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# Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture, Current Events, History, and Society

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## The Historian as Darwinian Scientist: Frank J. Sulloway

Herbert Barry, III  
University of Pittsburgh

*Frank J. Sulloway was born in 1947 in Concord, New Hampshire, and received his PhD in the history of science from Harvard University in 1978. Currently, he is affiliated with MIT as a researcher. Dr. Sulloway has had a remarkable number of research positions and lectureships at leading institutions in America and Europe, although he has never held a professorship. In 1970 he produced, with Mark B. Adams, a series of six films and film guides on various aspects of "Charles Darwin's Voyage with H.M.S. Beagle" and subsequently published numerous articles on Darwin. Sulloway's two published books are*

## Space on Our Minds

Articles on the Heaven's Gate Cult  
Sir Humphry Davy, and Isaac Asimov  
and a Book Review of *Human Space*

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## Heaven's Gate and The Induced Apocalypse

David Redles  
University of Texas at San Antonio

A blazing comet, last seen by humans some 4,200 years ago, streaks towards earth. The turn of the millennium approaches. Suddenly a UFO is reported following in the comet's wake. The gates of heaven are about to open. The time of the rapture is near. Thirty-eight chosen disciples of Do, as well as the self-proclaimed alien Christ incarnate himself, commit suicide March 26, 1997,

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in order to rendezvous with space aliens in the clouds. This echoes the events of Jonestown, and more recently, the Solar Temple. But there is more here than the mass suicide of millenarian cultists, impatient for the apocalypse. For one can add Timothy McVeigh (if the evidence introduced at the beginning of his trial proves conclusive), Aum Shinrikyo leader Shoko Asahara, Charles Manson, and Adolf Hitler to the list of individuals who, convinced that an apocalypse was near, attempted to induce it themselves. For those immersed in the apocalyptic mentality, the difference between mass suicide and mass violence is not as great as one might think.

Heaven's Gate members were fully immersed in the apocalyptic mentality. The group's internet material (from which this article draws) warns of an imminent apocalyptic end (a "spading over" of the earth and all its inhabitants). Members viewed themselves as having been chosen by higher powers (space aliens) to fulfill a salvational mission. They further believed that efforts to convince the world of their mission had been hindered by Luciferian space aliens who had deluded humanity with false religions, which included everything from "country-club" Christianity to New Age philosophy. When the group's alien apocalypticism met with hostility and ridicule, they became increasingly convinced that the end time was indeed near, and eventually, that mass suicide was the only road to salvation. To understand how the Heaven's Gate members arrived at this induced apocalypse, a brief history of the Heaven's Gate movement is needed.

In the mid-seventies Marshal Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles became convinced that they were the "two witnesses" foretold in the Book of Revelation who were to appear at the end time. According to the Bible, the Two were to be assassinated by disbelievers, only to resurrect and ascend into the clouds. Applewhite and Nettles initially predicted that this would happen to them, and that the biblical cloud would in fact be a spacecraft. They were further convinced that biblical figures such as God, Lucifer, the angels, the prophets, and Jesus were in fact all space aliens. The connection between UFO belief and apocalypticism is in fact quite old. The appearance of "flying saucers" shortly after the U.S. detonation of the atomic bomb, with all its apocalyptic connotations, had always seemed more than coincidental for some believers. From the

beginning, ideas abounded that the space aliens had arrived to monitor human nuclear capability, perhaps to someday rescue chosen believers and save them from annihilation. Abductee reports in the 1970s and 1980s also spoke of coming apocalyptic events and alien involvement, either as saviors or evil manipulators of human evolutionary genetics. It was just such a wave of sightings in the mid-1970s that gave form to Marshall Applewhite and Lois Nettles' developing belief that they had been chosen by higher powers for a salvational mission. Interestingly, Applewhite's messianism seems to have begun after a near-death experience when, prodded by Nettles, he became convinced that he was saved for a reason. The experience of facing death and subsequently developing a messianic sense of immortality is quite common among messiah wannabes. It reflects what Robert Jay Lifton termed *symbolic*

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*immortality*, an attempt to cope with the sudden reality of death through the creation of a personal sense of existing beyond death.

In 1975 Applewhite and Nettles, now calling themselves Bo and Peep (shepherds gathering their flock), prophesied an imminent apocalypse and the coming of a UFO that would raise up the chosen in a Spielbergesque rapture (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was a favorite film of the two). When the UFO failed to arrive on the appointed date, Applewhite pushed the rapture back to the end of the year, and then again indefinitely (a common occurrence in apocalyptic movements). Applewhite, Nettles and a few dozen devoted followers then withdrew from society to undergo the "process," the "overcoming" of all "human-mammalian" tendencies. In order to leave this world and enter "The Evolutionary Level Above Human" (TELAH), the biblical heavenly kingdom, it was believed one needed to overcome all human desires and connections. This meant leaving behind families, even children, and, most importantly, overcoming all sexual desires. Members referred to themselves as monks and, much like in early Christian monasticism, became celibate. For some members, including Applewhite, this meant castration.

During the period of isolation, Bo and Peep transformed into Do and Ti (from the musical notes used to communicate with aliens in *Close Encounters*). Do became convinced that he was the alien Christ who had incarnated in Jesus 2,000 years ago. Ti, for her part, was God incarnate. The chosen were those few humans with "deposits," alien souls sharing human bodies. Recruitment literature told potential converts they might be the elect if they hated "this world," were considered by human "plants" (those without deposits) as loners, drifters, and drop-outs -- those who felt they did not belong to this "space alien hell." Thus, the converts very inability to fit into modern society was transformed from a feeling of being outcasts to being the elect. Through conversion, a diminished sense of self consequently became a hyper-inflated one. It is no wonder that the followers looked to Do and Ti as their saviors. That the leaders demanded strict obedience and discouraged individuality in any way only increased dependence on the Two. Members were rarely alone, and had "check partners" to help them maintain the overcoming process. "Lesser offenses" included "taking any

action without using my check partner," "trusting my own judgment - or using my own mind," or "having likes or dislikes." It was a classic case of what Lifton calls *totalism*, an all-or-nothing outlook brought on by milieu control, where all information and imagery is controlled by group leaders. The complete withdrawal from family and friends also increased this totalistic environment. In this way the apocalyptic mentality intensified with time, building to a point where the apocalypse became almost psychologically mandatory.

With Ti's dying of cancer in 1984, Do seems to have begun thinking that the arrival of the UFO and the imminent apocalypse may have once again been at hand. A new wave of UFO sightings, increasing abductee reports (seen by Heaven's Gate members as the work of Luciferian aliens), and the continuing popularity of the various Star Trek programs, seemed to indicate that it was time to proselytize again. Public pronouncements were made in 1988 and again in the early 1990s. A *USA Today* advertisement, posters, public meetings, satellite telecasts, and internet postings all gave warning of a "Final Chance" for salvation. The extreme hostility of the response was interpreted by Do to mean that the end was indeed near and that the group should begin plans for its "exit." The group's broader salvational mission was curtailed and Do and his followers became increasingly convinced that only they, the chosen, would be saved. Although the group often claimed that the rapture would be a physical entering of the alien spacecraft, the incidences at Ruby Ridge and Waco led Do to conclude that perhaps their exit would involve a similar involuntary martyrdom (and in fact a well-armed bunker was constructed in preparation for just such an event). However, in the end, mass suicide seemed a better means of inducing the rapture.

The fact that Do may have believed that he, like Nettles before him, was dying of cancer may have escalated his desire for the apocalypse. While an autopsy revealed that there was no cancer, his belief is psychologically important. It not only reveals Applewhite's intense identification with Nettles, but the conviction of his impending death may have acted as a catalyst for the induced apocalypse. Once again, apocalyptic believers are certain that they have been chosen by higher powers to witness the end and actively usher in the New Age. They have been given a special mission to save the just and, occasionally, destroy the

wicked. It is here, I believe, that the induced apocalypse comes into play. If this period of time is the turning point, and they have been chosen, then the apocalypse must occur in their lifetime. When the prophesied end fails to occur, believers often induce it themselves, be it through mass suicide or mass murder. For the apocalypse not to occur would mean that the believer's sense of being chosen, of having a special mission, of being immortal -- indeed the entire new post-conversion identity -- was illusory. This cannot be tolerated. A brief look at how the induced apocalypse has influenced other millenarian groups will put Heaven's Gate in better historical context.

Jim Jones' People's Temple moved to Guyana to create a racially harmonious heaven on earth and safely await the apocalypse. After Jones became increasingly obsessed with the idea of an imminent Nazi-infiltrated CIA raid, mass suicide, and with it the entering of the kingdom of heaven, was a realization of Jones' apocalyptic vision. Nine hundred and eleven people lay dead November 18, 1978, bloated by the intense South American sun.

Luc Jouret's Order of the Solar Temple, a group which mixed New Age astrology and Rosicrucianism, believed that they were Templar knights reincarnated in contemporary humans. It was their mission to balance the forces of light and darkness and prevent an ecological and nuclear holocaust. However, they believed that as the Age of Pisces turned into the Age of Aquarius (the New Age) the forces of darkness had gained the upper hand. The incidences at Ruby Ridge and Waco were interpreted as verifying fears of secret world police forces planning the destruction of all dissenting groups. Jouret decided that scriptural prophecies were being fulfilled, and that it was time for the chosen to leave this world. Fifty-two members committed suicide on October 5, 1994.

The incident at Waco would, ironically, become a partial catalyst for mass suicide (Solar Temple and Heaven's Gate) and mass murder (Oklahoma City). After a visionary experience in Israel in 1985, Vernon Howell transformed himself into "David Koresh." Koresh believed that he was the Lamb of God, the Christ-figure prophesied in the Book of Revelation who looses the seventh seal that ushers in the apocalypse. The group's stockpiling of arms for the coming Armageddon and Koresh's New Light Doctrine attracted increasing media and government attention, which

escalated his belief that the apocalypse was imminent. When the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms finally did arrive, their tactics played directly into Koresh's conviction that the government was a tool of Babylon the Great, the force of evil. The final attack, complete with assault vehicles emitting noxious fumes, was the apocalypse made real. Koresh and his followers lit the fires of final consummation. Seventy-four people were incinerated in the intense heat April 19, 1993.

Mass suicide is not the only way to induce the apocalypse. Another is to actively initiate the event by striking out at the forces of evil. Timothy McVeigh, a racist survivalist, believed in a coming apocalyptic revolution where the common man would rise up and crush the federal government which he conceived as being the tool of secret powers, especially Jews. McVeigh made a pilgrimage to Waco during the standoff, and its firey end was the spark that enflamed his hate and sealed his plans (if initial evidence at his trial is confirmed) to begin the apocalyptic war himself by blowing up a federal building (as had been foretold in the right-wing apocalyptic novel, *The Turner Diaries*). One hundred and sixty-seven people, including 19 children, lay dead beneath the rubble April 19, 1995.

Charles Manson was convinced that the United States was facing an imminent apocalyptic race war. Manson believed that the blacks would win, but eventually turn power over to him, a "superior" white man. Manson became convinced that the murder of whites in their homes by blacks would be the catalyst for the apocalypse. When this failed to occur, Manson orchestrated the Tate-Lobianca murders to implicate blacks as the perpetrators, and thus instigate the race war. Seven people were brutally shot, stabbed, and mutilated in the late sixties.

Hitler and many of his followers were convinced that Germany, indeed the world, was at a turning point. If the apocalypse of the Weimar period could be overcome, the world would witness the dawn of a New Age, the millennial Third Reich. They believed that they had been imparted with a divine mission to seek its fulfillment. Hitler believed in an imminent final battle between the Aryans who were the chosen race of God (light) and the Jews who were the chosen race of Satan (darkness). Salvation, for Hitler, could only be achieved through the

annihilation of the Jewish race. World War II and the Holocaust were eschatological events induced in part by Hitler's apocalyptic mentality. As a result, tens of millions died.

I have linked the induced apocalypse of the mass suicide (Jonestown, Solar Temple, Waco, and Heaven's Gate) to the induced apocalypse of the mass murderer (Hitler, Manson, and McVeigh) for a very important reason: it would be short-sighted and in fact dangerous to simply dismiss Heaven's Gate as a sad, but socially minor, incident. For while the apocalyptic mentality need not turn violent -- many such movements have been pacifistic, calmly awaiting the end -- recent history clearly shows that some apocalyptic groups attempt, consciously or unconsciously, to induce the apocalypse. If Hitler had developed the atomic bomb first, the possibility of an altogether real apocalypse was not beyond the pale. The question becomes, could such a global induced apocalypse occur today? In citing one final recent example, the answer is a disturbing affirmative.

Shoko Ashara, obsessed with nuclear annihilation, believed in an imminent apocalyptic battle between the forces of light and darkness that would manifest in World War III, a conflict involving the United States, Japan, and Russia. A new world would be reborn from this apocalypse, and only Aum Shinrikyo followers would be saved. In a disturbingly familiar pattern, Asahara's conspiratorial fears combined with the defection of Aum members and the guru's failing health led Asahara and his inner circle to attempt to induce the apocalypse themselves. The Tokyo subway gassing was just part of a series of test runs. Asahara had much greater plans: sarin gas was to be released by Aum members throughout the world, even from helicopters. Plans for the use of biological, chemical, and even nuclear weapons were made. These actions, it was hoped, would usher in World War III and thereby initiate the apocalypse. On March 20, 1995, over 5,000 people were sickened and 12 died, but it could literally have been millions.

As biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction litter our planet, the dangers of an individual's or a small sect's induced apocalypse becoming a real global apocalypse are terrifyingly possible. The need to understand the apocalyptic mentality is now more important than ever.

*David Redles, PhD, is a lecturer in World History at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a member of the Forum's Apocalypse, Cults, and Millennialism Research Group. □*

## A Response to "Heaven's Gate"

**Ted Goertzel**  
Rutgers University

When the news of the Heaven's Gate mass suicides broke, the public relations officer at Rutgers-Camden suggested me as an "expert" who could comment to the local media. I hadn't heard much of the specifics about the case, so I jotted down a few key points based on the literature in political psychology. Within five minutes, the phone started ringing, and it kept ringing for three or four days. Fortunately, as more facts came in, I found that this case was a good fit for the pattern which I was expounding. Groups which get into this kind of difficulty usually have the following features:

- Dependency on an all-knowing leader who is believed to have the answers to all important questions.
- Barriers against relating to family members or friends who are not part of a small group of true believers.
- Belief that this world offers nothing, that it is hopeless and must be transformed.
- Belief in an all powerful, evil conspiracy which manipulates and controls the world.

