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J Am Psychoanal Assoc 1983; 31; 157

DOI: 10.1177/000306518303100106

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FREUD'S EGO IDEALS:
A STUDY OF ADMIRERED
MODERN HISTORICAL JACQUES SZALUTA, PH.D.
AND POLITICAL
PERSONAGES

SIGMUND FREUD WAS A MAN OF MANY VOCATIONS. In addition to being a physician, and ultimately a psychoanalyst, he was also an art critic, translator, philosopher—and a historian. What is so remarkable about Freud's voluminous writings, besides the obvious presentation and exposition of his revolutionary theory of psychoanalysis, is that they reveal him to have had a keen understanding of the past, making numerous historical references, and well-informed opinions on many historical personages. Although not formally trained as a historian, the founder of psychoanalysis, as does psychoanalysis itself, took a historical approach to the study of man and society. Because of Freud's profound interest in the past he had strong feelings for many of the men whom he cited or discussed in his works and correspondence. The purpose of this article is to examine the individuals whom Freud admired—his ego ideals—and to try to explain why in particular he selected them and what these choices reveal about his own personal dynamics.

Freud admired and wrote about many and varied figures. They may be classified as literary, biblical, philosophical, and medical personages, to cite but a few categories. This study,

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however, will focus on the historical and political figures whom Freud admired, and will be confined to the modern era, starting from approximately the period of early modern Europe and going to Freud's own time. The seventeenth century to the twentieth is generally considered a historically distinctive block of time.

Freud's involvement with the study of history was so intense that it can be characterized as a passion. In some instances an aspect of his "self-feelings" influencing the development of his specific neurotic symptomatology was related to a particular association he made with certain historical events. This depth of feeling can be gathered from the fact that although Freud loved to travel, and especially to Italy, like one of his boyhood heroes, Hannibal, with whom he identified, he too was unable to enter Rome. As with Hannibal, who failed to take the city, Rome for Freud, despite his great interest in the classical period, for a time represented destruction and death. Not until he was forty-five was he able to venture to Rome. On the conscious level Rome was the seat of the Catholic church, and in Freud's experience Catholicism meant anti-Semitism. Unconsciously, Freud's phobia for Rome stemmed from a Czechoslovakian Roman Catholic nursemaid who had taken care of him in his first two and a half years of life. The influence of this elderly woman, Freud recognized, had intensified his oedipal complex to such an extent that his inability to go to Rome "was a result of incestuous wishes toward his mother and the specific choice of the city was an unconscious representation of his feelings toward the Roman Catholic nursemaid" (Grigg, 1973, p. 109). What is especially pertinent here is Freud's sense of history and the reasons for his identification with Hannibal. His own words are:

I had actually been following in Hannibal's footsteps. Like him, I had been fated not to see Rome; and he too had moved into the Campagna when everyone had expected him in Rome. But Hannibal, whom I had come to resemble in these respects, had been the favourite hero of my later

school days. Like so many boys of that age, I had sympathized in the Punic Wars not with the Romans but with the Carthaginians. And when in the higher classes I began to understand for the first time what it meant to belong to an alien race, and anti-Semitic feelings among the other boys warned me that I must take up a definite position, the figure of the Semitic general rose still higher in my esteem. To my youthful mind Hannibal and Rome symbolized the conflict between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic church [Freud, 1900, p. 196].

His interest in history is further adduced by his recalling that "One of the first books that I got hold of when I learnt to read was Thiers' history of the Consulate and the Empire" (1900, p. 197), and how he played with wooden toy soldiers, sticking labels on their backs with the names of Napoleon's marshals. His favorite, he declares, was Masséna. Clearly, his interest in the past, and a search for heroes, started at a precocious age.

There are numerous such examples of sublimation *in statu nascendi* in Freud's life. Another relevant incident, which occurred a few years after he overcame his "Rome neurosis," is his trip to Greece to view the Acropolis. The scene there was so overwhelming for him that it led to his gaining additional insights into his personality. He published his reactions in a letter entitled "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis. Upon arrival he thought to himself in wonderment, "So all this really *does* exist, just as we learnt in school!" (Freud, 1936, p. 241). With characteristic insight, and drawing on another historical episode, he fantasied telling his brother, Alexander, who was on the trip with him:

'And now, here we are in Athens, and standing on the Acropolis! We really *have* gone a long way!' So too, if I may compare such a small event with a greater one, Napoleon, during his coronation as Emperor in Notre Dame, turned to one of his brothers—it must no doubt have been

the eldest one, Joseph—and remarked: ‘What would *Monsieur notre Père* have said to this, if he could have been here to-day?’ [p. 247].

Propitiously, Freud’s anxiety and sense of “derealization” led to a penetrating insight into his conflict with his father.¹ Again, his own words must be used:

It must be that a sense of guilt was attached to the satisfaction in having gone such a long way: there was something about it that was wrong, that from earliest times had been forbidden. It was something to do with a child’s criticism of his father, with the undervaluation which took the place of the overvaluation of earlier childhood. It seems as though the essence of success was to have got further than one’s father, and as though to excel one’s father was still something forbidden [1936, p. 247].

To be sure, Freud was well aware of the psychic importance of ego ideals, and he developed and defined this concept. In his pivotal work “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” Freud (1914) introduced the concept of “ego ideal.” He explains: “Idealization is a process that concerns the *object*; by it that object, without any alteration in its nature, is aggrandized and exalted in the subject’s mind. Idealization is possible in the sphere of ego-libido as well as in that of object-libido” (p. 94). Pertinent to its application to Freud himself, in the context of this paper, is his indication that “It would not surprise us if we were to find a special psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal is ensured and which, with this end in view, constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal” (p. 95). And as will be elaborated, the following statement is also applicable to Freud, to whom, on the one hand, the parental influence gave a socially acceptable direction but, on the other hand, an especially

¹ On the Acropolis experience, see Kanzer (1976). For a discussion of the literature on the significance of Freud’s “Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,” see Fisher (1976).

marked ambivalent feeling toward his father and authority. He states: ". . . what prompted the subject to form an ego ideal, on whose behalf his conscience acts as a watchman, arose from the critical influence of his parents (conveyed to him by the medium of the voice), to whom were added, as time went on, those who were trained and taught him and the innumerable and indefinable host of all the other people in his environment—his fellow-men—and public opinion" (p. 96).

