

‘God Complex’ Helps Bush Deal With Anxiety

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EIR: Could you start off by giving us a summary of your book? Some of the research that you did and some of the major findings that you came up with on President Bush?

Frank: My book is essentially a psychoanalytic study of the President, looking at some of the early sources of his behavior and how his character evolved over time. There is a chronological lens that we can look through, which is his mid-life decision to quit drinking, what that’s about, and his experience of him being born again. I came to the conclusion that his entire life, from early on, has been dedicated to managing, through evasion—to managing his anxiety. That he was an overwhelmingly anxious person who built up layers and layers of different ways to protect himself from anxiety.

The anxiety, in a child like that, is usually about their own destructiveness and also about being humiliated. His father was a star. His mother was cold and distant. His sister—he was the first born and his sister died; there was no mourning. There was no discussion of her death. And so, he was sort of left on his own.

There are lots of different ways of managing anxiety, and, there are several of them that have come out since he stopped drinking. But, of course, the first way to manage anxiety is through alcohol. But, by being a born-again Christian, he can also manage anxiety by being connected to God, by feeling that he’ll be saved in any kind of a rapture, by feeling that he’s always on the side of the Good.

Another way to manage anxiety is to make *other* people anxious, so he can project his anxiety into the rest of us. So we can experience the kind of anxiety—and the rest of the world *does*, in lots of ways, experience the kinds of anxiety that he must have felt as a child. Another way of managing

anxiety is to simplify things; to divide the world, his own *inner* world, into good and bad, into black and white. And, we certainly see that in his Second Inaugural address today, where he talks about, the world is divided in half in terms of good and evil. So, it's another way to manage anxiety.

Another way to manage anxiety is to be *cruel* to other people, by making them anxious, and by gratifying your own sense of power to compensate for feeling helpless.

And, finally, there is another way to manage anxiety, which is to become detached from the consequences of your behavior. Something that I call malign indifference, which is a repudiation, really, of the damage that you've done, and not taking responsibility for it.

Of course, here is *another* way of managing anxiety, which is evident in the way Washington, D.C. looks today: It looks like a police state. If this is a free world, you could fool anybody. You certainly could have fooled me. It's surrounded by guns and police. This is not freedom. This is freedom inside of a metal cage, that he has created, because he is so anxious and so frightened. When he has town meetings, he has to screen all the members who participate, because he's afraid of having any question that might disagree with him. This is a frightened man who *insists* on having everybody be absolutely loyal to him.

It's a different kind of leadership than this country has been used to. We have had other Presidents who have been frightened: most famously, Richard Nixon. And, then, we've had other Presidents who have been somewhat grandiose, certainly Lyndon Johnson. But, we have never had anybody like this.

So, that's what my book is about. My book is, essentially, a detailed study of the psychological phenomenon that involves mental splitting, mental function, mental action, and how, ultimately, Bush has decided to play his anxieties out on a global scale.

EIR: In the book, you, towards the beginning, indicate that what you've produced is a study that is representative of the work that's done on many foreign leaders. You discussed the whole field of applied psychoanalysis, and that this has become a rather important tool, used by the U.S. government, the intelligence agencies; and it seems to be a pretty widely known phenomenon around the world. Could you say a bit about that?

Frank: Yes, the book is a scientific study. It's based on a long tradition of psychoanalysis called applied psychoanalysis, which is the application of psychoanalytic thinking, and psychoanalytic principles, to the study of historical figures, of foreign leaders, people who never make it into the analyst's consulting room. Freud did this, of course, with Moses, Leonardo. People have done it, certainly on Hitler. Roosevelt commissioned a study on Hitler in 1942, so they could figure out how to deal with him after the war was over, to understand him psychologically. There have been studies: on Gandhi, various other leaders; historical and current.

And, the State Department, right now, is doing a series of profiles, which they do regularly, on all kinds of foreign leaders, from Saddam Hussein to Qaddafi, to Putin, to Castro, to every leader in the world, really. That's been headed by a man named Jerrold Post. Dr. Post and I are colleagues. In fact, he invited me to be a speaker at one of his seminars, and I discussed the book there. Of course, he found it very interesting, and important to have a chance to try and do this with a sitting President.

