the direction of our present-day desires, psychological, psychotherapeutic and psycho historical concepts «permeate all aspects of society, and have transformed the way that we see the world»[5,2000,p.137]. Psychohistorical and psychobiographical studies are exciting, emotional-intellectual enterprises, for psycho history may still be the only approach to history explicitly based on human love, and on the displacement and re-enactment of mismanaged love on to historical (political, economic, social) arenas.

Methodological problems. The psychohistorical-psychobiographical approach often confronts the short age of detailed data on childhood and child rearing. This poses certain limits on detecting and studying developmental, motivational and personality patterns among individuals and groups in the historical as well as in the current context. Close reading of primary sources would be needed in the future to produce a broader and not such an impressionistic picture of the emotional and motivational basis of social action. More systematic narrative research methods are also sorely needed [McAdams and Ochberg, 1988; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992]. Political scientists have faced obstacles while trying to incorporate psychological theories in the inquest to understand and even predict (and perhaps control) political behavior. Psycho historical research can offer o me clues for making better use of both

historical research and psychological theories for such purposes. At present, unfortunately, psychological theories of, for example, charisma, leadership, large groups and intra- and inter-group conflicts are not very coherent. However, de Mause's (2002) later work on the emotional life of nations, sacrificial-cleansing war sand group-fantasies and Volkan's (2004; 2006) new works on ethnic error and collective regression (in trying to avoid traumatic humiliation) have given valuable insights into the fabrication of enemy images and into the self-right eons revenge mentality.

Psycho historians have mainly abandoned the dominating impact of clinical-psychological orientations to some extent, which has resulted in the adoption of mostly eclectic theoretical positions and, lately, also in interdisciplinary projects. They use their own special methodology of discovery in these positions and projects, which requires them to make use of their own emotions, identifications, transference and counter transferences as research tools. Opening up new vistas may sometimes require in fugitive and sensitive fantasies and unconfirmed but exciting constructions. To discuss the implications of these personal equations and immersions would require more attention and critical awareness than has been hitherto the practice in scientific evaluation. Psycho historians do not possess any magical divining graces or predictive skills. Psycho history has to depend on relevant documents, consistent concepts, the parsimony and coverage of theories, and empirically testable hypotheses. The scientific attitude has to be incorporated into psycho historical research, too. Psycho historians have to build on careful observations and to make clear assumptions about the «order of things. «They have to be keenly aware of, and to pull together, the relevant materials, and to search for general principles, models or paradigms. They have to accept the possible bias and errors and the tentative nature of their conclusions. They also have to be ready to participate in public and social self-criticism and re-evaluation of their research results.

Besides logical-epistemological criteria, there are subjective criteria (emotional and intellectual conviction and meaning resonance) for the validation of a psycho historical thesis. Binion (2001) has also proposed that a psycho historical thesis confirmed if «the known evidence all runs its way,» if that thesis «could potentially be refuted by new evidence,» and if finally any piece of what that thesis purports to explain «cannot very well be explained otherwise. «It may be that, nowadays, psychohistorical-psychohistorical research has heuristic value and functional applicability while pointing to historical and current issues concerning these find others (loss of identity, fragmentation, regression, transition) at the crossroads of psychological

development, personality formation, political behavior and cultural transformation. The leap from in trap sychictointra-andinter-groupprocesses is, however, a tedious one, and it has not been unproblematic in many psycho historical studies. The individual psychological conceptions do not easily lend themselves to being linked to large historical and societal vistas.

The psycho historical view cannot give priority to economic and political factors in approaches to human action. Such issues are interspersed throughout with longed for psychological coping strategies and defense mechanisms, with thought patterns, emotional constellations, group interactions, and mixtures of memories, dissociations and repressed desires. Human action cannot be predicted solely based on childhood background and the group fantasies of social actors. Still, psychohistorical-psychohistorical perspectives may well produce an understanding of the roots of displaced love projected, for example, on to the political stage, and help to provide preventive measures against man's destructive love of death, «necrophilia. «This means remembering and opening up the past, and presenting new questions about our desires for the future. Arguably, it may be as difficult to predict the future as to assess the present, the actual state of affairs.

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