The first of Freud's ego ideals will now be considered.² Freud had a special fondness for England, considering it the home of rational liberty. He liked its institutions, literature, and many of its political figures. One English figure who loomed large in Freud's estimation was Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell was the Puritan leader during the English Civil War of 1642-1649, who established a republic, and in 1653 became Lord Protector, in effect dictator—albeit unwillingly—of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. There were many issues that caused the Civil War, but the main contention revolved about who would dominate the country—the king, Charles I, or the parliament. Under the leadership of Cromwell, the parliamentary forces ultimately won, and brought about the execution of Charles I. Although Cromwell had misgivings about committing regicide, his name appears third among the 59 signatories on the king's death warrant.

What is so relevant for consideration here, in addition to the matter of Cromwell's conflict with the king, are the facts that he rose from obscurity, displayed outstanding military and political leadership abilities, and brought about many reforms. In the battles with the royalist forces, Cromwell distinguished himself, emerging as an eminent general, and this success paved the way for political power. Even after power was attained, however, Cromwell's Puritan regime met with opposition. Domestically, England was divided, Scotland and Ireland were rebellious; internationally, England had to fight Holland and

² For a theoretical and clinical discussion on the development of the superego and ego ideals, germane to this study, see Beres (1958).

Spain. Yet, despite Cromwell's continued conflicts with parliament, his achievements were considerable. Essentially, Cromwell was unusually progressive for his time in consenting to religious toleration, allowing Quakers to worship freely and permitting Jews to reenter England. This toleration, however, did not extend to the Catholic church (Fraser, 1973).

Cromwell amply met Freud's criteria for being an ego ideal, but this also reflected Freud's ambivalence toward his father. There was a heroic quality to Cromwell, having risen from obscurity to eminence and great power. Moreover, what Freud appreciated was Cromwell's policy of greater toleration and his position on the Jews. As for his policy toward Catholics, "Cromwell's opposition to Catholicism may have pleased Freud as it fitted in with some of his own feelings resulting from his experience with anti-Semitism" (Grinstein, 1968, p. 388).

Also remarkable, as Grinstein (1968) has pointed out, was the physical resemblance between Cromwell and Freud's father; they both had reddish complexions. This factor helped to contribute to Freud's idealized transference for Cromwell. Some of Freud's identification, however, was negative and ambivalent, since he wished his father to have been more like Cromwell. Freud appreciated Cromwell because he was a revolutionary, even though he had committed brutalities. His esteem for Cromwell was so high that he named his second son Oliver after him. This accolade clearly reflected his associations with his father. Freud (1900) explains that Cromwell had

... powerfully attracted me in my boyhood, especially since my visit to England. During the year before the child's birth I had made up my mind to use this name if it were a son and I greeted the new-born baby with it with a feeling of high *satisfaction*. (It is easy to see how the suppressed megalomania of fathers is transferred in their thoughts on to their children, and it seems quite probable that this is one of the ways in which the suppression of that feeling,

which becomes necessary in actual life, is carried out.) [p. 448].³

Another figure who appealed to Freud, and who receives a great deal of attention in his works is Napoleon Bonaparte. His frequent references to Napoleon are well informed and his appraisal of him is profound. On the one hand, his critique of Napoleon is perceptive, as when he describes him as “. . . that terrible scamp Napoleon who fixated as he was on his puberty phantasies, favored by incredible luck and uninhibited by any bonds except to his family, roved through the world like a somnambulist only to founder at the end in megalomania. There has hardly ever been a genius to whom every trace of nobility was so alien, such a classical anti-gentleman” (Jones, 1957, p. 190).

Napoleon, Freud admits, had been a martial ideal to him, and in his youth he had considered pursuing a military career. Although this ambition was not an enduring one, Napoleon remained an attractive person. It was of paramount importance to Freud that Napoleon was a product of the momentous French Revolution and the exponent of much of its ideology. Napoleon fought and humbled the leading monarchies of Europe, thereby weakening the twin pillars of feudalism—the aristocracy and the Catholic church. Among the old ruling monarchies he defeated was the Austrian House of Hapsburg. After Napoleon took power in France he acted opportunistically at home, but abroad he continued to be a revolutionary, advancing the rallying slogan of the revolution—“Careers open to talent.” Napoleon’s influence throughout Europe was a liberating one, and concerning the Jews, furthered their emancipation. When triumphant French soldiers entered the Germanic countries, they literally tore down the walls of the ghettos (Sachar, 1963, p. 66). And if the Jews had been generally excluded from performing military service during the *ancien régime*, they

³ Freud’s two other sons were also named after admired personages, Martin for Jacques Martin Charcot and Ernst for Ernst Wilhelm Bruecke. On Freud’s fascination with historical names, see Bernfeld (1951).

could and did serve in the Napoleonic armies. For Freud, these policies were confirmed because one of Napoleon's leading commanders, Marshal Masséna, whom he believed to be Jewish, rose to prominence. Masséna, whose name Freud erroneously thought to have originally been Manasseh, was his "declared favourite" for still another reason than possibly being of Jewish ancestry. As Freud (1900) says: "No doubt this preference was also partly to be explained by the fact that my birthday fell on the same day as his, exactly a hundred years later" (pp. 197-198).

