The roots of contemporary leadership discourse can be traced back to a series of six public lectures delivered in Victorian London in 1840. That was the setting for Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle’s articulation of the Great Man Theory, his assertion that certain individuals, certain men, were gifts from God placed on earth to provide the “lightning” needed to uplift human existence. There were intellectual precursors to Carlyle’s views, to be sure: Sun Tzu and Plato, among them. Still, any consideration of leadership – what it is and is not – rests on the shoulders of Carlyle and his view of how world history has unfolded.

Contemporary leadership theorists may reject the Great Man – in truth, virtually all do – or they may simply ignore Carlyle. Plus, it isn’t much of a theory, at least not a theory about how to lead. It is more a view of the world, a notion of how history unfolds, a call for recognition and humble obedience, even subservience, to the most able man.

And there’s that man element. To say this is a gendered view of leadership, an assertion that the movers and shakers of world history have always been and will always be men, is more than a slight understatement. We like to think we have moved beyond that gender bias, although perhaps not as far as we believe.

For many leadership theorists, Carlyle is an anachronism, an unwelcomed reminder of a nonscientific past. Contemporary surveys occasionally mention Carlyle’s Great Man Theory before moving on to more rigorous academic categories: traits, behaviors, contingencies, and so forth. The Great Man theory does not fit into the “rigorous scholarly theory and research” that makes up the contemporary canon of leadership discourse. A “trait approach” emphasizing the extraordinary attributes that set effective leaders apart from less effective ones can be seen as a more recent echo of the Great Man. Trait theory too is often dismissed as unsatisfying, misleading, or both.

Writing in the early 20th century, Sigmund Freud offered his own spin on the great man. For Freud, the great man, an uncapsulated construct, was articulated not as a moral proscription for how followers should react,
but rather as an analytic *description* of the elemental forces that lead people to seek heroes. There is a direct narrative line that can be drawn from Carlyle’s Great Man to Sigmund Freud’s father figure and then to the present-day veneration of corporate saviors and the “great” CEO.

**Find the Ablest Man**

In the spring of 1840, Carlyle delivered his lectures on the role played by heroes in shaping the arc of history. The following year those lectures were brought together in a single volume entitled *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. The Great Man theory was born.

Carlyle’s voice in those lectures is unquestionably off-putting to the contemporary ear. There is the obvious gender bias of his formulation, a rendering of his reading of history as unfolding through the efforts of dominant males combined with what Keith Grint referred to as the prevalent Victorian conviction that leadership was “irredeemably masculine.” There is the deep religiosity of his language, a reflection of the strict Calvinist upbringing provided by his parents who expected him to become a preacher. And perhaps most distinctly, there is his admonition that “our” job, those of us not divinely designated, is to recognize the Great Man, lift him to a position of prominence, and then obey. A “sick” world would thus be healed through subservience to God’s chosen one.

**A Discourse Undertaken**

In a period of crisis and upheaval – the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars and the accelerating pace of industrialization – Carlyle looked for a source of strength, direction, wisdom, and uplift. Those reassurances were no longer provided by the Church, which in Carlyle’s view had become a discredited shepherd. Moving away from Calvinism involved a commensurate break with his father, so parental authority seemed as unreliable as Church hierarchy. Carlyle’s quest led him to the Great Man: an individual of this earth but unmistakably sent by God.

Already a well-known intellectual on his way to becoming “the most widely read and most greatly admired social philosopher of his time,” Carlyle fought off his discomfort with public speaking in order to earn the significant fees associated with lecturing. He opened the talks on heroes by explaining his intent. “We have undertaken to discourse here for a little on the Great Men,” he explained to his audience, “their manner of appearance in our world’s business, how they have shaped themselves in the world’s history, what ideas men found of them, what work they
Carlyle labored to demonstrate how “the great man, with his free force direct out of God’s own hand” shaped the world. Given his loss of faith in the Church and his dismay over the revolutions that had spread across Europe, Carlyle wondered about authority. Who had it? Under what claims was it to be held? Who would exercise it in the future? From Carlyle’s vantage, wrote Chris Vanden Bossche, “it appeared not only that authority had shifted, but that the transcendental grounds for it had been undermined.” So, if old platforms for authority were passing, what would replace them? In *On Heroes*, Carlyle provided his answer: the “Able-man,” an individual who has been “sent by God” to have “a divine right over me.”

