



[As stated in the below notes by the author of this piece, Peter Myers, shows his research for Freud as a “Jewish Avenger”—against Non-Jews. The entire piece is presented as can be found on the internet and with the info below. Only a few minor spelling glitches were corrected in converting this document for presentation—note by Eric L. Miller]

Thomas Szasz on Sigmund Freud as Jewish Avenger (against Christianity).

A leading dissident Jewish intellectual, **Szasz here exposes Freud's anti-Gentilism**. - Peter Myers, August 19, 2001; update April 23, 2004.

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Freud "discovered" that religion is a mental illness; yet he exempted the Jewish religion.

(1) Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression* (2) Erich Fromm's Jewish hermeneutics and Bible commentary

(1) Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, NY, 1978).

Chapter 9; endnotes and footnotes are included.

{p. 138} **Sigmund Freud: The Jewish Avenger**

I

Because I regard psychotherapy as a moral rather than a medical enterprise, it is reasonable to inquire into **the religious origin, development, and self-identification of the founder of psychoanalysis**. Heretofore, such an inquiry was considered relevant, if at all, only as background material, a part of the cultural history of individuals and ideas. I consider it relevant as foreground material, **a part of the ethical systems that psychotherapists and their works constitute, conceal, and convey**.

Freud's great grandfather was Rabbi Ephraim Freud, and his grandfather was Rabbi Schlomo Freud. It is not known whether these men were rabbis in the religious sense or whether their titles merely connoted respect. Freud himself was born a Jew, was given the Jewish name Schlomo after his grandfather, and remained a Jew. {see endnote 1}

II

The **inconsistency between Freud's passionate antireligious tirades and his profound commitment to Jewishness** significantly highlights an important aspect of Freud's personality and produc- {p. 139} tions, namely his **anti-Gentilism**. **The popular image of Freud as an enlightened, emancipated, irreligious person who, with the aid of psychoanalysis, "discovered" that religion is a mental illness is pure fiction**. Freud was extremely fond of this image of himself, and he did all he could to cultivate it. Subsequently, Jones successfully merchandised it, with the result that, although **the facts of Freud's personal sense of Jewishness and his anti-Gentilism are duly recorded, mainly in his letters**, the significance of these facts somehow disappears in Jones's treatment of them.

Freud was, throughout his life, a proud, chauvinistic, even *vengeful* Jew. David Bakan offers the following evidence to support his contention regarding Freud's positive self-identification as a Jew:

{quote} Freud believed that anti-Semitism was practically ubiquitous in either latent or manifest form; the broad masses in England were anti-Semitic, "as everywhere"; he was of the opinion that the book on Moses would anger the Jews; he expressed a love of Hebrew and Yiddish, according to Freud's son; **he refused to accept royalties on Hebrew and Yiddish translations of his works; he was sympathetic to Zionism from the first days of the movement and was acquainted with and respected Herzl; he had once sent Herzl a copy of one of his works with a personal dedication; Freud's son was a member of the Kadimah, a Zionist organization, and Freud himself was an honorary member of it.** {end quote; endnote 2}

Bakan also notes that on "Freud's thirty-fifth birthday, his father gave him the Bible which he had read as a boy, inscribed in Hebrew," {endnote 3} and that **when "he was in America he sent greetings by cablegram to his family on the High Holidays."** {endnote 4} In addition, Freud displayed his devotion to Judaism in the letters he wrote, in the friends and enemies he made, in the way he lived, and, last but not least, in his anti-Gentilism.

III

Intensely interested in religion and religious history, Freud indulged in countless speculations on these subjects. In many of

{p. 140} these he simply followed his central formula - which was to become the trick of the psychoanalytic trade - namely, that everything is something other than what it seems to be or than what the authorities say it is. Oedipus was not a king but a complex; Leonardo was not a heroic painter but a homosexual pervert; Moses was not a Jew, but an Egyptian. It is significant, in this connection, that Freud was satisfied with transforming the founder of his own religion from a Jew into an Egyptian; he did not suggest that Moses was mad. That was an "interpretation" Freud reserved for patients, dissident colleagues, and Jesus. "Once in a conversation on the topic [of

religion]," Jones relates, "Freud remarked to me that **Jesus** could even have been 'an ordinary **deluded** creature.'" {endnote 5}

One of Freud's many pronouncements on religion is recorded in his *The Future of an Illusion*:

{quote} We call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relation to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification. Having thus taken our bearings, let us return once more to the question of religious doctrines. We can now repeat that all of them are illusions. ... Some of them are so improbable, so incompatible with everything we have laboriously discovered about the reality of the world, that we may compare them ... to delusions. {end quote; endnote 6}

Voltaire, Nietzsche, and many other thinkers since the Enlightenment have noted that religious doctrines are not empirically verifiable observations. What does Freud add to such positivistic antireligiosity? **Only the assertion that religious belief and conduct belong in the same class as mental disorders**; they are madnesses, medical disorders, matters on which Freud is, or claims to be, an expert.

There is, in short, **nothing scientific about Freud's hostility to embellished religion, though he tries hard to pretend that there is**. The same sort of antireligiosity that Freud preached was rampant in ancient Greece: its character was identified by Plato, and its

{p. 141} significance for the modern age has been re-identified by Eric Voegelin. Plato's particular wrath, notes Voegelin,

{quote} is aroused by the type which combines agnosticism with rascality. ... [Most] dangerous is the agnostic who is at the same time possessed by incontinent ambition, by a taste for luxuries, who is subtle, intelligent, and persuasive; for this is the class of men who furnish the prophets and fanatics, the men who are half sincere and half insincere, the dictators, demagogues, and ambitious generals, the founders of new associations of initiates and scheming sophists (908d-e). In order to designate these evils of the age appropriately and

comprehensively, Plato now uses the category of *nosos*, a disease of the soul (888b). {end quote; see footnote below; see endnote 7}

The terms - diviner, fanatic for all kinds of imposture, and contriver of private Mysteries - fit Freud perfectly. Plato's foregoing observations are important because they provide some of the basis for Voegelin's, and Karl Popper's, classification of psychoanalysis as a modern Gnostic movement and for their bracketing it, as such, with Communism and Nazism. {endnote 9}

It is ironic that Plato diagnoses as a "disease of the soul" precisely that mental state which Freud claims characterizes the ideally mature, psychoanalytically imbued person; and that Freud diagnoses as a "disease of the mind" precisely that mental state which Plato claims characterizes the ideally moral, ethically imbued person. In both cases, of course, mental health and mental

{footnote on Plato} Voegelin's reference here is to Plato's Laws, Book X:

But those in whom the conviction that the world has no place in it for gods is conjoined with incontinence of pleasure and pain and the possession of a vigorous memory and a keen intelligence share the malady of atheism with the other sort, but are sure to work more harm, where the former do less, in the way of mischief to their fellows. The first may be free-spoken enough about gods, sacrifices, and oaths, and perhaps, if he does not meet with his deserts his mockery may make converts of others. But the second, who holds the same creed as the other, but is what is popularly called a "man of parts," a fellow of plentiful subtlety and guile - that is the type which furnishes our swarms of diviners and fanatics for all kinds of imposture; on occasion also it produces dictators, demagogues, generals, contrivers of private Mysteries, and the arts and tricks of the so called Sophists. {end footnote; see endnote 9}

{p. 142} disease are defined in moral terms and reflect the ethical standards of the definer. {see footnote below}

One might think that a man who writes about religion as Freud did in *The Future of an Illusion* and elsewhere would declare himself an atheist or agnostic. Not so. In his Autobiographical Study, **Freud declares: "My parents were Jews, and I have remained a Jew myself."** {see endnote 11} It will repay us to look closely at what Freud himself meant by that affirmation. Obviously, he did not mean that he abstained from eating pork or from working on Saturday. What he meant, he tells us, is this: "When, in 1873, I first joined the University, I experienced some appreciable disappointments. Above all, I found that I was expected to feel myself inferior and alien because I was a Jew. I refused absolutely to do the first of these things. **I have never been able to see why I should feel ashamed of my descent or, as people were beginning to say, of my 'race.'**" {endnote 12} In short, Freud decided that "Jewish is beautiful!"

