

The Personality and Career of Satan

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To those members of the APA who are so strictly dedicated to the doctrine of immaculate Scientism that they must needs limit the compass of their professional attention to the simplest and purest of measurable phenomena, to those who with good reason pride themselves on having contributed to the historic emancipation of our discipline from the shackles of an out-worn philosophy and theology, to these and perhaps to many others, the title of this paper provides ample cause for dismay or indignation. What will their reference group, the Olympian company of physicists, think when they hear that Satan was exhibited as an object for serious consideration at the annual meeting of their Association? By what deplorable slip of judgment did the Program Committee of Division 8 let the Devil—that shadow of a by-gone superstitious age—crash the gates of this emporium of genuine scientific commerce?

Here at the outset I must hasten to exonerate your Program Committee by reminding you that theirs was the power to accept or to reject every paper except this one, and, therefore, that mine is whatever blame there be for taking advantage of my over-privileged position to insert a topic which seems precisely calculated to affront the fastidious scruples of some of my most respected colleagues.

My front-line of defense runs as follows: first, that more knowledge about the major determinants of human behavior is one of the prime aims of the science of psychology; second, that one class of major determinants of behavior consists of products of the imagination (imagination regarding causes and consequences, for example), these being not infrequently more powerful than percepts in their effects on a person's physiology, mood, emotions, decisions, and overt actions; third, that among the countless dynamic products of the imagination over the last two thousand years, the concept, figure, and deeds of Satan have been singularly influential, apparently surpassing in awesome potency, during certain periods in certain areas, the concept, figure, and deeds of God; and fourth, since the amount of data bearing on the imagined personality and career of Satan down the ages is almost unique in volume and variety (my bibliography on the Devil consists of more than 150 titles), it would be hard to find a better case in which to test the plausibility of whatever hypotheses we may construct relative to the genesis, evolution, propagation, and survival of an enormously consequential inhabitant of the* collective mind of Western man. Despite the fact that today it is not possible to observe the birth and development of this particular demon in a living mind, any more than an evolutionist can witness the rise and fall of the dinosaur, I hope that some of you, in view of these considerations, will concede that a longitudinal study of the Devil, if systematically conducted, may properly be given place within the boundaries of psychology as currently defined.

To what class of charismatic imamnial entities does Satan belong? Not to the class represented, say, by images of Alexander the Great; and not to the class represented by images of Hamlet or Don Quixote. Satan is similar to the members of both these only in one respect: he possesses a full complement of *anthropopsychic* properties, that is, he is described as perceiving, feeling, thinking, or intending as a human being does. Only occasionally is he endowed with solely *anthropomorphic* attributes. When he is

portrayed in a nearly human form, he is almost invariably supplied with certain goat-like appendages, such as horns, a tail, and cloven feet. But more important than this he is an immortal being with supernatural powers at his command: he is capable of doing everything that children have always imagined doing in the furthest reaches of their wish-fulfilling fantasies. Being a pure psyche, or spirit, he is ordinarily invisible, can pass through walls of any thickness, and can invade and seize the will of any living creature. In this way he can take the shape of an insidious serpent as he did to seduce Eve, or that of a dragon at the jaws to Hell as he does in Breughel's canvases, or that of the dog who appeared in the laboratory of the fed-up scholar, Faust. In former days, we may presume, the Devil was more enchanting than God to some young boys because, with the wings of an angel he would fly from place to place without a gasoline motor and to any height, unencumbered by the elaborate apparatus of a science fiction hero, as he did, according to the Gospel of St. Luke, when he took Jesus "up into a high mountain" and later "set him on a pinnacle of the temple." These powers are comparable to those exhibited by countless heroes, gods, demi-gods, and demons of mythologies, sagas, and legends; and roughly speaking he belongs with them, but in a special class of supernatural entities whose exceeding potency depends on a vivid belief in their existence, and, further, in a sub-class of that class, composed of demonic entities, and in Satan's case, the source and rider of all demons, indeed, in the Judao-Christian tradition, the object of a monodemonism inter-related with the orthodox monotheism.

But here is the snag: people have always been disposed to think, on the one hand, that the supernatural anthropopsychic beings that play the leading parts in the dramatic mythologies and religions of all out-groups are purely imaginary, and, on the other hand, to be convinced that the *personae* of their own religious dramas (who were deeply planted in their psyches at the earliest age) are absolutely real and sacred beings, whose objective existence outside their minds has been unmistakably and irrevocably revealed. And so, seeing that Satan and God were the key figures in the sacred apocalyptic myth of both Judaism and Christianity, in one of which religions most of us were reared, it will be necessary if we wish to adopt our customary scientific impartiality in these matters to extricate ourselves from whatever constraining web of sentiments may still reside in us, and, taking the station of the man in the moon before the arrival of any missionary astronauts, look at the whole matter from afar in readiness for any sign of "usable truth," which Melville once defined as "the apprehension of the absolute condition of things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not."

