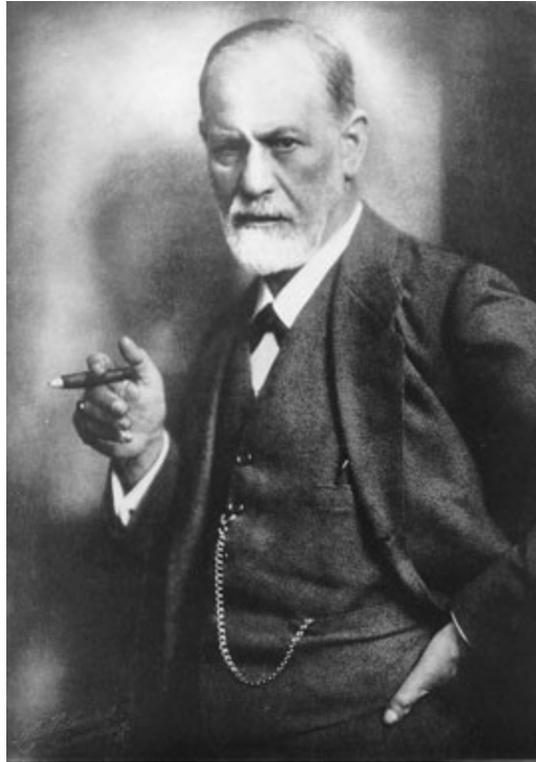


# *A Soulless Age*

*Psychoanalysis and  
The Dogma of Reason*

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*“If you want to expel religion from our European civilization, you can only do it by means of another system of doctrines; and such a system would from the outset take over all the psychological characteristics of religion – the same sanctity, rigidity and intolerance, the same prohibition of thought – for its own defense.”*

- Freud's alter ego in his *The Future of an Illusion*, p.51

The historical debate between science and religion<sup>1</sup> continues unabated in the modern age. Centuries ago, men like Voltaire not only hoped for, but predicted the imminent demise of religion, overcome as it would be by the liberating powers of science and reason. So far, however, this promise has proven empty. In the ongoing struggle between these two metaphysical adversaries, it is often forgotten that they have formed and in-formed each other in many ways. Indeed, they seem to mirror each other in some of their functions, creating a feedback loop throughout their history which shows no sign of either side's demise. Consider, for example, that certain religions have been created in the image of science (such as Christian Science and Scientology); that some scientific theories, like evolution, have been defended religiously in spite of incomplete proof: and that, marginalized between these two pillars of culture, the occult sciences claim to employ and transcend both religion *and* science.

Most historical studies of this high-stakes struggle focus on the mainstream actors, the famous personalities. In spite of being aware of their ambiguities, some historians place them squarely in either one camp or the other. Sigmund Freud is a prominent example of such historicizing. Together with Charles Darwin, Freud is perhaps the most important contributor to man's present-day, secularized self-conception,<sup>2</sup> and yet he stands out in history as both a hero and a villain. With an enormous volume of research dedicated to him and his brainchild, psychoanalysis, Freud often elicits zealous reactions amongst his commentators. Discussions on the religious characteristics – both negative and positive – of psychoanalysis, a modernist attempt at a science of the mind, seem exhaustive and diverse; however, studying their interpretations yields insight into the continuing prejudices on both sides of the debate.

In psychoanalyzing the citizens of Vienna, Freud saw that religion and its analogues - mysticism, occultism, and other 'irrational' philosophies - were “illusions” of the mind. They were, to him, states of mental disease akin to neuroses.<sup>3</sup> And as with all diseases, they were given a social stigma. Freud said that they indicated intellectual immaturity, and he believed they needed to be controlled, if not eradicated, with the guiding hand of science.<sup>4</sup> And, by defining the deeper layers of the mind – the realms previously reserved by religion and mysticism – as rationally knowable, classifiable, and predictable, Freud legitimated his theories as products of a transcendent science. Through his great influence, Freud aimed to perpetuate a secular, enlightened society.<sup>5</sup> His analysis of the religious mentality cast a new and authoritative light on the (often insightful) grievances held by positivist scientists towards the 'irrational'.<sup>6</sup> And so he formulated a new dogma to further enlighten Western civilization. However, though he believed it to be a dogma based in a superior Reason, he was in fact imposing a new form of religion: namely, the rule of reductionist and objective Science.

New 'truths,' prejudices, or dogmas, whether arrived at 'objectively' or subjectively, eventually become old and are replaced. Although popular psychology, language and common sense may still be influenced by Freudianism today, the professional and academic worlds have largely moved on. Psychoanalysis has not withstood the test of time, and, instead of being a “solution to the problem of religion”<sup>7</sup> as Freud thought it would be, it has found itself to be a useful ally for many religious

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1 Author's Note: the terms 'science' and 'religion' are consciously generalized throughout this paper.

2 Bruner, p.23

3 Freud; *The Future of an Illusion*, p.44

4 Philp, p.90

5 Freud is described by Peter Gay as “probably the most influential master among the Modernists.” Gay; *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, p.70

6 Freud; *The Future of an Illusion*

7 Freud; *The Future of an Illusion*, p.23

thinkers. But why did we listen to Freud in the first place? And how were his ideas received?