Of course, there are some unique features described in David Redles' essay. To the best of my knowledge, no previous sect has actually castrated its members, although sexuality is often repressed or limited to relationships with the leader. While there is widespread interest in UFOs, the Heaven's Gate kind of sectarianism has not been typical of that movement. Most UFO believers are hobbyists who find it a diversion, or repressed memory victims who find it an explanation for their anxieties. Redles is justifiably concerned that these movements may increase as the millennium approaches.

In talking to the media, I found that they were interested in practical guidelines for dealing with friends or family members who are caught up

in sects. This is an area where psychohistorians can offer some practical guidance. Fortunately, most people who join sects drop out fairly quickly because life in a sect is actually very dull. We can advise people who have a family member or friend who is caught up in this syndrome not to try to argue them out of their beliefs. These belief systems are impervious to logical argument. What can work is to share your conviction that there is hope and value in this world. Make sure they know that you care about them and want to be with them and invite them to join you in doing things they enjoy. This can work, especially if they aren't in too deeply. If they have already gone so far as to castrate themselves, it may be hopeless, but this is infrequent.

There is, as Redles warns, always the possibility of a mass movement developing with similarly destructive beliefs. If we manage to avoid major economic crisis or social dislocation, however, I expect these movements are likely to remain on the lunatic fringes of society. However, it seems that even countries with prosperity and strong social networks, such as Japan, are vulnerable to these movements on the fringe.

*Ted Goertzel, PhD, is Director of the South Jersey Survey for the Rutgers Graduate Department of Public Policy and Administration, professor of sociology at Rutgers University, and author of numerous books, including Turncoats and True Believers: The Dynamics of Political Belief and Disillusionment (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992). □*

## Comments on "Heaven's Gate"

**Donna Crawley**  
Ramapo College

I found the author's argument that people who feel they are "chosen" within an apocalyptic group need the apocalypse to happen during their lifetimes to be a useful insight in explaining the acts of violence that are sometimes associated with

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these groups (e.g., Koresh and Waco), but this brief paper regrettably does not address why only *some* of these groups engage in apocalyptic violence. Why are some others content to wait for the apocalypse, even if it doesn't look like it's coming during their lifetimes? There are some important analyses to be done on this subject.

It is an interesting idea to link the mass suicides based on apocalyptic ideology to mass murders based on a comparable type of ideology. Often mass murderers are studied, in sociology, along with serial murderers, but this author may have found a linking that is more relevant in some cases (e.g., with Charles Manson).

Even though the author has been advised not to use formal footnotes because of limitations of space, the paper would be stronger if he had incorporated the sources into the text itself.

*Donna Crawley, PhD, has an ongoing interest in cults. She is Editor of Transformations and Associate Professor of Psychology at Ramapo College of New Jersey where she formerly was Associate Dean of the School of Social Science/ Human Services. □*

## A Different Look at the Heaven's Gate Cult

**Michael Flynn**  
Center on Violence and Human Survival

David Redles is quite correct in his contention that apocalypticism is inherent to most mass violence. Joining Gershom Scholem (*The Messianic Idea in Judaism* [1971]) and others, who have warned of the dangers posed by those committed to "pressing for the end," his essay makes several points on the allure the apocalyptic holds for many in society. I would like to use this opportunity to suggest a slightly different understanding of the Heaven's Gate event.

The Heaven's Gate suicide's immediate media wake witnessed two main camps of experts. The first saw it as a cultic phenomena and dutifully went about identifying coercion, guruism, and brainwashing as the main ingredients of the suicidal soup. Celebrants in a culture marked by definitional looseness and political naiveté, they easily labeled the event a tragedy and advocated greater vigilance on the part of the state and public to prevent any further catastrophes. The second,

invoking the fundamental irrationality of the spiritual quest, adopted a more apologist tone. Although this contingent refused to engage in the sanctimonious reductionism central to social scientific analysis, their commentary was almost completely devoid of any form of insight, rendering it eerily forgettable.

What both failed to realize is that the end for the sexless wayfarers came sometime in the early eighties. As the "Great Communicator" (Ronald Reagan), employing a great menu of apocalyptic tropes, moved through the nightly news convincing Americans of the Russians' unalterable venality, this group of unanchored innocents were engaged in constructing a theology that established both the Earth's ultimate unviability and an avenue of escape.

Many consider Baudrillard's pronouncement made in "Looking Back on the End of the World," "everything has already been wiped off the map. It is useless to dream; the clash has gently taken place everywhere," to be another example of European intellectual nihilism, a condition that inhabitants of the New Jerusalem find most palatable. Yet with this Heaven's Gate testimonial, "I've been on this planet for thirty-one years and there's nothing here for me," it receives an absolute edification. Taken seriously (something few desire to do), the statement discloses a "mentality" and situation that is post-apocalyptic. Because the end has been so "gentle" in coming, the elite can continue their insistence on the marginality and madness of those intimate with the end (while simultaneously going feverishly about the fortification of their workplaces and residences against the Beast's possibilities). But those margins are spilling over with individuals radically demoralized by the society's spiritual and emotional disembowelment. For them, any act of will aimed at the creation of meaning requires a fair degree of excess.

As described by such chroniclers as Denis Johnson, George Saunders, and Campbell McGrath, the post-apocalyptic is a world thick in disengagement and vitiation. In the following passage from Denis Johnson's "The Glen Where the Failed Gods Are Drinking" (in *Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly* [1995]), "I just a poor mortal having stumbled onto/ the glen where the failed gods are drinking/ stand here almost remembering my birth/

and the trees too are beautiful and dead," the lone individual, cursed with a hypertrophied memory, occupies a terrain in which the divine is debauched and nature resides in a state of pornographic defoliation. In such conditions, the attributes of expediency and adaptation, to name only two perennial favorites of psychologists and other guardians of culture, strike even the quasi-authentic as far more sinister than self-destruction.

Let me conclude by invoking E.M. Cioran (*On the Heights of Despair* [1992]), a philosopher well suited for apocalyptic modes of being. In his "The Sense of Endings," an essay in which he states "there are so many kinds of death," Cioran argues that "when men can no longer bear the monotony and banality of ordinary existence, they will find in each experience of the absolute an opportunity to commit suicide." In the realm of the post-apocalypse, suicide remains an extreme but not fanatical act; an act that in many, perhaps most, instances cannot be considered violent. Too much has been sacrificed for ordinary life to be considered sacred. Because the victim and perpetrator are identical and the death imposed consensual, there is no manhunt, no trial; the conjectures floated by the experts seem to hold only air, the anchors appear even more jejune than usual. Even for the most devoted this makes for barely passable entertainment. Perhaps this is one reason those who remain earthbound dread it so.

*Michael Flynn is Chair of the Program Committee and Associate Director of the Center on Violence and Human Survival, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and co-editor with Charles Strozier of several books. He is also a psychotherapist in private practice. □*

## Sir Humphry Davy's Belief in Heavenly Extraterrestrials

**Paul H. Elovitz**  
Ramapo College

Humphry Davy believed in superior, extraterrestrial beings throughout his life and wondered if he might be joining them in death.

Sir Davy (1778-1829) was a brilliant English chemist and exponent of science. This eldest son of a middle-class family discovered five major chemical elements; invented the miner's

safety lamp; and experimented with nitrous oxide (laughing gas). He also made significant contributions to agricultural chemistry, tanning, and a variety of fields from geology to electrochemistry. His close friends included Coolidge, Southey, and Roget. He was made a professor of the Royal Society, given the Copley medal, honored by Napoleon in the course of a world war, and knighted in 1812. In 1820 he was elected head of the Royal Institution. Humphry took ill in 1825 and felt "burned out." He spent most of the rest of his life traveling for his health. In 1829, at age 50, he died soon after completing the book, *Consolations in Travel, or The Last Days of a Philosopher*.

In January, 1983, in the course of a sabbatical semester in England, I came across some of Sir Humphry's letters at the Science Museum in London. These, along with his poetry, prose, and dreams, provide ample evidence that the existence of heavenly extraterrestrials was central to his belief system. His childhood experiences had influenced him to study the "sacred stream of science" which "flows from Nature's bosom." Upon separation from his parents at age six he found an idealized surrogate mother in Mother Nature. Unlike his real-life mother who had left him to live on a farm with his father and three younger siblings, his surrogate mother was there to shine down upon him whenever he needed solace. His adolescent poetry provides evidence of his having come to believe that he was descended from extraterrestrial beings, geniuses who came to the earth with a much higher level of civilization and who would periodically select certain "sons" to further the progress of mankind. This formulation enabled me to unravel some of the paradoxes, explaining how such an extraordinarily successful scientist and articulate spokesman for the scientific method, could also be a believer in magic.

His brother writes that throughout Davy's life "he was very subject in sleep to dream[s] and ... that his dreams were frequently of a very vivid and often terrific kind." He remembered more dreams than is usual and believed "that their source was on high, according to the old Homeric notion, and given to forewarning." There are ample materials on his dreams and his ideas on dreams throughout his notebooks and memoirs. In no case, however, is there so much emphasis on dreams as in his final work. *Consolations in Travel* is organized around a dream, or "vision,"

which is presented to the reader. The book is set up as a series of seven dialogues between five individuals who have been identified by his brother and subsequent biographers, as representing Davy and certain of his friends. I found it very useful to treat the different individuals in the dialogue as representing different feelings, thoughts, and impulses within Davy himself.

One character represents Davy's practical, cultivated, scholarly, and traditional religious self. Another is Onuphrio who represents Davy's adolescent doubts about "Our Heavenly Father" and religion in general that occurred after the death of his father when he was 15 years old. Onuphrio lumps an "instinct of religion or superstition" together. This character's materialistic view of causation and doubts about the value of dreams and religion were clearly not Davy's mature views of 1829. The religious/traditionalist character rejects Onuphrio's view as "not uncommon amongst young men of very superior talents, who have only slightly examined the evidences of revealed religion." The issue of why Davy the man of 50 must repudiate the opinions of his youth is bound up with his impending death. As he struggled with what his chief contemporary biographer calls his "death wish," he had the need to reject the notion that his early death would destroy his spirit as well as his body.

In the actual "vision" in the book, Philalethes, as Davy calls himself, is with two friends in the Roman Colosseum. All three are supposed to leave for social engagements, but when he chooses to stay behind, they wish him "the company of some of the spectres of the ancient Romans." What he's waiting for is obvious to his friends. At this point he drifts off into a reverie -- into what he calls a new state of existence. He hears a distinct and harp-like voice that explains to him it is an "intelligence." This extraterrestrial then takes him through a historical tour that presents mankind's progress, extending from the caveman into the historical period and further still into ancient Greece, Rome, and the Colosseum. The voice which he calls that of the Genius discusses how a few superior minds enabled mankind to advance by teaching them to live in houses, domesticate cattle, and sow and reap. The Romans are focused upon as a great group of conquerors and civilizers. Attention is devoted to the sciences including the experiment on electricity and to some political leaders who are



praised for their contributions to the progress of society.

Davy travels not only into man's past, but into outer space and to areas that are far superior to the "damp, dreary, dark, and cold" existence of mankind, areas "where all is life, light, and enjoyment." He sees strange creatures whose elephant trunk-like tubes disgust him. Yet these creatures with their peculiar motions gain their pleasures from "the highest intellectual nature." They live without wars, and their ambitions are "intellectual greatness." They are very much the opposite of mankind. Davy's vision extends on for some 25 pages of description of a wonderland of fascinating and superior beings from outer space. Davy then falls back to earth. The vision is over.

Philalethes (Davy) then asserts that there "are certainly no absolutely new ideas produced in sleep," but the ones produced have greatly affected his feelings, health, and imagination. He quickly moves onto discussing another dream which we would call pre-cognitive. When a young man, he was stricken with typhus. While hovering between life and death, he had a vision of a lady with blue eyes, long blond hair, and bright rosy complexion who was unlike any woman of his youth. He engaged in the most interesting and intelligent conversation with this "good angel" who was so vivid that he almost had a visual picture of her. Upon his recovery she disappeared. Ten years later, he chanced to meet the image of this woman in a girl of 14 or 15 in Illyria (present day Croatia). Another 10 years later, when traveling for his health, he again met her and she nursed him back to the health he still had. She became his "guardian genius."

There are several themes expressed in Davy's vision and dream. Life is better above the earth than on it and "the guardian angel of my recovery" has a heavenly quality. The extraterrestrial Genius shows the heavens to be superior, and even the elephant-trunk-type creatures there are superior to mankind. Man is portrayed as bestial, deformed, or helpless without the heavenly touch. The hero in all the dreams is primarily an observer or a passive recipient of the actions of others.

Davy believed dreams revealed that he, or at least his spirit, had lived in other times and places. He thought that there was an analogy between the fragmentary nature of the remembered

dream and his fragmentary sense of other existences. His task, however, was to find out what form his future life would take. In short, how immortality was to be achieved. He did not believe that our ideas or spirit are destroyed, they are simply forgotten in the way a child forgets what happened to it in the womb or in infancy before the age of two.

Since immortality of the spirit is what is truly important to him, Davy in the dialogues dismisses the idea of immortality in the present "corporeal [corporeal] form" as merely the immortality of the "machinery." It's the mind that truly counts. Philalethes says that he has this view of the immortality of the spirit as opposed to the materialistic view, which was formed "in my imagination" when "it was employed upon a vision of the Colosseum":

I felt connected with new sensations and infinite hopes, a thirst for immortality; the great names of other ages and distant nations appear to me to be still living around me; and, even in the funeral monuments of the heroic and the great I saw, as it were, the degree of the indestructibility of mind.

This notion of his merging with the minds of others is clearest in his dreams. It helps to explain why Davy introduced the writing of obituaries at the Royal Institution, since he could feel a closeness, an imbibing of their spirits into himself, as he recounted the lives and ideas of others.

Davy's wrestling with his ill health and impending death can be traced to the issues of his reactions to the death of his parents and his reaction to success. He was one of those people who was "wrecked by success" on this earth. He longed to head the Royal Institution and then found himself presiding over squabbling factions. He married his ideal woman and then became such a "martyr to matrimony" that an informal separation was arranged. In print he was satirized as one of the humbugs of the age.

After the death of his mother in 1826 he declared "that which I regard most tenderly is in the grave." His "death wish" became apparent. His health collapsed and he subjected himself to the strains of travel as he sought to revive his faltering spirits by changing the scenery. Davy was torn between desire to join his mother in death and his dwindling wish to continue living in his state of ill health up to the very end of his life.