It is open to question whether Freud's assessment of the nature of anti-Semitism in Central Europe before the First World War was accurate. Karl Popper offers a quite different view of that cultural scene:

{quote} I believe that before the First World War Austria, and even Germany, treated the Jews quite well. They were given almost all rights, although there were some barriers established by tradition, especially in the army. In a perfect society, no doubt, they would have been treated in every respect as equals.... The proportion of Jews or men of Jewish origin among university professors, medical men, and lawyers was very high, and open resentment was aroused by this only after the First World War. ... Admittedly, it is understandable that people who were {continued next page}

{footnote} The fundamental similarities between Plato's and Freud's concepts of mental functioning have been noted by others, for example by A.J.P. Kenny, who observes that "Both Freud and Plato regard mental health as harmony between the parts of the soul, and mental illness as unresolved conflict between them." {end footnote; see endnote 10}

{p. 143} despised for their racial origin should react by saying that they were proud of it. But racial pride is not only stupid but wrong, even if provoked by racial hatred. {end quote}

Popper's concluding remark, with which I agree, raises another question, namely: Does deciding that "Jewish is beautiful" imply that "Gentile is ugly?" As we shall see, it did indeed for Freud.

In 1882, when Freud is twenty-six, he reaffirms his religious ties. "And as for us," he writes to his fiancée, "this is what I believe: **even if the form wherein the old Jews were happy no longer offers us any shelter, something of the core, of this meaningful and life-affirming Judaism will not be absent from our home.**" {endnote 14} From his youth onward, Freud sought strength from his identification with Judaism. In it, he found not only strength but also solace from solitude and a historical-religious transcendence. For example, when **in 1895** he felt increasingly isolated from his medical colleagues, **he joined the B'nai B'rith Society**, a Jewish fraternal organization, **to which he belonged for the rest of his life.** Every other week he attended society gatherings, and occasionally lectured there himself. **"I gave a lecture on dreams to my Jewish society last Tuesday," he writes to Fliess on December 12, 1897,** "and it had an enthusiastic reception. I shall continue it next Tuesday." {endnote 15} **On March 11, 1900, he writes: "I spend every other Tuesday evening among my Jewish brethren, to whom I recently gave another lecture."** {endnote 16}

Freud's proud self-identification as a Jew is also well displayed **in his letters**, especially to Abraham and Ferenczi. For example, **on December 26, 1908 Freud encourages Abraham with his appeal to their common faith: "Do not lose heart. Our ancient Jewish toughness will prove itself in the end."** {endnote 17} **He ends the letter with this frank revelation: "Our Aryan comrades are really completely indispensable to us, otherwise psycho-analysis would succumb to anti-Semitism."** {endnote 18}

On July 20, 1908, Freud writes to Abraham: **"On the whole it is easier for us Jews, as we lack the mystical element."** {endnote 19} Three days later, he writes: **"May I say that it is consanguineous**

Jewish traits that attract me to you? We understand each other. ...

I nurse a suspicion that the suppressed anti-Semitism of the Swiss

{p. 144} that spares me is deflected in reinforced form upon you." {endnote 20} On October 11, he picks up the same theme: "Just because I get on most easily with you (and also with our colleague Ferenczi of Budapest), I feel it incumbent upon me not to concede too much to **racial preference** and therefore **neglect that more alien Aryan [Jung].**" {endnote 21}

After sustaining a psychiatric attack on psychoanalysis in Germany, Freud writes to Ferenczi in a similar vein. In the midst of the First World War, a Professor Franz von Luschan declares that "Such absolute nonsense [as psychoanalysis] should be countered ruthlessly and with an iron broom. In the Great Times in which we live, such old wives' psychiatry is doubly repulsive." {endnote 22} Freud's reaction to this, in a letter to Ferenczi, on April 4, 1916, is: 'Now we know what we have to expect from the Great Times. No Matter! **An old Jew is tougher than a Royal Prussian Teuton.**' {endnote 23}

Freud's references to Jewishness, his own or his interlocutor's, **figure prominently in much of his correspondence.** An often-quoted example of it is his famous letter to the Protestant pastor Oskar Pfister, in which Freud writes proudly, "Incidentally, why was it that none of all the pious ever discovered psychoanalysis? **Why did it have to wait for a completely godless Jew?**" {endnote 24} To which Pfister offers the incredibly inane answer that Freud is not a bad Jew but a good Christian!

In a letter to Barbara Low, written in English in 1936, Freud remarks: "I know that you have not thought that the death of your brother-in-law David [Eder, a psychoanalyst] had left me untroubled, because I had not written at once.... Eder belonged to the people one loves without having to trouble about them.... **We were both Jews and knew of each other that we carried that miraculous thing in common, which** - inaccessible to any analysis so far - **makes the Jew.**" {endnote 25} As we saw earlier - in his letter to Abraham in 1908 - when Freud wants to extol Jews as better fitted for science than Christians, he boasts that 'we [Jews] lack the mystical element.' In this letter to Barbara Low, however, he boasts that being a Jew is

something "miraculous." The phrase "in inaccessible to analysis" is also worth remarking on. It was one of Freud's favorite terminological inventions, dividing the world into two classes in terms of his own "science" - things

{p. 145} accessible to analysis and things in inaccessible to analysis. Into the latter category he placed not only his own and Eder's "miraculous" Jewishness, but also the "genius" of those he respected (**the genius of those he didn't respect being reduced, by "analysis," to its psychopathological roots**).

Freud's letter to Ennco Morselli, an Italian author who had sent him a book critical of psychoanalysis, is also of interest in this connection. "I noticed with regret," writes Freud, "that you cannot accept our youthful science without great reservations. ... **But your brief pro-Zionist pamphlet on the Zionist question I was able to read without any mixed feelings, with unreserved approval....** I am not sure that your opinion which looks upon psychoanalysis as a direct product of the Jewish mind is correct, but if it is, I wouldn't be ashamed. Although I have been alienated from the religion of my forebears for a long time, **I have never lost the feeling of solidarity with my people** and realize with satisfaction that you call yourself a pupil of a man of my race - the great Lombroso." {endnote 26} There are at least two things in this letter that deserve special attention. In the first place, **Freud's assertion that he was alienated from the Jewish religion was simply not true**; as we saw, **his alienation from it was limited simply to his not practicing most of its rituals - a very different thing**. In the second place, why was Freud so proud of Lombroso's Jewishness? Was Lombroso a good man? Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909) was a pioneer forensic psychiatrist whose claim to fame rested on his supposedly scientific psychiatric-genetic "discovery" that criminals were "degenerates" who could be identified by certain physical stigmata or "atavism." His views thus presaged those of Nazi geneticists and Soviet psychiatrists, hardly something to be proud of. {see footnote below}

Besides testifying to Freud's pride in his Jewishness - and to **his essential, however unformalistic, religiosity** - these examples, of which many more could be cited, also illustrate his consistent

{footnote} Karl Kraus, another Viennese Jew - but one who was quite free of the venomous anti-Gentilism that suffused Freud - recognized the evil character of Lombroso's "genius." In 1903, at the height of Lombroso's fame, Kraus called him a "charlatan" and **ridiculed him for having made "his own scientific stature impregnable by demonstrating that anti-Semitism is a mental illness."** {endnote 27}

{p. 146} duplicity with respect to the relations between psychoanalysis and Judaism. **In print and in public, Freud insists, with the voice of the wounded savant, that psychoanalysis is a science like any other and has nothing to do with Jewishness. In person and in private, however, he identifies psychoanalysis, with the voice of the prophet militant, as a Jewish creation and possession.**