Of all the metaphors and adjectives one could associate with Freud – that he was a mad scientist, a genius, a prophet, high priest, or even Grand Inquisitor of Scientism – none seem to fully communicate the link between religion and his anti-religious psychology. I do not propose to initiate a new metaphor, one that was somehow overlooked by researchers with far more expertise. However, I do hope to paint a broader picture than most by addressing the key linkage directly; namely, by showing that Freud was a classic dogmatist. He administered to a scientific culture many of its 'religious' needs, including a hierarchy of transcendent truth and its appointed interpreters, a measure of social control, and a supply of scapegoats for that which was going wrong. This position will be demonstrated through a critique of psychoanalysis and its history, function and essence.

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### **The Enlightenment and the Dogma of Reason**

To understand dogma as a force in science and religion, we should begin by arriving at a suitable description.

In this discussion, dogma is the enforcement of a belief *chosen* to represent the 'truth.' As a standardized, universal model of truth, it is shut off from feedback and therefore, especially in the long run, likely to be less 'correct' than it might seem. Consider it further as a popularized prejudice – for example, the belief that the irrational or non-rational is inferior to rationality – which simultaneously stems from and defines the current boundaries of common knowledge.

Below the explicitly ideological level, dogma permeates language and common sense as well. A century after Freud published his theories, and decades since their displacement by other sciences, we still speak of repressions, complexes, projection, anal-retentiveness, penis-envy, etc. Such theoretical advances – interpretations of reality – made in science filter into common knowledge over time. At the same time, it is not difficult to imagine that the psychodynamic tendencies, beliefs and habits of religions are still present in these theoretical advances.

Freud seems to have been a firm believer in the dogmas<sup>8</sup> of the Enlightenment. Like the philosophers of the Enlightenment, and those of 19<sup>th</sup> century Positivism, he placed Reason at the summit of human mental development.<sup>9</sup> To understand this bias towards rationality we first turn to one of the principal voices from the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant.<sup>10</sup>

Much like Freud, Kant saw the religious human, in his dependence on the 'false' dogmas of religion, as psychologically immature. *Sapere Aude* – “dare to know” – his motto encouraging independent knowledge, therefore accompanied science as a means toward individual maturity or 'enlightenment.' Observation, rational analysis, and unbridled curiosity became some of the tools of the modern production of knowledge; together they aimed to empower the individual and undermine the irrational dogma of religions.

The men and women of science soon used these tools to turn their gaze upon themselves, leading to the field now known as psychology. It is no surprise to find that our doctor Sigmund Freud,

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8 Although 'dogma' is used continuously in this paper, it could be substituted with grand narrative, doctrine, creed, belief, etc.

9 Positivism is a materialist philosophy of science that greatly influenced 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century scientists and philosophers. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.38

10 Summarized from the text *What is Enlightenment*, 1784

as a leader amongst these scientists, has been described as the last representative of the rationalism of the Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup>

To accomplish the Enlightenment project, Kant believed Reason must have the freedom to be used publicly in all matters. Until all members of society had been enlightened, and could thus rule themselves, he envisioned a temporary compromise with an enlightened king.<sup>12</sup> This belief in the temporary rule by a single autocrat is important to keep in mind as we see how Freud himself developed.

We must also mention some contemporaries of Freud who disagreed with the dogmas of the Enlightenment. The philosophers from the Frankfurt school, for example, such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Erich Fromm, a one-time Freudian psychoanalyst, were keen to point out several pitfalls in the planned enlightenment of mankind through Reason. They argued that the universal faith in Reason which men like Kant had called for would essentially lead us back into the same state of knowledge as under religion; namely, the state of having one final objective truth for everyone to believe in. In other words, the structuring of thought through logic and rationality would lead to the 'end' of individuality.

These philosophers point out a fundamental disconnect between knowledge, whether scientific or otherwise, and the object of that knowledge. Knowledge, they say, starts as myth: and as myth becomes fact, it becomes incontestable. This disconnect is inherent to our way of knowing, they continue, because our knowledge of reality is only an approximation of reality. But the disconnect is denied by positivists like Freud. They believe in absolute knowledge, and throw out any suggestion of myth in their thinking. And of course, the mechanism through which this denial is enacted is the faith in Reason. Since all criticism of Reason is deemed irrational, Reason itself triumphs by 'virtue' of being rational. But this virtue is imposed through faith; and like any faith, it limits thought.

This limiting, the Frankfurt philosophers said, creates prejudiced masses. And masses in turn inspire fear. They are vulnerable to charlatans who speak the language of Enlightenment;<sup>13</sup> and since these charlatans – the mystics, occultists, and quacks that positivists push aside – are nearly indistinguishable from the true voice of Reason, they can put the entire structure of enlightened society at risk.