A credo. The ground for this undertaking of mine, as well as for the hope that other psychologists will invade the abundant field of religious images and imagents, and grapple with one or another of its many mysteries, is a conclusion, or value judgment, I have come to, on the periphery of science, which might be termed a credo. It is the belief that the evidence set forth by anthropologists and psychoanalysts, particularly by Frazer and by Freud, in favor of the proposition that religions are products of human

imaginings revised by rationality, is so massive and persuasive that it adds up to a veritable discovery, potentially the most consequential discovery since Darwin's theory of evolution. This discovery, as I view it, puts religion in the select company of science, philosophy, and art since these are also products of the best human imaginings revised by rationality. In fact, if one defines religion as *the* matter of ultimate concern, it gives religion the superordinate position. You can ask science for what? philosophy for what? and art for what? but not religion for what? because it is the function of religion to provide the best conceivable answers to all those "whats." To answer these "whats," to fulfil this basic function, as I see it, the propositions and stories of a religion should, first of all, be as true as they can be at any given time, that is, congruent with the deepest realities of human nature; and second, they should be as comprehensive and as self-consistent as they can be made; and third, they should comfort the distressed, and, by presenting visions of a realizable better future, engender hope, and encourage efforts to achieve this. Finally, a religious system should be applicable to the most critical problems of the day and aid in their solution, and hence, like science, should always be susceptible to correction and reconstruction. This is an ideal which was approximated by Christianity in the 13th century, at least as judged by most of the eminent intellectuals of that era as well as by the bulk of the population. But today only a minority of thoughtful people sincerely believe, in the marrow of their passions, that Christianity fulfils any of these functions to a consequential degree, and this failure, so evident to so many for so long, is in all likelihood the root determinant of the alienation and demoralization of large numbers of our fellowmen. And so the discovery I mentioned is both important and timely, for it means that religion, as a product of passionate human imaginings revised by rationality, can be sympathetically examined, analyzed, evaluated, revised, radically reconstructed, or built anew by people of sufficient depth and genius, just as art-forms and scientific theories have been periodically recreated down the centuries. Suspecting that Satan, the drama of the Good Father and the Bad Son, may be initially responsible in some degree for the fact that Christianity has not matured to the point of being equal to the dilemmas of our time, I shall turn to the question of the genesis and nature of this Bad Son.

Prologue. Essential to a genuine understanding of what I have in mind to say is a fifty-page prologue, which, of course, must be omitted. It deals with the application of contemporary anthropological and psychological theories to such fundamental phenomena as (1), the projection of anthropopsychic entities as powers immanent in natural objects, such as the earth and sun, and then their projection into space as transcendent powers outside of nature; and (2), the transition from the concept of a god as sheer power to that of a moral god who is both powerful and good; and (3), the evolution of a chaos of minor deities, by consolidation and crystallization, into a single god, highly magnified as to power and benevolence, or, as in Persia, the conception of two gods, coeval brothers of almost equal potency, one wholly good, known later as Ozmazd and the other wholly evil, known later as Ahriman; and (4), the social effect of the *cyclical* mythology of ancient India, portraying an eternal series of departures

and returns with no progressions that endure, and Zoroaster's radical break with tradition by composing a dynamic *linear* mythology which announced that the age-old alternation of good and evil—first Ozmazd, the angel of light, truth, and virtue in control of things, and then Ahriman, the angel of darkness, lies, and vice—that this perpetual cycle would be terminated at an appointed future time, when Ozmazd and his good angels would utterly demolish the wicked Ahriman and his legions, cast him into the abyss, and establish a new and perfect world which would endure forever; and (5), the assimilation of the main features of this powerful apocalyptic myth and the composition of variant versions of it by the Hebrews during the second and first century B.C. (the once-called “silent centuries” between the Old and the New Testament), one in the book of Daniel and others in several non-canonical works, particularly the book of Enoch which refers to the war in Heaven ending with the fall of the angels and visualizes another great war to end all wars between the powers of righteousness and wickedness; and (6), concomitant with this evolution of apocalypticism, the shaping, stage by stage, of the villain of the piece, out of a multiplicity of demons, minor devils, and more than one Satan. “Satan” is a word which in the Old Testament means “the Adversary” (of man)—not a particular person with a proper name, but a role played by a number of angels (like FBI agents) in the service of Jehovah, who have access to Heaven, as we see in the book of Job, and are evidently on good terms with the Almighty. All of this provides wonderful sources for studies of evolution on the mental level, the emergence of innumerable variations which compete in a desperate struggle for survival.