So, what one does is, you read everything written about them, everything that they've written. In this case, because of the availability of videotapes and things like that, I can actually see all of his press conferences, over and over and over again; his various speeches. Study them, look at his non-verbal behavior, plus his choice of words. Read the memoirs of his parents, written by Barbara Bush—she wrote two; one by George Sr., he wrote one. There's all kinds of interviews with various friends and family members. I did not interview anybody in person. I decided that I would use material that was only available to the general public. I wanted to show a way of thinking, about a way of approaching material, from a detailed study of what's available to all of us.

EIR: I guess that also included a careful review of the famous seven-minute reading of *The Pet Goat*, down in Florida [on Sept. 11]?

Frank: Yes. A careful review of that. I know the kind of trance state he was in, and, basically, it's a good example of *why* he needs to protect himself from anxiety; because there you saw a case in which he was terrified and unable to think. He didn't know what to do! And I think that the problem is that, when you think that you are protecting yourself by constructing all these mechanisms, you actually are not protecting yourself. And, when you are trying to protect *us*, the American people, we're not being protected. It does not make us less anxious to have Washington, D.C. be a police state, for a day or two. The result is the opposite.

Denying anxiety is not the same as experiencing and *managing* it. If parents never help a baby manage his fears, that baby lacks the means to face them as an adult. You don't just have to be calmed down; you have to actually have developed the ability to manage your *own* fears, involving thinking about them. And, you do that by getting help from parents to manage your fears from early on in life.

Tina Brown, who wrote a column in today's *Washington Post*, washingtonpost.com, called "Mothering the Old Boys," talks about it in a very clever way, which is that, Bush "out-sources" his own feelings and his own anxiety. He gets Laura Bush to manage his anxiety. And, I think that is another way he has of managing things. He's very frightened of being attacked, of being humiliated, but he's able to cover it over and compensate for it. The problem is, is that it never works, because you become insatiable. The drive never stops.

EIR: The obvious conclusion, from what you just said, is



President Bush gives his Second Inaugural speech on Jan. 20. Dr. Frank considered the speech “quite stunning in terms of the desperate need to manage anxiety.”

that many other governments around the world have their own teams of psychiatrists, using this method of applied psychoanalysis, and they’ve undoubtedly drawn some of the same professional conclusions that you have about the President.

Frank: I can’t imagine them *not* coming to the same conclusions. It’s actually impossible not to.

EIR: Now, I wanted to ask you about one particular series of three experiences that Bush had, that we probably all were eyewitness to, in which the protective screens that you describe, the screening of the audiences at all of his town meetings, didn’t quite hold true: And that was the three Presidential debates with Sen. John Kerry. I wonder if you could comment on Bush’s performance during those debates. I had a lot of people comment, especially people who had read your book, that the clinical evidence was practically jumping through the TV screen at them.

Frank: Well, it’s very interesting to track through the three debates. Take the first debate. One of the purposes of Bush’s anxiety has to do with his feelings of inadequacy in competition, both with his brother Jeb, and mainly with his father. And, he’s very anxious about his own destructiveness, but also his own being defeated. So, what John Kerry did in that first debate, was, he told Bush that Bush was making mistakes that his father never would have made. And Bush became, I felt, completely unwound and unravelled at that moment, and he started deteriorating in front of everybody. And at one moment, he said to Kerry, “Of course, I know the difference between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden.” It was quite striking. He became extremely anxious and disorganized.

And, I think that the problem with Kerry at that moment was that he didn’t go for the—he didn’t pursue it.

EIR: Yes, I agree.

Frank: Because, it is very clear that he broke through all of the defenses, and it happened very suddenly. It was like a sudden punch, that broke through a fighter’s well-constructed defenses. And so, he didn’t follow through on it, but it was very clear that you could see that Bush was having trouble thinking, that he retreats to what people who are ex-alcoholics all do—untreated alcoholics—they retreat to repeating phrases. And, they repeat certain phases, about “It’s hard work. It’s hard work being President”—or whatever he kept saying. But, he would repeat certain phrases, because he was like somebody clinging to a life raft. And these phrases become anxiety-managing kind of phrases.