### **Freud and Psychoanalysis, a short and skewed biography**

Sigmund Freud was an atheistic Austrian Jew, born in 1858 and died in 1939, who took the time to apply rational observation to his own psyche and its “deeper reality,” which he called the *unconscious*.<sup>14</sup> After several years this process seemed to reveal to him the irrational patterns inherent in his thoughts, behaviors, and dreams.<sup>15</sup> The introspection which he subjected himself to was rather unique in Western science, and for his courage he is sometimes considered a hero (especially by his followers), responsible for confronting people with themselves – something which was rarely done

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11 Fromm, p.6

12 Kant seems to have had the 'enlightened,' but absolutist king Frederick the Great of Prussia in mind as an example.

13 Summarized from the text *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944

14 Schorske, p.22

15 For more information on the nature of Freud's introspection and subsequent theorizing, see the Appendix

during the hegemony of religion. However, at the time of his rise to fame, having located the (physiological) origins of the personality in childhood *sexuality* – the modern trend of permissiveness towards children can be traced back to Freud<sup>16</sup> – he was also considered a charlatan, a pervert, a demagogue, and, “worst of all for him, a mystic.”<sup>17</sup>

Freud's science was influenced by some of the extremely rational philosophies that existed in the wake of the Enlightenment. His ethical forbears he found in the English positivists, such as John Stuart Mill, who were, says Schorske, “protagonists of libidinal repression and the advocates of postponed gratification...[They were] secularized utilitarian moralists [who] were builders, stern and rational, of the liberal ego.”<sup>18</sup> Freud was similarly engaged in modernizing humanity through the doctrine of Reason. Although Darwin's evolution theory, where nature can be interpreted as being embroiled in a constant struggle with itself, had at least for a few decades allowed humans to remain the “best of gods produce,” Freud revolutionized this image. He presented man the evolved animal as psychologically incomplete, struggling primarily against his unreason.<sup>19</sup> This “disturbingly pessimistic thinking,” reminiscent of monotheistic doctrines about man's inherently sinful nature, has since had a major, yet hidden influence on our modern image of humanity.<sup>20</sup>

As a doctor and scientist, Freud was interested in classifying the characteristics of the mind, so as to create a coherent system of diagnosis; as a man, he actively sought fame for his momentous discoveries; and as a leader, he was keen to shape his system into a dominant institution. According to Roazen, Freud was successful in all these areas. “Psychoanalysis,” he writes at the turn of the twentieth century, “is now a profession with its thousands of practitioners, and the field has had a powerful impact on how we think about ourselves.”<sup>21</sup> Even amongst Christian ministers, a formidable number studies psychoanalysis to accompany their theological research.<sup>22</sup>

Freud's professional success stands in stark contrast to his personal constitution. Peter Gay, a historian of modernity who has published extensively on Freud, notes that for a healer, Freud had a strikingly low opinion of mankind.<sup>23</sup> His pessimism and misanthropy – perhaps a result of his subjection to racism in Austria – skewed his interpretations of humanity towards the negative: there would have to be major compromises between the individual and society to prevent our dark nature from making life impossible. In spite of the great promise of science, Freud saw no way out of this “predicament of civilization.”<sup>24</sup> This outlook certainly gained plausibility and popularity at the time of the destruction and suffering inflicted by humans on each other in the World Wars. In its wake, the primal and relevant concern for the moral restriction of humanity would bring together Jews, Christians, atheists, etc. under a single cause: psychoanalysis.

As it began however, psychoanalysis was practiced mostly by and amongst (ethnic) Jews. Freud did not want psychoanalysis to become known as a Jewish affair, as he wanted it to be an “impartial instrument” of research,<sup>25</sup> and the social stigma against Jews would reduce its chance of spreading. This

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16 Bruner, p.25

17 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.84

18 Schorske, p.12

19 Bruner, p.24

20 Roazen, p.37

21 Roazen, p.35

22 Fromm, p.8

23 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.43

24 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.69

25 Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.36

connotation was a real possibility as, on the one hand, psychoanalysis offered work and prestige where these were otherwise closed to Jews, and on the other, a disproportionate amount of Freud's patients were in fact Jewish.<sup>26</sup> The origin of psychoanalytic theory was, therefore, to some extent a Jewish affair.<sup>27</sup>

Extrapolating from the (heavily contested) data on his “deranged” patients in Vienna,<sup>28</sup> Freud delineated those 'common' experiences in the social environment (including abuse) which shape every person's self-image and mental habits – the experiences which we *repress*, making us insecure, neurotic, unbalanced, and maladjusted to some degree during our entire lives.

Our sexual organs, our relationship to our parents and their sexual organs, and social impositions which suppress our sexual instincts are some of the core elements spawning the dysfunctions in our personality. According to Philp, it's “no surprise” Freud found mainly sex informing the unconscious, as it was totally repressed in Vienna at the time.<sup>29</sup> The mechanism through which sexual imprints from the unconscious came forth was described by Freud through a tripartite model of consciousness. Greatly simplified, this model places the *Ego*, our waking part of consciousness, which we normally associate with our identity and will, in between two mostly unconscious levels; our aggressive, natural, subconscious instincts called the *Id* (which Freud seems to have particularly disliked<sup>30</sup>) and our *Super-ego*, the moral conscience which tries to keep the urges of the *Id* in check.<sup>31</sup> Freud seems to have borrowed his concept of the *Id* from Georg Groddeck, a fellow physician and later follower. However, to Groddeck it remained a metaphor for the 'occult,' or unknowable force behind existence, whereas with Freud it quickly acquired a 'scientific' status.<sup>32</sup>

The ego, Freud recognized, is a creation of our mind, a self-conception which we defend from the apparent chaos of identity. Where we use religion, science, language, etc. to make sense of the macroscopic world, we use the ego to make sense of our microscopic Selves. In this sense, Freud's investigation of the ego seems tantamount to an invasion of the microscopic world by a macroscopic system; the 'objective' imposed upon the 'subjective.' Freud believed this process could probe and improve our mental life, which, like civilization itself, is a “web of deceptions.”<sup>33</sup> He recognized the unconscious, irrational motivations of the ego, but regarded it as the hero of everyday life and rationality; his therapeutic system<sup>34</sup> was therefore aimed especially at analyzing and transcending the irrational through reason.