Napoleon and Messéna were ego ideals for Freud, both having had spectacular careers, and both having come from obscure backgrounds. But it was the Revolution that had made this possible. As with Cromwell, Napoleon was regarded as progressive by Freud, and Napoleon did beneficially affect the conditions of the Jews. His deeds entered the folklore of eastern European Jews, and Freud's family shared in these changes and attitudes. Such policies and examples further served to stimulate Freud's ambitions.

A figure with heroic and intrepid qualities, and contemporary with Freud, was the Italian nationalist and revolutionary leader Giuseppe Garibaldi. Born in 1807, he had risen from obscurity, and plebeian origin, to international prominence.

That Garibaldi impressed Freud is obvious, and that Freud associated him ambivalently with his father is also evident. Recalling the manifest content of a dream he had had about his father (who died in 1896) Freud (1900) writes:

I remembered how like Garibaldi he had looked on his death-bed, and felt glad that that promise had come true . . . Those of us who were standing round had in fact remarked how like Garibaldi my father looked on his death-bed. He had a post-mortem rise of temperature, his cheeks had been flushed more and more deeply red . . . [p. 428].

A comparison of photographs of Freud's father and Garibaldi in fact shows a striking similarity between them (Grinstein, 1968, p. 380).

Like Freud, Garibaldi too had a fixation about Rome. Garibaldi, a leading force in the unification of Italy, demonstrates his strong affects regarding that city by writing in his autobiography that "the liberation of Rome" was "my whole life's ideal" (Garibaldi, 1889, 2:285).⁴

In the leading political and international developments during Freud's youth, the Hapsburg Empire was intricately involved. For the second half of the nineteenth century, whether the issues were Italian or German unification or stands taken by other European countries, Austria played a key role in these affairs. Since many of Garibaldi's exploits occurred during Freud's own lifetime, making him a witness to these changes, it is germane to consider the history of this period in greater detail. Sometimes the exposure to these dramatic events were personal and graphic for Freud. In 1866, for instance, when Freud was ten years old, Austria was at war with Prussia and Italy. With his father, who took him to see the returning wounded soldiers, the young Freud would observe their predicament as they were transferred from the train in which they arrived to hay carts, and then transported to hospitals. The condition of these wounded made such an impression on him that he "begged his mother to let him have her old linen so that he could make what was called *Charpie* for them, the predecessor of medicated cotton." And in his school, Freud asked his teachers to organize *Charpie* groups (Jones, 1953, p. 21). Such encounters had the effect of heightening Freud's curiosity and interest in history.

Italian nationalism for most of the nineteenth century by definition was anti-Austrian and anti-Papal. The republican and socialist Garibaldi embodied this radical spirit. To all Italian nationalists, Italy would not be complete unless Rome became the capital of the country. However, Rome was also the seat of the Vatican, and many countries were concerned that this sit-

And in a still more impassioned mood, Garibaldi declared: "I will never sheath my sword until Rome is proclaimed the capital of united Italy. Rome or death" (Garibaldi, 1889, 3:364).

uation persist. For Catholic Austria, support of the Pope and his papal territory fitted in very well with her domestic and diplomatic policy. After 1814, with the predominance of Metternich in Austria and in European diplomacy, Austrian policies were reactionary, opposed to democracy, nationalism, and republicanism. And as the Hapsburg Empire included extensive territories on the Italian peninsula, any attempt to change the *status quo* would be a direct threat to her interests.

Like the unification of Germany, the unification of Italy was achieved by a series of wars. And just as the Prussian house of Hohenzollern was instrumental in providing the leadership for German unification, so the Piedmontese house of Savoy played a similar role. Under the diplomatic leadership of Cavour, the prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, alliances were created for the purpose of increasing the power of Piedmont. By deftly manipulating Napoleon III, Cavour made an alliance with France and tricked Austria into going to war in 1859. The war ended inconclusively, but its eventual outcome was the territorial aggrandizement of Piedmont. This anti-Austrian war stimulated nationalist sentiment, since Austria was now considered the hereditary opponent. Garibaldi did much to stimulate this popular sentiment, but unlike Cavour, and King Victor Emmanuel II whom he represented, Garibaldi operated from a different base of power. Cavour was a practitioner of *realpolitik*, based on fairly conventional, if devious, diplomatic maneuvers. Unlike the romantic Garibaldi, he abhorred the implications of fighting on the barricades. But Garibaldi, though less concerned with diplomatic conventions, was also instrumental in bringing about Italian unification. With his legion of a thousand "redshirts," which swelled wherever he arrived, Garibaldi nearly brought about a grave international crisis. In his triumphal march northward, crossing over and landing in southern Italy in 1860 after having conquered Sicily, Garibaldi promised to take Rome. Rome, however, since 1848, had been guarded by French soldiers, and the Pope had declared his neutrality in this struggle. Garibaldi's threat, aside

from its international implications, could also very well bring on an Italian civil war. At the crucial moment, Garibaldi deferred to the king, Victor Emmanuel II, and Cavour, and consented to curb his radical activities. But the circumstances of international politics were to be favorable for Piedmont to expand, and the popular agitation which Garibaldi had stimulated was to make for eventual success (Mack Smith, 1954). In 1866, Piedmont allied with Prussia and defeated Austria. Her gaining the province of Venetia was the benefit. In 1870, with France involved in a war with Prussia and no longer able to protect Rome, Italian forces simply walked in and took Rome. Rome, despite the protestations of the Pope, was declared the capital of the country. The Pope, moreover, declared himself to be "prisoner" in the Vatican and demanded that Italians not recognize the new government. This tension was to persist until 1922, when Mussolini negotiated the Lateran agreements. Significantly, the movement which Garibaldi had led had of necessity been anticlerical.