While precariously holding onto life, he took what joy he could from companionship, intellect, Mother Nature, and the Catholic religion.

The collapse of Sir Davy's world was intimately connected with its very foundations. As a young child he learned to live without his real mother close at hand by projecting his mother onto nature and worshipping Mother Nature. He then projected his maternal benefactor onto the stars to light the terrifying night. His next step was to become her chosen son. This idealized mother was insufficient when Humphry was struck down with typhus. He then needed someone close at hand, the way every little boy does. So he unconsciously conjured up an Illyrian maid whom he periodically sought out to nurse him back to health.

For some inclination as to what his next incarnation might be like, Humphry turned to the dreams that had brought him images of his extraterrestrial parents. Still, the images in dreams are often polar opposites. Like other men, this scientist, poet, and philosopher died not knowing if he faced a heavenly bliss or a horrible nightmare. Yet he hoped that he might join the godlike, extraterrestrial beings whose presence, in his mind, had consoled him throughout his life and helped inspire him to scientific greatness.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, began his study of Sir Humphry Davy as part of a research project on the innovators of the English Industrial Revolution. He has made numerous professional presentations on Davy and has published three articles and chapters on the scientist, including one encyclopedia article. In conjunction with J. Donald Hughes, Montague Ullman, Mena Potts, and Ralph Colp, he developed a special technique for helping biographers work with the dreams of deceased historical personalities. The research was made possible by a one semester sabbatical from Ramapo College in 1983 for which the author wishes to express his appreciation. This article was edited down to half its original size and, because of constraints of space and the policy of this publication, the voluminous footnotes have been omitted. □*

## Asimov as Exemplar

Alan C. Elms  
University of California-Davis

Isaac Asimov (1920-1992) did not invent the term *psychohistory*, and his use of it in his

*Foundation Trilogy* and later differed a great deal from the way we use it now. But most members of the general public who know the word probably think first of Asimov, not of Erikson and his successors. Asimov was an exemplar of the "hard" science fiction writer, developing future worlds by extrapolating current technology, physics, astronomy, and biology. Yet most of Asimov's best-loved works pivot around aspects of societal dynamics, robot psychology, and the emotional reactions of very neurotic humans. Asimov wrote a two-volume, 1500-page autobiography, *In Memory Yet Green (1920-1954)* (1979) and *In Joy Still Felt (1954-1978)* (1980), in which he reviewed the events of his life up to 1978 in astonishing detail but rarely introspected about them. [See also the posthumous *I, Asimov: A Memoir* (1994).] He proclaimed little knowledge of psychological theory and even less interest in analyzing himself or being analyzed by others. Nonetheless, at age 53 he married a psychoanalyst to whom he remained happily married until he died at age 72.

When I began a psychobiographical study of Asimov a decade ago, I was unaware of the contradictions, ironies, and contrasts in his life and work. I had been thinking and writing for some time about the psychology of several other writers of science fiction and fantasy. My focus was on trying to understand what psychological functions an act of creative writing serves *for the writer* (not for the reader). For some writers, writing mainly serves an expressive function -- it allows them to express aspects of their personality, their values, and their style. For other writers, their writing serves a defensive function -- allowing the disguised satisfaction of urges the writer cannot consciously acknowledge, or distancing the writer in time and space ("long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away") from personal issues that would be too anxiety-producing if confronted directly. The use of writing as a psychological defense involves only a temporary solution to one's problems at best. But some writers are able to use their writing to work through their psychological problems, to help resolve their inner crises, and to restore themselves to a psychological health. In that sense, creative writing can serve not just a defensive but a psychologically restitutive function.

After I'd lived with that way of looking at fiction writing for a while, one other possibility seemed worth pursuing: that for some writers, writing serves no distinctive psychological function

at all, but is just another way to make a buck or to offer an argument. In science fiction, ideas rather than strong emotions or violent acts often provide the focus for a story. Writers of such stories may ring intellectual changes on previous work in the field, speculate on the long-range impact of recent or potential scientific discoveries, and work along as efficient wordsmiths. Perhaps that's all they aspire to; they may never feel motivated to become self-therapists or even self-expressers.

I began to look for just such a writer, to contrast with my other examples. I wanted a writer whose work displayed no psychological hang-ups and served no psychological functions but just told good stories. I quickly thought of Isaac Asimov. I had not read his work since my own adolescence, but I remembered him as a creator of simple characters and complicated science fiction mysteries, as a writer whose work was enjoyed by everybody and disturbed nobody.

When I began to read him again, however, I quickly discovered a different Asimov. For instance, one of the best-selling novels of his later career, *The Robots of Dawn* (1983), focuses not on the murder mystery or the interplanetary politics with which it's nominally concerned, but on its human detective's struggle to conquer his severe neurotic anxieties. Lije Baley is agoraphobic (loosely, afraid of open spaces), acrophobic (afraid of heights), and phobic in several other ways. He can hardly leave his enclosed underground city without being overcome by panic. He experiences even greater stress when taking a routine spaceflight to another planet, as he must occasionally do in the course of his work.

When I found other characters in other Asimov stories suffering from similar fears, I began to wonder whether Asimov might have problems along similar lines. Was he somehow using his fiction to serve defensive functions? Then I heard that he had recently taken an airplane flight for the first time in his life. This was even better, I thought. Perhaps Asimov had been using his writing of science fiction to work through his severe emotional problems, maybe with a psychotherapist's help. Suppose he'd finally conquered his phobias, boarded a plane, and took off. Another triumph for the psychological restitutive power of writing science fiction!

I wrote to Asimov, asking whether his character Lije Baley's psychological struggles

reflected his own attempts to come to terms with agoraphobic or acrophobic feelings. If so, I continued, had he been successful in his efforts, either through writing fiction or by other means? And finally, about that plane ride -- "was that the result of some recent resolution of your agoraphobic and acrophobic feelings, or was it merely a matter of circumstance?"

Asimov responded by return mail, acknowledging "very mild" agoraphobic tendencies:

I prefer enclosed places to open places but only to the extent that I prefer coffee to tea. My typewriter and library are in two rooms in which the blinds are always down. My word-processor, however, is in the living room, where one whole wall, virtually, is glass (and 33 stories up) and where my wife likes to have the sun (or clouds) streaming in. So I work on the word-processor without complaint and without trouble. Again, when I walk through Central Park I prefer to stick to the paths, rather than walk over grass and given my own choice I would prefer to walk around it. I feel comfortable in the canyons of Manhattan, but I will walk across empty spaces if I have to.

Asimov said his acrophobia was "much more severe":

I live on the 33rd floor [note the repetition] and I don't mind looking out the window horizontally, but I would be very uncomfortable looking *down* and I rarely try it. We have two balconies and I can get out upon them if there is some reason to do it, but I rapidly get uncomfortable and go back in.

However, my writing is certainly not a conscious attempt to deal with this. I feel no need to deal with it. I don't mind being acrophobic since I have no desire whatever to go up in a plane or to climb a mountain or to walk a tightrope.

Asimov concluded by saying it was not he but another science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury, who had recently "made the newspapers" for finally taking an airplane ride:

In fact, I have no urge to do *any* kind of traveling. Left to myself, I would be perfectly content to stay on the island of Manhattan for the rest of my life. And when

I do leave, it is only for short distances, and I return as soon as I can....[P]lease let me impress upon you the fact that I am happy with myself exactly as I am and I am spending my life *exactly* the way I want to spend it.

So much for my idea that Asimov might have been making his fiction serve a restitutive function. As he presented matters in the letter, he seemed to be ruling out even a defensive function. Thinking I should clarify the latter point, I wrote again, asking as politely as possible whether Asimov might be denying his anxieties "by avoiding introspection and by writing vast amounts of material that divert your and others' attention away from some kind of underlying uneasiness or self-doubt? I suppose that question represents the stereotypical psychoanalytic assumption, with which I do not necessarily agree, that everybody is neurotic somehow but that not everybody realizes it. Do you have a response to that that satisfies you, if not the psychologists and psychiatrists who might ask it?"

Asimov's response was emphatic:

Honestly, I am not defensive. I am a genuinely happy person except where the outside world impinges -- if I develop clogged coronaries and am threatened with death, if those I love are unhappy for good reason, etc. When unthreatened by the outside and left entirely to my own devices, I am openly happy. The fact is I write easily, I receive instant appreciation for my work, I make a good living, my wife and daughter love me, I have good and affectionate friends -- I have no *reason* for unhappiness. And in my whole life I have never had self-doubt. I have known exactly what I could do from the very start and I have gone out and done it.

Until those last two sentences, I felt willing to give Asimov the benefit of the doubt. After all, he knew first-hand whether he was happy or not, whether he was anxious or not. He had a lot more information about his psychological state than I did. But *never* any self-doubt? Not if we can judge from the voluminous evidence of his autobiography. Was he being totally honest with himself, and genuinely undefensive, when he said he was "a genuinely happy person" with "no *reason* for unhappiness"? Well, as the narrator of

Asimov's mystery novel *Murder at the ABA* (1976) puts it, "The super-secure are never secure."

I realized, of course, that nothing is more likely to put a person on the defensive than a psychologist asking, "Are you being defensive?" Maybe Asimov was just overreacting to my questions when he said he'd never felt any self-doubt and so on. Maybe in less defensive moments he would have admitted to occasional self-doubts, or to intermittent moments of unease amid all the happiness. I was willing to grant in turn that as he now lived his life, mostly indoors and mostly in front of his word-processor keyboard, Isaac Asimov probably was one of the world's happier people. But I decided to never again consider using him as an example of a writer whose work served no significant psychological function.

*Alan Elms is a professor of psychology at UC Davis, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on psychobiography and on personality theory. His most recent book is Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology (Oxford University Press, 1994). He is currently working on a psychobiography of Elvis Presley (in collaboration with Bruce Heller) and on a full-scale biography of Paul M. A. Linebarger (aka Cordwainer Smith). This article is adapted from material first published in the science fiction research journal Extrapolation and in Uncovering Lives. The Asimov correspondence was published with the permission of Isaac Asimov. □*

## Reflections on Isaac Asimov

**Paul H. Elovitz**  
**Ramapo College**

The most famous man to use the word *psychohistorian* amazed, inspired, frustrated, and puzzled me.

Isaac Asimov's (1920-1992) incredible productivity and erudition still amaze me. He, according to a newspaper article I read some years ago, wrote his first hundred books in only 20 years (five books a year). This New Yorker's second hundred took nine and one half years (10.5 books a year) and his third hundred was achieved in less than six years (16.5 books a year). At that rate of increased efficiency, had he lived to 100 years,

instead of merely to 72, just imagine how many books he would have produced! In fact, he wrote a *mere 500 books* rather than the astronomical number that would follow from the geometric progression he seemed to be approaching. I still chuckle and remain awestruck at the thought of such literary profundity. In contrast to Asimov, my first recollections of writing are of not being able to do it. While my days of writing blocks are long gone, writing is still a slow process for me: I am still at the beginning stages of my first 100 books. I am hoping for a long life so I may achieve my goals!

Towards the end of his life Asimov declared "writing is more fun than ever. The longer I write the easier it gets." A friend of his told me that "the man was a machine" when it came to writing; which is why "he turned out stuff incredibly -- with incredible speed." As an example she mentioned that "someone at the United Nations asked him to write something on children. He did it in two days (with research!) and it was perfect, ready for the printers." Asimov's example is one of many which inspired me to write and to enjoy writing.

In the late 1970s I thoroughly enjoyed a commencement speech Asimov gave at Ramapo College. He spoke of the enormous creativity and curiosity of the young child, creativity and curiosity which are usually lost in the process of schooling. Ramapo's strait-laced academic vice president, a former seminarian, was pleased to meet this popularizer of science and science fiction. Afterwards, he commented that during the procession and the ceremonies the speaker kept propositioning the good-looking valedictorian in her early 20s -- less than half his age. The administrator, who is now back to teaching philosophy, wondered aloud if the secret of Asimov's literary profusion was an uncensored quality which allowed him to let it "all out." I thought there might be some merit in this suggestion; certainly, Asimov wrote so quickly that he had little time to censor his own thoughts or words. I also wondered if the vice president was as "straight-laced" as I had imagined.

In 1979 I became co-editor of *The Psychohistory News: Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association*. One of my first endeavors was to attempt to interview Asimov in person. The project began auspiciously with Asimov being the most prompt correspondent

I ever engaged before or since. His replies arrived so rapidly that it crossed my mind that the writer may have told the mailman to wait while he typed a reply to me! His answer said, "Yes..., but...." Yes, I could interview him, but first I would need to do the proper background reading which included the first volume of his autobiography, *In Memory Yet Green (1920-1954)*. This seemed like a reasonable request. So, after writing him that I accepted this condition, I started reading. Additional epistles from him added to my pre-interview homework. I soon enlisted my rapid-reading younger son to assist in the task. The second volume, *In Joy Still Felt (1954-1978)*, appeared in print well before I was halfway through the first. And there were numerous additional homework assignments as well!

At that point, I suggested to this denizen of the 33rd floor of a Manhattan skyscraper that we get on with the interview since he wrote so much faster than I (and my son) could read. I got no response and this marked the end of his part of the correspondence. I sought the advice of a psychohistorical colleague who was an old friend of Asimov. Had he cut off communication because of my honesty: "You write faster than my son and I read"? She said that had nothing to do with it. In her experience, Asimov would never give a personal interview to anyone who was psychological in their approach. "But," I stammered, "isn't he married to a psychoanalyst/psychiatrist?" My colleague simply shrugged her shoulders and declared that it made "no difference" He would not accept a personal interview by anyone with *psycho* as part of their qualifications.

After Asimov's death the same colleague reported that this "helpful, kind, decent, dear, lovely guy" was "very horny." She reported that whenever they were alone together, however briefly, he never stopped propositioning her. I asked how his wife dealt with his womanizing and was told, "She ignored it." Clearly, I was not alone in finding this science fiction writer and popularizer of science puzzling and at times frustrating.

I was not puzzled or frustrated when I learned from reading Alan Elms that Asimov feared heights: that he was an acrophobe (with agoraphobe tendencies) who wrote about space travelers. As a psychotherapist, I readily understood the inclination to devote psychic energy to something that one experienced anxiety

about. He avoided air travel, until he marshaled his courage later in life, while relishing literary space travel on the pages of the *Foundation Trilogy* and elsewhere. In his autobiography, he does make reference to the possibility that his absorption of his mother's fears that stemmed from his "babyhood experience with pneumonia" resulted in his disinclination to take risks -- including flying. He seemed to have been one of many people who can make vaguely psychological comments about themselves but who are most uncomfortable if any professional makes such comments.