V

One of Freud's most powerful motives in life was the desire to inflict vengeance on Christianity for its traditional anti-Semitism. This idea has been suggested by Freud himself, and has been alluded to by others. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where Freud tells us so much about himself, he relates one of his dreams in which he is in Rome. To explain it, he offers the following episode about his childhood:

{quote}

I had actually been following in Hannibal's footsteps. Like him, I had been fated not to see Rome; and he too had moved into the Campagna when everyone had expected him in Rome. But Hannibal, whom I had come to resemble in these respects, had been the favourite hero of my later school days. Like so many boys of that age, I had sympathized in the Punic Wars not with the Romans but with the Carthaginians. And when in the higher classes I began to understand for the first time what it meant to belong to all alien race, and anti-Semitic feelings among the other boys warned me that I must take up a definite position, the figure of the Semitic general rose still higher in my esteem. **To my youthful mind Hannibal and Rome symbolized the conflict between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic church** {Lionel Curtis on identification between Carthage and Jews: [curtis2.html](#)}. And the increasing importance of the effects

of the anti-Semitic movement upon our emotional life helped to fix the thoughts and feelings of those early days. At that point I was brought up against the event in my youth whose power was still being shown in my dreams. I may have been ten or twelve years old, when my father began to take me with him on his walks and reveal to me in his talk his views

{p. 147} upon things in the world we live in. Thus, it was on one such occasion that he told me a story to show me how much better things were now than they had been in his days. 'When I was a young man,' he said, 'I went for a walk one Saturday in the streets of your birthplace; I was well dressed, and had a new fur cap on my head. A Christian came up to me and with a single blow knocked off my cap into the mud and shouted: "Jew! get off the pavement!"' 'And what did you do?' I asked. 'I went into the roadway and picked up my cap,' was his quiet reply. This struck me as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time, Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies. {end quote; endnote 28}

Hannibal, the African - whom Freud calls a "Semite" - takes vengeance on the Romans who conquered and humiliated the Carthaginians. Freud, the Semite, takes vengeance on the Christians who conquered and humiliated the Jews. Hannibal was tenacious and had a secret weapon: elephants. Freud, too, was tenacious, and he, too, had a secret weapon: psychoanalysis. **Hannibal's elephants terrorized his enemies** whom the animals then trampled to death. **Freud's psychoanalysis terrorized his enemies whom his "interpretations" then degraded into the carriers of despicable diseases.** The story of Freud's life and the story of psychoanalysis in his lifetime are **variations on the theme of justified vengeance** in the pattern not only of the legendary Hannibal but also of the literary Count of Monte Cristo: the humiliated but morally superior victim escapes from dependence on his morally inferior victimizers; he hides, schemes, and grows powerful; he returns to the scene of his defeat, and there remorselessly humiliates and subjugates his erstwhile victimizers as they had humiliated and subjugated him.

Carl Schorske also finds the dream I have cited and the events surrounding it of the greatest significance for understanding Freud's work. However, he interprets Freud's desire "to take

{p. 148} **vengeance on the Romans**" as a "project [that] was **at once political and filial.**" {endnote 29} In most other great creative Viennese who were Freud's contemporaries, observes Schorske, "the generational revolt against the fathers took the specific historical form of rejection of their fathers' liberal creed. Thus Gustav Mahler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal both turned back to the baroque Catholic tradition. Not so Freud, at least not consciously. He defined his oedipal stance in such a way as to overcome his father by realizing the liberal creed his father professed but failed to defend. **Freud-Hannibal as 'Semitic general' would avenge his feeble father against Rome**, a Rome that symbolized 'the organization of the Catholic Church' and the Habsburg regime that supported it." {endnote 30} This is an extremely persuasive interpretation which, **although it deflects some of Freud's animus against the Gentiles to his father, does not negate the pervasive anti-Christian animus behind much of the Freudian opus.**

Stanley Rothman and Phillip Isenberg adopt and adumbrate Schorske's foregoing hypothesis. "It does not seem far-fetched to suggest," they write, "that **with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud felt that he had weakened if not fully conquered the Catholic Church** and had thus succeeded in doing what his father had feared to do." {endnote 31} Rothman and Isenberg adduce much additional evidence to support their thesis concerning **Freud's "Jewish marginality" as the reason for his disaffection with the Christian world** in which he lived. "Is it possible, then," they ask "that some of the motives associated with Freud's discovery of psychoanalysis had their sources in the same drives which led other Jews to Marxism, i.e., the desire to end marginality by undermining the bases of the dominant culture?" {endnote 32} They answer this somewhat rhetorical question affirmatively, though cautiously: "There is at least some evidence that it is and that **Freud was at least partially motivated by an animus towards the Catholic Church** which informed and profoundly influenced his initial discoveries" {endnote 33} I differ from this view only by holding that Freud was more than partially influenced by such an

animus and that it influenced not only his earlier writings but all of his work.

{p. 149} Rothman and Isenberg rote that "**Freud's successful (if symbolic) conquest of Rome**" - in *The Interpretation of Dreams* - did not "lessen his dislike for the Catholic Church. ... It was in Rome, too, that Freud, some years later, put the finishing touches on Totem and Taboo, which he always regarded as one of the most important and satisfying things he had written. The volume **ostensibly deals with the origins of religion. Yet it is Christian practice and ritual that are examined in terms of primitive drives and defense mechanisms.**" {endnote 34}

Finally, Rothman and Isenberg cite another item from Freud's correspondence that supports quite decisively the view that Freud's anti-Gentilism was a leading motive in his life. "In 1938," they write, "while waiting to leave Austria for England to escape from the Nazis, he wrote to his son Ernst: 'It is high time that Ahasuerus came to rest somewhere.' He was, of course, **identifying with Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, who was compelled to wander, because he would not allow Christ to rest while the latter was carrying the cross to Calvary.** It is difficult to believe that the choice of this allusion was purely accidental." {endnote 36}

That **Freud had identified himself, and privately thought of himself, as a Jewish warrior**, fighting against a hostile Christian world, has thus been amply documented. {endnote 33} What has received less attention, however, is the way **Freud always portrayed his Jewish militancy, his anti-Gentilism, as a self-defense, a necessary and legitimate protection against attacks on him, as a Jew and a psychoanalyst.** While such self-defensive claims are sometimes factually justifiable, they must always be evaluated cautiously: most aggressors, especially most modern ones, have claimed merely to be defending or protecting what was rightly theirs. In the case of Freud qua psychoanalyst, the claim is patently fraudulent: after all, he had to invent psychoanalysis before he could defend it. Although he was proud to assert that he created psychoanalysis when it came to claiming priority for it, **he acted as if psychoanalysis had somehow always existed**, as if it were merely a collection of 'facts," when it came to responding to those who

regarded its very creation as an act of aggression against their own interests and values. Jung's impression of Freud's seemingly de-

{p. 150} fensive vengefulness is pertinent in this connection.

According to Ellenberger, Jung felt that Freud's main characteristic was bitterness, "every word being loaded with it ... his attitude was the bitterness of the person who is entirely misunderstood, and his manners always seemed to say: 'If they do not understand, they must be stamped into hell.' {endnote 37}

VI

In the early days of psychoanalysis, many of the persons interested in it were Jewish, and the intellectual life of Central Europe was then heavily influenced by Jewish journalists, writers, physicians, and scientists. Thus, Freud's vengefulness toward personal enemies in particular and Gentiles in general, as well as the potential destructiveness of psychoanalysis as a rhetoric of execration and invalidation, found a secure sanctuary behind the walls of the unwritten rule: "If it is Jewish, it is liberal, progressive, scientific, humane, and helpful." The writings of contemporary authors on Freud and on the Vienna of his time support this assertion - which, moreover, is familiar to many who, like myself, still possess some memories of an era only one generation away from my own. Indeed, the above maxim is still operative, as the following example illustrates.