Looking back at the French Revolution, Carlyle laid the responsibility for the collapse of the *Ancien Régime* squarely on the shoulders of its inept royal head, Louis XVI. Louis was a far-from-able man, and revolutions occur, insisted Carlyle, when “you have put a too *Unable* Man at the head of affairs!” Societies bedeviled by the lack of an Able Man at their helm had one core responsibility: find him, and:

raise him to the supreme place, and loyally reverence him; you have a perfect government for that country; no ballot box, Parliamentary eloquence, voting, constitution-building, or other machinery whatsoever can improve it a whit. It is the perfect state; an ideal country. The Ablest Man; he means also the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man: what he *tells us to do* must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn; – the thing which it will in all ways behoove us, with right loyal thankfulness, and nothing doubting, to do!

Locating an Able-man and having the multitudes agree that this *was* the Able-man, however, was no easy matter. “That we knew in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: that is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in the ages, seeking after!” Carlyle was offering as much an argument for how the world worked as a theory of leadership. Great men were sent by God to be heroes and these heroes became leaders through the righteous process of hero-worship.

Perhaps no statement found in the lectures is more frequently quoted than what follows from the opening of *On Heroes*:

For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones, the modelers, planners, and in a wide sense creators, of whatever the general mass of men contrived to do or attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that
dwell in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world’s history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.\textsuperscript{18}

The goal of the lectures, then, was explicitly pedantic: to convince listeners to “bow down submissive before great men,” an act which would allow the worshiper to “feel himself to be more noble and blessed.”\textsuperscript{19}

Carlyle’s great men were an eclectic group: prophets, poets, priests, men of letters, and kings. That Shakespeare was as much a great man as Oliver Cromwell and Martin Luther may seem like something of a surprise. After all, what did the Bard lead? But to Carlyle, “all the greatness of man” came out decisively in Shakespeare. “That Shakespeare is the chief of all Poets hitherto; the greatest intellect who, in our recorded world, has left record of himself in the way of Literature. I know no such a power of vision, faculty of thought, if we take all the characters of it, in any other man.”\textsuperscript{20} “Nature” had offered Shakespeare to the world and Nature was pleased with the result.

Still, it was the final lecture, “The Hero as King,” that carried the greatest weight for Carlyle and cemented the connection between heroes and leaders. It was “the last form of Heroism,” he wrote, “that which we call Kingship”:

The Commander over Men he to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of the Great Men. He is practically the \textit{summary} for us of all the various figures of Heroism; Priest, Teacher, whatsoever of earthly or of spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a man, embodies itself here, to \textit{command} over us, furnish us with constraint practical teaching, tell us for the day and hour what we are to \textit{do}.\textsuperscript{21}

It was this amalgam Great Man who should be raised to “the supreme place.” Carlyle admitted indifference to the process of such elevation. It was the fact of elevation and the resultant worshipful voluntary subjugation that would lead to “the perfect state; an ideal country.”\textsuperscript{22}

Carlyle’s view of history as working through the deeds of great men, or conversely through the absence of such a hero, did not go uncontested among his contemporaries. Ideas, at least important ones, seldom do. In \textit{On Heroes}, Carlyle rejected any critique:

He [the Great Man] was the ‘creature of the Time,’ they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything, he did nothing – but what we the little critic could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work. The Times call forth? Alas, we have known Times \textit{call} loudly enough for their great man; but not find him when they called! He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the Time, \textit{calling} its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called . . . His word is the wise healing word which we all
The Great Man

can believe in. All blazes round him now, when he has once struck on it, into fire like his own.23

Critics of the Great Man theory, Carlyle maintained, belittled themselves through their egregious misreading of how the world works.

It is impossible to miss the stern proselytizing, the righteous indignation, and the reproachful tone of these words. No surprise that Carlyle’s work found particular favor among the rising acolytes of 20th century Italian fascism and German Nazism.24 Carlyle with his Great Man Theory was called upon to add a “veneer of respectability” to “the fascists, who were delighted to find their ideas proclaimed in eloquent words by the great Victorian.”25

Modernists generally and rationalists in particular harbor a deep unease with hero-worship. Carlyle’s preaching – that is the best word for it – is easy to resist or ignore on scientific, moral, and political grounds. The formulation of a great man holding sway over the rest of us nonetheless continues to resonate. In the world of business, the search for a hero to “save” failing companies exerts considerable appeal.