Returning to the subject of space, a vital point is that we project out into space things that we cannot do within ourselves or on this Earth. Space is such a fertile place for our fantasies, dreams, and endeavors that in less than one century humans have flown both close to the Earth and in outer space. If people, even acrophobic men like Isaac Asimov and his fellow science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury, can think of doing something, other people will actually do it! And here on Earth I will continue to be inspired by Asimov's erudition, literary productivity, and belief that knowledge should be accessible to all humankind.

Paul H. Elovitz is editor of this publication.



## The Humane Use of Space

**Andrew Brink**

**Forum Research Associate**

*Review of Peter Petschauer, Human Space: Personal Rights in a Threatening World. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997. ISBN 0275956458, i-xx, 187 pp., \$55.*

Peter Petschauer's *Human Space* is a rewardingly reflective yet apprehensive book. He is a man of intellectual gifts matched by sensitivity, trying honestly to make sense of his own experience; there is little comfort in it. It is good that a historian can stand apart from his profession enough to consider his personal part in it, and try to sum up what living in America on the verge of the millennium means to him. The theme of space and how humans inhabit it is a device capacious enough for the great diversity of topics Petschauer addresses. The organizing theme is how he survived the rigors of a World War II European

childhood to migrate to the United States, where he became a highly effective professor of history and administrator at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. The book is not an autobiography but a set of reflections on the prospect for a just and decent social order in his adopted country.

Petschauer's interest in psychohistory arose from reconstructions of his own childhood "abandonment" by his German parents when they left him for reasons of safety with an unrelated family in the village of Afers in northern Italy. (His insightful commentary on Lloyd deMause's theory of the abandoning mode of childrearing appeared in *The Journal of Psychohistory* Volume 13 (2) Fall 1985.) Through the kindness of strangers, Petschauer and his brother spent the war in a remote and very traditional farming community, entirely different from the New York City he was to enter as a student. Cultural difference and extensive travel, including many returns to Afers, give Petschauer a vantage point on contemporary America; though no Swiftian satirist, he is a sort of Gulliver surveying the pretentious, misled, and alarming features of contemporary America.

What Petschauer sees is not reassuring. He rightly fears America's gun culture and predicts violence on an unmanageable scale unless the history and dynamics of ethnic violence in other parts of the world are understood (p. 157). Economic and social justice in America are deteriorating as "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." These are common enough concerns, but Petschauer brings to his concern the cogency of an ability to compare societies.

A liberal humanist in the best tradition of American higher education, Petschauer's disquiet shows most strongly in comments on the sector of life he knows best: academic departments -- especially departments of history. If there is hope of students' understanding the dynamics of groups contending along ethnic and economic rifts in society, and if persecutions and tyrannies are to be understood for their uselessness in solving real social problems, it must be through the insights of historians. The historians best equipped to see into the dynamics of justice and conflict are those equipped with psychological, as well as historical, techniques. Petschauer would like to see more cross-disciplinary work, but he despairs of it because of rivalrous territoriality and personal

mistrust amongst professional historians. I found the remarks on the failures in writing and teaching history (starting on page 88) to be the most compelling in the book. My own frustrating (and damaging) experience of trying to introduce psychobiography into the study of the life and writings of Bertrand Russell backs up what Petschauer has to say. I only wish that he had developed his comments further, along the lines of Peter Loewenberg's brilliant essay, "Love and Hate in the Academy" (in *Decoding the Past*, 1984). Loewenberg wrote: "The fact that academics are intellectuals complicates the problem. They use elegant rationalizations to block real communication" (p. 77).

The best solution to defensive over-intellectualization among academics would be graduate seminars on psychodynamic theory, together with personal analysis; but that is what the most disordered personalities in university departments most fear. Perhaps the psychodynamics of academic endeavor are so dangerous that they cannot be directly approached except by a prepared few. We may need to demythologize, even satirize the pretensions of intellect alone, to solve interpersonal and social problems. If academe could be seen as Swift's ridiculous flying island of Laputa with its philosophers, men of science, historians, and projectors, a new start, taking unconscious motives and wishes into account, might be made.

Yes, I had hoped that Petschauer's book would be more psychological, more a plea for the best hope we have -- to discover the unconscious in its everyday guises. I thought he missed opportunities, as in the instance of starting with fundamentals in his idea of space. Psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott's "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" (in *Playing and Reality*, 1971) could have helped. Winnicott shows how the space between an infant and its mother's breasts is eventually occupied by a "transitional object," a mouthed blanket edge or toy. He writes: "The intermediate area to which I am referring is that area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality testing" (p. 11). How we originally fill spaces, gaps and openings -- confident in our creativity or fearful of its failure -- has a lot to do with the social values we come to hold and the politics we profess. Variables in child rearing, the minutiae of the history of childhood in any society, are

fundamental to assessing how forgiving or punitive, how accepting or rejecting of other persons, a nation or any of its subgroups is likely to be.

Peter Petschauer throws important new light on the failures of American society to realize its ideals, skillfully using a comparative method. His book is an example for other historians to vent their misgivings about the profession as ameliorative for society. In his assessment of America, Petschauer says little about sex, gender, and their confusions, nor does he explore the obviously fraught topic of divorce. It is perhaps ungrateful to ask the author of an already worthwhile book to examine more deeply motivations in respect of relations with women. Our discontents run deep, with fear, avoidance, and patronizing of women a highly troubled, imperfectly understood area of academic life -- and much beyond.

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## Space on Our Minds

**Paul H. Elovitz**  
Ramapo College

The Heaven's Gate UFO, Rancho Santa Fe, "Death Cult" shook the nation on March 27th. We were shocked to learn that 39 people willingly went to their deaths as they sought to hitch a ride on the Hale-Bopp Comet to a better, more heavenly life. There were the usual couple of days of complete fascination. The newspapers had banner headlines on the event and the *New York*

*Times* even gave brief biographies on all of the cultists who were identified. The talk shows featured interviews with cultists, their families, or, when they had no one better, "the experts." The phone rang off the hook for Forum member Ted Goertzel who had never even directly written on the subject but was designated as his university's expert. Jokes abounded about catching a ride to heaven. But, then, rather quickly, the media dropped this issue. In my opinion all of the manic activity was designed more to ward off understanding than to really come to terms with the reality of mass suicide.

Suicide, both individual and collective, frightens us because it is a clear and present threat. Yet, no matter how much we try to avoid it, it comes back to haunt us since it is far more possible than we would like to acknowledge. It is a real danger in our society. This danger is reflected in the statistics of the county of 900,000 people where I live. A decade ago the coroner told me that there were at least ten suicides for every homicide. Yet, the news usually focuses on homicides because it feels much safer to think that somebody else is trying to kill us rather than that we may take our own lives. Of course, the greatest danger of suicide is through our collective actions as members of nation states, countries so jealous and protective of their sovereignty that we empower them to destroy the world rather than concede to common sense and compromise. (Perhaps it would be useful to think of the nation state as a type of cult with an apocalyptic vision of the world?)

In the face of death, especially self-inflicted death, many of us are at such a loss that we lose touch with our own senses to an unusual degree. A graphic example of this frightening tendency is revealed in the initial coverage by the *New York Times* on March 27th. The headline read: "39 Men Found at San Diego Estate in Apparent Suicide." In fact, there were more women than men who killed themselves. The first paragraph indicated they were all young men. In fact, most were not young. The next paragraph declared them to be all white men, ages "18 to 24 years old." In fact, blacks were included in their ranks and none identified in the first few days were as young as 24. The sheriff's deputies were so overwhelmed by the stench of death that they literally "backed out" of the lavish compound.

For several years, I have been interested in Professor David Redles' research on

apocalypticism and cults. He began by studying the occult, wrote a doctoral dissertation on Hitler's apocalypticism, and then turned to the examination of contemporary cults such as Heaven's Gate. Recently, he has agreed to play a leadership role in the Forum's Apocalypse, Cults, and Millennialism Research Group. When Heaven's Gate occurred, I urged him to write up his ideas for this issue. His term "induced apocalypse" appears to me to be especially felicitous because it concretizes a concept which so many of us have been talking about for a decade and more. The books, *The Year 2000: Essays on the End* (1997) and *Apocalypse: On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America* (1994), both by Charles Strozier, are two good examples of the type of scholarship devoted to the complex issues of apocalyptic thinking and apocalyptic hopes. Clearly, Charles Strozier, Robert Jay Lifton, and Michael Flynn of the Center on Violence and Human Survival are doing vital work on the subject as are others. Nevertheless, so much needs to be done including the education of the FBI, the ATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms), and the public. It should be remembered that the ATF and FBI played their appointed roles in David Koresh's "induced apocalypse" in Waco. The children the authorities used as a justification for their action were all killed in the fire.

Though the mass media, ever responsive to so many of our unconscious desires, quickly put aside Heaven's Gate, a preoccupation with space is in the air. Below are a few examples. On April 30th, speaking to my class on the Holocaust, a survivor who joined partisans in the woods refers to her beloved grandchildren as "being from Mars" because their values are so different. *Time* magazine focuses on the discovery of the possibility of life and seas on Europa, one of Jupiter's moons. Another article focuses on possible life on Mars millions of years ago. TV shows and documentaries dwell on UFOs invading our atmosphere and aliens abducting humans. In April the ashes of Timothy Leary and Gene Roddenberry, creator of *Star Trek*, were released into space. At the movies, for example, *Mars Attacks* was released last fall, there was the re-release of *Star Wars* in January, and literally as I write these words there is the release of *The Fifth Element* involving extraterrestrials and space travel. Fox television's "The X-Files" is a show that chronicles the lives and events of two FBI



agents whose job is to investigate UFO sightings and abductions; it continues to rank high in the Nielsen ratings week after week. Though we mostly focus on our fears of space, we also look upward for help. As a prominent television commentator said the other day, "Angels are hot." Movies and television shows about angels abound with TV's "Touched by an Angel" having 20 million viewers. Space and aliens are on our minds and likely will be much more within our consciousness. We are also increasingly aware of spatial relations and interactions here on earth as is reflected by Peter Petschauer's exciting book, *Human Space*, which Andrew Brink reviewed for this issue.

Space seemed to me to be a mild curiosity in 1983, when I stumbled across Sir Humphry Davy's belief that he was descended from extraterrestrials, the geniuses who advanced civilization. Fourteen years ago interest in space seemed mostly focused on the human use of it as we spent billions to keep the Russians from winning the space race. We were pursuing President Reagan's Star Wars defense fantasy of a safe Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), even while the experts indicated it was impossible to fully defend against nuclear attack. Since there was little academic interest in space, I made only one attempt to publish my article on Davy's childhood beliefs in aliens and space travel. Today it appears much more relevant. Writings about Isaac Asimov, who took his readers to the far reaches of space, while fearing to even fly from New York to Washington on the shuttle, also seem relevant in the light of our current fascination.

Our fears and fantasies of space will not go away. In early May a suicide and suicide attempt by two members of the Heaven's Gate cult served as a reminder of this. By May 20 "Space Day" was proclaimed on NBC television. Our mostly unconscious hope for salvation from heavenly space or of alien enemies from it continues. That was the sentiment I expressed last year in my review of *Independence Day* and it seems all the more accurate today. For better and worse, I believe that space is an increasing focus of our hopes and fears. □

## Fathers

Articles by Strozier, Shneidman, and Gouaux

### Father

**Charles B. Strozier**  
**Center on Violence and Human Survival**

My father lives in the mist of my memories. He was everything for me in my childhood, and believed I was special even when I doubted it myself. When I was 15 he died suddenly, even somewhat tragically, in his prime while heading up Florida State University and under consideration for the presidency of the University of Chicago. He went like all his 10 brothers: young, of clogged heart arteries. They thought his chest pains in the months before he died were heartburn. But then what could they do in that age before bypass surgery?

I remember his smell. He loved two stiff bourbons after work and smoked Camels and Kools in the time warp before dinner. One of my earliest memories is of sitting on his lap and sucking on his whiskied ice. It kept him alive in my mouth as he talked incessantly to all of us, to Mother, and any guest who might be with us. He was stocky and soft in warm, human ways. He felt good to touch, like a teddy bear. The cigarette smoke filled the air, the taste of the ice lingered.

He often brought friends from the university home for drinks. I listened intently to the talk, which alternated between banter and serious discussion of important topics. I later came to think of this cocktail talk as conversations in the Platonic sense. But all I knew as a child is that I wanted to remain there to listen to every word of what was said. For the most part, I had no understanding of the words. But I grasped the form and warmed to the style. Always there were jokes to leaven things, quick comebacks and laughter to offset commitment. Dad was a liberal Democrat but also a comfortable bourgeois who had come out of the struggle of the 1930s determined to enjoy the affluence of the 1950s.

Sometimes Dad would trot us out to perform. It wasn't malicious on his part. This jolly man said he always wanted a three-year old in his life. He loved young children, and told me often I should remain little like Peter Pan (which left a corner of me guilty for maturing). We were his toys, though. I performed the manual of arms in my grandfather's World War I uniform. During World War II Dad had been in charge of

recruitment for Georgia and somehow learned the manual. He took pride in the diligence with which I on his command practiced and performed the drill for him and his tipsy friends. Since I later became an antiwar radical during the 1960s, it turned out that doing the manual of arms at age six in my oversized uniform was as close to the military as I ever got.

Dinner was a set piece in our family. My mother's task was to have it ready and the table set just as cocktails ended. I don't think she ever failed once to meet the exacting timetable. As she finished putting the plates on the table, the rest of the family filed in from the living room. My active memories of dinners begin around age four and proceed from our first apartment in Hyde Park near the University of Chicago (where Dad was a French professor and dean) to Tallahassee, Florida, where we lived from my ages of 13 to 16 in much splendor in a huge house with servants. But from relative poverty to pretentious splendor in the huge white house with columns that looked like something Jefferson Davis might have lived in, dinners always had the same character: Dad and his imposed rituals dominated. Certain markers defined his dignity and position. He had butter on a special plate next to him; the rest of us ate margarine. It was often proclaimed that only he could tell the difference and so the cost of giving butter to everyone would have been wasted on us philistines. Needless to say, he always sat at the head of the table, in the best chair, placed at the end of the table away from the kitchen.

Mother didn't really like to cook, however, and a central family myth was that the only real cook was Dad. And, in fact, he was good in the kitchen, knew sauces, and was well versed in French wines. On vacation and some special days we were treated to his cooking. That required much "oohing" and "ahhing," and the quality of the dish became the main topic of conversation. I kept by his side in those precious moments, watching and learning, staying close. I am sure it was why I grew up liking to cook, something that stood me in good stead much later during my years of single parenthood.