From dissonance to consonance. Here I shall pause for a moment at the end of this summary of my prologue, because I have come to a body of material of exceeding richness and significance, mostly in the book of Enoch, which may be familiar to the next President of this Division; but if not, I would like to recommend it to him as just his meat. Whether he will be appetized or not, his is the theoretical digestive system which seems best fitted to give vital order to this plenitude of heterogeneous data. In agreement with the consensus of opinion of those scholars who are entitled to a serious hearing, a purely hypothetical model of the initial state of mind shared by the non-canonical writers of the last centuries B.C. might include the following: (1), a feeling of extreme distress engendered by the tribulations suffered by their peoples and by the perception of rewarded wickedness on all sides of them ever since the break-up of Alexander's empire; (2), an insistent need to find an explanation for this prevalence and these victories of iniquity, since it was no longer possible to view them as God's just punishment for their own sins; (3), a strong attraction to the Persian concept of Ahriman, first, because it *did* provide an anthropopsychic explanation of evil, and second, because of Ahriman's essential role in the inspiring and irresistible apocalyptic vision of the great war of supernatural beings that would end with the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; and third, because it was comforting to have a single figure to whom all wickedness could be legitimately ascribed; (4), a state of dissonance resulting from the entertainment of this concept because, since Ahriman

was a self-created god with powers almost equal to those of the good god, Ozmazd, this concept did not conform to their certainty that God was the creator of the universe, all powerful and all good; and (5), an antipathy to Ahriman because he was a foreign god never in any way related to Jehovah.

So much for this crude and over-simplified analysis of the initial condition of a hypothetical cognitive system. What an expert of Dr. Festinger's mettle might do, after revising my provisional formulation, would be to trace in the relevant non-canonical works the progression from this state of dissonance to that of relative consonance which was attained before the middle of the first century A.D., first, by giving the supernatural Ahriman the Biblical name of "Satan," second, by endowing this grandiose Satan with a large portion of Ahriman's evil powers, by admitting, in fact, that Satan was in control of the temporal and hopelessly vicious age of human history in which they were then living, an age in which the righteous were constantly tormented by his demonic and human agents; third, by announcing that the angel Satan had been created by God in Heaven but had fallen because of some unpardonable offense, and fourth, by stating that God, being omnipotent, had power over Satan, and being all good, would bring an end to the Devil's rule on earth in the near future as prophesied by the apocalyptic writers. Here endeth this prologue.

'New Testament Satan. Here for the first time we encounter a fully formed and featured Satan, outcome of the just-described non-canonical imaginings revised by rationality: a fallen angel of the first magnitude, the Evil One, with supernatural powers, the implacable enemy of God's promised kingdom for the righteous. He is the being who in St. John is called the prince of this world and whom St. Paul names as the prince of the powers of the air. (Perhaps the architects of space programs should take note of this.) Satan's undisputed sovereignty on earth at that time is made known to us when he tempts Jesus by saying: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for *that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it.* If thou therefore will worship me, all shall be thine." The presence of this hardly credible Satan in the New Testament has been an embarrassment to many modern theologians. But in the most recent book on the subject by Ling, it is argued that a supernatural antagonist is indispensable to the plot; that it was the extension of Satan's power on earth which brought forth the Christ to conquer hate with love, and to prove that the seductions of the prince of this world could be resisted, and that demons subservient to his vicious will could be exorcized from the souls of his unhappy victims. We need not be detained by this crucial issue. Suffice it to say that here was sufficient Biblical ground for a prodigious exuberance of imaginations about the Devil, which, in subsequent Christian centuries, exhibited him mostly as the arch tempter, the wily, cunning, and treacherous "old serpent," and more profoundly as the arch-hater, conspirator, destroyer of the faith, vindictively intent on marring God's fair work.

But these were popular legends for the most part and, my first duty being to discover the Christian party Une respecting the personality of the Devil, I must turn

to the struggles of the Church Fathers to construct a theory that did not contradict the orthodox premises they had inherited and that could be given scriptural support. Furthermore, since the problem was that of explaining the vicissitudes of a father-son relationship, the theory had to be psychologically plausible; and so, as we shall see at times, the reflections of these founding fathers of Christian theology resemble those of modern psychoanalysts. From the few specimens to be presented of the mentations of these theorists, you will also gain some impression of the difficulty of their task; which was that of producing consonance out of a cognitive model in which incompatible properties had already been implanted by projection. In subsequent rabbinical writings, Satan was the villain in many enthralling stories; but he never reached the monstrous proportions that he did in later Christianity. He was the tempter, accuser, and punisher, but not *the* principal of all evil.

What was the original state of the Devil? Here the basic premise was that since God is perfect, his celestial creations must be perfect, and hence the Devil must have been perfect on the day that he was made. But there was no Biblical support for this conclusion until Tertullian (*Adversus Marcionem*, 2, 10) encountered the famous prophecy in Ezekial 28, 12, and decided (like many a dream interpreter of our time) that the King of Tyre to whom this passage is literally addressed was unquestionably a symbol of the Devil, and hence it was not the King but the Devil who was “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty . . . perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee . . .” Tertullian’s arguments were widely accepted and henceforth the Devil, in the first phase of his career, was known as Lucifer, the “Morning Star,” the “Shining One,” first and highest of the angels. Gregory of Nyssa (ctz 331-396) was of the same mind. St. Anselm (1033-1109) also assumed that Lucifer was perfect at the time of his creation, and St. Thomas (ca 1225-1274) taught that he was one of the pure angels of God, probably “superior to all.” That point at least was settled without much argument. The next question, however, brought forth a variety of answers.