The reason for Freud's sense of kinship with Garibaldi was not only that he had had clashes with leading figures of authority. The causes that Garibaldi advocated were in accord with Freud's own historical aspirations. Nonetheless, Garibaldi was a rough individualist who had committed brutalities. In this respect he also resembled Cromwell. As Grinstein (1968) perceptively finds, Cromwell and Garibaldi "had certain very positive qualities which he [Freud] may have ascribed to his father, and others which he may have wished his father had had. At the same time he seems to have attributed to his father some of the negative aspects of these men." In sum, based on the account of Freud's dream of his father's death, and his association with Garibaldi, "it is evident that his father's death evoked a storm of ambitious feelings of long standing, of wanting to rise above his father and triumph in his own great achievements" (p. 389).

Another contemporary figure, but one who dominated European affairs in the years of Freud's maturity, and whose

influence was even more consequential for Freud than Garibaldi's, was the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck. Freud's fascination with Bismarck was so compelling that when the retired chancellor visited Vienna in 1892, when Freud was thirty-six, Freud waited in the street and made several attempts to get a close look at him. He spent two and a half hours trying to see him, but all he got was a glimpse of his back. Jones (1953) remarks that this was "behavior one would have thought atypical of Freud" (p. 192).

Starting in adolescence, Freud closely followed Bismarck's career, fired by his exploits. During the Franco-Prussian War, when Freud was fourteen, he took such an interest in this conflict that he acquired a large map which he dotted with small flags in order to pursue the vicissitudes of the campaign. He would then enthusiastically give lectures to his sisters on the strategies of the respective forces (Jones, 1953, p. 23).

The vital features of Bismarck's policies will now be discussed. This historical background must be considered because it affected Freud directly and influenced his political orientation. In 1861, the year before Bismarck was summoned by King William I to accept the positions of minister president and minister of foreign affairs, Prussia was engulfed in a critical political crisis. The issues that served as a catalyst were the questions over the size of the army and the length of service for conscripts. By extension, this was also a contest over the control of the national budget between the nascent parliamentary forces and the autocratic King William I, an ardent heir of the Hohenzollern legacy and tradition. Its resolution, in either direction, would have wide social implications. Soon after his appointment, Bismarck made his celebrated speech to parliament in which he declared that the great issues confronting them would not be resolved by democratic discussion or majority votes, but by "blood and iron." Appropriately, he earned the appellation of "Iron Chancellor." By acting aggressively and unscrupulously he defeated the parliamentary opposition. Bismarck's triumph entrenched the feudal powers of the king and the Junkers, lasting till 1918.

This single achievement made him indispensable to the king and the preeminent leader in Prussia. Ultimately, it paved the way for his diplomatic ascendancy. One of his goals was to achieve German unity. He accomplished this, with great finesse, and emerged as the most consummate statesman in Europe. But to achieve this goal, Bismarck had to wage three wars. In his first one, in 1864, he manipulated Austria to be his ally against Denmark. In 1866, he found a pretext to go to war with Austria, his erstwhile ally. Austria was defeated, and this caused great changes in the Hapsburg Empire. On the one hand it marked the relative military decline of Austria, but on the other brought about greater liberalization in the country. Then in 1870, Bismarck manipulated France to declare war. The result was another Prussian triumph, bringing about the unification of Germany and the relative decline of France. Because of Bismarck's efforts, King William was proclaimed, in Versailles itself, the German emperor (Pflanze, 1963). After 1871, judging it to be in Germany's best interests, Bismarck strove to maintain peace in Europe.

These years of upheaval and change directly affected the fortunes of Freud and his family. Moreover, such events caused Freud to direct his attention to Bismarck, the commanding statesman of his day, who remained in power until 1890. Freud's idealization of Bismarck was closely tied to his feelings toward his father. Freud's father also admired Bismarck, because he had brought about German unification, which the father, born in 1815 like Bismarck, considered progressive. When the father had to make a change and adapt his birthday from the Jewish to the Christian calendar, he showed his esteem for Bismarck by selecting his birthday. However, despite their mutual affinity for Bismarck, the father's gesture was to serve the son to express hostility toward his father (see Szaluta, 1980). Freud once asked his friend Wilhelm Fliess "whether his numerical computations could predict which of the two men would die first" (Jones, 1953). To be sure, Freud's idealization of Bismarck was tempered with some reservation because "he expressed the opinion

that Bismarck like a nightmare (*Alp*) weighed heavy on the whole continent: his death would bring universal relief." In reaction to this sentiment, Jones perceptively quips: "This may well have been a perfectly objective political judgment, but it is pertinent to recall that Freud's father's birthday was the same as Bismarck's" (p. 192).

It is to be noted that all the public figures admired by Freud discussed here either advanced secularism or contested the power of the Catholic church. Bismarck, as Freud well knew, was essentially an aggressive and ruthless person, which should have made Freud pause in his partisanship for him. Yet, decades later, after his departure from power, when Bismarck's legacy was even more discredited, Freud remained favorably disposed to him. This attitude is revealed by his acceptance of a dream of Bismarck's lauditorily interpreted by Hanns Sachs and published in a revised edition (in 1913) of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Szaluta, 1980, pp. 215-227). In a sense, by subjectively arranging the evidence of Bismarck's performance and policies, Freud could readily make Bismarck appear as a staunchly anti-Catholic crusader, and therefore meet Freud's criteria for acceptance. After the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck was instrumental in replacing the French monarchy with a republican form of government (Bismarck, 1898, pp. 251-256). He felt, with some justification, that a republican regime would tend to be isolated diplomatically, more so than a monarchy. Ironically, the very conservative Bismarck, in this instance, advanced the cause of the traditions of the French Revolution. To cite only the highlights of the subsequent developments of this policy, we note that the Catholic forces in France did not readily accept this accommodation and, for domestic reasons, opposed a regime deemed anticlerical. This contention culminated in the notorious Dreyfus affair in 1894, which was a cover for an attempt to overthrow the republican government. After withstanding the crisis caused by the affair, the government retaliated. It led to a separation of church and state and concerted anticlericalism (Wright, 1960).