Finding the pathways between the levels of self, the linkage between the conscious and unconscious minds, was now the duty of a therapist trained in psychoanalysis.<sup>35</sup> For example, using *free association*, where a patient speaks uninhibitedly, the psychiatrist could deduce childhood trauma's and repressions through what we now call *Freudian slips* ('accidental' expressions of unconscious thoughts). *Transference* and *resistance* similarly manifested the diseases of the unconscious, and the psychoanalyst recognized them with the help of Freud's diagnostic toolkit.

In spite of Freud's scientific postulating, however, his claims seem rather 'unscientific': Adam

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26 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.121, 128

27 See Peter Gay for more on this topic

28 LaPiere, p.61

29 Philp, p.131

30 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.70

31 LaPiere, p.38

32 Bos, p.436

33 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.46

34 Which he never intended as a therapy, but as a diagnostic tool: see LaPiere, p.68

35 LaPiere, p.41 (extrani)

Phillips, for example, wonders how, if the unconscious is that which cannot be anticipated, there can be experts of the unknown.<sup>36</sup> What psychoanalysis finds in the psyche cannot be proved or disproved, making its claim to scientific status rather controversial:<sup>37</sup> not to mention, no one has yet been able to test scientifically the value of *any* form of mental therapy.<sup>38</sup> We must therefore explore the metaphysical nature of psychoanalysis.

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### Psychoanalysis and/as Religion

Freud not only shunned philosophy but renounced and denounced religion, finding a substitute in (a rather extreme) rationalism. As Peter Gay writes, “When it came to Reason, Freud was a monotheist.”<sup>39</sup> Religion as a psychological and behavioral dogma had made life difficult for science for centuries, and Freud, as a Jew in Catholic Vienna, experienced its prejudice in his own life. One can understand how his interest in religion did not remain a dispassionate psychology, but became an explicit diagnosis of pathology. Fueled by some of the reactionary prejudices of positivist<sup>40</sup> science, Freud helped reverse the situation, calling religious dogma into question and putting organized religion on the defensive.

As a source of meaning, science is ideally agnostic about final truths, or dogmas; in practice, however, it has to transcend its own fleeting dogmas as old theories are disproved and new ones are created. In the case of psychoanalysis, the acceptance of its arguments “must be an act of faith,” as there are no proofs to support their authority.<sup>41</sup> Freud's early twentieth century psychology offered a new dogma to those who had lost the old religion. However, unlike the Church, he made the mistake of believing that *everything* could be known and understood rationally, and like the Church, he explained away the questions which his science couldn't answer – “His science,” says LaPiere, “was of transcendent importance.”<sup>42</sup>

Science itself arose, at least in part, out of the transcendence of dogma. The revealed and eternal truths of mass religion were gradually relegated to a secondary place after the Enlightenment, behind observed and rationally analyzed facts: behind logic and proof. Those fundamental aspects of existence which seem 'unknowable' – and where most religions claim authority – still appear to be outside the scope of science; it simply lacks the tools to 'know,' let alone establish laws about, what time 'is,' for example, or gravity, or life. As Freud unquestioningly believed, however, there was “no appeal to a court above that of reason.”<sup>43</sup> His theories on sex and the unconscious were products of this appeal; but to Phillips it is clear that in Freud's time, “sexuality and the unconscious were the new, scientifically prestigious words for the occult.” they were no more than semantic trends about what the unknown 'is,' to which many people happened to adhere.<sup>44</sup>

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36 Phillips, p.18

37 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.78

38 LaPiere, p.70

39 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.65

40 Positivism: a materialist philosophy which connotes a religious essence because it requires faith in rationality. Freud's positivism was especially reactionary towards metaphysics.

41 Philp, p.81

42 Philp, p.135

43 Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.28

44 Phillips, p.19

Freud, as an archetypal positivist, never questioned the supremacy of rational and materialist thought.<sup>45</sup> Why, then, did he spend so much effort effacing its 'opponent,' religion? If we follow Gay, Freud's view of religion as an illusion akin to neurosis makes him the opposite of religious;<sup>46</sup> this requires however that we agree with Freud that science itself is not an illusion.<sup>47</sup> In the case of psychoanalysis, which portends to understand the psyche, the illusion of knowledge (in science) seems to have been greatly supported by the destruction of another illusion (religion). In psycho-'analysis,' the latter part of the name implies separation – of subject and object, conscious and unconscious behavior, etc – and allows a certain amount of control over the object of study; the parts are easier to understand than the whole. By separating and isolating religion from the purity of reason, Freud could justify its inferiority as an illusion and lift up his own.