Nancy Koehn argued that the upward spiral of CEO pay following the well-publicized executive misdeeds that helped trigger the recession of 2007–2008 could be attributed directly to this ongoing belief in the “Great Man.”26 Driven by a “quasi-religious belief” in the power and influence of an individual hero, board members and investors regularly search for “saviors.”27 Occasionally, that savior is a woman, but the search remains active. Boards hire, and then frequently dismiss CEOs, both male and female, always on the lookout for the latest savior.

So why the enduring appeal? Sigmund Freud had an explanation.

**A Primal Drive**

It’s hard to conceive of two individuals as existing in such sharp contrast as Thomas Carlyle and Sigmund Freud. One was a man of God, the other of science. One was a sermonizer, the other an analyzer. Yet both proposed their own version of a great man theory and his – always his – role in history.

By the time of the 1937 publication of his *Moses and Monotheism*, a revisionist study of the great Hebrew hero and savior, Freud had established a worldwide psychoanalytic movement.28 In search of analytic rigor to aid his and others’ clinical assessment of patients, Freud delved into the unconscious working of the mind. Over time, intellectual curiosity led him to a broader perspective, seeking to illuminate a linkage between individual psychology and group dynamics, religious belief, and the structure of history. Although the study of Moses represented his most fully realized
view of the hero role in history, his notion of the great man (I am using small letters rather than capitals because it is meant to be descriptive in Freud’s case) can be traced to earlier works, most specifically his 1921 Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.

For Freud, the need for a single, special leader was primal, arising from the drive for dependency and even love. He opened his reasoning by situating the individual within a larger collective: a tribe, a clan, or a family. This was the unit that proscribed the psychological world of individuals. Freud reflected the gender biases of the Victorian era as much as did Carlyle. He placed the father as the central figure in the family unit.

On a personal level, Freud’s focus emerged from his personal struggle with his own father.29 According to Samuel Slipp, a complex interaction of forces – “losses of important early childhood attachment figures; unconscious conflicts with his mother, who appeared to be seductive, aggressive, intrusive, and exploitive; his mother’s own frustrations as a person and her constricted social role; and anti-Semitism, which contributed to his father’s economic failure and Freud’s own professional difficulties” – compounded Freud’s gender biases and his search for a father figure.30 Some of the authors of classic mid-20th-century feminist books, Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, for example, chastised Freud explicitly for what they held to be his oppressive position, based on age-old attitudes, concerning women.31 As Carlyle did decades earlier, Freud both reflected and reinforced the prevailing gender attitudes of his time.

For Freud, group membership conveyed many obvious benefits to individual members, including safety and security. However, by following a single leader, group members tend to bend their thinking “in the direction of the approximation to the other individuals in the group.”32 Group members would opt for conformity while sacrificing individuality.

Freud selected two institutions to offer illustrative examples of this attraction: the Catholic Church and the military. Christ for the Church and the commander-in-chief for the military were both father figures, loved by group members and thought to love all followers within the group equally. Those assumptions were based on the basic process of identification. This was, for Freud, the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person: particularly the son identifying with the father. “A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father; he would like to grow up like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere.”33 Identification with a father figure was a natural, even inevitable form of emotional attachment.

For Freud, the leader was always male; a father figure. Charles Strozier and Daniel Offer explained that “Freud always examines the unfolding of the Oedipus complex” – this being the primary source of conflict within
the family—“from the boy’s point of view, adding only parenthetically that the analogue of the boy’s conflicts occurs in girls.”\textsuperscript{34} Carlyle’s gendered view derived from his reading of world history as unfolding through the actions of men; for Freud, it derived from the assumed role of the father as head of the family.

In Freud’s treatment of Moses, we can see his most complete statement of the role of the male hero-leader in human society. Writing in the \textit{American Journal of Psychoanalysis}, Jerome Appelbaum suggested that Freud had spent a lifetime obsessing with the story of Moses as a consequence of his unresolved, troubled relationship with his father.\textsuperscript{35} That obsession with a father figure recurred throughout his work.

Freud’s Moses story departed in dramatic ways from that found in the Old Testament. Rather than being a Jewish son sent floating down the Nile, he was an Egyptian born into royalty. His later struggle with Pharaoh was, in this narrative, a struggle—perhaps symbolic but maybe not—with his “real” father. Moses emerged as a hero by rebelling against this father, killing him “in some guise or another.”\textsuperscript{36}

Monotheism, which Moses institutionalized among the Hebrews, represented for Freud the triumph of the father figure, the single male deity who could serve as the organizing totem for his followers. Moses was the great man, with monotheism representing the institutionalization of the single male authority figure.