It is germane to note that Bismarck's policies also were beneficial to the Italian government because of its annexation of Rome. Before 1870 France had been the protector of the Pope, a concession Napoleon III had made to his Catholic constituents. This matter was of concern to the Italian government, for at some future time France could again be in a position to intervene in Italy and restore the seized territories to the Pope. But thanks to the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War, France was less likely to take such a step (Bismarck, 1898, pp. 257-265).

If Bismarck's foreign policy appeared to be in opposition to Catholic countries, which was not, as such, his intention, his domestic policy could be construed to be overtly so. With the unification in 1871, since the additional Germanic areas that joined the Reich were primarily Catholic regions, Bismarck launched the celebrated *Kulturkampf*, or Battle of Civilizations. This conflict was marked by a direct attack on the Catholic church, and also singled out the newly formed political organization of the church, the Catholic Center Party. The ferocity of the struggle escalated, taking such forms as trying to end clerical influence in schools, banishing the Jesuits from Germany, and labeling the Center Party leaders as *Reichsfeinde*, that is, enemies of the state. Support for this struggle was widespread, since Germany was the historic home of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Bismarck, at first, had support from Protestant groups and the liberal forces in Germany. But he failed, and then he allied himself with his former opponent. The new pariah for Bismarck, which again demonstrated his authoritarian and reactionary sentiments, was the Social Democratic Party.

Bismarck's maneuvers affected Austria directly, internally and internationally, and ultimately Austria's fortunes were to be tied to Germany's. Freud experienced the many social changes which occurred, and which for a time appeared beneficial for him. Given Freud's own vulnerable social situation and ambivalence toward his father, Bismarck appeared pow-

erful indeed. That Bismarck's policies at the same time entailed aggressiveness directed toward himself and those forces he supported was not a conscious deterrent. In this instance, Bismarck's being an ego ideal for Freud may be considered as a defense, a form of identification with the aggressor (Szaluta, 1980, p. 241).

As a youth, Freud considered many careers before he decided to become a physician. He had considered law, politics, and the army. As Freud (1925) writes, "Under the powerful influence of a school friendship with a boy rather my senior who grew up to be a well-known politician, I developed a wish to study law like him and to engage in social activities" (p. 8). This man was Victor Adler, a prominent leader of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Unlike the previously discussed ego ideals, Freud knew Adler personally, though not closely. Paradoxically, this man whom Freud admired and who was, as Freud (1900) describes him, "my senior and superior" and subsequently had "shown his ability as a leader of men and an organizer of large groups" (p. 212) had had a serious altercation with him. The reason for the dispute was over a philosophical difference. The discussion took place in a German students' club (a *Leseverein* or reading society), to which Freud belonged in the 1870's for only a few years, and the topic was the relation of philosophy to the natural sciences. As Freud (1900) humbly recalls, "I was a green youngster, full of materialistic theories, and thrust myself forward to give expression to an extremely one-sided point of view" (p. 212). When Adler sharply disagreed with Freud, Freud became belligerent. Freud was castigated for his rudeness by the others, but he not only obstinately refused to apologize to Adler, but apparently challenged him to a duel. Fortunately, Adler declined dueling the zealous Freud, and many years later the chastened Freud gratefully wrote, "The man I had insulted was too sensible to look upon the incident as a *challenge*, and let the affair drop" (p. 213).

Although the prospect of political power appealed to Freud, his eventual choice of a career was as much conditioned

by social realities as by his intellectual interests. After the 1860's Jews were able to hold high positions in government, but anti-Semitism continued to prevail. From the late 1870's on and lasting to the turn of the century, some politicians in Austria acquired elective offices by espousing anti-Semitic doctrines (Schorske, 1973; Trosman, 1976). The two most notable were the parliamentarian Georg von Schönerer and the notorious mayor of Vienna, Karl Lueger, who was Adolf Hitler's ego ideal. If Freud sought prominence in his youth, and there are indications that he did, then he would have to find a more viable route than politics (Schur, 1972, pp. 29-30; Kupper and Rollman-Branch, 1959, pp. 123-124). Adler, after World War I, became secretary of state for a brief time.

If Freud did not follow Adler in his political career, he nonetheless was sufficiently impressed by him to follow him in another manner. The house which was destined to become for many years the world center for psychoanalysis, 19 Berggasse, had at one time been occupied by Adler. The root for this step can be traced to a day in the early 1880's when Freud met an old friend, Heinrich Braun, with whom he had attended the Gymnasium. Braun invited Freud to have lunch with his brother-in-law, who was Victor Adler and who then resided at 19 Berggasse (Grotjahn, 1956, p. 651).

In 1891, Freud and his wife were looking for a more spacious residence to accommodate their growing family and Freud's practice. They had been living in a four-room apartment, in a fashionable part of Vienna. They gave a great deal of consideration to what kind of house would best suit their needs. They considered the number of rooms, the accessibility of the house for patients, the acceptability of the location, and the availability of schools for their children. One day, however, on what appeared to be an impulse, Freud decided to move into the house on 19 Berggasse.⁵

⁵ Many photographs of the house and the rooms and of Victor Adler and his wife standing in the garden of Berggasse 19 are in the substantial pictorial volume edited by Ernst Freud et al. (1978).

This sudden decision was made one afternoon when Freud took a walk, saw the sign "For Rent" in front of the house, walked in to look at it, and returned home to inform his wife that he found the ideal house for them. Mrs. Freud realized that the house was in a poor neighborhood and no successful physicians were located there, nor was it especially attractive or spacious. Mrs. Suzanne Bernfeld, who has done considerable research on Freud's early years, explains that his wife "realized that Freud had to have this house and that no other house would do" (Trosman and Wolf, 1973, p. 232). Being an understanding wife and wanting to please her husband, she said that she approved of it and that it would be a practical house for them, and thus they "did manage to live in this gloomy and impractical house for forty-seven years" (Grötjahn, 1956, p. 651).