At this point it should be noted that, in his writings, Freud continuously confused religion with *religious dogma*.<sup>48</sup> The concept of religion as 'spirituality' he also left undefined; whereas the tenets of religious dogma are constructed to remedy ignorance, pain, suffering, and fear, the spiritual goal of those who Freud lumped together may have been to *confront* these issues. This confusion may help explain Freud's refusal to question his own rational confrontation with the unknown.

In spite of his rabid hatred of 'religion,' Freud did not necessarily hate the 'religious experience' as reported by saints, mystics, poets, etc. His superficial foray into this deeper unknown, however, remained in the form of an unfinished and untested theory of what he called the *oceanic feeling*. It was described second-hand by Freud as a feeling of something limitless, unbounded, and purely subjective, independent of belief and illusion.<sup>49</sup> However, he said, "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself. It is not easy to deal scientifically with feelings."<sup>50</sup>

Mystical or religious experiences require a form of intelligence which Freud admittedly lacked,<sup>51</sup> especially as it would have drawn him away from his soberly scientific experience.<sup>52</sup> Freud did maintain that it was a psychological phenomenon open "in principle" to investigation, but not with the current standards of science.<sup>53</sup> The religious experience was indispensable to mysticism, most philosophies and religions, and human history in general;<sup>54</sup> however, regardless of its relevance, and his own ignorance of it, Freud still dismissed this phenomenon as a regression to a primordial state.<sup>55</sup> It seems then that Freud marginalized mysticism because it was marginalized within his own self-conception.

In Freud's teleological conception, science was the highest realm of knowledge available to man. Even though it only touches a certain part of the spectrum of experience, namely the material, its (commonly alleged) objectivity and reason are the only source of truth we have.<sup>56</sup> Ironically, although Freud recognized science as the product of (fallible) people, he simultaneously elevated science – especially his own – to the position of authority previously held by God: omniscient, eternal, and

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45 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.73

46 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.77

47 Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.56

48 Philp, p.72; Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.72, p.93

49 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.64

50 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.65

51 Mills, *The Ontology of Religiosity*

52 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.17

53 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.134

54 See for example William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, or Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*

55 Mills, *The Ontology of Religiosity*

56 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.48

omnipotent. Freud implied that he knew the absurdity of believing in any one doctrine,<sup>57</sup> but, as Phillips says, psychoanalysis has always been committed to the mainstream – and the mainstream “just happens to be” science.<sup>58</sup> Having chosen unsound bases for his theories, Freud's own 'omniscience' suffered by sticking to them in spite of contradictory evidence.<sup>59</sup> He tolerated no opposition or even much speculation on his theories, dogmatically denying input, keeping his followers in the fold, and slandering those who objected to his dominance.<sup>60</sup> The “early defensive strategy” of psychoanalysis was therefore to “blandly reject all criticism as mere proof of the critic's own neurosis”<sup>61</sup> – an omniscient cynicism of all human motivations.

Slander seems to have been one of Freud's common pastimes. Denouncing an opponent is often a successful political strategy, and has been a central mechanism to protect the dogmas of religion; Freud similarly enjoyed successful character assassinations of dissenters alongside of his attacks on religion.<sup>62</sup> As Freud wrote in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, “he always needed a friend and enemy, [and,] if necessary, would make one.”<sup>63</sup> He simply switched 'heathen' and 'heresy' with 'neurotic' and 'pathology.'

In making enemies Freud necessarily isolated himself, and under his patronage, psychoanalysis became a self-marginalizing, cultic movement. Freud and his followers repeatedly acknowledged this fact themselves.<sup>64</sup> By “dealing with the irrational but not dealing in it”<sup>65</sup> – whether he intended it or not – his theories fed a popular demand for rationalized metaphysical, moral and social codes.<sup>66</sup> The social impact of Freud's 'cult' made the psychiatric practice, with its dictation of healthy 'psycho-spiritual' norms, an emulation of the role of the priest: sermonizing from the pulpit, and chastising in the confessional.

The rituals and hierarchical characteristics of psychoanalysis were also reminiscent of religious institutions. Years of unending 'indoctrination' through therapy, the power relationship between psychiatrist and patient, the apotheosis of Freud as infallible pope of psychoanalysis, and the sanctification of his writings thus consolidated his branch of science in a very familiar manner. Although Freud himself was comfortably bourgeois most of his life, psychoanalysis became a financially privileged institution in society. Much of the Western economy was (is) geared towards sustaining and promoting the science industry in general, just as it existed to glorify religious institutions before – and psychoanalysis counts as an expensive development from church tithes and offerings for secular devotees.