Before any food was served and immediately after we had pulled our chairs to the table came a special prayer that was never altered in a single word or syllable. It was a solemn Episcopal moment that Dad surely treasured, and connected with the rich church life into which he

married and in which his children were so heavily involved. He even attended confirmation classes and formally joined our Church of the Redeemer just down the street from where we lived. But there was always a note of irony in Dad's relation to our High Church Episcopalianism. I don't think he really liked it. He joked too much about all the jumping up and down during the services and how, as the incense filled the air and our men and boy's choir sang the glorious music of Bach, he longed to belt out "Beulah Land."

Dinner itself was entirely free of childish disruptions and filled with conversation that moved into the concerns of our days. Only rarely did Dad and Mother engage in talk that excluded us. There was only one conversation at any given moment, and somehow Dad was always at the center of it. The favorite topic was to recall and laugh about family stories: the play my older brother Bob had written yesterday, the upcoming vacation to Long Lake in Wisconsin, the fun party we had after Dad won the Legion of Honor. It was a family-centered discourse that implicitly privileged our experiences over all others in the cosmos. I felt warmly enveloped in the family myths we spun out and eager to wallow in Dad's unconditional love.

Sometime after our move to Florida, Dad sensed I was in turmoil and, despite the tremendous pressures he was under, took the time to talk with me. Our conversations began around issues of religion. Upon our arrival in Tallahassee we had begun attending the local Episcopal Church. I found it profoundly dissatisfying, and was particularly bothered when the arch minister one day gave a sermon that explained why the Bible supported, indeed required, black inferiority. It seemed absurd to me. But I felt I understood the contradiction between my reaction to the sermon and my reddening neck as I attempted to blend in with my new redneck friends. I guess I saw acceptance of local customs as different from theology and ethical ideals. However, that sermon and my general obnoxious rebelliousness that was emerging called into question all of Christianity for me. I remember filling out a form at school early in that first semester and putting "atheist" in the category of "religious preference." I was called into the principal's office and coerced into changing it to "Episcopalian," a submission I have always regretted.

I was going through an adolescent crisis and Dad found a way to take long walks with me in

the late evening around our grounds and let me vent my frustrations about God and church. He made me believe in my heartfelt anger and trust my new insights. I honestly felt I was the first ever to have doubts about God. He not only didn't mock my adolescent musings, he treated my views with respect. He asked questions, Socratic-like in true University of Chicago style, but basically he listened to my thoughts. It was a profound experience for me, and has forever given me the sense that my views on things matter. I knew Dad died knowing I had potential.

His death was awful. He left for Chicago on Tuesday, April 19, 1960, to give a speech. That night, staying at the home of a doctor friend in Hyde Park, he woke up with chest pains. His host rushed him to the hospital where he spent the rest of the night in great pain and died early on the morning of April 20. Mother got a call during the night of his illness. When we left for school we didn't know he had already died, only that he was sick and Mother was leaving to catch a plane for Chicago out of Atlanta. I walked around school in a fog. At 10:30 in French class the loud speaker came on and called me down to the principal's office. I felt a sinking feeling in my stomach and later relived that moment in ten years of migraines that began at 10:30 in the morning. Someone was there to drive me back to the home, though neither he nor anyone in the office would tell me what had happened. When we drove up to the house there were already a bunch of cars parked in the driveway. I walked in and Mary Call Collins, the Governor's wife, came over and at last told me Dad had died and gave me a hug.

The next few days were a blur of people and sour faces -- a drunken woman making jokes about people all evening to relieve the incredible tension, people everywhere trying to comfort me. I bitterly and irrationally resented the presence of Bob, the unfortunate namesake for Dad. But my Aunt Sandy put into motion the engine that was to drive my life. She laid out my options. I could stay in Tallahassee and live with the Governor and his wife while I finished high school in Florida. I was touched but knew it was wrong. Dad had died for me to leave. Second, I could return with Mother to Chicago. But I couldn't abide returning to the Lab School in Chicago or living with my newly assertive brother, let alone my mother. So, she said, the only thing for me to do was to go away to school. She decided on Lawrenceville, the

prep school near Princeton. I agreed vaguely.

There was a huge memorial service that I stumbled through without any sense of the actual proceedings. Mother then said Bob and I were to take Dad's ashes and throw them into the sea outside of our coast cottage. Bob and I drove to the funeral director's and met a typically dour man in a black suit who had us sign a paper. He then gave us Dad in a round yellow can the size of a cigar box. We put it in the front seat between us as we drove to the coast. We got there at low tide. I held the can and walked out a good 50 yards into the water but it was still only up to my knees. I gave up and decided this would be as good a place as any to throw them. I hesitated, wondering what kind of a ceremony would be appropriate, but Bob, still on the shore, was impatient and urged me to throw the ashes in the water. Uncertain, I opened the can. The ashes were stark white and had some bumps mixed in, as I guess happens in cremation. I looked at the ashes for a moment, then threw the contents of the can in an arch that spread them in the water as though I had been casting a net.

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## A Psychohistorian and His Father

**J. Lee Shneidman**  
**Adelphi University**

The three great influences on my life were the *hospital*, my father, and my mother. I was in and out of various hospitals from infancy to 13 years of age and the *hospital* dominated my consciousness. During my stays in the *hospital* for cancer treatments, I twice overheard physicians state that I would not live through the night and that my parents should be summoned. They were wrong about this and many other things as well. Thus, I often came to question authority, including

my father. This paper will focus on my father, Bernard Shneidman, and his influence on my life as well as on certain decisions I have made as an historian.

My father was born in the *shtetl* (Jewish village) of Kalinovka in Ukraine in Tsarist Russia in 1895 or 1901. There was uncertainty as to the date of his birth and even his very name (Berl, Boris, Buzzik, Dov, or Bernard, depending upon who called and what language was used). He was the eldest son of Wulf (also Velvel or Zev) and Wulf's second wife Rivka (also Reisel), both of whom were murdered by the Germans in June, 1942, with the aid of Ukrainian collaborators.

His father, my grandfather, was born in 1866 as one of at least four sons and one daughter. To confuse Tsarist military authorities, each of these brothers had a different last name. One was called "Shneiderman," another "Shneidman," and a third "Shnaiderman." Familial confusion was heightened by the giving away within the family of a firstborn son to honor a pledge. My father grew up thinking this actual nephew was his brother and, even once he knew the real relationship, would like to tell the shocking tale of one of his brothers marrying his sister. My father and his brothers were Orthodox Jews who studied in Hebrew school. They were trained in the family occupations of watchmaking and the manufacturing of *kvass* (fermented fruit juice) and illegal vodka. Their father's second wife was somehow related to Trotsky, a fact unknown to me until sometime in the 1960s.

My father, according to his version, joined the Red Army, became an officer, and served under Trotsky until Trotsky formed an alliance with the anti-Semitic anarchist Makhno. After this he went west where he had adventures before reaching Cherbourg in France where he took a boat for Newark, using Shneidman as his name. At about the same time, his nephew who was raised as his brother went to Palestine where he changed his name, adding to the confusion of who was who. Only after the creation of the State of Israel did my father and he find each other. Most of the family who stayed behind in Russia were murdered by the Germans in World War II.

My father went to New York where he got a job as a trolley conductor and went to night school to study pharmacy. In 1927 he married my mother, dropped out of school, and opened a

laundry while doing some watch repairing on the side. My father had *Yiddishkeit*. He was not religious, but he loved Yiddish culture. Even after I had become literate in Yiddish, he would read Yiddish poems and stories to me.

But Bernard Shneidman never quite made it in the United States. He was a Marxist. Frequently there was not enough money in our home for clothes -- for which my numerous hospitalizations for cancer treatments were blamed -- but there was always enough money for books, magazines, and the right causes. I learned to read *The Worker* and *Freiheit*. However, my father insisted that to get the facts the *New York Times* or *Herald-Tribune* should be read as well. At least once a week a "fascist" paper like the *Sun* should be read. From the age of seven, I was involved in politics -- collecting food for the Spanish Republic or organizing pickets around candy stores that sold Japanese goods after the 1937 Japanese attack on American and British ships in Chinese waters (the Panay Incident). My identification was with the underdog, the oppressed. One of the reviewers of my history of Aragon commented that I obviously did not like the feudal aristocracy; he was right. But I had no awareness that I had personalized my political reporting and assumed my father's values while questioning his authority.

It took years of analysis to understand my father. Despite his bravado, he was a frightened man who was threatened by me -- and not only because of the constant drain of my hospitalizations. Almost from my earliest memories there was a power struggle. While he took a hidden pleasure in my academic progress, he had a vested interest in demonstrating my stupidity. Since I could never compete with the exploits of his childhood -- according to the stories he told us of his youth he was champion at everything, which I never quite believed -- the only area open to me was intellectual. If he quoted a source, I would check that source and read everything I could find that the source had written. To win in the power struggle, I would not only have to know the replies, but I would have to know his side of the position better than he did. In college, I became a debater and could win on either side of the proposition.

I have been criticized for over-footnoting. This is true. My scholarship is thorough but polemical. The text and footnotes are not only used to present and substantiate my position, but to

cite and refute different views. However, I have no difficulty in altering a position when new evidence is presented or insights dawn. Whereas my father was rigid in defending a monochromatic solution, I became a champion for advancing a multifaceted, over-determined view.

Intellectually, I would have preferred becoming a historian of the origins of Russia. But that was impossible during the years I went to college because universities did not offer courses in early Russian history. In college I took Spanish which I liked because I had become interested in understanding Spain. For me, the origins of modern civilization were the Middle Ages. If you understood the origins you would understand the present because you would deal with the evolution from past to present. Somehow, my research led to a relatively unexplored area of Spanish history, the Kingdom of Aragon, which fascinated me. The chief city of that kingdom was Barcelona, and I knew about Barcelona from the Spanish Civil War. I spent my last two years in college writing term papers about Aragonese history. Since a PhD was a union card necessary to earn a living, reality determined that it would be in Aragonese history and not Russian history. My first published article, however, was on Russian history. My research was always on Russian or Spanish history and quite polemical. My analyst once commented that I was on too many barricades. He was right. I had to learn to be selective.

I was a Democrat and I am still an elected member of the County Committee. Quite early I became fascinated with the local Tammany Club which I joined and became an active speaker in both English and Yiddish. My father would have preferred the ALP (American Labor Party), but after the Hitler-Stalin Pact I had little use for anything political out of Moscow. In college and graduate school I took courses in political theory and constitutional law. Unconsciously, I was attempting to understand the difference between the democratic society in which I lived, which my father had embraced, and the imperial, capricious, system by which my father ruled. I liked Aristotle, hated Plato; liked [St.] Thomas, hated [St.] Augustine; liked Locke, hated Hobbes. I constantly preferred not only those theorists who supported an open, multifaceted society rather than the closed, monochromatic one, but also, those theorists and systems I could use to counter my father's authoritarianism. I wanted to know the

origins and development of government and law. I wanted stability, not whim. Constitutional government would not only abolish my father's *ukase* (Tsarist Imperial Decree), but also protect a child against the monster *hospital*. Consciously, I became a liberal. I had no problem integrating Marx into my personal theory and consider Edward Bernstein, the democratic, reformist socialist, to be the legitimate version, while Lenin was the authoritarian revisionist who never understood Marx's humanity.

Struggling with my father, I found I could win. That battle reinforced my battle with the *hospital*. Authorities did not have all the answers. I could chart my own course.

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## Oskar Schindler's Father

Charles Gouaux

Forum Research Associate

There are only a few references to fathers in the Oscar winning film, *Schindler's List*. They occur in the course of conversations Oskar Schindler has with Itzhak Stern, the Jewish accountant. They tell us two things. Quoting his father, Schindler says, "Everyone needs a good doctor, a forgiving priest, and a clever accountant." At this point in his life, Schindler doesn't have use for the first two because business is everything!

At another point he brags that he has seven times as many workers than his father had. Of course, Oskar's workers are slave laborers! But why did Oskar feel he had to compete with and surpass his father? This powerful and gripping book and movie leaves the reader and viewer guessing as to the many aspects of Schindler's motivation.

Charles Gouaux, PhD, a psychologist in private practice in St. Louis, Missouri, is a member of American Psychological Association and the IPA. □

## A Darwinian Psychohistory?: Frank J. Sulloway

(Continued from page 1)

Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend (New York: Basic Books, 1979) and Born to Rebel: Birth Order, Family Dynamics, and Creative Lives (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). He is currently preparing, as editor and major contributor, Testing Theories of History to be published by Harvard University Press. Among his numerous honors are the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship Award of over \$400,000 (1984-1989), popularly called the "genius award"; his election as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1989) "for research in the history of biology and the major studies on Darwin and Freud that resulted from it"; the Golden Plate Award; and many fellowships and grants. Herbert Barry ("HB") interviewed Frank Sulloway ("FJS") for four hours in his MIT office in Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 5, 1997.

**HB:** What brought you to the study of birth order?

**FJS:** I stumbled onto the topic by accident 27 years ago. I was working on the problem of why Charles Darwin became an evolutionist. I had retraced the voyage of the *Beagle* and was well aware of the crucial data, from the Galápagos Islands, that made Darwin an evolutionist. Soon after his return to England in late 1836, Darwin allowed these Galápagos species to be publicly displayed. As a consequence dozens of top naturalists saw Darwin's finches, mockingbirds, and tortoises. They became aware that the different islands had different species. Why didn't they all become evolutionists? I concluded that it was not the evidence that made Darwin an evolutionist, rather it was his willingness to interpret that evidence in a radical light.

I thought this intellectual decision must have something to do with Darwin's personality. So in 1970 I began studying personality psychology and eventually stumbled onto the research on birth order. At first I was rather skeptical that something that seemed like a biographical footnote could be all that important.

But when I compared a sample of early evolutionists with early opponents of evolution, there was a very sizable difference in birth order, shown by a standard statistical test. I obtained a whopping correlation and spent the next 25 years trying to understand why that correlation had emerged.

**HB:** Which of your works do you view with the most pride?

**FJS:** I am most proud of *Born to Rebel* due to the sheer magnitude of the work and the self-sacrifice that went into it. I have existed for two decades as a kind of glorified graduate student without a formal job, living from hand to mouth on competitive grants and fellowships, primarily to write this book. I conducted the research continuously for over two decades, including during the writing of *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*, on which I spent seven years.