The key to this impulsive act is to be found in that chance luncheon he had had in Adler's house a decade earlier. Adler, though only four years older, was also a psychiatrist and out-ranked Freud in Meynert's laboratory, and he appeared to be so much more successful than Freud. Mrs. Bernfeld comprehendingly gives the reason for Freud's feelings:

After Freud had left the hospitable Adlers, he found himself in a melancholy mood. Never, he must have thought, would he be able to achieve what Adler had achieved; never would he be able to marry his fiancée; never would he have a son; never would he be a respected member of the community. All his hopes and with them all the hopes of Martha seemed doomed. The simple Adler household must have appeared far beyond his reach at that time, when one considers that almost ten years later when he was already married and had a son of his own, he still unconsciously responded to the vision of fulfillment with the hunger of a struggling young student [Grötjahn, 1956, pp. 651-652].⁶

⁶ Eventually, "To go to Berggasse 19 in Vienna to have a talk with Freud was a common procedure both for teachers and students of psychoanalysis" (Alexander, 1940).

Two other nineteenth-century figures will now be discussed. These men were Ferdinand Lasalle (1825-1864) and Edward Lasker (1829-1884). They are linked together here because both are analyzed in conjunction with each other by Freud in one of his dreams. This dream, which appears in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is lengthy, receives extensive attention, and has many meanings. Only a few comments will be quoted from this dream, and they will be limited to segments pertinent to the thesis of this paper. Freud (1900) reflects:

I had a dream which consisted of two separate pieces. The first piece was the word 'Autodidasker', which I recalled vividly. The second piece was an exact reproduction of a short and harmless phantasy which I had produced some days before . . . The word 'Autodidasker' could easily be analysed into 'Autor' [author], 'Autodidakt' [self-taught] and 'Lasker', with which I also associated the name of Lasalle. The first of these words led to the precipitating cause of the dream—this time a significant one . . . The concern I felt over the danger of coming to grief over a woman—for that was the kernel of my dream-thoughts—found an example in Breslau in the cases of Lasker and Lasalle which made it possible to give a simultaneous picture of the two ways in which this fatal influence can be exercised. 'Cherchez la femme', the phrase in which these thoughts could be summarized, led me, taken in another sense, to my still unmarried brother, whose name is Alexander. I now perceived that 'Alex', the shortened form of the name by which we call him, has almost the same sound as an anagram of 'Lasker', and that this factor must have had a share in leading my thoughts along the by-path by way of Breslau [pp. 298-300].

Grinstein (1968) gives an exhaustive and insightful interpretation of this entire dream. To cite only what is germane from it, his view is that this dream, in which a Professor N. is cited, reveals that he must have been a father figure to Freud,

and accordingly, Freud had conflicting feelings toward men in authority (p. 241).

Lasker and Lasalle, though both were very prominent men, did not become heads of state. Instead, they acquired their reputations by being leaders of large political movements, namely those of a democratic and left-wing nature. Additionally, both were Jewish. Freud sympathized with them politically but deeply regretted that their personal lives were marked by tragedy (Grinstein, 1968, p. 242).

Lasker led a very active political life. In the Revolution of 1848, when he was nineteen, he joined a students' legion in Vienna and fought against the imperial Hapsburg forces. After 1865 he served in both the Prussian parliament and then in the Diet of the North German Confederation. From 1867 on, he continued to rise in prominence and, being an intellectual man, was responsible for bringing about judicial reforms and espousing greater political freedom. Lasker was one of the ranking leaders of the National Liberal Party, the most important party in Germany in the years following German unification. However, after 1870, Lasker found himself increasingly opposing Bismarck over issues of principle and economic policies. What is significant is that Lasker, a Jew, had risen to such prominence that he was in a position to contest the authority of the mighty Bismarck, to the extent of earning his undying enmity.

The following anecdote is sufficient to illustrate his prestige and the fear that Bismarck had of him. When Lasker died, he was in New York, on a visit to the United States. The American House of Representatives passed a resolution expressing its sympathy with the German Reichstag at the death of one of its distinguished colleagues. Bismarck declined to convey this resolution to the Reichstag, sent it back to the United States, and when questioned about this act, vehemently condemned Lasker for having opposed him politically (Eyck, 1950, p. 274).

Lasalle was more radical than Lasker because he was a socialist and an activist and was frequently imprisoned for his

activities. Though a revolutionary, Karl Marx himself opposed his program because he favored achieving socialism through universal suffrage. There is also a paradox in his career. Bismarck was so impressed with Lasalle that he frequently consulted with him.

Bismarck had many secret nocturnal conversations with this Jewish revolutionary genius who impressed Bismarck very much with his ideas and his excellent knowledge, his brilliant conversational talents, and his personal charm. When he had to speak about his relations with Lasalle in the Reichstag in the debate on the bill against Socialists in 1878, Bismarck praised Lasalle's personality in the warmest terms and said that it had always been a matter of regret when their conversations had to end after continuing for some hours [Eyck, 1950, p. 116].

Lasalle's life ended tragically. He was killed in a duel fought with pistols, having challenged a young woman's father because he had refused to give his daughter permission to marry Lasalle. Freud too had once challenged an older man to a duel, Victor Adler. There were many other similarities between Freud and Lasalle, from being intellectuals to becoming men of great influence. In the history of the socialist movement, Lasalle has left an indelible mark.