Thus, we have a significant refinement of the desire and drive for a great man to lead us. Throughout history, Freud noted, “the great majority of people have a strong need for authority which they can admire.”\textsuperscript{37} Freud replaced Carlyle’s belief in divine intervention with individual psychology, family dynamics, and psychosexual drives. He nonetheless located what he felt was a recurring human desire for a single, male hero. This father figure satisfied a primal need for protection and love.

Freud addressed many of the same matters taken up by Carlyle, most particularly the source and role of authority in human existence. Carlyle and Freud make an odd couple, but they were co-authors of a broadly conceived great man theory (see Table 1.1). There were also significant differences.

For Carlyle, dependence on the Great Man offered nothing but uplift: all upside. For Freud, dependency inevitably led to a marked reduction in intellectual engagement on the part of group members. Part of this dynamic created a pathway to passivity and dependence.\textsuperscript{38} It was also a view that was echoed in the concept known as “groupthink,” which involved placing a higher value on group membership than on individual autonomy. For Freud, the presence of a strong, attractive individual leader exacerbated the tendency to submerge the individual into the
Table 1.1 Comparing the Contributions of Carlyle and Freud

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casey</th>
<th>Great Man Theory</th>
<th>Freud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great men were sent by God to be heroes and these heroes became leaders through the righteous process of hero-worship</td>
<td>Core of theory</td>
<td>Humans have a primal need for a father figure to whom they offer dependence and love in return for protection and reciprocated love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>Source of authority</td>
<td>Position in family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male – by virtue of history</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male – by virtue of patriarchal family structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Exchange with followers</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal reverence</td>
<td>Role of followers</td>
<td>Submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recognizing great man</td>
<td>Inherent danger</td>
<td>Mistreatment by great man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplift</td>
<td>Outcome of obedience</td>
<td>Reduced autonomy of group members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

group. Group members provided the leader with love and expected that love to be reciprocated equally.39

In Freud’s view, the great man was “the father that lives in each of us from his childhood days for the same father whom the hero of legend boasts of having overcome.” The “picture of the father,” then, included the “decisiveness of thought, the strength of will, the self-reliance and independence of the great man” as well as “his divine conviction of doing the right thing which may pass into ruthlessness.” The great man will be admired, trusted, and followed. However, “one cannot help but being afraid of him.”40

That final note – “one cannot help but being afraid of him” – marked a distinction with the jubilant tone so prevalent in Carlyle. And Freud did not stop with that warning. By admiring a leader unconditionally, followers were submitting to authority. In so doing, followers rendered themselves vulnerable. Submission enabled an authority figure who “dominates and sometimes even ill-treats them.”41 Writing on the cusp of World War II (Freud left Vienna for London the year prior to the publication of Moses and Monotheism), Freud’s warning was tangible and immediate.42

A Fully Relevant Construct

Scholarship in post-World War II America slowly but unmistakably moved away from a focus on individuals – Great Men and father figures
alike – as the sole movers and shakers of events. Walter Nord and Suzy Fox noted that trend in the domain of psychology, traditionally a field concerned with the individual and “the quest to uncover the essential properties and universal features of the typical human being.” Their study of published psychology research suggested that a reorientation had occurred. The tendency, although far from universal, was to move “from viewing individuals independently of context, to consideration of interplay between individuals and their contexts.”

That movement, unexpected though it may be in the field of psychology (an “under-recognized” shift according to Nord and Fox), was fundamental to a number of other fields long before the postwar era. In one of the early direct rebukes to Carlyle, Herbert Spencer presented a core sociological view of unfolding of events as being shaped more by context than by the efforts of individuals, no matter how great they might be.

Spencer was influenced by newly emergent theories of evolution: Darwin of course, but more specifically the work of French biologist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Spencer offered his own *Principles of Biology* (1864) with its notion of “survival of the fittest.” His thoughts were also shaped by the ongoing work of French philosopher Auguste Comte who published a series of books between 1830 and 1842 under the general title, *The Course in Positive Philosophy*. Spencer became a founding voice in the field of sociology. In his 1873 *Study of Sociology*, a founding text in the evolution of sociological inquiry, Spencer took direct aim at Carlyle’s Great Man theory.

The great man must always be considered and understood in terms of the times in which he lived. “Even if we were to grant the absurd supposition that the genesis of the great man does not depend on the antecedents furnished by the society he is born in,” Spencer wrote, “there would still be the quite sufficient facts that he is powerless in the absence of the material and mental accumulations which his society inherits from the past, and that he is powerless in the absence of the co-existing population, character, intelligence, and social arrangements.” Great men, if and when they did appear, were products of social and historical forces rather than gifts bestowed on human civilization by God.