Both books represent my tendency to be extremely thorough in the way I approach research problems and in the way I spend a great deal of time trying to come to the right interpretation. I spent 12 years working on how Darwin came to be an evolutionist before I published anything on that problem. It involved understanding the whole history of what happened to his specimens and tracking down his Galápagos birds in England and measuring each of them. Understanding Freud was a similarly challenging problem in that I felt I had to read most of the scientific and medical literature that he was exposed to in the 1880s and 1890s, as well as the entire corpus of Freud's works -- the published and unpublished psychoanalytic works, including the untranslated works in German. I like labyrinthine kinds of projects.

One of the most satisfying achievements in writing *Born to Rebel* was to develop a fairly consistent, unitary theory involving almost a dozen factors all combining to shape personality development in a way that is consistent with the goals of childhood understood from a Darwinian point of view. The principal goal of childhood is getting out of childhood alive. What are children trying to do? To maximize parental investment. How do children do that? They develop strategies that implement this goal. All of the variables I ended up identifying as crucial to personality development can be understood in terms of how they lead individuals to adopt the behavioural strategies that they actually do. I was able to use

multivariate models to test many of these predictors and thereby explain individual behavior.

**HB:** How is the reception to *Born to Rebel*?

**FJS:** First-born reviewers are three times more likely than laterborns to believe that the theory is wrong (as I have found from surveys). In many cases they have gone out of their way to distort the basic argument. To begin with, the book is not only about birth order. It is about personality development and how family dynamics in various measurable ways influence this process.

My book has definitely polarized its readership. It is not intended, however, to be an evaluative argument about who is a better person. The data tends to show that laterborns are on the side of liberalism -- are *for* freeing the slaves, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and democracy. Firstborns are generally on the wrong side of those issues. Many first-born readers take this very personally, as if I have something against firstborns, which I don't. Firstborns excel at many things -- they win more Nobel prizes in science, for example -- and they are accordingly creative in their own ways, just as laterborns are creative in their own ways.

**HB:** Do your findings apply only to groups of people or to individuals as well?

**FJS:** People sometimes say, "Oh, that's just a statistical generalization, it doesn't apply to individuals." Rubbish! If you use multivariate models, you can derive a specific prediction for each individual. Such predictions are particularly meaningful when we are dealing with people such as Darwin who are loaded to the gills with predictors that make them rebels. Darwin's predicted probability for being an evolutionist, given a dozen or so significant influences, is 94 percent. He's the fifth of six children; he came from a liberal family; he's a liberal himself both politically and religiously; he was young at the time he converted to a belief in evolution; he went on a voyage around the world (which is a significant predictor of acceptance of evolution); and he had conflict with his father when he was a child. Virtually everything that makes one a radical is present in his life and therefore makes him more likely than 94 percent of the rest of the population to support evolution. He not only supported evolution but he also developed a novel theory on the subject.

**HB:** Do you think your book will stimulate hypothesis testing on birth order and family dynamics?

**FJS:** I would be far more interested in having it stimulate hypothesis testing in general. I am not wedded to any one variable, or even to the role of family dynamics. My book documents the influence in history of many sociological and situational predictors as well.

**HB:** Does the significance of the variables you considered differ depending upon the situation?

**FJS:** A tremendously important influence on human behavior is the context of the behavior. That's why meta-analysis is such a powerful tool for understanding discrepancies in outcomes from one behavioral study to another. The context of the situation dictates the extent to which any particular predictor such as birth order, or social attitudes, or conflict with a parent is relevant to a given behavior as observed in a given event. For example, in England there was hardly a birth-order effect in the reaction to Newton. Everybody respected him and his novel ideas. But in France, where Newton's theories were controversial, there was a big birth-order effect. That's an interaction effect. Birth order is a good predictor where the theory is controversial, namely France, but it's a lousy predictor where the theory isn't controversial. The greatest challenge in doing historical research is getting the behavior matched to the context. It would not be too hard to do a meta-analysis of 30 major political revolutions -- such as the Russian Revolution, the American Revolution, the English Civil War, and the American Civil War -- if 30 different scholars would each agree to spend one year working up a sample on one of the 30 events. For a single person to do such a study would take 30 years, so we need more people throwing their hats into the ring in order to achieve a science of human behavior linked with historical context.

**HB:** What are you working on now?

**FJS:** I hope in the next year or so to complete an edited volume that I have already done a considerable amount of work on, *Testing Theories of History*. This volume is an attempt to gather together four or five other scholars in the history of science and in history who have written on the need for testing claims. The general argument is that claims about history are no different from the kind of claims that a

paleontologist or evolutionary biologist would make. Evolution is history.

Scientists feel a tremendous need to test their theories but historians feel almost no need to do so. I want to clarify under what circumstances scholars ought to test their claims in history. Some historical claims are not testable, including most biographical claims. But many historical claims, such as generalizations about people, are statistical claims, and thus are testable. The reason that historians rarely test their theories is that they are not trained to test, and they are also not trained to recognize when a test is necessary.

**HB:** What about your own family, your birth order?

**FJS:** I'm the third of four boys. My younger brother is nine years younger, a half brother from my father's second marriage. I grew up as a functional lastborn since I had no younger sibling for nine years. By the way, the important influence in this regard is not biological birth order but *functional* birth order.

When I was a very young child, in my first year, my mother was hospitalized for about six months. When I was about two and a half she was away for about nine months. One could plausibly argue, based on attachment theory, that having had disrupted parenting probably had a considerable effect on my personality. I have been a fiercely independent person, as witness the fact that I have never had a job. The whole notion of working for somebody else -- having somebody literally control my life -- is anathema to me. I think that's related to the fact that my mother was away when I was a child, that I learned a certain degree of independence through separation. I'm also probably more introverted and shy than I would have been had my mother been around on a constant basis.

**HB:** What was your undergraduate major?

**FJS:** I was as hybrid an undergraduate, as I am now. I majored in history and science. This field was not the history of science. It was a split major. My science was biology, and my history was American history.

**HB:** Did you get good statistics training?

**FJS:** I never took a statistics course either in college or in graduate school. I trained myself to do statistics as an undergraduate by taking a computer course. If you have a database and are

interested in doing hypothesis testing, it's really quite simple to learn the basic rules of statistics.

**HB:** What is your primary scholarly affiliation today?

**FJS:** I don't consider that I have any one topical affiliation. I was trained as a historian of science and have a doctorate in this field. I've spent ten years as a postdoc in psychology departments in this country and abroad -- two years at Berkeley, six years at Harvard, and two years at University College in London -- so I have a broad background in psychology. The only formal teaching I have done was for the Psychology Department at Harvard in a course on Darwin, Freud, and sociobiology. I consider myself both a psychologist and a historian of science.

**HB:** Have you had any psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic training or experience?

**FJS:** I haven't had any psychoanalytic training at all.

**HB:** What special training was most helpful in your becoming a scholar capable of using psychosocial research tools with such effectiveness?

**FJS:** I was very influenced as an undergraduate by having Edward O. Wilson as a teacher. I took his course on evolutionary biology as a junior at Harvard.

**HB:** In addition to Edward O. Wilson, do any other mentors come to mind?

**FJS:** Jerry Kagan, a child psychologist of considerable renown, also took me under his wing. The chapter on shyness in *Born to Rebel* was due largely to Kagan's own work on that topic. I was interested in showing that the strategies siblings develop based on birth order would be altered by some independent attribute of their psyches that was known to be partly under biological control. Shyness is moderately heritable and has a dozen physiological markers. Although shyness has no direct effect on support of revolutionary ideas, it serves as a powerful moderating influence by entering into interactions with birth order. Shy people are fence sitters so that one finds almost no birth-order effect among them. They try to keep their mouths shut and say the least controversial thing. Shyness makes the lastborn less revolutionary and makes the firstborn more revolutionary (by making them more cautious about expressing a conservative stance). I feel that



most of what we want to know about human development is going to involve "interactionist" stories like that. Most interactions are missed without the aid of statistical methods. We tend to see mostly main effects. The only way we will know the full story about human development is to do very intensive, empirical investigations.

**HB:** Did Erik Erikson, Robert J. Lifton, and the Wellfleet Group have any impact on you?

**FJS:** No. However, I did have some contact with Erik Erikson when he was writing on Einstein. He wasn't particularly interested in the work I was doing on birth order, but I was impressed by him as a very warm and interesting person.

**HB:** What books were important to your development?

**FJS:** I was certainly fascinated by Darwin's *Autobiography* (1958) and Ernest Jones' biography of Freud, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (1953-1957). I've always had an interest in with making sense out of people's lives. Reading the Jones biography and the Fliess letters got me started on my Freud book. Reading Darwin's autobiography and puzzling about Darwin's life got me started on *Born to Rebel*. Why was Darwin such a radical revolutionary? Overall, I was influenced by reading Darwin, far more so than by reading Freud. I was a little disappointed -- having invested seven years of my life, and having read the 24 volumes of Freud's collected works and all his untranslated works in German -- to discover how flawed the theory was in terms of one's ability to apply it in an objective manner. I haven't used psychoanalysis much in my own work as a historian.

We often think of Darwinism as focusing on innate propensities that are based on genes. But, parallel to the growth of the literature in evolutionary psychology, I came to realize that one could propose a highly environmental form of Darwinian theory. The strategies of siblings are adaptive and are achieved largely through learning rather than through innate propensities. Darwinian selection has allowed us to have large brains so that we can accomplish most adaptations through learning. It was quite exciting, during the last three or four years of writing *Born to Rebel*, when I began to understand how useful Darwinian theory could be for the understanding of personality development.

There is a fascinating interface going on in research today in the behavioral sciences between personality psychology, behavioral genetics, and evolutionary psychology. From behavioral genetics we have learned that siblings are enormously different and that a great deal of personality is heritable. The heritability for most major dimensions of personality is about 40 percent. Some aspects of the psyche of an individual such as Darwin cannot be explained on the basis of traditional environmentalist accounts. There are aspects of Darwin's personality -- his agreeableness and his sensitivity, for example -- that are partly just genetic givens. It's important for people who are trying to explain behavior not to go zealously overboard in an environmentalist direction. Only about half of the individual differences in personality between siblings is due to environmental influences.

Evolutionary psychology suggests that siblings are very different because they are devising different strategies -- their Darwinian interests are different and, therefore, their strategies are different too. These individual strategies emerge as different personality characteristics. Personality development is the whole bailiwick of strategies designed to promote parental favor and to deal effectively with sibling rivals in this competitive situation.

**HB:** How do you regard the preparation for, and practice of, history today?

**FJS:** I think there are major problems with how history is done nowadays. It is driven by anecdote and is largely oblivious to the need for hypothesis testing. Although we now live in an age of computers, where accessing and manipulating large amounts of data and doing hypothesis testing are increasingly possible, it is extremely rare for me to ever hear a historian give a talk where a hypothesis is even articulated, much less tested. I've heard many debates among historians where it is clear that hypothesis testing would have ended that debate. They just talk back and forth at each other as if a few anecdotes here and there could prove their point. They really do believe that a hundred anecdotes are better than one anecdote, whereas a hundred anecdotes are no better than one to a knowledgeable exponent of hypothesis testing. Anecdotes only *suggest* hypotheses.

I think there is a major need for a real

reformation in how history is taught. This reformation would require having a course early in graduate training, which teaches young historians when they ought to test claims. Formal statistical testing and hypothesis testing are fairly simple to teach. If you send me a graduate student in history, I can teach this person in one week -- or even a few afternoons -- everything that he or she will need to know statistically to do his or her project. I can set up a database for them, send them out to collect data, and teach them how to use experts in their field as independent judges or raters. The major problem that historians have is that they are unaware of when they should be testing. Maybe 30-40 percent of all historical problems would lend themselves to testing, but only one tenth of one per cent actually get tested.

Some background in evolutionary psychology is also very important. Darwinism is a general theory that is very useful for understanding animal behavior. Marxism is now out, and psychoanalysis has long been problematical. People who propose a theory of historical behavior should at least be aware of whether it is plausible and consistent in a Darwinian world. If it isn't, it is probably wrong. A model in this regard is John Bowlby, who came out of a background in psychoanalysis and clawed his way into the world of real science. He recognized the need for hypothesis testing and really boned up on the scientific literature in ethology and evolutionary biology. He began to understand the attachment bond from a Darwinian point of view. The attachment relationship is an adaptive relationship for all young organisms in a perilous world. It keeps them from being scooped up by predators. It really was wrong, as Bowlby emphasized, for psychoanalysts to treat attachment as a form of pathological dependency. Attachment enhances survival, and it goes through its own phases. Disruption of the attachment relationship by an abusive parent, or by parental loss, can be psychologically consequential for the child. A lot of advice based on psychoanalytic theory, being handed out in the 1940s and 1950s, said, "Don't coddle your children." This advice was feeding the very problem that it was supposed to cure.

**HB:** There are some historians who are interested in doing statistical studies and hypothesis testing.

**FJS:** There are indeed areas in history where hypothesis testing is going on, such as

demographic and economic history. One of the problems is that this work gets viewed as "quantitative history." I don't like to cast it in this way. What I do is to try to test hypotheses. Some of what I do is quantitative, some isn't. We don't say somebody does *quantitative* biology or *quantitative* physics. Nobody in the sciences who does hypothesis testing would make a big deal out of the quantitative bit. All scientists want to know is, can a claim be tested? How one actually tests the claim is of far less importance. What we really need is not quantitative historians but *scientific* historians.

It may sound crazy to have a field of scientific historians, but what's the alternative? *Unscientific* historians? Are we going to have people who are oblivious to the normal methods that have characterized the greatest progress in knowledge in the last 500 years? That's science. What exactly is the scientific method? It's trying to falsify your claim. Unscientific history occurs when scholars do not try to falsify their claims. Scientific history is just good history. If you're not doing scientific history, you're doing bad history.

**HB:** What was the impact of your getting a MacArthur Fellowship?

**FJS:** It was very crucial for me. I am the only MacArthur Fellow that I know who used every penny of the fellowship to support my research. I did exactly what they hoped recipients would do. I used it to facilitate full-time research for five years.

**HB:** Do you plan to make your data files accessible to colleagues?

**FJS:** My research encompasses databases for the French Revolution; the Reformation; 3,890 scientists; and a few smaller databases, such as American Presidents and U.S. Supreme Court voting. I would have no qualms about sharing some of these databases with scholars who are actively working on related projects. I especially might do so on a reciprocity basis. For example, French historians are in a position to fill out my biographical database on the French Revolution by going through archival data, or parish and genealogical records.