In his book on the Viennese writer Karl Kraus, Frank Field considers Kraus's criticism of psychoanalysis. Kraus not only saw through psychoanalysis, but also had the courage to identify what he saw - namely, base rhetoric. After presenting a rather unimaginative review of Kraus's criticisms of Freud's work, Field quotes Kraus's famous aphorism, in which he declares, "**Psychoanalysis is the disease of which it pretends to be the cure.**" {endnote 38} "Of course, this was unfair," is Field's comment on this aphorism. {endnote 39} He then tries to obscure Kraus's insight and to counteract the force of his attack:

{quote} It was indeed from the position of an artist, anxious to preserve the wholeness of human experience in an age of increasing

specialization, that much of the satire of Kraus was directed. But the distinction between satire

{p. 151} and polemic was often obscured in his work by a marked element of personal and social animosity. It has already been seen that one of the reasons for Kraus's attack on psychoanalysis was the analysis of his own personality that was performed by a member of Freud's circle. When the satirist expressed his fear that, in the hands of men less devoted to the integrity of their profession as Freud himself, **psychoanalysis might become merely a lucrative source of income derived from the unhappiness of mankind**, he was certainly maliciously underlining the fact that **the overwhelming majority of the practitioners of psychoanalysis were Jewish**. The incident might seem trivial if it were not part of a pattern. Kraus's position over the Dreyfus Affair has already been noted. [He allowed the publication of anti-Dreyfusard opinion in the Fackel.] So have his attacks on the Jewish press of Vienna. Now he is making remarks about Freud's circle which, **if they came from a non-Jew, would be regarded as anti-Semitic**. {end quote; endnote 40}

This passage appears in a book about Kraus written by an author sympathetic to his subject. Yet, when it comes to Freud's Jewishness, Field acts as if Kraus had simply gone too far: one does not say such things about psychoanalysis, even if they are true! Actually, Field's attribution of Kraus's animosity toward psychoanalysis to his being "analyzed" by Fritz Wittels is, as I have shown in my book on Kraus, demonstrably false. {endnote 41} And, **while belaboring Kraus's "animosities" in this passage, Field quite forgets Freud's**, and simply ends up dismissing Kraus's profound critique of psychoanalysis by tarring Kraus with the feather of anti-Semitism.

Field's remarks epitomize an intellectual-scientific attitude toward Freud and his work that developed in the early days of psychoanalysis, before the First World War, and one which Freud did everything he could to cultivate. I refer here to **the view that it was in bad taste to point out that psychoanalysis was not a matter of science but of Jewishness**, or that it was, especially in its actual use by Freud and his lackeys, an immoral and ugly enterprise. If such a charge was made by a Christian - so held the supporters of

{p. 152} this position - it revealed the critic's **anti-Semitism**; and if it was made by a Jew, it revealed a lapse in his judgment, or grew out of his **self-hatred** as a Jew. Since there were few Mohammedans in Freud's Vienna, and fewer still who cared a whit about psychoanalysis, **this attitude in effect exempted psychoanalysis from effective intellectual or scientific criticism**. One more example of this phenomenon - from among countless similar accounts - should suffice here.

Remarking on the persons Freud hated the most, Kurt Eissler - secretary of the Freud Archives - identifies among them Theodor Lessing (1872-1933), a philosopher of history killed by the Nazis {endnote 42} Lessing had called psychoanalysis "a monstrosity of the Jewish spirit." Thinking that the author was a descendant of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1719-1781), the famous exponent of Central European enlightenment, Freud wrote him and reminded him of the memory of his great ancestor. When Lessing replied that he himself was a Jew, Freud "turned away from him in disgust." {endnote 43} "It is significant," comments Eissler, "that Freud remained comparatively unruffled, as long as he thought that psychoanalysis was being reviled by a Christian because of the Jewishness of its founder and of most of its adherents (as was the case at that time), yet **could not tolerate the same type of defamation coming from a Jew.**" {endnote 44} Probably unwittingly, Eissler here highlights **Freud's double standard in judging critics of psychoanalysis** - a double standard that has become the stock-in-trade of the loyal analysts: **if the critic was Jewish, he owed loyalty to the Freudian religion just as he did to the Mosaic one; if he was not Jewish, his opposition to psychoanalysis was just another manifestation of his anti-Semitism.**

The result of such efforts to dismiss or repress criticisms of psychoanalysis as the symptom either of Christian anti-Semitism or of Jewish "self-hatred" is the stubborn persistence of a set of false images about Freud and his doctrine. I refer in particular to the tendency to see Freud as a humane and forgiving therapist, **even when he uses psychoanalysis not to heal but to harm**; and the refusal to see him as a vengeful enemy of non-Jews and non-believers in psychoanalysis, even when he uses psychoanalysis not to understand but to undermine.

Vengeance and forgiveness are important themes in all religions, especially in Judaism and Christianity. **Jahweh is a vengeful god**, punishing remorselessly through the third generation. **Jesus is a forgiving god**, redeeming mankind through His own martyrdom. It would be foolish, however, to conclude simply that Jews are vengeful and Christians forgiving. In fact, **one of the sad facts of history has been the remorseless vindictiveness of Christians toward Jews**, avenging the death of the God of Forgiveness by never forgiving the Jews for His fate and by persecuting them as "Christkillers," not through three generations but through two thousand years. **Freud lived, of course, in a society imbued with the spirit of such Christian anti-Semitism.** Hence, there was nothing particularly novel either about Freud's resolution to revenge himself on his enemies, religious or personal, or about his method of **using words to accomplish this goal.** In fact, both Christianity, the culture in which he lived, and psychoanalysis, the sphere of activity in which he prospered, made extensive use of the rhetoric of rejection for attacking and annihilating their enemies. As these two wars with words, and with the acts those words were used to justify, constitute an immense historical panorama, I shall confine myself here to a brief illustration of each.

No sooner did Christianity cease to be the despised religion of a minority, and become instead the dominant religion of the majority, than it decreed that non-Christians were insane, that their places of worship could not be called churches, and that they were fit subjects for the penalty of death. The *Codex Theodosiantus* or *Theodosian Code*, issued in the fourth century A.D., contains these astonishing, but sobering, words:

{quote} Emperors Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius Augustuses: It is Our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which the divine Peter The Apostle transmitted to the Romans.... We command that those persons who follow this rule shall embrace the name of Catholic Christians. **The rest, however, whom We adjudge de-**

{p. 154} **mented and unsane, shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas**, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches, and they **shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of Our own initiative, which We shall assume in accordance with the divine judgment.** {endnote 45}

Here, 1,300 years before the birth of institutional psychiatry, and 1,500 years before the birth of psychoanalysis (and only 400 years after the death of Christ), we encounter the theological version of the war with words which, after the decline of Christianity, became the stock-in-trade of the psychopathologist. **The deviant is branded as "demented" and is deprived first of his language, then of his life.**

Psychiatry - the specialty out of which psychoanalysis grew, which it never abandoned, and which, since Freud's death and especially in the United States, it has decisively re-embraced - is, of course, largely an ideology and rhetoric of rejection, albeit one disguised, in the vocabulary of medicine, as diagnosis and treatment.

This **pseudomedical ideology and rhetoric is closely related to the theological ideology and rhetoric it displaced.** {endnote 46} Thus, as words of execration were implemented by acts of execution in the Church, demeaning diagnoses were implemented, in psychiatry, by **acts of imprisonment and torture called "certification," "hospitalization," and "treatment."**

Revealingly, no sooner did psychoanalysis become a source of psychiatric influence to be reckoned with, and hence a threat to the hegemony of established psychiatric power, than it too became a target for diagnostic derogation by establishment psychiatry.