What was the cause of the change in Lucifer’s personality from the state of perfection to that of unrighteousness? There was peace in Heaven until Lucifer, out of a feeling of resentment, persuaded a large number of discontented fellow angels to join him in a revolution against the celestial government of his Almighty Father. What was the cause of the resentment which transformed Lucifer into Satan? The answers given can be ordered into two classes.

1. *Resentment engendered by jealousy and envy (dispositional determinants) provoked by the presence of another object of God’s concern (situational determinant).* Justin Martyr (ca 100-165) seems to have been the first to suggest that envy of Adam was the cause of the Devil’s discontent. A little later we find Irenaeus (2nd century) affirming that the angel “because apostate and an enemy on the day when he became jealous of God’s creature (man) and undertook to set him against God.” To this thesis both Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa were

agreeable. But, according to Lactantius (4th century), God first produced the Word (Christ) and then Lucifer who was tainted with the venom of jealousy. "He was jealous of his elder brother, who, remaining attached to God the Father, obtained his affection." In short, these first explanations of Satan's passage from good to evil are consonant with sound Freudian doctrine respecting the dynamics of so-called "sibling rivalry"; jealousy of the Father's preceding creation (elder brother) or of his succeeding creation (equivalent to a younger brother). The latter thesis is analogous to the story of the two other proud, vindictive (Satanic) characters in the Old Testament (e.g. Cain and Ishmael). Jealousy of this sort and of this intensity presupposes a high degree of *dependent narcissism* (that is, the child's insistence on a monopoly of parental love), and, possibly, on the parent's too-obvious display of favoritism for the other sibling.

2. *Resentment engendered by envy of God's supreme position of power and glory and by a thwarted desire, coming out of pride, to ascend to God's elevated station.* It was the reverent doctor, Origen (ca 185-254) who proposed this hypothesis of *pride*, which was accepted by the great majority of subsequent writers. Having been exposed to Greek culture in Alexandria, Origen must have been familiar with the concept of *hubris*, so central to Hellenic thought. But he said he was persuaded to this idea by his conviction that the material world was created *after* the revolution of the angels (partly, indeed, to serve as a prison for these perverse spirits), and hence the jealousy-of-Adam theory was untenable. Also influential was the passage from Isaiah (14), in which the King of Babylon, who has just died and descended into Hell, is addressed by his royal predecessors:

Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to hell. . . How art thou fallen from heaven, O day star, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst lay low the nations! And thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like unto the Most High.

Origen convinced his fellow theologians that these words could refer, not to any earthly king, but to Satan only; and henceforth the Devil became the prince of pride on whose brow was to be read: "I will be like unto the Most High." This puts Satan in a class which includes the giants who tried to scale Olympus and replace Zeus, as well as a host of other defeated, defiant ascensionists, frustrated dictators, would-be deicides, regicides, and parricides.

In what precisely did Satan's pride consist? That Satan fell through pride was irrefutably established in the fourth century. It would have been perilous to tamper with that judgment. But the exact nature of the Angel's pride was still an open question, to the solution of which several eminent Church Fathers would direct their mentational

powers as if they were so many clinical psychologists and psychiatrists discussing among themselves the dynamics of a single case, except that the ecclesiastical philosophers, being in a state of total data deprivation, had nothing but unaided rationality to carry them, and their exchange of logics and assured pronouncements lasted for a thousand years and led to no unanimous decision. Since there does not seem to be any vital conception of pride and its vagaries that has wide currency among the members of this Division, our private views, if any, on this neglected topic may be more discrepant than those of the Church Fathers, in which case a mere list of their conclusions as to the nature of Satan's sin might instigate some fruitful intellectual activities in us:

1. Satan wanted to pass himself off as God, said Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (Lectures, 35, 5).
2. Satan tried to convince his fellow angels that he had created himself and then created matter out of his own body, announced Prudentius (*Hamarti"enia*, 168).
3. Satan wished to shatter the bonds of his dependence upon God and to be his own master, asserted Saint Gregory the Great (Morals 34, 40).
4. Satan wished to obtain beatitude before the time appointed by his maker, argued Saint Anselm (*De casu diaboli*, 4).
5. Satan wanted the other angels to adore him as a self-created God, said Rupert (*De Victoria Verbi Dei*, 1, 8-12) in essential agreement with Prudentius.
6. Satan wished to derive his happiness from himself alone, instead of with the help of grace. This was the authoritative verdict of Saint Thomas (Summa, 1, 63, 3).

The differences between these six opinions which entangled the fastidious intellects of the Church, could hardly detain the interest of a psychologist today. "To hell with these minutiae," he might say. "Satan wanted to be God, period." But not until the 14th century was a qualified version of this diagnosis literally set forth.