On a doctrinal level there are some other parallels between psychoanalysis and religion worth mentioning. Firstly, according to Freud's idea of the origin of Judaism,<sup>67</sup> all Jews have an innate sense of guilt towards a primordial father of their civilization (Moses). This is related to Freud's *Oedipus Complex*, as the guilt is a 'memory' of the father-figure's murder. The religion of Judaism was then formed as a comforting mechanism to deal with this eternal guilt. But science has not recognized

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57 Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.28

58 Phillips, p.19

59 Philp, p.45

60 Philp, p.134

61 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.79

62 Phillips, p.29

63 Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.59

64 Prick, p.135

65 Phillips, p.18.

66 Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.69

67 As expressed in *Moses and Monotheism*

psychic trauma as inheritable, and Freud's theory of inherited guilt feelings therefore resembles the theological doctrine of Original Sin.<sup>68</sup>

Secondly, Freud shared a sense of life's earthly imperfection, seeing death as a welcome escape both personally and theoretically in his idea of an innate *death drive*.<sup>69</sup> Despite his occasional utopianism about the possibilities of science and its rational materialism, Freud saw death as the deliverance from the inevitability of suffering and tragedy.<sup>70</sup> This pessimistic rejection of life and preoccupation with death mirrored the 'death religions,' such as Christianity and Islam, which also point us to the afterlife for the attainment of happiness.

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## Psychoanalysis and Society

Freud's followers were mostly medical men. The sociologist Richard LaPiere considered this an accidental link, which helped to slowly promote psychoanalysis as a science; without it, its claims to scientific status would have been denied much earlier. Regardless of their 'sober' background, his followers attributed powers to Freud which he did not assert, and, like a "messianic movement," they spread his fame faster than his ideas.<sup>71</sup> While Freud hated clinging to illusion, such as hero-worship, "nobody [did] it more than his own followers."<sup>72</sup> As if theologians themselves, they called beginners 'novices,' referred to dissenters as 'schismatics,' and generally gave the psychoanalytic society the atmosphere of a religious fraternity.<sup>73</sup>

Religion and psychoanalysis have both been employed by their followers as a system of social obedience. The ancient moral values of certain religions enforce a particular relationship amongst their members, as well as towards outsiders – Freud, however, questioned these values and the source of the authority establishing them. Instead of paying heed to established dogma he conjured a replacement system out of his own 'scientific' values, colored as they were by his pessimism and other subjective tendencies. This system placed all blame for personal problems on society and its repressions, yet encouraged an ideal of mental health through conformity to social realities.<sup>74</sup>

The progress of the society in which individuals live is, to some extent, a result of historical improvements in social control; one could argue that psychoanalysis, by preaching bourgeois conformity, was a way of getting those who were having trouble conforming psychologically and behaviorally back in line with the status quo. In practice, however, psychoanalysis did not always generate the desired results; according to Phillips, it could drive people mad – "either crazily conformist, or crazily bizarre."<sup>75</sup>

Another side of promoting conformity was that it provided 'the elite' with a useful ethic. Apart from relieving them of "all responsibility," psychoanalysis provided the legislators of society with "a

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68 Original Sin: St. Augustine's extra-biblical doctrine of man's inherent 'sinfulness'

69 Roazen, p.38 LaPiere, p.53

70 Roazen, p.38

71 LaPiere, p.41-3

72 Prick, p.8

73 Gay, A Godless Jew, p.18

74 LaPiere, p.69

75 Phillips, p.30

sense of security, absolution from guilt, and assurance of performing a meaningful task.”<sup>76</sup> In Freud's ethic, individual and social repressions were inevitable, projecting something of a fatalistic outlook on the existing social reality. To LaPiere, this elite, nihilistic ethic has rapidly gone on to displace our traditional ideals of human character.<sup>77</sup>

Here it is interesting to note again that Freud performed years of analysis on himself before publishing his theories. However, any self-analysis performed by his peers he considered nullified by the repressions hidden from them by their unconscious. Thus obsessed with the superstitions and complexes in the minds of others, he seems to have lost touch with his own. Just as religion informs followers through stories and interpretations made by the chosen few, Freudian science relied on intermediaries, trained in psychoanalysis and reason, to communicate reality. This asymmetrical power structure in the production of truth was fanatically endorsed through Freud's stewardship and the devotion of his followers.

However, conforming to Freud's ideal of science now seems as unlikely as returning to the old time religion. Prick neatly sums up the shortcomings of his science;

“Advances are made as a result of theorizing, verification and falsification, criticism, opposition, and counter-evidence searching...All these activities didn't or hardly played a role in the development of psychoanalysis. Freud's theories have barely empirical support; [they are] craftily constructed on a foundation of spiritual analogies, associations and other quasi-logic connections. It's a work of art.”<sup>78</sup>

Of course these shortcomings did little to prevent psychoanalysis from becoming a source of social change; as LaPiere notes, man's social world is whatever he defines it to be. The fact that Freudianism is 'unscientific' therefore has no real social significance.<sup>79</sup>

Freud thought that he was making basic discoveries, which do have certain validity as theories of human behavior; but psychoanalytical patients are statistically shown to quickly regress from improvements made, if any are made at all. LaPiere considers this (limited) truth of psychoanalysis, its exoticism, self-indulgence, and social implications as some of the main reasons for its former popularity.<sup>80</sup> He later adds another reason: before psychology was recognized as a science, doctors had nowhere to send the neurotics which filled their clinics, and which they were unable (or unwilling) to deal with. Psychoanalysis, regardless of its scientific status, proved a perfect fit to the institutional framework of human medicine, as the doctors could simply defer their neurotics to Freud and his psychoanalysts.<sup>81</sup>

Psychoanalysis was a conservative system relevant to its own time and place, but by allowing his initial discoveries to atrophy into dogma, Freud doomed it to fade out rather quickly. The problem, as I will argue more extensively below, was not necessarily that his science was poor or closer to being a religion, but that he allowed the same human propensities which stifle religion to preclude progress in his own form of science. Ambition, emotion, prejudice; the drive to provide a counter-religious, absolute model of reality left Freud only nominally aware that his own science would be overturned eventually.