**HB:** What is the importance of childhood to psychosocial and psychohistorical studies?

**FJS:** Enormous. Individuals learn a substantial amount of their social attitudes by

direct transmission of ideas from their parents. The correlation between social attitudes of offspring and parents is quite high. It's around .5. However, the same is not true for personality. Individuals learn personality traits as part of the strategy for dealing with family dynamics. The combined influence of social attitudes and personality enable us to explain some aspects of adult behavior, such as voting in favor of a reform movement, or voting Democratic or Republican. It's a multivariate problem.

**HB:** Can you identify a range of ages in childhood that is the most influential on subsequent adult behavior?

**FJS:** I think it's almost intuitively obvious that the early years are more important than the later years because more of personality is formed during this period. But I would say that psychoanalytic theory has grossly overemphasized the importance of very early childhood, the first year or two when memories are supposed to become "unconscious." The first ten years are considerably more important than the second ten, and the first five are more important than the second five. But I don't think the first six months or year are the most important, though it depends entirely on what attributes we are talking about. Attachment behavior, which relates to the capacity for intimacy, probably has an earlier determination -- the first year or two seems to be critical. Personality traits, which are a reflection of sibling strategies and family dynamics, are probably formed more during the second through fifth years.

**HB:** What is the importance of family dynamics and birth order to historians?

**FJS:** Their implications for historians are considerable because historians have tended to underestimate the importance of within-family diversity. They have assumed, without any evidence, that between-family differences, such as class, religious denomination, or geographic origins, are the influences we should be looking at. But all these influences, when we test them, have relatively little explanatory power. Historians would do well to be more aware of how remarkably diverse siblings are who grow up in the *same* family and to incorporate this fact into their toolkit of explanatory causes. Birth order is one of the primary mechanisms by which this remarkable diversity arises among siblings. But birth order is not a cause in itself. It is a proxy for strategies that

siblings adopt in competing for parental favor, such as the employment of individual differences in physical strength, temperament, and gender.

Most of what's important in development is not a single event or a trauma. Personality development is a long-term emergent property of interactions with other family members. Attributing aspects of personality to, say, the loss of a parent is generally a mistake. We really need to understand how niches and dynamics in the family change as a result of such events. I'm not saying that the loss of a parent has no influence on a person, but that it's very easy to grossly overemphasize the influence of this kind of event. If the early loss of a parent can explain huge amounts of subsequent behavior, I would like to see the statistical tests showing it. None of this speculative stuff. A typical psychobiography assertion is "Freud has said that..." and then the author just goes on to weave some hypothetical scenario. That is an irresponsible kind of scholarship and we can do much better. I know, because I've tested the influence of parental loss for thousands of historical figures.

**HB:** How do you define psychohistory?

**FJS:** To me psychohistory means the application of psychological theories aimed at explaining human behavior in a specific historical context. The psychologist studies people who are alive and can answer questionnaires and be tested in experimental situations. The psychohistorian happens to study people who aren't alive. The theoretical perspective, and the methods of hypothesis testing, ought to be the same.

**HB:** Paul Elovitz and some other psychohistorians have been doing studies of recent U.S. Presidents and candidates for President who are alive, interviewing them or people who knew them or grew up with them. The information is of historical importance. In *Born to Rebel* you make one reference to psychohistory, one which is not friendly. What is your critique of the field?

**FJS:** I'm not hostile at all to psychohistory as a general discipline. I am hostile to traditions within psychohistory that have taken some theory which they, like some true believer in some religious cult, believe is absolutely true. Such practitioners go back in history and apply this cherished theory to one individual, selecting data willy nilly to fit the theory, and then write some speculative psychobiography of this individual.

These psychobiographies don't come out of academic psychology, where most psychological theories are on a better footing. Instead, they come out of the weakest areas of psychology, which are those based on clinical evidence and involve theories that are most under constant revision because they were never erected on an adequate scientific foundation. I think it's irresponsible to go back and try to analyze the key to somebody's personality based on what you think their Oedipus complex was.

A totally different enterprise is doing, judged in terms of tantalizing bits of circumstantial evidence, what I tried to do in *Born to Rebel*. One begins with a plausible hypothesis, such as one very close to the heart of psychoanalysis -- that parent-offspring conflict is relevant to behavior. That's testable using well-known historical figures. I managed to get independent raters to rate levels of parent-offspring conflict for about a thousand people, which is more than ten times larger than the average study in psychology. Indeed, it turns out that people who have conflict with a parent are more likely to support revolutions. Interestingly, conflict with a parent is far more important for firstborns than it is for laterborns. Firstborns generally have a niche in which they are parent-identified, incurring parental favor by serving as a surrogate parent and by identifying strongly with parents. So if a firstborn has conflict with a parent, that conflict breaks the mechanism. The finding involves an interaction effect. And that tells us that if we are going to apply something remotely like Freud's notion of Oedipal conflict, its application will be significantly different depending upon the subject's niche in his or her family. This is the kind of sophisticated theorizing and hypothesis testing that I think we really want in "psychohistory."

**HB:** What do you think of Erikson's psychobiography of Martin Luther and Gandhi?

**FJS:** I'm not expert on Gandhi; but having read everything on Luther's childhood, having read Reformation scholars on the problem, and having spent about two years researching my Reformation chapter in *Born to Rebel*, I know perfectly well that no Reformation scholar takes Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958) very seriously. The evidence suggests that Luther's parents were no more harsh than any other parents at this time, and Luther was by no means traumatized by them. I wouldn't cite Luther as a case of high parental conflict to a level

that I know, in my history of science sample, would have made someone a revolutionary. I think Erikson was dead wrong about that.

I have developed a multivariate model of support for the Reformation. Without any information about parental conflict, the model predicts that Luther, a firstborn, will support the Reformation. He comes from Germany, which has the highest support rate of any nation. He comes from the lower clergy, which has the highest support rate of any social group. His parents were lower middle class, which in this rare instance is a predictor of support for change. Given all of these predictors, Luther's probability of support is 67 percent, just over the midline. All Reformation scholars agree that Luther was one of the more moderate reformers. Had Luther experienced the kind of severe parent-offspring conflict that Erikson claims, Luther ought to have been one of the most radical reformers.

Erikson could get away with the argument of his book because he himself decides what the reader gets to know about Luther's childhood. How far could Erikson have gotten if he had been limited by the methodological precaution of asking ten or twelve Reformation scholars, as independent raters, where Luther's conflict with his parents really was on a scale of one to ten. They wouldn't have agreed with him at all. That's why he didn't ask them. If Erickson had wanted to be really honest about it, he should have pointed out that everybody else disagreed with his evidence as well as his conclusions from that evidence. That's the kind of integrity we need to introduce if psychohistory is going to have more viability as a respected field of inquiry.

**HB:** We'd like a list of five people in order who you think have made the greatest contribution to psychohistory.

**FJS:** Counterintuitively, I would list first the book by David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (1980), for its antidote value. Anybody reading this book should realize that we should not be practicing psychohistory the way it's practiced. My second choice is Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), with the strong caveat that Kuhn in no way attempted to test those claims, although I do think many of the claims he made are in fact testable. Dean Keith Simonton is my third choice. He has tested hundreds of

hypotheses about leadership, creativity, and greatness in history. He's done so in a series of books including *Greatness: Who Makes History and Why* (1994) and *Genius, Creativity, and Leadership: Historiometric Inquiries* (1984).

**HB:** How about the book by Irving D. Harris, *The Promised Seed: A Comparative Study of Eminent First and Later Sons* (1964)?

**FJS:** Yes, there's a book I've certainly read. Harris was attempting very informal hypothesis testing. His methods weren't really rigorous and he used very small datasets. However, one has to give the guy high marks for a book written in 1964, given the level of his competitors. In methodological rigor, Harris is way above the books by Erikson and Freud -- I wouldn't put any of their books on the list. I think the list merits only three or four names at most.

**HB:** What are your thoughts about the reactions of some people to the coming of the third millennium?

**FJS:** It's possible that family dynamics and sibling differences are related to recruitment into millenarian cults that believe the earth is coming to an end. I would predict that the recent Heaven's Gate cult would recruit people who are religious in general, so that this population is probably slightly biased for firstborns. But it would also tend to recruit out of this population a slightly larger proportion of laterborns who are willing to entertain an oddball set of beliefs that strain credulity. So, my *overall* prediction is that Heaven's Gate members were somewhat more likely to be laterborns.

**HB:** The cult members subordinated themselves to a charismatic leader.

**FJS:** It depends on the extent to which the cult emphasizes an unconventional belief system, which is a laterborn predilection, versus emphasis on obedience to the authority of a charismatic figure, which is a firstborn trait. It's a complex question to figure out what is the correct hypothesis in any specific instance.

**HB:** What are your thoughts on the dynamics of violence in our world? Your book reports that middleborn children are less violent.

**FJS:** In political and social revolutions firstborns and lastborns tend to be more militant than middleborn children. Firstborns are militant because they are bigger and stronger than their

siblings and can effectively use aggression. Lastborns are militant because they tend to be more zealous, more open to experience, and more radically devoted to change. Middle children don't have the advantage of physical size of the firstborn and they aren't protected by parents as the lastborn is. They tend therefore to be more diplomatic.

**HB:** How do you understand the psychology of terrorism?

**FJS:** This issue is directly related to family niches and sibling strategies. I devoted an entire chapter in *Born to Rebel* to the psychology of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution. I tested all the standard hypotheses of French historians on this subject, that the terrorists tended to be urban or young or lower class or predisposed by previous political experience. The two best predictors of support for the Terror were differences in birth order and a tough-minded temperament, with temperament also being predicted by birth order. Younger children, particularly middleborns, are the least tough minded and tend to eschew violence. These sibling differences in attitudes toward the Terror are twice as large as all the differences that French historians have claimed based on social factors like urbanization and class.

**HB:** Another possible factor is the degree to which the parents are punitive. Lloyd deMause suggests that in previous centuries parents were very punitive and sexually abusive to their children. The violent revolutionaries might have been retaliating against their experiences with brutal parents.

**FJS:** It's a plausible theory. Whether it's true or not is a matter of doing the empirical testing. I don't think that we'd find much difference in how loving parents were from the 14th century to the present. Rather, I think that there are enormous variations in how loving or abusive individual parents are in the same population. The between-family differences would swamp the between-century differences. I say this because I have tested the claim for more than a thousand people in my study.

**HB:** What needs to be done in historical, family dynamics, and birth-order studies in the next decade?

**FJS:** The single most important class of studies that needs to be done involves all the siblings and parents in the *same* family. We need

to understand more about how, given the niche that the first child actually occupies, what niche the second child then chooses to occupy. That's different from asking the question, "On average, what is the firstborn's niche (and associated personality profile)?" This would be asking, "What did the firstborn child actually do, and what did the second child then do in response?" Take the case of Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the second of eight children, with a rather shy elder brother. Napoleon, who was extremely pig-headed and extroverted, was able to usurp the dominant niche in his family. By his late teens he was running the family, which is unusual. If a firstborn does not occupy the typical firstborn niche -- that of the dominant alpha male figure -- this niche is open for another sibling to occupy.

In the field of history, I'd like to think that historians will cease to worry about whether their discipline is a humanities or a science, which I think is a stupid issue, and will just get on with asking the more interesting questions. The historian's goal almost always ought to be to have a rank-ordered list of candidates for explanatory power. To do that, one often has to conduct a multivariate analysis. One tests each hypothesis and then rank-orders the effect size of each predictive variable. Then one can say, for example, that the most important predictor of attitudes toward scientific innovation is birth order, the next most important one is social attitudes, then age, personal friendship with the leader, and nationality differences. Some nations are significantly more or less positive toward innovations. This often happens as a result of chauvinism. It was a lot easier for the British to be in favor of Isaac Newton, who was one of them, than it was for the French, because the theory that Newton was attacking was Descartes' theory which was a French theory.

**HB:** What else do psychohistorians need to do to gain academic acceptance?

**FJS:** Let's take a hypothesis, not a global theory, and let's go test it in history, with a sufficient number of cases. Our unit of analysis will no longer be individual biographies but rather whole populations. There's a million problems that can be tackled in this manner. I have thought of going back, for example, and doing a much more elaborate analysis of the antislavery or Abolition movement. We could work up a database of maybe a thousand people, including a control

group of famous opponents of Abolition -- many black biographies are now in microfilm at libraries like Harvard's Widener. I'd also love to see a detailed analysis of who went north and who went south in the American Civil War, particularly in the border states where families often split. There are many anecdotal comments about this topic, but nobody has done a really good study of it.

**HB:** Do you foresee a Darwinian psychohistory?

**FJS:** Darwinian theory is the one and only general-purpose theory that is capable of explaining the broad features of animal behavior, including that of human beings. This assertion does not mean that psychobiography will end up being nothing but Darwinian. Many lower-level theories need to be included among the basic tools of psychohistory. Still, I am confident that none of these lower-level theories will ever significantly violate Darwinian assumptions. To the extent that the fields of psychobiography and psychohistory wish to become part of modern science, requiring they employ a theory from the behavioral sciences, they must be Darwinian. *Born to Rebel* offers just such an eclectic, Darwinian approach to the problem of why some people, but not others, endorse radical changes in life.

*Interviewer's Note: Frank Sulloway's Born to Rebel is an important contribution to our understanding of rebellion and conformity. Human beings make recurrent choices between these two major adaptive strategies. Birth involves separation from the mother, followed by autonomous development and subsequent rebellions against parents, teachers, employers, and other authority figures. Meanwhile, conformity to social demands is required for successful adjustment in relationships.*

*Sulloway has revitalized the birth order debate initiated in two books a generation ago. More frequent conformity by firstborns and more frequent rebellion by laterborns is consistent with Irving D. Harris, The Promised Seed: A Comparative Study of Eminent First and Later Sons (1964). The author compared famous first sons with famous men who grew up with one or more older brothers in a variety of occupations, including government, warfare, philosophy, and literature. Stronger connection with the parents and therefore incorporation of their ideals caused the first sons to be more idealistic and theoretical.*

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*Competition with one or more older, stronger, and more parentally-affiliated brothers caused the later sons to be more pragmatic and observant.*

*Sulloway described successive children of the same parents as occupying different adaptive niches in accordance with Darwin's observation that different species occupy different ecological niches. This conception is consistent with an observation by J. H. S. Bossard and E. E. Boll, The Large Family System (1956). Successive children seek unique roles, such as responsible, popular, socially ambitious, or studious. Later children in large families tend to be forced into pathological roles, such as isolate, irresponsible, sickly, or spoiled, because the more desirable roles are already occupied.*

*The principal new contributions of Born to Rebel are its systematic study of several thousand individuals and its multivariate perspective.*

*Herbert Barry, III, is a psychologist who has taught and researched at the University of Pittsburgh for 33 years. He is Co-Director of the Psychohistory Forum's Childhood and Personality of Presidents and Presidential Candidates Research Group and a past president of the*

*International Psychohistorical Association. His specialties include birth order and Presidential leadership. Dr. Barry is a prolific scholar who has published over 200 articles. □*

## Letter to the Editor

### David Beisel and the Value of Teachers

Dear Editor,

What follows is a short college application essay, written in 1992 while I was in the process of applying successfully to Brown University. Its publication is meant to honor the hard work and dedication of Professor David Beisel and other teachers whose impact is too rarely acknowledged.