Illustrative of this sort of attack is a paper delivered by a German psychiatrist in Baden-Baden on May 28, 1910. At the Congress of South-West German psychiatrists held in that resort, Alfred E. Hoche (1865-1943), a professor of psychiatry in Freiburg, read a paper with the dramatic title, **"An Epidemic of Insanity Among Doctors."** In a letter to Freud dated July 2, 1910, Jung gives the following account of that occasion: Hoche did indeed declare us ripe for the madhouse. Stockmayer was there and has told me about it. The lectures fell into the well-known pattern: charges of mysticism, sectarianism, arcane jargon,

{p. 155} epidemic of hysteria, dangerousness, etc. Isolated clapping. Nobody protested. Stockmayer was quite alone and hadn't the gumption." {endnote 47} According to Jones's account of it, Hoche declared that "Psychoanalysts were ripe for certification in a lunatic asylum." {endnote 48} Ironically, many of the criticisms that Hoche leveled against psychoanalysts were well founded, but he overplayed his hand: he was not content to dispute with psychoanalysts in the free marketplace of ideas, but wanted to dispose of them by demeaning them as mad and locking them up in madhouses. Clearly, **the idea that disagreement is a disease, and that he who defies authority is deranged** and should be disposed of by the methods of social repression then in vogue, is very old indeed.

Thus, **when Freud developed his own lexicon of loathing, called it psychoanalysis, and used it to smite his enemies, he did nothing new**, either historically or morally. It would, therefore, be as inaccurate and unfair to blame Freud for inventing a wholly novel method of assassinating characters as it would be to praise him for inventing a wholly novel method of curing souls. Psychoanalysis has been credited with, and discredited for, far too many virtues and sins - when, for the most part, these are simply the virtues and sins inherent in being human and in using language as rhetoric, noble or base, as the case might be. {endnote 49} In short, Freud was neither worse nor better than other religious and political leaders who rose to "greatness" over the bodies and souls of executed or execrated enemies.

VIII

That Freud was an angry avenger and a domineering founder of a religion (or cult), rather than a dispassionate scientist or compassionate therapist, is, I believe, epitomized by his lifelong fascination with Moses. Righteous indignation is the mood, more than any other, that characterizes both Moses and Freud. Moses liberated the Jews from Egyptian slavery; Freud sought to liberate the ego from enslavement to the id. **Moses took revenge against the Egyptians; Freud, against the Christians.** Moses founded Judaism; Freud, psychoanalysis.

Moses and Monotheism, published in 1939, was Freud's last

{p. 156} creative effort. {endnote 50} Written when he was over eighty, it supplements his earlier remarks about Moses. {endnote 51} Why was Freud, especially at the end of his life, so obsessed with the Moses legend and the origin of Judaism? Jones supplies the evidence for the answer: Freud began his intellectual quest with indignation about anti-Semitism and a resolve to avenge it; he ended it with the same preoccupation and passion. "We cannot refrain from wondering," writes Jones, "how, when nearing his end, Freud came to be so engrossed in the topics described above [i.e., Moses and the origin of Judaism], and to devote to them all his intellectual interest during the last five years of his life." {endnote 52} Alluding to Freud's "bitter experiences of anti-Semitism," Jones suggests, I believe correctly, that Freud's interest in these matters derived partly from **his unceasing obsession with the "Jewish problem" and partly from the rising tide of Nazism**. Jones notes that "Freud's deep conviction of his Jewishness, and his wholehearted acceptance of that fact," {endnote 53} compelled him to concern himself with the origin and nature of Judaism. "We know," adds Jones, "how greatly he admired the great Semitic leaders of the past, from Hannibal onward, and how gladly in his early years he would have been willing to sacrifice his life to emulate their heroic deeds." {endnote 54} This, then, was the primary motive for Freud's identification with Moses: "The leader who kindled his imagination above all others was inevitably Moses, the great man who did more than anyone to build the Jewish nation, to create the religion that has ever since borne his name." {endnote 55}

Replacing the Mosaic with the Freudian religion satisfied Freud's craving for fame and power. Identifying himself with an avenging Jewish hero gratified his urge to oppose, in his own - rhetorical rather than ethical or political - style, the fresh flood of anti-Semitism issuing from Nazism. "The reason," writes Jones, "that just then narrowed Freud's interest in mankind in general and its religions to the more specific question of the Jews and their religion could only have been the unparalleled persecution of his people getting under way in Nazi Germany." {endnote 56}

That, no doubt, was true. However, it is one thing to avenge Medieval Christian or modern National-Socialist anti-Semitism as moral and political evils; it is quite another to call the linguistic justification or literary result of such a revenge a science or treat-

{p. 157} ment. After all, the view that avenging great wrongs, especially against the Jews, is reserved to God has always stood at the center of the Jewish religion. It is articulated repeatedly in the Bible: in Deuteronomy, "To me belongeth vengeance" (32:35); in Psalms, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself" (94 :1); and even Paul, the Jew-become-apostle, writes in Romans, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, said the Lord" (12:19). Clearly, Freud felt that vengeance was his, too. That, perhaps, is what made him the great religious leader he was.

{p. 221} SIGMUND FREUD

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4. Ibid., p 52.
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11. S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study* (1925), SE, Vol. II, p. 7.

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43 Jones, *Freud*, Vol. III, p. 160.

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(2) Erich Fromm's Jewish hermeneutics and Bible commentary

Fromm, Freud, and Midrash

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THE WRITINGS OF ERICH FROMM (1908-1980) REPRESENT a significant chapter not only in the annals of psychoanalysis but in the history of Jewish hermeneutics. Indeed, one cannot help being struck by the fact that **almost all of Fromm's work**, whether a discussion of psychoanalysis, Marxism, or contemporary society, **draws heavily upon the Bible, and even at times refers to the Talmud**, Hasidic works, and other Jewish religious sources. Where Freud saw psychoanalysis as a "metamorphosed extension of Judaism," as Yosef Haim Yerushalim notes, [1] **Fromm** followed in the footsteps of his master and **created a body of work that is midrashic**.

One encounters in Fromm's works various **exegetical genres of a Jewish mode**. The most basic of these devices is, of course, **the quoting of Scripture, especially to begin and conclude**. On the frontispiece of *The Revolution of Hope* (1968), for example, one is welcomed by the words of Koheleth: "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope" (Ecclesiastes 9:4). In *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud* (1962), Fromm cites Psalm 135 to illustrate his concept of idolatry and further draws upon Hosea 14:3, which describes idolatrous man as bowing to the work of his own hands. [2] This volume ends with a verse from Isaiah, chosen to summarize Fromm's argument. So, too, in *The Sane Society* (1955), one of the earlier works, Fromm draws upon biblical verses dealing with idolatry to help the reader understand his pioneering discussion of modern alienation. The book closes with the famous verse from Deuteronomy: "I put before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse ... therefor e choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

This Scripture quoting persists throughout Fromm's work. It began with his first book, *Escape From Freedom* (1941) which is, in its largest sense, a modern commentary on--or perhaps response to--the Book of Exodus. To illustrate the unhealthy phenomenon of the excessive dependence of certain social classes, Fromm cites the biblical expression, "clay in the potter's hand" (Jeremiah 18:6), transforming it from a description of man's dependence on God to an indictment of excessive dependence on fellow men. [3]

In fact, one finds throughout Fromm's writings the old homiletical device of **using biblical texts and stories to illustrate more contemporary convictions**. Thus, in *Escape From Freedom, You Shall Be As Gods* (1966), and other works, Fromm utilizes **the Garden of Eden narrative in Genesis as a paradigm** for man's "process of individualization," wherein he "cuts his ties with nature" so that history--and alienation--can emerge. [4] To Fromm, the messianic visions in the Bible represent a complete victory of man over incestuous ties [5]--a quintessential psychoanalytic interpretation! In *The Forgotten Language* (1955), the Book of Jonah is interpreted as describing the state of being protracted and isolated; [6] and in *Man For Himself* (1947), Fromm adds that the Book of Jonah teaches that the essence of love is to labor. [7] In the same place, he compares Jonah to Cain, so engaging in the homiletical device frequently utilized by the Rabbis of drawing parallels between biblical characters. And in *The Heart of Man: It's Genius For Good and Evil* (1964), Fromm interprets the biblical story of King Solomon, the baby, and the two women as a depiction of the "necrophilous person" (the villain in Fromm's works), who is more willing to kill or to be killed than to achieve justice through life-affirming means. [8]

Needless to say, one as concerned with the concept of freedom as Erich Fromm is quite intrigued with the narrative in the early Book of Exodus which describes Moses' encounter with Pharaoh. Beginning in *Escape From Freedom* and expanding his thought in *You Shall Be As Gods*, Fromm offers an extensive excursus on that narrative as a model of human liberation. Pharaoh's confusion of worship with laziness becomes a condemnation of all who do not recognize that productiveness is intrinsic. [9]

Like Jewish preachers throughout the ages, **Fromm is attentive to the nuances of Hebrew words**. His favorite Hebrew word is *emunah* (generally translated, "faith"), which Fromm interprets as denoting the "certainty of the uncertain." [10] Fromm further notes that the word *emunah*, in the Hebrew Bible, can mean "firmness," and can describe a character trait rather than belief in something. [11] Here he uses Hebrew etymology for the secularization of religious terminology.