7. Satan could not have been so extravagant as to believe that he was capable of becoming God, but he could have felt a desire to possess the divine nature and could have regretted that divinity was beyond his reach, concluded Duns Scotus (*Sententias*, 2, 5, 1).

I shall not pursue this topic any further since the controversy had no closure and the samples of psychological acumen I have given you will suffice as a basis for a summary statement of what the reverent doctors had to say about the Devil's sin, namely that it consisted in hardly more than a desire to be one grade higher on the heavenly scale

of Being than he was at his creation, which meant the acquisition of a divine nature, since he already possessed every form of excellence but this.

In this day of non-authoritarian parents, of independence training, of the precocious emancipation of youth, and of teenage killers, Satan's ascensionistic hopes (perfect illustrations of the Adlerian craving for superiority) are not likely to be regarded as ample cause for everlasting ostracism and damnation. But of course this judgment of our time may be nothing but a consequence of the Devil's having pretty nearly realized his unswerving ambition to subvert our natures. In any case, we should remind ourselves that God was so unutterably and absolutely glorious in the sight of the Church Fathers that no filial fantasy of approaching the grandeur of his perfection could be considered as anything but monstrous. In view, however, of the abominable motives and enormities that they attributed to Satan from the moment he arrived on earth, we can scarcely say that they succeeded in identifying a form of pride that would explain both the utmost punishment that was meted out to him in Heaven and the malevolent course of his whole subsequent career. It is this mildness of their conclusions, as I weigh them, that has prodded me to seek a more sufficient answer, carrying on as they did with no facts, experiments, statistics, or computers to assist me. But before doing so, I must consider the most refractory of all the problems that confronted the Church Fathers.

What is the explanation of the emergence of evil dispositions in Lucifer's perfectly created personality? Of all those who have honestly endeavored to come to grips with this question, St. Anselm (1033-1109) is especially impressive. He assumes that the good angels who stood firmly in the truth did so because they had received from God the gift of *steadfastness*. Then he asks, did God fail to give Lucifer this gift or did he offer it but fail to transmit the necessary capacity or disposition to receive it? In either case, Lucifer-Satan must be judged blameless. St. Anselm's answer is that God gave Lucifer both sufficient power and sufficient will to be steadfast, but that the angel did not continue to exercise his will in the right direction to the end. No explanation is offered for the sudden weakening of the angel's disposition or power to be steadfast. Why was he deprived of this capacity? We are left with the assertion that God created a perfect spiritual being who became the epitome of imperfection. Let us consider three of several conceivable solutions.

1. God created Lucifer precisely in his own likeness (the very best that he could do), that is, he shaped a jealous personality liable to revenge ("God is jealous and the Lord revengeth"), who would insist on a monopoly of power and glory ("no other gods before me"), and give vent, when crossed, to horrific outbursts of wrath ("For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury and his rebukes with flames of fire"). And then, having created these dispositions in his son, God closed the only possible avenue to their fulfilment by proclaiming himself the *everlasting* ruler of the universe. According to this interpretation, Lucifer acted much as his Father would have

acted in his place, that is, if *relegated forever* to a subordinate position. God's refusal to be succeeded, as other gods had been succeeded (*hubris* in a ruler), would be enough to account for the report that his once-admirable son has *never* been able to forgive him. This thesis would conform to the proposition that God was all powerful and possibly all good, but *not* all knowing, since he did not foresee that a replication of himself would eventually rebel, if all hope of any higher status were denied him.

2. If (by definition) God is omniscient and capable of foreknowledge, he must have *known* that he was not giving Lucifer (or Adam later) enough steadfastness for them to persevere in perpetual obedience, *known* that they would therefore disobey eventually, and *known* that he would punish each of them for this, despite the fact that he himself had planted the bent toward disobedience (the id tendency) and failed to imbue sufficient power to inhibit it (ego structure). One might surmise that God committed this grave injustice as the only possible means to a good end, namely, to provide mankind with an unforgettable object lesson of crime, and punishment, which was to serve as the necessary forerunner of his later presentation of the possibility of redemption, as Christianity has affirmed. But this is hardly plausible, since if God were omniscient he would have realized that neither of these two object lessons would succeed in making mankind obedient, and that the day would come when people might suspect that he himself was responsible for the crimes he had punished so severely and unforgivingly.
3. In the case of Lucifer-Satan, God might purposely have endowed him with a preponderance of malice in order that he, Satan, might perform with gusto certain tasks which he, God, was reluctant to perform, such as in *Job* to test, by tribulation and torture, the limits of man's steadfastness in piety. By assigning all hateful functions to Satan, God could reserve all charitable functions for himself: if Satan was given freedom to seduce and to corrupt, then God could intervene with his gracious mercy and forgiveness. This thesis is in harmony with the widespread opinion that the glory of God is manifest not so much in sustaining a man in goodness as in converting a great sinner (e.g. St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Francis, etc.), and with the judgment that a repentant sinner is closer to God than a consistently moral man.