Before I met Dr. David Beisel, my history professor for three semesters at Rockland Community College, the word *learning*, to me, did not describe the acquiring of knowledge for its own sake, but rather the Machiavellian competition for grades I faced in high school. A subject such as history, Dr. Beisel's own, seemed to have little apparent utility other than to

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fulfill the demands of the New York State Board of Regents. In fact, it was my tenth grade history teacher who said, "School is a game. You've got to learn each teacher's rules and play by those rules so you can get good grades, get into a good college, and get a good job." I wanted to speed up the game. I used my accelerated courses to graduate early, in an attempt to fast-forward through my education and to arrive at the career phase of my life. Not being sure of what direction to take, I chose to enter the Mentor/Talented Student Honors Program at Rockland Community College. On my first day of class, Dr. Beisel set the stage for what would become my first real exposure to learning. "By the end of the semester," he told the class, "I will have turned you into college students."

From Professor Beisel I have learned that the study of history not only has utility but is key to analysis of the present. In my second class with him, Western Civilization II, I had the opportunity to compare past events to the then current Gulf War. While the majority of Americans believed that the U.S. was fighting a "moral war" against tyranny and dictatorship, Beisel was exploring economic causes (oil company and military manufacturer connections with government), political causes, and even psychological causes (our need for an enemy after the end of the Cold War). He was also drawing parallels, showing the similarities between present day U.S. foreign policy and the military overextension of sixteenth century Spain and other great powers in history. I've learned that, in order to be awake and aware of the world, I must have more than one set of eyes. Each time I take a course in college, I acquire a new perspective, one which I can use, in combination with all the others, to see the world more truthfully.

Beisel's first-day prediction was correct, and by the end of my first semester with him I had come to value not only the academic field of history but my college education as a whole. It bears notice, however, Dr. Beisel was not the only teacher in my college experience to "turn me on" to his subject and to learning in general. What makes

Professor Beisel different from the others is that he has emphasized, in the most aggressive manner possible, the real goal of education: critical thinking. Although I had had a taste of such thinking in high school, it was not until I encountered Dr. Beisel that I found critical thinking to be not an occasional pastime, but a way of life.

Appreciatively yours,

Avram Piltch  
New York City

*The author graduated from SUNY-Binghamton and then took a master's degree from New York University. □*

## **In Memoriam: Melvin Goldstein (1926-1997)**

**Paul H. Elovitz  
Ramapo College**

Professor Melvin Goldstein died peacefully in the arms of his loved ones on May 14 just short of his 71st birthday. This concluded several years of struggling with cancer. This son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants was born on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and raised in Brooklyn. He served his country in World War II in the navy, graduated from Long Island University in 1949, earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1950, and took his doctoral degree in literature at the University of Wisconsin in 1958. After teaching at a variety of colleges in the New York area, he went to the University of Hartford in 1966 where he taught literature. There he was instrumental in establishing the Judaic Studies and Yiddish programs and helped to create the Afro-American literature studies program — and continued to do so after his formal retirement in 1994. At Hartford in 1992, he was a recipient of

### **THE MAKERS OF PSYCHOHISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT**

To write the history of psychohistory, the Forum is interviewing the founders of our field to create a record of their challenges and accomplishments. It welcomes participants who will help identify, interview, and publish accounts of the founding of psychohistory.



the Roy E. Larsen Award for excellence in teaching.

Literary and film criticism based on psychoanalysis was among his passions. He trained at the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP) and, in 1982, he took a master of education degree in Counseling Psychology at the University of Hartford. For many years, Dr. Goldstein provided educational services and taught psychoanalytic techniques to physicians at the Department of Psychiatry of Middlesex Hospital. In 1969, he became a Certified Psychological Examiner (CPE) of the State of Connecticut.

Psychohistory is a field he worked hard to develop. Often, despite being in great pain from a bad back, he traveled to Manhattan to attend or give papers at the Group for the Psychohistorical Study of Film, the Psychohistory Forum, or the IPA, or to serve as Group Process Analyst at IPA meetings. He relished the exchange of ideas and seemed to delight in observing and interacting with the most varied individuals. In fact, Goldstein's influence should be measured more by the quality of his interpersonal relations than by the still impressive list of his publications on Shakespeare, film, and many other subjects.

This robustly humane man called himself a "Freudian rabbi" and, with his flowing beard, looked the part. He usually greeted people of both sexes with a big hug and signed many of his letters and cards with "hugs and kisses." He profoundly cared about people, often made valuable comments, and enjoyed mentoring others. At workshops on teaching psychohistory his comments could be especially incisive. At all times, he had a way with words and was able to get people to see things from a slightly different viewpoint. One example of this trait is when he talked about patients' dropping out of psychotherapy to pursue "boy friend therapy" or not having enough money because of "shopping therapy." Another example is when, in the course of writing a letter of recommendation for a younger colleague he had mentored, he referred to himself as the student rather than the teacher. At his university, his influence was such that his departmental chair referred to him as "a father figure to colleagues and students." Melvin Goldstein's keen intellect, warm smile, bear hugs, and friendship will be missed by many people beyond the 200 mourners who attended his funeral.

Surviving are his wife of 47 years, Margo, three children, and five grandchildren. Condolences should be sent to the Goldstein's at 20 Lilley Court in West Hartford, CT 06119, and donations to the Melvin Goldstein English Scholarship Award Fund, University of Hartford, Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117. Memorial services, which his colleagues and former students are invited to attend, will be held at the opening ceremony of the IPA Convention on June 4th and at the Forum's September meeting. Contact Paul Elovitz for details. □

## Bulletin Board

**FORTHCOMING PSYCHOHISTORY FORUM PRESENTATIONS:** An outgrowth of the May 3rd program, "Oedipus and the Fathers: A Workshop on the Autobiographies of Psychohistorians," has been the establishment of a committee to discuss the role of mothers. **Conalee Shneidman** (Tel. 212-724-6852), **Mary Lambert**, and **Hanna Turken** are the organizers. **Michael Flynn** (Center on Violence and Human Survival) is scheduled for Saturday, November 15, to present on "Apocalyptic Hope: Apocalyptic Thinking." **NOTICES:** **Mel Kalfus** will be completing his teaching at Lynn University and devoting himself to teaching psychohistory in the Florida Atlantic University Elder Hostel program. **Herbert Barry, III**, became a trustee of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation earlier this year. **CONFERENCES:** The **Association for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society** has a conference on "Aggressivity and Violence" scheduled for November 6-8, 1997, at George Washington University in Washington, DC. **Clio's Psyche** will be exchanging advertisements with the publication, *The Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*. The **IPA (International Psychohistorical Association)** has a full program planned for its June 4-6 20th Annual Convention in New York City, and a number of our members are presenting. These include: Herbert Barry, David Beisel, Rudolph Binion, Robert Chaikin, Ted L. Cox, Florian Galler, James Kirchhofer, Jerry Kroth, Joan Lachkar, Richard Morrock, Vivian Rosenberg, and J. Lee Shneidman. Two Ramapo College students, David Barry and Michele O'Donnell, are also presenting. The Psychohistory Forum's Research Group on the Makers of Psychohistory is sponsoring a presentation by Paul Elovitz and a panel which will include David Barry, David

Beisel, Rudolph Binion, Lloyd deMause, and Henry Lawton. TRAVEL: **Henry Lawton** and wife Helen combined travel to the April European psychohistory conference in Amsterdam with a historic tour of the homeland of Helen's ancestors. **Diane Gross** spent part of April traveling in Egypt. **AWARDS:** **Dan Dervin** has been awarded the Adele Mellen Prize for his book, *Matricentric Narratives: Recent British Women's Fiction in a Postmodern Mode* (1997). **PUBLICATIONS:** The SPECIAL DUAL TRAINING ISSUE of **Clio's Psyche**, to be published in September, is well under way. The introduction will be written by Peter Loewenberg and it will include articles by Peter Balo, Mark Bracher, Geoffrey Cocks, Lloyd deMause, Paul H. Elovitz, Thomas Kohut, Nellie Thompson, Richard Weiss, Victor Wolfenstein, and others. **Jacques Szaluta's** *Psychohistory: Theory and Practice* is scheduled for publication this summer. Szaluta, together with Laurie Adams, has edited *Psychoanalysis and the Humanities*, Number 6 in the series, Current Issues in Psychoanalytic Practice: Monographs of the Society for Psychoanalytic Training (1997). Congratulations to *The Psychohistory Review* on its 25th anniversary issue which included articles by Peter Gay, Peter Loewenberg, and Charles Strozier. Congratulations to **Florian Galler** on the publication of "Group-Dynamic Processes in Financial Markets" in *The Journal of Psychohistory (JPH)* 24 (4) Spring 1997, 403-408. The first 1997 publication of **Sander Breiner** of Michigan was a book review of Zeng Yi, *Scarlet Memorial: Tales of Cannibalism in Modern China*, in the *JPH* Winter 1997 issue. **Alberto Fergusson** has published "The Technique of Accompanied Autoanalysis (AA) and the Theory of Psychosis as Psychological Destruction and Decomposition (PDD)". It was first presented at the First International Meeting on the Rehabilitation Process of the Severely Mentally Ill in Bogota, Colombia, in April, 1997. **Phyllis Grosskurth** has published *Byron, the Flawed Angel*, her literary psychobiography of Lord Byron. Grosskurth was interviewed in our September, 1996, issue (Vol. 3, No. 2). **CONDOLENCES** to **Ted L. Cox** on the deaths of his daughter and mother as well as to the family of Mel Goldstein. **RETIREMENTS:** **Dan Dervin** is retiring from Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia, after 30 years to devote more time to writing. **OUR THANKS** to our members and friends for their support which makes **Clio's Psyche** possible. To a member of the Board of Trustees for a \$200 gift. To

Benefactors Herbert Barry and Ralph Colp, and to Contributing Member Jacqueline Paulson. Our thanks for thought-provoking materials to Herbert Barry, Andrew Brink, Donna Crawley, Alan Elms, Michael Flynn, Ted Goertzel, Charles Gouaux, Avram Piltch, David Redles, J. Lee Shneidman, Charles Strozier, and Frank Sulloway. Thanks to Kellie King, Michele O'Donnell, and Michelle White for proofreading, and to Anna Lentz and Gary Schmidt for their assistance in producing this periodical. □

### SULLOWAY CUTS

It's about parent-offspring conflict, temperament, gender, gender of siblings, and age gaps between siblings. My book also deals with age, social attitudes, and social class.

The model is really right on for people like him. Alfred Russel Wallace, who codiscovered the theory of natural selection, had a 96 percent probability of becoming an evolutionist.

I have a soft spot in my heart for birth order because, if we happen to be looking at problems of revolutionary change, it just so happens that birth order is the best of the 256 variables that I looked at. But

Another book I would like to do in the longer term is about the Darwinian family. A great deal has emerged during the last 15-20 years about how to understand human behavior from an evolutionary theory point of view. I would begin this book with a chapter on pregnancy. There's been considerable research showing that pregnancy is not a wonderfully harmonious event. The fetus and mother are engaged in a warfare that is played out in terms of who controls the glucose supply to the fetus. The reason it normally works is the process of natural selection, which has allowed both parties to become finely tuned to the other. In pregnancy life starts out as a Darwinian struggle, followed by the Darwinian struggle of family dynamics. Siblings compete for parental investment; and personality, which reflects sibling strategies, is a consequence of this competition. A great deal is illuminated by an evolutionary understanding of the family.

+The mother and the fetus are in warfare with one another because their genetic interests differ. The mother is equally related to all her offspring, so she

has interests in having future offspring that her individual offspring do not entirely share. As a

**Some forthcoming articles:**

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*Reflections on Aum Shinrikyo*

**Jacques LeRider:**  
*Jewish Identity in Freud's  
Moses and Monotheism*

**Maria Milora:**  
*Personal Myth in History:  
Nixon and Hiss*

**Michael Foldy:**  
*The Emotional Logic of  
Mein Kampf, Kohutian and  
Bakhtinian Perspectives*

result,...The fetus wants more of the mother's

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nutrients than is in the mother's own interests. The fetus has its own hormonal system and grows its own blood vessels to counteract what the mother is doing, and the mother secretes specific hormones to stop what the fetus is doing. Pregnancy is a carefully orchestrated war between two conflicting sets of Darwinian interests.

It is absurd that two centuries of French historians have made general claims about social class and

voting in the National Convention without testing these claims. The mechanisms of testing have been available for at least a century, and yet have not been used by historians.

I heard him lecture about ten years afterward. He had this style of "Gosh, golly, I'm just an Alabama ant man." For a moment I wondered if this was the man I remembered as the greatest teacher I ever had. It took me about ten minutes to recall that his brilliance as a teacher was his infectiousness, not his performance. He has such a love of the complexities of nature and such a poetic gift for describing them. After just a few minutes of listening to him, I had this feeling of "Why isn't everybody doing what this man is doing?"

One of the things that interested me was Wilson's penchant for model building. At that time he was engaged in his book on island biogeography with Robert MacArthur in which he used equilibrium models to predict the number of species on an island based on its height, size, and distance from another mainland source. He clearly saw evolutionary biology as a science in which one could do rather sophisticated hypothesis testing. As a result of this experience, I ended up trying to be an evolutionary biologist in history. A lot of the theory that I rely on is Darwinian theory. The methods that I rely on are the standard methods of science.

[/Bob] It's rather ironic that, having started out as a Darwin scholar and having invested a tremendous amount of my life in understanding Darwinian theory and Darwin's individual development, it took me almost 20 years to realize how directly Darwin's theory was relevant to the problems I was most interested in. Neither I nor anybody else really understood how to integrate a developmental theory about birth order -- one that deals largely with environmental influences -- into a Darwinian framework.

: Given the problem that a scholar chooses to work on, what is the best method for knowing the

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