Fromm delights in contrasting *tikvak*, the Hebrew word for "hope" with *esperar*, the Spanish term for the same idea: the former, he declares, has the more dynamic connotation of "tension," while the

latter describes a state of waiting. [12] The Hebrew words *rahamim* and *ahabah* are also frequently contrasted by Fromm in his discussions of various kinds of love. The former, we are told, describes "motherly love" and derives from the root *rehem*, "womb." The latter, employed to describe erotic love, denotes "fusion and union." [13] These terms are explored in greater detail by Fromm in *The Art of Loving* (1956), where he employs Hebrew etymologies to illustrate his concepts of motherly and other kinds of love. [14]

Fromm turns to rabbinic as well as to biblical sources. *Escape From Freedom* begins with Hillel's famous dictum in *Ethics of the Fathers*: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" And at the end of *Man For Himself* (whose title certainly echoes Hillel's dictum), Fromm rephrases another famous dictum of Hillel's, "Do not do to others what is hateful to you": "Whatever you do to others you also do to yourself." Fromm elaborates: "The respect for life, that of others as one's own, is the concomitant of the process of life itself and a condition of psychic health." [15]

Like Jewish homiletics of all ages, Fromm's interpretations of Scripture range from brilliant insights into the plain meaning of the Bible to shameless forcing of the biblical text, in Fromm's case, to fit psychoanalytic dogmas. Among the ulterior uses of the Bible in Fromm's work is his insistence, at the end of *You Shall Be As Gods*, that **we find in biblical literature a clear-cut evolution of the God-concept** from authoritarian ruler to constitutional monarch, **from anthropomorphically-described God to nameless God**. The Jewish religion, Fromm editorializes, could "not take the last logical step, to give up 'God' and to establish a concept of man as a being who is alone in the world, but who can feel at home in it if he achieves union with his fellow man and with nature." [16] But Fromm did not prove that there are "logical steps" in the development of biblical religion. An objective, critical scholar would suspect such pat stacking of biblical epochs, since idolatry reasserted itself in some of the most sophisticated periods, and powerful trends in religious progress could be felt in some of the most degrading circumstances.

In *The Sane Society*, Fromm actually readjusts the classical Jewish concept of *galut* (exile imposed as divine punishment) to his own thinking. Instead of the Dispersion regarded as a setback to Jewish life

in the Jewish land, Fromm offers a diaspora viewed as a healthy separation from the land until such time as the Jewish people "has overcome the incestuous tie to the soil and to nature." [17]

There are many other forced characterizations of biblical thinking that Fromm presents in an authoritative manner, as though he were describing the true meaning of the Bible (whether psychological or otherwise) and not just presenting his own views. One more sample of such homiletic license that may be cited is Fromm's characterization of the biblical view of love, especially in *The Art of Loving*, which does violence to the ancient texts by ignoring the element of God, and the role that the Divine plays in the commandments to love. [18]

But Fromm's best insights into the bible more than compensate for any forced characterizations we might encounter. *You Shall Be As Gods* contains many important interpretations of biblical texts; and there is not a knowledgeable Jewish preacher who at one time or another has not cited Fromm's brilliant defense of the Sabbath in *The Forgotten Language*. What is most remarkable is that it is not merely the idea of the Jewish Sabbath that Fromm defends, but the rabbinic observance of it. In the Sabbath rituals, he argued, "we are dealing not with obsessive over-strictness, but with a concept of work and rest that is different from our modern concept." [19] Fromm's concept of the Sabbath comes remarkably close to that of Abraham Heschel, who was writing at around the same time. **To Fromm, the Jewish Shabbat is "man's victory over time,"** for "by stopping interference with nature for one day you eliminate time." [20]

One could isolate many more instances of Fromm as Jewish homiletician and Bible-commentator, but we have certainly found enough of a pattern to pose a significant question: **Why the preoccupation with the Bible?** Is it simply that the biblical tradition was the one that Fromm knew best, the tradition that he absorbed since childhood? And why was Fromm so intent on using Hebrew words to illustrate his points? After all, why play philological word games when one does not accept a particular text as authoritative?

The temptation is, of course, to psychoanalyze Fromm, to hypothesize, with one Protestant critic, that Fromm cited the Hebrew Bible so frequently because it still wielded a certain authority over

him. [21] Yet one could respond that Fromm also cited New Testament verses, and became fascinated with Zen literature in his later years. [22] Perhaps he quoted the Bible so frequently because everyone knows many of its stories, and perhaps he turned to Zen out of a conscious or unconscious desire for new disciplines, [23] or even out of dissatisfaction with psychoanalysis.

Yet, in all fairness to Fromm, it would seem that he chose to cite the Hebrew Bible because he put it in a special category. **"The Old Testament," Fromm panegyricizes, "is a revolutionary book;** its theme is the liberation of man from the incestuous ties to blood and soil, from the submission to idols, **from slavery**, from powerful masters, **to freedom** for the individual, for the nation and for all of mankind." [24] The prophetic tradition in particular is glorified by Fromm as a "humanist religion" which required that man "understand his situation, see the alternatives, and then decide." [25] Rabbinic tradition, too, offers worthy guides to human self-betterment. Rabbi Akiba, for example, is described as "one of the greatest humanists among the sages." [26]

Fromm is far more deeply rooted in the Bible than in Rabbinics or in the general Jewish hermeneutics in which Fromm certainly has a place. To understand Fromm's more immediate motives or models for Bible interpretation, we must study not so much Fromm's Jewish education as his psychoanalytic training in the Freudian tradition. One place to begin that is with his *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (1959).

Whereas Freud is not at all ambivalent in his pronouncements that God is but a projection of the father-image upon the cosmos, and that the therapeutic science of psychoanalysis is all that the human soul really needs, Fromm's writings on religion are a network of contradictions and ambivalences. On the one hand, Fromm can observe that the worship of God is an attempt to get in touch with a part of ourselves we have lost through projection. [27] On the other hand, Fromm can assert that God has become an idol of words, phases, and doctrines, [28] so suggesting that there may be an objective divine reality outside of man. And yet, Fromm ends *You Shall Be As Gods* by describing an "x-reality," a kind of godless God-feeling, a non-theistic "religious attitude" that can save even the non-theist from the materialistic idolatries of modern man.

In *Escape From Authority: The Perspectives of Erich Fromm* (1961), John Schaar, Fromm's most effective critic, points to the weaknesses in Fromm's views of religion and ethics. Schaar notes that Fromm's psychoanalytic philosophy shuns authority with an almost obsessive aversion, and tells people with an equally obsessive temerity that they can achieve perfection. This is not the place to cite the many difficulties that emerge from Fromm's interpretation of Marxism or of social and economic conditions; Schaar is very helpful on these issues. Suffice it to say that the same ratio of insights and distortions that Fromm brings to the Bible may be found in his explanation of other texts and of other social and historical traditions. Like every intellectual, Fromm was guilty of all kinds of projections and verbal games. And like every genius whose life is directed toward service to humanity, he bequeathed both break-throughs and culs-de-sac.