Up to this point I have argued much as some of the Church Fathers argued, but with the addition of a few psychological hypotheses provided by recent studies of father-son relationships. The chief difference in bias is that *formerly* (perhaps since time immemorial) it was the children who were blamed for disobedience and rebellion ("Honor thy father and thy mother"), whereas *today* the parents are more likely to be blamed, the psychoanalytical commandment being: honor thy son and thy daughter.

But, in all earnestness, religious thought tends, or should tend, toward the ideal; and we are entitled to expect from it a story of a Father-Son relationship in Heaven which

will edify and inspire terrestrial fathers who are similarly confronted by a discontented son. But the truth is that hundreds of fathers of our own time display greater wisdom than was attributed to Diety in preparing their son for the advent of a younger sibling, or in transforming his enmity to affection. Many times, of course, they don't, and so we have in our midst numerous micro Satans, repressed Satanic personalities of minor scale and scope. Which brings me to:

An abstract of the Satanic personality. I say "Satanic personality" instead of "Satan's personality," because my goal is a theoretical formulation which is congruent not only with the Devil's character and career as represented to us by the scholastic theorists, but with the development of a compound of thematic dispositions which is manifested to a varying extent, covertly and overtly, by numerous persons of our own day, and which I have had the opportunity to investigate in a few cases. In attempting this, I shall be extending the speculations of the ecclesiastical theorists only so far as to propose, first, that absolute evil cannot be derived from a mild form of pride, but only from the most extreme form, which I shall call *absolute malignant pride*, or *malignant narcissism*, and second, that the *potentiality* for absolute pride was necessarily present in Lucifer's personality from the day of his creation.

In briefest terms, my reconstruction involves the following familiar components: (1), an extravagant growth of four varieties of narcissism originating and reinforced in the earliest years of childhood, at the core of which is the subject's tacit assumption that *his own supreme worth entitles* him to a *monopoly* (or at least the lion's share) of whatever goods, services, attention, adulation, honors, privileges, power, and prestige are to be had in his environment; (2), a series of shocks, frustrations, or punishments which are narcissistically felt to be unforgivably malicious insults; (3), the transformation of the initial state of complacent self-esteem into a suspicious focal hatred of the insulting object, generalized into a diffuse misanthrope and distrust; and (4), a fixed determination to revenge the injury which, if unsuccessful, may lead to nihilism, self-hate, and suicide, the narcissist against himself. I suggest that the first phase of narcissistic expansion—illustrated, say, by Lucifer in his prime—is not malignant, but a possible precursor of malignancy, the development of which depends on whether the suffered narcissistic wound is taken in good grace (impunitively or intrapunitively) or as an outrage to be avenged with extrapunitive fanaticism. All of this is congruent with orthodox belief regarding Satan's personality and career as given earlier.

The distinctive underlying characteristics of the Satanic personality, then, are a) a secret feeling in the subject of having been harshly, treacherously, unjustly, or ignominiously deprived of his deservedly large share of benefits, rewards, and glory; b) a basic state of alienation, resentment, and distrust; c) a hidden envy coupled with expressed contempt of the notable achievements of others; d) repression of guilt feelings; and e) the adoption of one or another strategy—sly, slippery, and subversive or openly destructive—of giving vent to his self-consuming hatred. His negative characteristic, by which he is most easily identified, is the absence of any capacity to experience or express authentic selfless love, gratitude, admiration, or compassion.

Question. How is it that psychoanalysis has not emphasized malignant narcissism, or Satanism, as a complex to be repressed? How is it that Oedipus reigns supreme as the epitome of evil in the id of Freudian theory? In Adlerian theory, to be sure, Satan's need for superiority, his envy and rage are adequately conceptualized; but not his invulnerable stockade of pride, as described in *Paradise Lost* or *Moby Dick*, for example. Why is that? Or, to put it in another way, why did not the early religion-makers accuse Satan of lecherous excesses? It is true that some of them did consider for awhile that concupiscence might have been the sin by which the Angel fell, and later, in the days of Witchcraft, hundreds of women, under torture, testified to the Devil's diffuse and inexhaustible libido; but more deadly than all that was malice coming out of pride. And yet today we have no psychology of pride.