In the second debate, he had an unusual advantage, for him. Namely that it was town hall-style, meaning that he could sit on a stool, and he could move around. And, one of the ways that a child has, of managing anxiety, is to become very active. You dissipate your anxiety through muscular activity: these kids whom you see in school, who can’t sit still, and they’re jumping up and down, and running around. You get them to run around, it’s a way of discharging their tension. So, he actually was hopping up and down from his chair, quite dramatically a couple of times, almost like a child—interrupting Kerry, interrupting the questioners. I felt that it was clear evidence of a not-very-acceptable technique to manage his anxiety. But, he was not pinned down, verbally, particularly, at least as I recall, because he could get rid of his

anxiety by physical behavior.

However, he also talked like he was trying to be cute a few times, when he talked about: “Oh, I own a lumber company? Does anybody want to buy some lumber?” That was quite a dramatic statement. First of all, there’s a very common statement in bars about having sex; offering yourself as available for sex. And, clearly he was reverting to his behavior, I think, when he used to be drinking; this behavior that got him a lot of consensual validation. People would applaud, or laugh, and find him cute and a clown. In other words, when he can’t fight, directly and intellectually, because he couldn’t really compete with Kerry on an intellectual basis, he retreated to becoming kind of a clown. And he was almost mimicking himself. That is another way to manage anxiety. But it was quite disturbing to see this in a President.

And then, the third debate, I just felt that he was much more organized and trying to focus on staying on point. I thought Kerry had another chance, because it was a debate where you couldn’t walk around and dissipate your anxiety. But Kerry decided not to go for the jugular this time, at all. He didn’t mention Bush’s father, which I think would have worked, if he had done it again.

EIR: Yes. Of course, that was the debate that sparked so much of the speculation of that box-like thing that was jutting out from—

Frank: —from his back, right. Whether he was getting coached. And, it’s amazing. There’s definitely something there, but the question is, what is it and what’s its function? Was he wired? Another possibility people have been writing to me about, is whether he’s on some kind of a life-vest system, because he has some cardiac irregularities, and that would account for him fainting a few times and his falling off the bicycle. But, those are all very speculative.

EIR: I understand that a paperback edition of the book is coming out shortly, and that you’ve written an additional chapter, I would assume updating the clinical profile.

Frank: Yes, I have written an update. Actually it’s not quite finished yet. I’m writing an updated clinical profile of President Bush, because the book stops, really in April. And, this paperback edition, which is going to come out in June, will go through the State of the Union address this year. So, it’s got a few more weeks to go. It’s essentially an update of the book, in terms of what’s been going on since April, through the campaign, through the election, through the Inauguration and the early part of his second term, which has started now.

In terms of his behavior, some of the characteristics that are described in the book are elaborated: Abu Ghraib is a good example.

But, there’s also a chapter I’m writing about group function. I decided to add a chapter about groups, because I think that it’s very important to understand, that inside the mind of



After being told “America is under attack,” when the second plane hit the World Trade Center on 9/11, a visibly stunned George Bush continued to read My Pet Goat in a Florida classroom for nearly seven minutes.

people like President Bush—and he’s not the only person like this—they have a kind of an internal mafia, or an internal gang constructed that protects them against anxiety inside, and, in his case, he’s been able to have that gang *live* in front of him, and not just in his mind. He’s been surrounded by members of his Cabinet and his advisors who essentially function the way the parts of his inner world function. And he’s able to create a kind of group that protects him from everything bad, and can also express his own aggression and destructiveness, without him having to take responsibility for it. So, he can have other people do it, like Rumsfeld and Cheney; and then he doesn’t have to do it. It’s a very interesting psychological phenomenon.

The book will come out in the middle of June of this year. It’s being endorsed also, on the cover, in addition to the current people, it’s going to be endorsed by Seymour Hersh and by Ron Suskind, who wrote the book about [former Treasury Secretary] Paul O’Neill [*The Price of Loyalty*].

EIR: That’s excellent. Suskind had done his own article.

Frank: He had done an article on faith. It’s very powerful and very good.

EIR: That’s very exciting. Did you have a chance to observe, or read, the State of the Union?