That view, that the individual leader was a product of larger forces was not unique to sociology. We can find evidence of it in history writing as well. Historical biographer Allan Nevins was fond of quoting from a letter by Abraham Lincoln. In April 1864, Lincoln wrote to a lawyer friend in a contemplative mood. This was an especially ripe moment for introspection, with the president awaiting a Senate vote for the Thirteenth Amendment ending slavery. Lincoln was humble. “I claim not to have controlled events,” he observed, “but confess plainly that events have
controlled me." Lincoln may have been expressing a bit too much humility. He was, after all, the consensus selection by historians as the single most influential figure in American history. Nonetheless, he recognized the larger forces that served to shape events and control outcomes.

In the next century, Martin Luther King appeared to offer new evidence of the decisive role that an individual could play in shaping events. But beware of overascribing causation to the efforts of an individual, no matter how special or prominent that individual. That was a caution offered by historians.

When the *Journal of American History* devoted a special issue to the impact of King on the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, special issue editor Nathan Irvin Huggins took pains to distance himself from attribution of causation to individual actions alone. “He was only one man in a movement; although a very prominent one.” We can be sure, Huggins added, that *some* of what occurred in the 1960s “would have occurred without any given individual, Martin Luther King included.” He added, “No one is more troubled than I am by Great Man approaches to historical events.”

The disinclination to place any individuals, regardless of their capabilities, prominence, and appeal, at the center of analysis found some support among some management scholars. In a 1977 *Academy of Management Review* article, Jeffrey Pfeffer echoed the caution of sociologists and historians. Sure, we like to believe that individuals can triumph over “a complex set of interactions,” noted Pfeffer. It is a comforting illusion and seems to make solutions relatively easy. Look for better leaders. But causes were far more complex and solutions far more difficult to achieve.

That stream was picked up by James Meindl and colleagues when they wrote about the “romance of leadership.” In a 1985 *Administrative Science Quarterly* article, Meindl and colleagues noted the degree to which organizations and the public obsess over and celebrate individual leadership. But that is a simple, even simplistic way for people to understand complex interactions.

How and why do organizations, groups, even societies and nations succeed or fail? People often attribute success or failure of institutions (or any other social groups) to the actions of individuals. It is easy to understand the appeal of such an attribution. According to Freud, it is primal, basic to our search for a father figure/protector. In a chaotic, complex world, it seems to uphold individual agency: the capacity of one person within a social setting to take independent actions and make autonomous decisions that matter. And humans, according to evolutionary psychologists, are natural followers.
“At the dawn of human history, more than two million years ago,” wrote Mark van Vugt and Anjana Anuja, “in the hostile environment of the African savannah, there was safety in numbers. Individuals who possessed the cognitive ability for followership thrived better than those lacking it.” Studies of human attachment have argued that infants come into the world biologically preprogrammed to form attachments to authority figures, an impulse which Freud laid to a longing for parental authority. We are all born to follow.

The manner in which people interpret their world figures into the elevation of the individual. We construct narratives and tell stories. Inherent in that mode of knowledge construction is a kind of hero’s journey, either a romantic drama of “the hero’s transcendence of the world” – here I am quoting from Hayden White – or a comedic/tragic plot in which the hero falls. Those stories have a common theme: an individual protagonist resides at the core.

It is not much of a mystery to appreciate why corporate executives cling to a kind of great person theory. Eric Guthey and colleagues noted a trend, dating back to the later 19th century, for business executives to construct a narrative in which “they can remain floating in mid-air by virtue of their own innate skills and exemplary characteristics.” CEOs take pains to claim authorship of great successes for their companies, while blaming failures on outside forces: unfair foreign competition, crippling state regulation, world economic trends, and even bad weather.

By romanticizing their own role in the company’s success, CEOs seek to enhance their self-esteem. With adulation comes prestige, power, and control. CEOs seek to assure others – shareholders (both current and potential future investors), board members, fellow executives, and employees at all levels – that their leadership is worthy of followership; that they are indeed great men and women.

