

Geoffrey Cocks, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of History at Albion College. He is the author of *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute* (1985, 1997), *The Wolf at the Door: Stanley Kubrick, History, and the Holocaust* (2004), and *The State of Health: Illness in Nazi Germany* (2012). He can be contacted at gcocks@albion.edu. □

Fleshing out Freud's Undeveloped Psychosexual Stages

James L. Kelley—Independent Scholar

Review of Daniel S. Benveniste's Libido, Culture, and Consciousness: Revisiting Freud's Totem and Taboo (New York: IP Books, 2022), ISBN 978-1-949093-99-5, pages i-xiii, 473, soft-bound, \$35.00.

Benveniste's book attempts to flesh out Freud's underdeveloped notion that psychosexual stages originated with our ancestors' traumatic prehistoric experiences. Though Freud wrote about his "phylogenetic fantasy" (this term derived from the title editors gave to an English translation of one of Freud's unpublished papers) throughout his later life, it is in his 1914 *Totem and Taboo* that we find the fullest expression of his idea that humans inherit memory traces of their forebears' traumatic experiences. The work spoke of a "primal horde" that was lorded over by an alpha male, a "primal father" who kept all the women to himself and subjugated or drove away all of the weaker males in the group. These disinherited sons banded together, killed and ate their father, and agreed to cooperate to forge a society that was gentler and more equitable. However, the repressed guilt over the patricide influenced the creation of totemism and exogamy, practices that defined the fraternal society that succeeded the primal horde.

As Benveniste (2022) summarizes Freud in *Totem*, "The two principal taboos of totemism are the taboo against harming the totem and the taboo against sexual relations within the clan" (p. 18). Freud has, in effect, linked a stage in human history with a psychosexual stage (phallic), a cultural practice (exogamy), and a myth/religious ritual (totemism/totemic feast). *Libido, Culture, and Consciousness* wishes to extend this kind of analog into each of Freud's psychosexual stages, and also into suitably adapted ver-

sions of Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages.

Is Benveniste successful? A simple "yes" or "no" would doubtlessly be misleading. The author is humble enough to admit that we cannot ever be sure what happened before writing was invented; thus, even Freud's "primal horde" theory itself is conjecture, however inspired. Also, the author is careful to point out that his linking of "universal" myths to Freud's stages and broadly-defined cultural stages (the dating of which, the author admits, is little more than guesswork) is not the final word on the matter, but rather an attempt to provide an up-to-date synthesis for the 2020s.

Instead of the chapter-by-chapter summary typical of short book reviews, I will use the remainder of this piece to zero in on the portion of the text which I have been taken with the most. Chapters Three and Five link the oral stage to the Upper Paleolithic era humans whose nomadic culture had not achieved the clear separation from nature that their Neolithic successors would do. Not unlike an orally-fixated child sucking a thumb, these Paleo-nomads developed funeral rites to help assuage their fear of death. These funerals helped the living work through psychical ambivalence toward dead relatives. These two chapters (pp. 61-81, 143-181), along with the appendix on "Orality in Psychoanalytic Theory" (pp. 366-370), yield numerous insights into the oral stage. I especially favor the appendix, which alerted me to a trio of articles that I am quite sure I will be citing in my ongoing work on the psychosexual stages.

A sizable part of Chapter Three is taken up by Benveniste's able analysis of a set of drawings by one of his autistic patients. The author suggests that the little boy's scrawled circles and lines were numerous mouths that threatened to torment him. The artwork was paired by Benveniste with recordings of interviews with the child, during which the words "mouth" and "teeth" were frequently heard. It seems that this patient was expressing his fear of being devoured by his environment. Whatever the truth of it is, the case casts light on the oral stage by painting a picture of the terrifying reality of being unable to surpass it. In terms of references, Benveniste calls upon names such as Bettelheim and Tustin to establish severe autism as a candidate for the oral stage's peculiar pathology. Never mind that recent literature on autism was not surveyed. There are plenty of books out there that score higher marks than Benveniste in the bibliography category. This book has other virtues.

All in all, *Libido, Culture, and Consciousness* is a treatise from which many both inside and outside of the psychoanalytic community could profit immensely. As a final attempt to pique your curiosity, the book contains a great number of color photographic illustrations from the author's own travels, one of which depicts the author himself side-by-side with a Yanomami shaman (p. 194)!

James L. Kelley's biography can be found on page 281. □

Letter to the Editor Addendum

Dear Editor,

In the historiographical essay "Psychohistorians of Music and Musicians," published in the Psychoanalysis of Music/Musicians & Poetry About Music: Part I section in *Clio's Psyche* (Winter 2023, Vol. 29, No. 2), I called attention to a disturbing trend I see in the scholarship of a number of psychohistorians in recent years. That trend is the failure to integrate the earlier work of psychohistorians directly relevant to the paper being presented. I am troubled not only by incomplete references but also by the number of presentations that never acknowledge related studies even exist.

I am embarrassed to find myself in the company of those I criticized. My essay failed to mention "Women's Voices in Opera: A Psychohistorical Perspective on Three Arias," by Ellen Toronto and Emily Wood Toronto in *The Journal of Psychohistory* (Fall 2019, Vol. 47, No. 2). I am happy to add this contribution to the other works cited in my essay.

David Beisel

Go to the *Clio's Psyche* websites (CliosPsyche.org, PsychohistoryForum.com, PsychobiographyForum.com) to learn more about the journal, psychohistory, and to view back issues from 1994-2021.