In the dream in which Lasker and Lasalle figure so prominently, the interpretation ultimately reveals that Freud was fearful he would not succeed in his ambitions, as his father had predicted when Freud was a child, and that he would come to grief over a woman (Grinstein, 1968, pp. 243-244). Lasalle died in a duel, over a woman, and Lasker died, apparently, from syphilis.

However, Freud turned his attention to Lasker and Lasalle not only for psychological reasons, but also for social and historical reasons. Lasker and Lasalle were German Jews who were able to rise to prominence because Jews had become emancipated, following the French Revolution and Napoleon. To be

sure, Jews continued to face restrictions, but there was a greater degree of freedom for them as the nineteenth century progressed. The commanding positions which Lasker and Lasalle attained represented a fruition of this change. To Freud, these two men could serve as an inspiration because they were able to become influential, demonstrating what talent, dedication, and work could bring about. Despite the anti-Semitism which existed, it is significant that Freud was able to have contemporary Jewish as well as historical gentile ego ideals.

The last ego ideal to be treated will be the American President Woodrow Wilson. Appositively, an American becomes of compelling concern to Freud just as the United States starts to play a consequential role in European affairs. In many respects, Wilson differs from the other figures. He is not a European, he is a twentieth-century personage, and Freud will eventually become disillusioned with Wilson. If Freud was disappointed with him, it is because he had at one time expected so much from this American leader.

It is Woodrow Wilson who led the United States into World War I, thereby tipping the balance in favor of the allies and bringing about the defeat of the Central Powers. The American president's idealistic program at first was widely hailed by both sides. However, the Versailles Treaty which followed the war evoked widespread dissatisfaction and indignation in the victorious and the defeated countries. Freud shared and largely reflected these popular sentiments. When the First World War started, Freud supported Austria's entry into the war—to the extent of envying his sons for going into military service. As the war progressed he became critical of Austria and Germany and was prepared to accept with equanimity the dissolution of the Austrian Empire. Freud also shared in the privations the war and its aftermath brought on the civilian population.

Undoubtedly, like so many others of liberal opinion, Freud expected much of Wilson. As with the other figures in whom Freud had great interest, there were many factors making for identification between Wilson and him. Both were born in 1856.

a similarity which fascinated Freud. Both were intellectual men, worked in relative isolation, and faced great odds. And both suffered from incapacitating illness (Roazen, 1968, pp. 243-245, 300-322).⁷ What is unique in Freud's attitude toward Wilson is the tergiversation that occurred. This vehement change apparently led him to collaborate in the 1930's with William C. Bullitt, the American ambassador to Germany, to write a censorious book on Wilson. This book has been widely criticized for being unfair to Wilson.

At one time Freud was buoyed by Wilson's peace proposals, for instance, Wilson's suggestion in 1916 that the belligerent countries state their war aims. Jones (1955) says that this put Freud "in a good mood . . . attributed to President Wilson's *démarche* which he thought should be taken seriously" (p. 190). Later, when Freud became bitter toward Wilson, Jones tried to explain to him the complexities of arriving at an equitable peace and the many limitations Wilson faced. Freud replied, "then he should not have made all those promises" (Jones, 1957, p. 17). Freud (1921) links Wilson's influence to the collapse of the German Army in 1918. In Freud's opinion, if ". . . the fantastic promises of the American President's Fourteen Points would probably not have been believed so easily," then "the splendid instrument [the army] would not have broken in the hands of the German leaders" (p. 95).

Woodrow Wilson differs from Freud's other ego ideals in that he was appreciated at first and then came to be disliked. Although Freud's strong feelings against Wilson led him to collaborate with an American in writing on Wilson, Freud never had a high estimation of the United States.⁸ His low opinion of the state of American culture, coupled with a shift in world predominance to the United States, suggests that Freud reacted to Wilson with the bias of a European. To be sure, the United

⁷ Although Roazen makes some valid observations on Freud, many of his interpretations are captiously presented.

⁸ Freud's prejudice against the United States antedated World War I (see Eissler, 1971, p. 235). Nonetheless Freud did appreciate the early recognition he received in the United States (see Deutsch, 1940, p. 187).

States was drawn into the conflict caused by Europeans, yet Freud, demonstrating a lack of detachment, declares that the figure of Wilson "as it rose above the horizon of Europeans, was from the beginning unsympathetic to me" and that this "aversion" increased "the more severely we suffered from the consequences of his intrusion into our destiny" (Bullitt and Freud, 1967, p. xl).

We now turn to a consideration of the associations, personal dynamics, and historical conditions to try to explain why the above-discussed leaders were of special significance to Freud. Paramount in determining his selection of ego ideals was his ambivalent relationship with his father, Jakob. On one hand, Freud loved, respected, and obeyed his father. The evidence for this is abundant, as the inscription on a Bible the father gave to his son bears out. The gift of the Bible is in itself indicative of the high regard the father had for his gifted son. Among the many warm and encouraging words the father inscribed on the Bible are, "it is the well that wise men have digged and from which lawgivers have drawn the waters of their knowledge . . . I send it to you as a token of love from your old father" (Schur, 1972, p. 24). The father wanted his son to be a learned person, and this the son fulfilled, becoming a "man of the Book." Schur states, "In this area, Freud was able to find in his father an object for identification and ego-ideal formation" (p. 25).

However, there also were episodes in their relationship that were traumatic to the young Freud. One of these early incidents is related by Freud (1900) in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In his elegant style, he recalls:

When I was seven or eight years old there was another domestic scene, which I can remember very clearly. One evening before going to sleep I disregarded the rules which modesty lays down and obeyed the calls of nature in my parents' bedroom while they were present. In the course of his reprimand, my father let fall the words: 'The boy will come to nothing.' This must have been a frightful blow

to my ambition, for references to this scene are still constantly recurring in my dreams and are always linked with an enumeration of my achievements and successes, as though I wanted to say: 'You see, I *have* come to something' [p. 216].