Corporations construct a context intended explicitly to reinforce that heroic great person image: public ceremonies, elaborate executive searches, ceremonial inaugurations, and the granting of elaborate symbols and perquisites. “If leaders are chosen by using a random number table,” Jeffrey Pfeffer reasoned, “persons are less likely to believe in their effects than if there is an elaborate search or selection process followed by an elaborate ceremony signifying the changing of control.” Additionally, “if the leader has a variety of perquisites and symbols that distinguish him or her from the rest of the organization,” the perception of worthiness, of greatness, is enhanced.

There are great people, heroes worthy being admired, exalted, and followed. In its circular logic – leaders must be important because we act as if they are important which we do because, well, they must be important –
the celebration of the heroic leader becomes self-reinforcing even without being empirically demonstrated. And when the organization fails, when performance disappoints, the route to correction is clear: find a new leader.

Looking Backward/Looking Forward

All the rigorous scholarly research and theorizing we may undertake cannot diminish the human striving to locate heroic leaders. People seek a narrative structure that brings legitimacy to abstractions, offers coherence in response to apparent chaos, and asserts human agency in the face of seemingly unmanageable complexity. This is not entirely rational. It may, in fact, be the opposite. The search may also be delusional and self-defeating. The Great Man Theory, more fully understood, helps our appreciation of what James Meindl and associates referred to as the lofty elevation of a concept of leadership by imbuing it with “mystery and near mysticism.”

Neither Carlyle not Freud paid much attention to what, precisely, their great man did in order to influence followers and shape history. What are the behaviors that allow leaders to be effective? Is there a universal answer to the behavioral question or are effective behaviors contingent on the particular context in which leaders – and followers – find themselves?

NOTES

8 Bossche, Carlyle and the Search for Authority.
10 Carlyle, On Heroes, 16.
The Great Man

11 Ibid., 29. In his book, the Great Man is sometimes capitalized, sometimes not.

12 Bossche, *Carlyle and the Search for Authority*.

13 Ibid.

14 Carlyle had written a massive three-volume history of the French Revolution that is said to have served as a primary source for Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*, published twenty-two years later.


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 163–4.

18 Ibid., 21.

19 Ibid., 31.

20 Ibid., 95.

21 Ibid., 162.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 29.

24 Schapiro, “Thomas Carlyle, Prophet of Fascism”; Alan Steinweis, “Hitler and Carlyle’s ‘Historical Greatness,’” *History Today* 45 (1995), 33–39. Keith Grint offered the following assessment of the relationship between Carlyle, Nazism, and Hitler: “Despite Carlyle’s virulent anti-Semitism, he was not a particular favorite author of Hitler’s, though the model for Carlyle’s ‘great’ leader was also Hitler’s: Frederick the Great. [Joseph] Goebbels (Hitler’s propaganda chief) read sections of Carlyle’s biography to Hitler in the last month of the war in a vain attempt to boost the Führer’s collapsing morale . . . if there was ever a ‘great’ leader – though the term ‘great’ is a misnomer here if it implies anything positive – to fit Carlyle’s ‘great-leaders-of-history’ approach to leadership, Hitler is one such leader.” Grint, *The Arts of Leadership*, 290.


33 Ibid., 37.
34 Strozier and Offer, “Freud and His Followers,” 28.
36 Strozier and Offer, “Freud and His Followers,” 28.
39 This was Freud, so, yes, that attraction was in part sexual; a libidinous attraction to the father-figure/leader. On “groupthink,” see Irving L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); William H. Whyte, “Groupthink,” Fortune (March 1952): 114–17, 142, 146.
40 Freud, Moses and Monotheism, 170.
41 Ibid., 111.
42 Freud’s leave-taking was sanctioned by the Nazi regime. The government insisted that he sign a statement saying that he had not been molested in any way and that he had been able to continue with his scientific work. Freud signed, and then added with clear and brutal sarcasm: “I can most highly recommend the Gestapo to everyone.” Mark Edmundson, “Defender of the Faith?” New York Times Sunday Magazine, Sept. 9, 2007, accessed at www.nytimes.com/2007/09/09/magazine/09wwln-lede-t.html?pagewanted=all&r=0.
47 A 2012 Steven Spielberg movie covering the events of this same month showed no similar humility toward Lincoln’s role as a prime mover. See H.K. Bush, “What Historians Think about Spielberg’s Lincoln,” Cineaste 38 (Spring 2013), 13–19.
48 A poll of historians crowned Lincoln with that distinction. The Atlantic Magazine, the poll’s sponsor, noted, “He saved the Union, freed the slaves, and presided over America’s second founding.” I like to think that the historians who participated in the poll would have been at least a bit embarrassed by that overattribution of individual causation. Lincoln himself certainly