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76 LaPiere, p.76

77 LaPiere, p.71

78 Prick, p.129

79 LaPiere, p.57

80 LaPiere, p.vii

81 LaPiere, p.43

## Analyzing Freud

Psychoanalysis reduced most 'neuroses,' such as religion, to early childhood experiences. Freud however failed to consider how his own views on religion were determined by his upbringing.<sup>82</sup> He grew up in a family of freethinkers and atheists in Austria, surrounded by Christians, the persecutors of his race: later in life, having taken the fight back to religion, he saw himself as the “great liberator of men.”<sup>83</sup> Gay believes that his situation as an ostracized Jew left Freud more psychologically free from prejudices and in a natural position of opposition.<sup>84</sup> It seems more plausible, however, that Freud's natural opposition not only had a prejudice to oppose, but one to defend as well.

Indeed, Freud's own prejudice extended towards most human beings, religious or not. He had revamped the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you,' into a statement of purely rational love: “If I love someone, he must deserve it in some way.”<sup>85</sup> Though describing himself as a highly moral man,<sup>86</sup> Freud concluded that our neighbors are our natural enemies, (in fact, that “most of them are trash”<sup>87</sup>), leading to an extremely egocentric treatment of humanity.

He knew that he was being called doctrinaire and authoritarian, manipulative, a prophet and a Pope,<sup>88</sup> but believed he did not fit the description. Indeed, he was publicly opposed to all traditional forms of authority:<sup>89</sup> here LaPiere draws a parallel to Martin Luther, whose own public resistance to dogma paved the way for Freud's revolution in psychology.<sup>90</sup>

In a letter to Marie Bonaparte, Princess of Denmark, Freud wrote that the most admirable, yet rare quality amongst scientists was the willingness to live with uncertainty. “Mediocre spirits,” wrote Freud, “demand of science a kind of certainty which it cannot give, a sort of religious satisfaction. Only the real, rare, true scientific minds can endure doubt, which is attached to all our knowledge.”<sup>91</sup> These words, however, seem to contradict his own dogmatic behavior.

Freud uncritically accepted the predominantly scientific outlook of his age as a complete revelation of truth. He never explicitly defined science, only gave it a capital S when writing about it.<sup>92</sup> Nor did he question the concept of psychological 'normality';<sup>93</sup> he simply projected his own neuroses and those of his patients outwards as universal complexes. It seems then, in the words of Prick, that Freud himself was not so much looking for truths as for “being correct.”<sup>94</sup> The following quote by Helen Puner is less spiting, but equally poignant: “Thus, one of the world's most determined disillusionists falls into the trap of ruthlessly tearing from his life one of man's great ‘illusions,’ -[religion]- only to

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82 Philp, p.127

83 Gay; Freud, Jews and Other Germans, p.67

84 Gay, A Godless Jew, p.137

85 Roazen, p.40

86 Gay; Freud, Jews and Other Germans, p.67

87 Roazen, p.30

88 Gay; Freud, Jews and Other Germans, p.57

89 LaPiere, p.40

90 LaPiere, p.59

91 Gay; Freud, Jews and Other Germans, p.80

92 Philp, p.128

93 Roazen, p.44

94 Prick, p.131

substitute for it another.”<sup>95</sup>

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## Freud's Colleagues and their Interpretation of Psychoanalysis

### *Fromm*

Erich Fromm, a one-time Freudian psychoanalyst and later member of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, turned towards an overt reconciliation of psychoanalysis and religion. Like all other dissenters from Freud's dogma, he was shunned by orthodox Freudians. According to Peter Gay, Fromm “would have struck Freud as a sad retreat from the scientific spirit.”<sup>96</sup>

In spite of this schism, and Freud's militant atheism, Fromm presented Freud as a friend of religion in his *Psychoanalysis and Religion* in 1950. His scientific approach was limited to Freud's initial theories, but separated from Freud's dualistic thinking about religion; as Fromm wrote, the positivist, teleological technology of the psychoanalytic system was good, but the man [Freud] was not.<sup>97</sup> Taking a very different approach to psychology, Fromm actively sought its correspondence to the role of the priest, with matters of the soul – love, reason, conscience, and values – as paramount subjects of study.