Such painful occurrences, and apparently there were several, caused Freud to have a great deal of anxiety and, on the unconscious level, as revealed in his dreams, to seek revenge against his father. Much later, Freud was to recognize a connection between certain urethral conflicts and ambition.

It appears that up to about the age of twelve, Freud had a good relationship with his father, but thereafter his regard for him declined. There is another event, also cited in *The Interpretation of Dreams* which had a profoundly negative effect on Freud. One day, when the young Freud went for a walk with his father, the latter recounted an anecdote from his early manhood. This anecdote has become celebrated in the literature on Freud, the gist of it being the father's questionable reaction to an antisemitic incident. Once, on a Sunday stroll, when the father was wearing a new fur hat, a gentile youth approached him and knocked his hat off, making it fall into the mud. The assailant then shouted an antisemitic insult. When asked by his son how he reacted to this provocation, the father replied he just picked up the hat and avoided a further confrontation. The father's intention in telling his son this story was to demonstrate how much conditions for Jews had improved since his own boyhood; the father considered his reaction to this incident to be an example of dignified behavior. To the young Freud, however, "that did not seem heroic on the part of the big strong man who was leading me, a little fellow, by the hand" (p. 197). Thereafter, Freud's feelings toward him changed, leading to disillusionment, and perhaps even to a devaluation of his father.

To be sure, the above-cited anecdote is significant psychologically because it heightened Freud's ambivalent feelings toward his father. But even if the lesson Freud took from his

father's story was not the intended one, Freud, as much as his father, was personally confronted with the vulnerability of being Jewish.⁹ And though thereafter Freud did behave differently from his father, perhaps more combatively, anti-Semitism affected his life too. Relevantly, it directed him to seek answers in history and to understand developments in historical context.¹⁰ The sense of foreboding historical-mindedness never left him, as demonstrated in his inimitable declaration:

... of all the peoples who lived round the basin of the Mediterranean in antiquity, the Jewish people is almost the only one which still exists in name and also in substance. It has met misfortunes and ill-treatment with an unexampled capacity for resistance; it had developed special character-traits and incidentally has earned the hearty dislike of every other people. We should be glad to understand more of the source of this viability of the Jews and of how their characteristics are connected with their history [Freud, 1939, p. 105].¹¹

Freud goes on to explain the reasons for the vicissitudes of the history of the Jews.

Although Freud's search for ego ideals was more determined by his relationship with his father than with his mother, she was instrumental in the direction he took because of the sense of confidence in himself she had given him. Freud was her first-born and he believed that he was her favorite child.¹² Accordingly, he personally felt that "people who know they are preferred or favoured by their mother give evidence in their lives of a peculiar self-reliance and an unshakeable optimism

⁹ For a discussion of Freud's ambivalence toward his Viennese milieu, and how this reflected his attitude toward his father, see Ticho and Ticho (1972).

¹⁰ An investigation of Freud's own early venture in the study of "psychohistory" is presented by Africa (1979). Eissler (1963) states that Freud "... read the history of his people almost like a patient's history ..." (p. 681).

¹¹ For Freud's own identification with Moses, see McLean (1940, p. 210).

¹² Freud's search for "philosophical knowledge" and its relation to his mother are examined by Slochower (1975, pp. 3-8).

which often seem like heroic attributes and bring actual success to their possessors" (Freud, 1900, p. 398, fn. 1). There are additional sources, such as the sibling rivalry that developed before Freud was two, and that made him act competitively and aggressively. Another complication for Freud was having a nephew older than he. All these challenges and questions led him to acquire a "veritable passion to understand" (Jones, 1953, p. 14).

Freud's classical education also had a determining influence on the direction he was to take. His particular education had a broadening effect on him. The curriculum of the Gymnasium emphasized the classical world, and accordingly he was taught ancient history, Latin, and Greek. He also learned, on his own, Spanish, English, and French. His works attest that he retained this cosmopolitan influence and remained informed throughout his adult life on the leading intellectual developments of his time. He was well versed in literature and read the works of the leading historians of his day, such as those of the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt. In comparing the parallels of psychoanalysis to ancient history, Freud once quipped: "only a good-for-nothing is not interested in his past" (Bernfeld, 1951, p. 111).

Summary and Conclusion

It is appropriate to conclude this study with a statement that characterizes Freud and his search for particular models, and this is: "A genius chooses his family from among heroes."¹³ His historical heroes were Cromwell, Napoleon, Masséna, Garibaldi, Bismarck, Adler, Lasalle, Lasker, and Wilson. Of course, toward many of these figures, Freud was also ambivalent. Yet these leaders have certain common denominators. In various degrees, they may be characterized as progressive, secular, and

¹³ Cited by Bychowski (1968, p. 740). Simmel (1940), the director of the Psychoanalytic Sanatorium in Berlin, who knew Freud personally and was impressed by Freud's qualities, regarded him as a "great historian" (p. 174).

anti-Catholic. Moreover, they all had spectacular careers, stood up against great odds, and in many instances had serious conflicts with their fathers or men in authority.

These leaders had a special significance for Freud, and their selection is representative not only of his own personal dynamics, but also of his historical milieu. His ego ideals demonstrate that Freud was ambitious and had partisan political feelings and concerns. In some cases the choice of the ego ideals stemmed from his ambivalent feelings toward his father and his particular resolution of the oedipal situation. Also very significant is the fact of Freud's Jewish heritage and the anti-Semitism he experienced as a citizen of the Hapsburg Empire. Moreover, Freud was always sensitive about the power and the influence of the Catholic church. Still another reason for his selection of widely scattered figures with whom to identify is the broadening influence of his classical education. In addition, being gifted linguistically, he was able to transcend a parochial environment. In general then, Freud's ego ideals reveal that he was informed politically and historically and that he regarded these men as promoting policies that were liberating.

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