Satan down the centuries. There is time here for no more than what you know already about Satan's seasons of ascendancy over the minds of men and women since the Dark Ages. A perpetually subversive agent, he was most influential in the Age of Faith, publicly as the inaugurator of the Black Mass and privately as the tempter and the interrupter of the prayers of the most devout, the "shadow," as Jung would say, of every monk and nun who strained for chastity and saintliness. Satan's victories were more spectacular, frightening, and obnoxious, however, in the overlapping and succeeding Age of Witchcraft, in which, as the acknowledged god of a persisting, pre-Christian Pagan cult, he was the exciting cause of recurrent seizures of anxiety and panic leading to fanatic witch hunts, trials, tortures, and burnings at the stake. Since the Devil was blamed for all the neurotic and psychotic symptoms which today are attributed to the id, the published detailed records of witch trials which have come down to us constitute, as Freud discovered, a comprehensive compendium of the lurid psychopathology of that era, and hence of considerable professional interest to many of us. But this chapter in the religious career of Satan deserves an extensive treatment, as does his distinguished career in literature from the Faust-book and Christopher Marlowe down through Milton and Goethe to Rimbaud and Thomas Mann. The Devil's successes in each of these spheres of activity call for a separate volume, as does his relatively short but fiery upsurges into philosophy and politics from the late eighteenth century down to his total incarnation in the person of Adolph Hitler. But since these wonders and horrors are outside the possible scope of this paper, I shall turn to another phenomenon: the operation of a very dangerous propensity to the indulgence of which all of us are prone.

Projections of Satan in the Western world. To the primitive mind every opponent or enemy is bad by definition. But after the development and articulation of abstract ethical principles, by the Egyptians and Hebrews, for example, a person or group of people could be judged bad or good, regardless of whether he or they were friend or foe. This distinction, however, was rarely made in practice; and as all forms of wickedness became crystallized into a single fiendish Satan who, like a proliferating cancer invaded the susceptible collective minds of men, their projection of this malignant essence into their most formidable enemies became inevitable, producing as

it did an encouraging inflation of their own sense of righteousness coupled with the conviction that the extermination of their enemies was their holy duty. Hence the inordinate brutality of religious wars. Christians, believing that theirs was the only “true” religion, were for centuries disposed to see Satan in the guise of each of their successive enemies: the entire pagan world surrounding Roman Christendom, the infiltrating heresies—Mithraism, Manichaeism, and Gnosticism—, the invading Huns and Moslems, the American Indians in New England, the deviant enthusiasms and cults arising in their midst, such as Romantic Love, Witchcraft, and the antitheistic French Enlightenment with its Goddess of Reason, and more recently, the self-proclaimed Antichrist, Nietzsche, and the atheist Marx giving shape to Communism. As a result of this dynamism of projection, it was possible for Catholics to see the Satanic spirit operating in their preProtestant and Protestant opponents, and for the latter, Savonarola and Luther, for example, to see Satan firmly ensconced in the Vatican at Rome, say, in the figure of Alexander VI, father of Cesare Borgia. Clearly the Capitalist plays the role of Satan in the apocalyptic thesis of Marx, which is extremely dangerous in this atomic age because it offers to those who are made gullible by misery the vision of an impossibly harmonious society without government, a society that is attainable only by a righteous war against the monodemonism of capitalism.

Of course, it is a great error to assume that whatever system of ideas is once defined as optimally good and true, will *always* be optimally good and true, and hence that every proposed change in the system must spring from an evil source, Satan in this context. This means that the creation of something new and the transformation of something old (the rarest and best of functions) are attributed in large measure to the Devil, often by the creator himself. For example, we find Blake, that admirable man, claiming that “every poet is of the Devil’s party,” and so, by degrees, Satan, hater of man, is endowed with some of the heroic virtues of Prometheus, lover of man, as Milton’s Satan was endowed to some extent; and, in due course, “Devil’s advocate” becomes a badge of honor, and all values are turned upside down, because Satan—at least according to the view presented here—is a wholly self-centered, envious, vindictive, nihilist without creative powers. In ancient Hindu mythology Siva, the destroyer, is not a nihilist, but the necessary fore-runner and initiator of the succeeding creative phase. According to one of several versions of his function, he is portrayed with a mighty lingam and ends his dance of destruction with a discharge of seed for the conception which originates the next period of construction.

Is the spirit of Satan operating in our midst? By the turn of the last century it seemed that Satan was no more than a vestigial image, a broken-spirited relic of a perished past, a ludicrous ham actor with no greater part to play in man’s imagination than the vermiform appendix in his gut. The sweetness and light of reason had shown him to be a nightmarish product of moral indigestion, an horrendous superstition, which the human species—being set at last on the ascending path of progressive evolutions and feeling better every day in every way—had left dying in its rear. Improve-

ments in the physical and social environment were gradually extinguishing whatever wicked dispositions had been manifest in less enlightened eras.

Such ill-bred complacency, of course, was fated for a fall; and after the shock of World War I there were lots of people conditioned to agree with Father Knox when he said: "It is so stupid of modern civilization to have given up believing in the devil when he is the only explanation of it." Somebody then suggested that precisely this was Satan's strategem, as crafty as any in his long career, namely, to convince mankind of his decease and the inconceivability of his rebirth. In dealing with a scientist, for example, could Satan have devised a better tactic? To be sure the ruse of anonymity was not wholly new. It was the very first he chose. But in Paradise he was advantaged by the fact that Adam and Eve had never even heard of him, had not been warned of his foreseen intrusion, his wicked resolution and his wiles. Satan managed, somehow, to keep his name out of Genesis. To operate in the twentieth century, however, it was necessary first of all to get his bad name and deeds—centuries of sin—erased from the entablatures of man's brain. Then and then only could he achieve his end: to destroy man's serenity forever, or, possibly to terminate the entire human drama, by proffering an atom to be split, in the same seductive way as he had started it by proffering an apple. This might be one version of the Devil in our midst.