Frank: Well, I read his Inaugural. In fact, if you want to know how I spent his Inauguration Day, I spent it in Canada. I thought it was just too painful. Especially living in Washington, it’s really like an armed camp. And I just decided I didn’t want to—I figured I could register my protest, by not buying anything American, by leaving, and also by writing and thinking about it.

I've got an article coming out tomorrow in *The American Prospect* about the Inauguration, but I wanted to say that his speech was quite stunning in terms of, again, the desperate need to manage anxiety. You could see it through the fact that he feels embattled by the "reign of hatred and resentment," as he calls it. He wants to expose the pretensions of tyrants. I mean he is really living in a world where we are embattled and surrounded by danger, and we have to be protected by God. It's quite stunning. He says, "America's vital interests and its deepest beliefs, our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our Founding we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this Earth has rights and dignity and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and Earth." It's pretty scary.

And it's all about freedom, and what he wants is something he's never going to have, because what he wants is freedom from anxiety. That's his deepest, unconscious wish; that's what his entire life is about. But, he's never going to have it this way. First of all, anxiety is not your enemy. Anxiety *can* be your enemy, especially if you're frightened out of your wits. But, anxiety should be a source of information, something to be managed and thought about. It's a way of your mind and your body letting you know that there is a problem that needs to be dealt with, and that you need to think about it. And, anxiety is part of living.

He is essentially saying that he wants to spread freedom throughout the world, which has to do with getting rid of anxiety. I think that when he's talking about tyranny, he's talking about his own internal experiences, that he is feeling tyrannized by his own anxiety and his own fears. And, he's getting the rest of the world to live out his own inner fantasies. It's amazing that he's come this far. I think part of it is that he's been able to manipulate and sweet-talk lots of people who are far better than he is. I mean, I think that people who are really good people, well-meaning people in middle America, are really seduced by his religiosity, his posturing, and of course, by their own fear, that he has helped create.

EIR: I thought it was very important, in the book, that you dedicated a chapter to discussing the people who are inclined, for their own reasons, to support someone like a Bush. And, obviously while there are a lot of questionable aspects of the Nov. 2, 2004 election, he did receive the votes of millions of people.

Frank: And, even if he had lost the election—which I still think was stolen, although there's no way to know—he still got a lot of votes. I mean, a *lot* of votes.

EIR: Over the course of the term as President, would you characterize his psychological state as having deteriorated? Is it an accelerating deterioration? Because, it is an important preview of what kinds of things we may be in store for in the next couple of years.



The President's "group" protects him from the outside world. Here, Bush is flanked by top officials of his first Administration (left to right): Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staffs Richard B Meyers, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Bush, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice.

Frank: For somebody who is grandiose, and for somebody who is using everything at their disposal to manage anxiety, those people can never fully rest. So, he's going to get worse and worse, psychologically; although, he may, at times, seem to be very calm. But the increase in his grandiosity and his paranoia are, if unchecked, just going to take over. He already wants to break down the Social Security system that's been working for a long time.

And, he is very interested in doing certain things such that, if he's *driven* to manage anxiety, he will be indifferent to the results of his destructiveness, because, if he *looked* at the results of his destructiveness in a serious way, it would make him anxious! So, this is why he can't really look at Abu Ghraib, or look at the devastation you caused our own troops, and certainly the Iraqi citizens—it's not possible for him to really take those things in. And, of course he doesn't allow much exposure to come into this country. So, I think that the future is that he is going to have to run faster and faster to manage anxiety, and the victims of that race that he is having against his internal tormentors, are going to be the rest of us. So, I'm not very optimistic about the future.

To say that he is psychologically deteriorating—the answer to your question would be, yes. But, it's not in the traditionally easily definable way, because, as long as he can appear calm, he will manage. But, if he is caught off-guard, it's very clear that he's not able to think. I mean, the other day—because, if you try to manage anxiety like that, it really im-

pinges on your ability to think—so, the other day somebody from the *Post* asked him, on Air Force One, “How come we haven’t caught bin Laden?” Bush responded really quickly, “Because he’s hiding!” It’s just unbelievable, it’s great. And it was so brilliant. It says it all!