In this respect Fromm was no different from Freud. Yet his approach to the Bible and to rabbinic tradition was part of the critical dialectic with Freudian doctrine in which he openly engaged in many of his works, especially *The Forgotten Language*, where he modified Freud's view of dreams, and in *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (1970), where he argues against Freud's understanding of the so-called "Oedipal Complex." Despite his protests against authority, Fromm's bible, like that of all neo-Freudian analysts, was the complete works of Freud. Fromm's work must therefore be regarded as a hermeneutic in the Freudian tradition that is colored and even distinguished by immersion in Jewish homiletics.

In *Sigmund Freud's Mission*, Freud's "Oedipus Complex" is questioned, re-interpreted, and re-named the "Joseph Complex." [29] (Fromm differs from Freud in that he regards competitiveness, and not incest-wishes, as the basic cause of normal sibling rivalry.) In this re-interpretation, we see that Fromm actually employs Freud's original text as a pious preacher would utilize the Bible: He cites the original, giving it all due deference. Only then does he recast the original Freudian mythos into what he regards as more appropriate biblical images.

Fromm notes in *Sigmund Freud's Mission* that Freud saw himself as a Moses figure. As evidence, he cites Freud's famous letter to Jung to the effect that the latter was to be his Joshua. Whether or not Freud saw himself as Moses is not the issue. (Indeed, in an incisive study,

Marthe Robert argues that Freud did not think of himself as Moses, but rather felt intimidated by Michelangelo's statue of Moses, which represented to him the father and the people with whom he had acted in a petty manner. Mine. Robert posits that, if anything, Freud regarded himself as a Joseph-figure, as an "interpreter of dreams.") [30] What matters is that Fromm believed that Freud regarded himself as a Moses.

In order to draw conclusions about the significance of Fromm's orientation, we must pause and consider what traditions Freud actually inspired and, more important still, how Freud, whether consciously or subconsciously, prompted others to see him.

If Freud was a Moses, he was a Moses visited by revelations about human beings, and not by the Divine Word. He claimed as his source of authority that psychoanalysis was a "science." Indeed, some critics observed that Freud shunned mysticism and spiritualism precisely because he did not want psychoanalysis to endanger its respectability as a science. [31]

Yet Freud would not or could not shun religious sources. He decided, however, to approach the Bible as though it were a patient on his couch. Thus, his infamous work, *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays* (1939), is an almost chatty excursus on a neurotic Bible. He attempts philological studies of words, [32] he posits obscure Egyptian origins in pentateuchal beliefs and practices, [33] he editorializes on how religion is a neurosis of humanity. [34] He even provides a good, old fashioned attack on the Talmudists in the style of the New Testament scholars of his day. [35] It is only at a few junctures in the book that he actually settles down to posing the fantastic theories that Moses was an Egyptian, that his god was the sun-disc deity of short-lived Egyptian "monotheism," and that the Israelites, out of fear of biological or cultural castration, murdered Moses and worked out their sense of revulsion and guilt over this crime by writing the Bible.

The attempts to explain Freud's perverse infatuation with Moses are many. Philip Rieff declares that "Freud was his own ideal Jew ... a fantasy Moses, lonely and estranged as he leads the large remainder of himself...from one small oasis of rational insight to another, with no

promises of a promised land this time around." [36] Rieff also suggests that Freud saw himself as a latter-day Joseph. [37] Paul Ricoeur sees through this romanticized view of the Freudian self-image, however. He observes, like Marthe Robert, that:

Moses stood as a father image for Freud himself, the same image he had already encountered at the time of "The Moses of Michelangelo"; this Moses had to be glorified as an esthetic fantasy and liquidated as a religious fantasy. One can guess how much it cost Freud to run counter to Jewish pride at the very moment when the storm of Nazi persecution was breaking out by publishing *Moses and Monotheism*, when his books were being burned and his publishing house ruined, and when he himself had to flee Vienna and take refuge in London: all this must have been a terrible "work of mourning" for Freud the man. [38]

In *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*, David Bakan posits that Freud viewed Moses as the symbol of the yoke of the Law. Freud therefore, he argues, killed Moses out of Sabbatean sentiments. [39] Yet Bakan's theory is immediately suspect, since one does not require Sabbateanism as a motive to kill off a symbol of authority. Furthermore, Bakan observes in the same book that Freud created a Gentile Moses of high position (royal Egyptian lineage) so that he could overcome his own feelings of lower status because he was a Jew. [40] I dare say that even Freud was not so torn a personality that he required Moses to be both an authoritarian target and a pattern for assimilation! Nor does what we know about Freud's moral conservatism fit with Bakan's theory that Freud saw himself as a new Moses whose mission it was to rescind the Law. [41] Freud was not as concerned with abolishing accepted moralities of religious traditions as he was with eradicating neuroses.

The conflicting views of Freud's self-image only point to the complexity of that self-image and of its effect upon others, whether personally or through Freud's writings. Though the truth about Freud's self-image will probably always be veiled by the hidden inner dynamics that elude any psychoanalytical study, the question remains important for our understanding of Fromm. For whatever the contradictions involved in determining the Freudian self-image, it is clear that Freud regarded himself as possessing authority to reassess Scripture, that he was obsessed with the character of Moses (whether

out of guilt or identification), and that he did, in fact, employ biblical literature, among other literatures, especially Greek and German, to illustrate his psychoanalytic discoveries or reevaluations. It is also clear that Freud had good experiences in Jewish education, as is indicated by his warm tribute to his teacher, Professor Hammerschlag: "Religious instruction served him as a way of educating towards love of the humanities and from the material of Jewish history he was able to find means of tapping the sources of enthusiasm hidden in the hearts of young people and making it flow out far beyond the limits of nationalism or dogma." [42]

I believe that it is safe to say, in view of the evidence, that **Freud internalizes biblical characters** - or at least identified greatly with some of them (Joseph, perhaps Moses) - **while purporting to be a Bible critic**. He was also viewed as a biblical figure; he projected that image, whether because he articulated his identifications (which, as we have seen, he sometimes did), or because something in his bearing suggested it. As Rieff testifies:

Freud's orientation was ... close to the prophetic. The function of a crisis psychology, as of the prophets, is to heighten the sense of threat and fear in the face of losses of self-identity, and to offer a control: hope, as the psychic state supplied by adhering to tradition, with the prophet as instructor. Freud, in this sense, was on the side of tradition. For him the past constituted the most dynamic part of the present. Tradition was never remote, but continually in the process of reasserting itself. He sought to remind people of it, and of its importance. [43]

Fromm, by contrast, functioned as a kind of exegete of the biblical tradition. He seems to have seen Freud and Freudianism as marking the most significant, contemporary juncture in the tradition of hermeneutics. It was not the Bible as such that Fromm interpreted, or even the Bible according to Freud, but rather the Bible because of Freud, the Bible as the heritage of psychoanalysis by virtue of Freud. (In this sense, Freud saw himself as a kind of Moses-figure.) Yet both Fromm and Freud no longer perceived the Bible as the Word of God. To them, it became an important vehicle of understanding and interpreting the human psyche.