Another might be that he went underground for several generations to gather up his energies for an unparalleled display of nihilistic force and that since World War I he has been incarnate in a host of madmen, one, of course, particularly, who kindled the crudest propensities in man's nature, and contrived detestable enormities on a larger scale than has ever been recorded in man's long history of criminality and martyrdom. In view of all this, some people have returned to the concept of original sin, or to a revised version of it, and the Devil has once again become an object of study, several books describing his nature and career having recently been published.

In a recent seminar on Satan at Harvard University which included several concentrators in literature and several in psychology, besides Professor Harry Levin and myself, there was an airing of diverse views as to what, if any, concept of the Devil as a force could have any significance for men with twentieth century minds. Since no unanimity was sought or approximated, I shall confine my concluding remarks to those tenable views which seem most pertinent to the theories and practices of psychologists.

Since the use of proper names derived from history (e.g. de Sade) or from mythology (e.g. Oedipus) to refer to certain definable human dispositions or complexes is an accepted convention in psychology today, the name "Satan" could be so used within a scientific framework. Precisely which nuclear disposition or compound of dispositions should be designated by the term "Satanism" or the "Satan complex" is a special problem that was not discussed in our seminar. Sufficient for our purposes was the idea that the Satanic spirit is marked by hate and a compulsion to destroy or to abase, both of which are born of a need to revenge a purely personal insult, as described so definitively and affectively by Captain Ahab, for example. As a corollary to this total vindictiveness would be an incapacity to love and an incapacity to create any variety

of new forms that are valuable to humanity. This combination, let us say, would constitute an evil personality. But if the object of its hatred were something that was definitely harmful to man's welfare, a personality of this sort might perform a beneficial function. We are all familiar with the old adage to the effect that bad men may do good and good men may do harm. And so, in view of the original conception of the Devil, we should add that the target of the malevolent spirit of Satanism is man's conception of supreme worth, or excellence, and man's desire and resolution to abide by this conception and to approach it in his being and in his conduct.

I shall not stop to write a book in justification of this statement, but will simply call attention to the fact that if we assume that God, Satan's first and foremost enemy, was man's superordinate representation of superlative power and virtue, created in man's own image, then the Satanic personality is freed from its hereditary exclusive reference to a wicked figure in the mythology of Judaeo-Christianity and becomes available for application in any context.

Since the modern world constitutes the context to be considered at this point, we should ask what conceptions of supreme wrath are dominant today. We think of Catholicism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and Communism; and for those peoples who sincerely cleave to any one of these beliefs, the target of Satanic envy and destructiveness is unequivocal. But since for most of the rest of us there is no widely acknowledged comparable conception to guide our individual and social efforts and give some unity and superpersonal significance to our various unique purposes, we might reasonably surmise that the Devil's target in the case of pretty nearly the majority of men and women in the West consists of whatever dispositions and powers may reside in them to create conceptions of this nature: say, the conception of a better world composed of better societies of better persons and to strive to actualize it by self-transformations and social reconstructions. In other words, according to one tenable view, the Satanic aim is to prevent all developments in this direction by shattering man's faith in the existence of the necessary potentialities within himself and reducing him to cynicism and despair until the demoralization and abasement of his personality has reached a state beyond recovery and in one disgraceful debacle of genocidal fury he terminates the long, long history of his species.

And here is where our psychology comes in with the bulk of its theories, its prevailing views of human personality, its images of man, obviously in league with the objectives of the nihilist Satanic spirit. Man is a computer, an animal, or an infant. His destiny is completely determined by genes, instincts, accidents, early conditionings and reinforcements, cultural and social forces. Love is a secondary drive based on hunger and oral sensations or a reaction formation to an innate underlying hate. In the majority of our personological formulations there are no provisions for creativity, no admitted margins of freedom for voluntary decisions, no fitting recognitions of the power of ideals, no bases for selfless actions, no ground at all for any hope that the human race can save itself from the fatality that now confronts it. If we psychologists were all the time, consciously or unconsciously, intending out of malice to reduce the

concept of human nature to its lowest common denominators, and were gloating over our successes in so doing, then we might have to admit that to this extent the Satanic spirit was alive within us. But personally I suspect that our abasements of man are consequences, first of all, of the established requirement for a Ph.D. degree, namely that we obtain, so far as possible, mathematically unequivocal results. And so, assuming there is some germ of truth in this, I shall leave you with the question of whether, by any chance, the current Ph.D. system is one of the Devil's cunningest contrivances.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



Henry Murray
The Personality and Career of Satan
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