EIR: One of the things that I think is somewhat a cause for optimism in this otherwise, obviously, rather bleak situation, with the re-inauguration of Bush, is that he’s taking on such a big issue with this attempt to privatize Social Security, that he’s met with a lot of resistance from Republicans in Congress. And I can just indicate two anecdotes that were in my mind, when we started talking. One is that, a number of leading Republicans in Congress, including Rep. Bill Thomas, who is the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, have basically called Bush’s proposal for privatization of Social Security, a “dead horse.” Thomas has apparently come under massive pressure, threats, harassment, from the White House for even making that comment. And, I was told today by a member of Congress, that when Sen. Arlen Specter, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, commented that he was not pleased that Alberto Gonzales had not answered many of the questions the Committee provided to him, in order to conclude his confirmation process, that he also received some very menacing calls from the White House, demanding basically that he cease and desist from any criticism. I guess the White House today, also came out with a typical Karl Rove counterattack against Sen. Robert Byrd, who put a one-week hold on the vote and final debate on Condi Rice’s appointment as Secretary of State, by essentially accusing him of being an old-line member of the KKK, and basically attributing the whole thing to racism, as if the Iraq War and the cover-up never happened.

Frank: Well, there will be an unraveling. All these defensive layers are definitely *frightening* to people who live outside of those layers, because, you are being bullied. You are being intimidated, and that’s very frightening. But, if people ever stand up to him—first of all, he’s going to show his teeth, and do the kinds of things you’ve just cited. But, it’s also going to show a massive defensiveness and an eventual collapse.

Bullies are basically frightened people, even though they are frightening. And, all of the behaviors that I’ve talked about, and that you have asked about, are the behaviors of a bully. So, I do think there is some hope, that members of his own party—because it’s going to have to come from members of his own party, because Democrats are already—many of them are weak, with the exception of Boxer and Kennedy and a few others. They are too afraid to stand up. It’s going to have to come from members of his own party who are going to see him as overstepping his bounds.

Now, one of the things that happens with a megalomaniac person, is that people who are that grandiose and that desperate, have to control more and more things, and take over more

and more things, and challenge more and more traditional sets of values, or traditions, really. And, the last person who did that, in a clear way, was [Sen. Joseph] McCarthy, when he, essentially, was beginning to challenge Eisenhower himself. And, I think that what happens is that, these people *never* stop, unless some outside force stops them. And, Bush *will not* stop of his own choosing. He will only have to *be* stopped. And that would have to be, by people who are willing to stand up and say, “Stop it! You can’t do this any more. I don’t care if you’re President.”

And, that’s what I think the Republicans might eventually do, when they see how really deeply disturbed he is. And, that’s what I’m hoping.

EIR: Well, I think there is, as I say, some cause for optimism that we are going to see that, hopefully sooner than later. And, of course, since Bush is not able to run for re-election, and Cheney is now saying again that he’s not interested or physically up to running, the benefits to Republicans of standing 100% with the President are diminishing. So, I’m optimistic.

Frank: I’m optimistic, but I really would not underestimate him. He is a formidable person. He’s clearly strong. He knows what he wants. I know that a few years ago, you guys were very much thinking that Cheney was running the show. There’s just no question that *he’s* running the show. This speech is *him*, not Cheney.

EIR: Right.

Frank: And, his behavior has always been him, and what he’s done is, he’s allowed people to think that there is optimism, everything will work out, he’s not really doing anything, he’s not that smart. He is very smart, but in a certain kind of way. He is very tricky, very cagey, and extremely dangerous as a President, and as a person. I think that people don’t quite—a lot of people understand that; but, the people who get attacked—like Specter, I’m sure, understands it more today than he did yesterday.

So, I do feel optimistic, but optimistic is only going to go so far. There has to be really a ready, steady, pressure kept, to educate members of Congress about who he is. You can do a lot of damage in the next four years. He’s done a lot of damage in the last four years, and even if he’s not able to be re-elected, or run again, he can do a tremendous amount of damage to our nation, to the economy, to Social Security, to our security, to the environment. I mean there is a lot of things that are irreversible.

So, I’m not exactly as optimistic as you are, but I’m not going to give up, and I don’t think you are either. And, that’s the issue, is to keep going.

EIR: Exactly, and I think that it’s probably a perfect point to leave our readers with.

Frank: I’m hopeful that people will keep going. People are speaking out.