In a letter to Arnold Zweig about *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud confessed that "the essay doesn't seem to me to be too well substantiated, nor do I like it entirely. ... This historical novel won't stand up to my own criticism." [44] Marthe Robert observes ironically, but convincingly that if Freud "had stuck to his original idea of a 'historical novel,' he might have avoided a good deal of regretful or acrimonious criticism.... He would have written a kind of historical fiction claiming only to communicate a certain amount of psychic truth as any novel is entitled to do. But once he abandoned his projected novel for a scientific work, he staked his good name as a scientist in a dubious undertaking, which instead of serving science and history, exploited them unscrupulously." [45]

The irony of *Moses and Monotheism* is that the "scientific," "critical" Bible-study that Freud set out to write became just another midrash. [46] At the very best, the book is today regarded as an unorthodox, whimsical midrash. Paul Ricoeur is more than kind when he refers to it as containing "an impressive number of hazardous hypotheses." [47] The tragedy is that Freud had a genuine aptitude for critical understanding of the Bible against its historical environment. He even approximated the observation of the great Bible scholar, Professor Yehezkel Kaufmann, that pagan religion, as opposed to biblical religion, emphasized a fate that controlled deity. [48] But Freud's own conflicting feelings about Jews, Judaism, and Moses probably prevented him from achieving objectivity and success as a Bible scholar. Instead, he created a midrash known as psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis is a hermeneutical tradition; and David Bakan asserts that in psychoanalysis, "each person is a Torah." He goes so far as to observe-- and not without at least a little truth--that the name of one of Freud's early patients, Dora, about whom he wrote extensively in evolving his views, is strikingly similar in sounds to the word Torah. [49] Unfortunately, Bakan strains to show that it is the kabalistic tradition that influenced Freud, even though he admitted that "we are unable to hypothesize that Freud actually read any kabalistic literature." [50] Bakan does not seem to realize that the hermeneutic devices he attributes to Freud are actually reminiscent of rabbinic midrash, which influenced kabalistic thinking as well.

"According to one pole," Paul Ricoeur observes, "hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of a meaning

addressed to me in the manner of a message, a proclamation, or as is sometimes said, a kerygma: according to the other pole, it is understood as a demystification, as a reduction of illusion." [51] Philip Rieff expresses the same idea in a more Freud-oriented vein:

In traditional hermeneutics, the discrepancies which inspire the interpretative effort are attributed either to accidental mutilation or to secret intention of texts. In psychic texts, discrepancies--breaks in continuity, distortions of content--are always presumed to disclose intention. Mutilations to the psychic life do not occur by chance. More than once in Freud the dreamer's situation is likened to that of a journalist who, in order to evade political censorship, supplies ingenious hints to put the reader on the track of the message which he cannot declare straightforwardly. [52]

Psychoanalysis did not end traditional hermeneutics, however. Freud and Fromm kept the Bible in their sights. It was before them at all times.

In regarding patients as texts, the psychoanalysts also opened the possibility of regarding texts as patients. And it is precisely this turn of events which enables us to understand Fromm. Freud regards Scripture as a neurotic outgrowth of a primal crime of Moses-murder. Bakan views it as an hysterical codex of laws devised out of incest-fears and their accompanying guilt. And Fromm? He certainly belongs to this tradition. Hence, Jakob J. Petuchowski could refer to *The Art of Loving* as "Erich Fromm's Midrash on Love." [53] Fromm is capable of distorting the Bible in some of his midrashim. But, then again, all the generations of Jewish (and Christian) exegetes have been guilty of this to some extent. Where Fromm differs from them is in his view of the focus of midrash. Always it is the person who is the text--his loving, his hoarding, his living. Fromm's hermeneutics are as rooted in Freud as in the Bible. Fromm employs Freud and the Bible when they are helpful, and looks to other sources, such as Zen Buddhism, when he fails to find an obliging image in either. Yet Fromm always creates midrash which, as Petuchowski describes it, "is

not only concerned with blending new insights and ancient wisdom... but must also contain musar (ethical teaching) and tockachot (criticism and reproof) Whatever his prejudices as biblical exegete, Fromm, it must be said, made his writings rich in both musar and tochachot.

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NOTES (1.) Yasef Haim Yerushalmi, Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable (New Haven/ London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 99. (2.) Erich Fromm, Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 58. Continued from page 8 (3.) Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1941), p. 144. In a rather unclear line of thought, Fromm declares that the prophet's words, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18), illustrate the antithesis of "authoritarian philosophy" (Escape From Freedom, p. 171). Just how this is true he does not really say. (4.) Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 70. (5.) You Shall Be As Gods, p.53. (6.) Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language: An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales, and Myths (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951), p. 22. (7.) Erich Fromm, Man For Himself (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1947), p. 99. (8.) Erich Fromm, The Heart of Man: Its Genius For Good and Evil (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p.41. (9.) Man For Himself p. 106. (10.) Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 13. (11.) Man For Himself p. 199. (12.) You Shall Be As Gods, p. p. 154n. (13.) See Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), pp. 33--34; Man For Himself p. 100. Actually, ahavah denotes covenantal love. Other philological observations made by Fromm can be found in The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p.195; Beyond the Chains of Illusion, p. 116; and You Shall Be As Gods, p. 192. (14.) Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 49ff. (15.) Man For Himself p. 225. (16.) You Shall Be As Gods, pp. 225ff. (17.) The Sane Society, p. 53. (18.) John H. Schaar, Escape From Authority: The

Perspectives of Erich Fromm (New York: Basic Books, 1961), p. 47. (19.) *The Forgotten Language*, p. 196. (20.) *The Forgotten Language*, p. 249. (21.) See J. Stanley Glenn, *Erich Fromm: A Protestant Critique* (New York: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 23. (22.) See *Beyond the Chains*, p. 156, and "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism," in *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, edited by D. Suzuki, Erich Fromm, and Richard De Martino (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 129. (23.) Schaar, p. 262. (24.) *You Shall Be As Gods*, p. 7. (25.) *The Revolution of Hope*, p. 49. (26.) *You Shall Be As Gods*, p. 153. (27.) Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 50; and Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), p. 44. (28.) *Beyond the Chains*, p. 155. (29.) Erich Fromm, *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), p. 63. (30.) Marthe Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*, translated by Ralph Mannheim (New York: Anchor, 1976), pp. 97-98, 107, 154. (31.) Anthony J. DeLuca, *Freud and Future Religious Experience* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams, 1977), p. 230. continued ... Continued from page 9 (32.) Sigmund Freud, "Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Freud*, edited by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), vol. 23, pp. 8, 114. (33.) *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 26--27, 69, 110. (34.) *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 55. (35.) *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 17. (36.) Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1961), p. xv. For the suggestion that Freud saw psychoanalysis as a "metamorphosed extension of Judaism," see Yerushalmi, p. 99. (37.) Rieff, p. 8. (38.) Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, translated by Dennis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 244. On Freud's concerns about publishing his work on Moses, see Jerry Victor Diller, *Freud's Jewish Identity: A Case Study in the Impact of Ethnicity* (London/Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1991), pp. 135ff. (39.) David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1958), pp. 129, 164. (40.) Bakan, p. 150. For the contrary suggestion that Freud posited an Egyptian Moses because he wanted a repressed Moses, see Elizabeth J. Bellamy, *Affective Genealogies: Psychoanalysis, Postmodernism and the "Jewish Question"* After Auschwitz (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), pp. 130ff. (41.) Bakan, p. 160. (42.) Obituary of Prof. S. Hammerschlag, in *The Complete Psychological Works of Freud*, edited by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), vol. 9, p. 255. For insights into Freud's

acquaintance with and use of biblical texts, see Yerushalmi, pp. 66ff. (43.) Rieff, p. 240. On tradition, see Yerushalmi, pp. 29--31. (44.) Cited by Robert, p. 148. Yerushalmi suggests that Freud had originally intended to do a psychoanalytic study of Moses (p. 18). On Freud and Michelangelo as "biblical exegetes who radically violate the plain sense of the text," see Yerushalmi, p. 22. For brilliant research into the literary background of Freud's Moses theories, see Yerushalmi's comments on Ernst Sellin, pp. 25- 26. On Moses and Freud's anger, see Yerushalmi, p. 25. On Moses and Freud's father, Jakob, see Diller, pp. 144ff. (45.) Robert, p. 161. (46.) See Robert, pp. 213-214, note 50. (47.) Ricoeur, p. 245. (48.) Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, edited by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), vol. 21, p. 18. (49.) Bakan, pp. 246-247. (50.) Bakan, p. 241. See also Robert, pp. 171-172, note 1. (51.) Ricoeur, p. 27. (52.) Rieff, p. 120. (53.) Commentary, December 1956. (54.) Commentary. p. 545. COPYRIGHT 1999 American Jewish Congress COPYRIGHT 2000 Gale Group

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