Fromm saw Freud's system of therapy as a resumption of ancient tradition, that of the *cure of the soul*. Psychoanalysis dealt with the same problems as philosophy and theology, he claimed, even though Freud religiously ignored one and deprecated the other. He acknowledged a division between this task and the *social adjustment* approach which typified psychoanalysis, adjustment being the process through which 'suffering' is brought to the average socially conformist level.<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting topic in *Psychoanalysis and Religion* is the discussion of the psychoanalytic idea of *rationalization*, the “counterfeit of reason.” It says that man is usually not rational about the irrational, but rationalizes it through what seems like logic; in reality however, the rationalization, such as traditional religion, is a compromise between our capacity for reason and our inherently “sheepish nature.”<sup>99</sup> Since Fromm also noted the tendency of religions to become dogmatic as soon as they become mass organizations, he may have been aware of psychoanalysis as a modern rationalizing dogma.<sup>100</sup>

Fromm, like Freud, maintained the supremacy of reason, and lamented the end of man's trust in its power to establish norms and ideas for human conduct.<sup>101</sup> Unlike Freud, he also looked positively upon the return to religion – not as an act of faith, “but in order to escape an intolerable doubt...in search of security.”<sup>102</sup> Fromm defined religion as “any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion,”<sup>103</sup> thus including

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95 Philp, p.129

96 Gay, A Godless Jew, p.107

97 Fromm, p.1

98 Fromm, p.72

99 Fromm, p.55, 57

100Fromm, p.82

101Fromm, p.5

102Fromm, p.4

103Fromm, p.22

psychoanalysis as a religion without god.<sup>104</sup> Whether or not he was a retreat from the 'scientific spirit' of Freud, Fromm's honesty and realism about the role of psychoanalysis and religion seems noteworthy.

### *Pfister*

The religious interest in psychoanalysis also came from the world of religion itself. Oskar Pfister, a Swiss Protestant minister, became a frequent correspondent and family friend of Freud in the early days of psychoanalysis. He saw his Protestantism as a positive, practical, psychologically sophisticated religion, purged of superstition and primitive ritual, and therefore fully reconcilable to psychoanalysis. He deplored Freud's negative, doctrinaire skepticism and accused him of being a devotee of a "substitute religion."<sup>105</sup>

Pfister also saw parallels between psychoanalysis and Protestantism: both aspired to the reduction of guilt (which is a punishment for defying authority), and the replacement of a stern father with a kindly one (in overcoming the Oedipus complex<sup>106</sup>). And, most importantly, they both placed love at the core of life. How Pfister deduced this last connection is open to interpretation, as psychoanalysis was at most scientific and rational about love. But he steered clear of any outright amendments to psychoanalysis, instead becoming a propagandist by bullying Catholics and other Protestants for the psychoanalytic movement.<sup>107</sup> It seems Freud maintained his friendship with this minister because he passively accepted psychoanalysis, and, as a cleric, was a window into the religious areas of society.<sup>108</sup>

### *Jung*

Carl Gustav Jung, twenty years Freud's junior, was a trained psychologist from Switzerland. In 1906 he sent his first publication, which was also one of the first papers to espouse Freudian ideas, to Freud. The response was enthusiastic; Freud sent back some of his most recent works, inviting Jung to be an intellectually honest correspondent. A friendship was then begun which lasted until their final break in 1913.

Their voluminous correspondence clearly demonstrates the development of the relationship between these two men: Freud, as the sarcastic father figure, limiting the intellectual space of Jung, the inspired son. Freud's early invitation for debate would prove to be little more than a politeness, as every idea Jung proposed was rejected and dismissed as the result of his father- and religious complexes.<sup>109</sup>

Jung was indeed drawn to Freud as a sort of father figure, a complex which the latter immediately realized and exploited. Freud's first letters to Jung expressly informed him that he was searching for followers, not equals.<sup>110</sup> Jung responded carefully, saying that Freud had enough faithful followers, and that he wanted to be more than that: "You have no lack of [followers]," he wrote. "But

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104Fromm, p.19

105Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.20

106Oedipus complex: named after the Greek mythical character Oedipus who killed his father and had sex with his mother.

It claims that around the age of 3-5, a child feels sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex and desires the death of the parent of the same sex; the resolution of this complex greatly influences one's personality and neuroses

107Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.82

108Prick, p.132

109Prick, p.111

110Prick, p.20

they do not advance the cause, for by faith alone nothing prospers in the long run.”<sup>111</sup> As long as Jung reiterated Freud's theories, however, and his disagreements remained nominal, Freud would continue to value his friendship and contributions.

Freud was perpetually afraid of Jung's 'Oedipal patricide.' This was his term for dissent – in this case, of Jung's dissent from the line imposed upon him by Freud.<sup>112</sup> Even though Jung wrote to Freud enthusiastically about his acceptance of Freudianity as his “new religion,”<sup>113</sup> and after he was made the head of the International Psychoanalytic Association, editor of the psychoanalytic *Jahrbuch* publication, and organizer of professional congresses, Freud's fear of dissent continued. It seems Jung was grudgingly kept in the fold only because he was the perfect candidate to spread international influence, to side-step the negative responses from German psychiatry, and to maintain control over Freud's Viennese supporters.<sup>114</sup>

But Freud's fears were not unfounded. Jung's occult interests –which he was not afraid to be associated with, as Freud was – were widespread, perhaps owing to the fact that his paternal grandfather was Grandmaster of the Freemasons<sup>115</sup> in Switzerland.<sup>116</sup> Inspired by his alternative knowledge Jung quickly established major additions to psychoanalytic conceptions of the unconscious. Not bound by dogmatic reason, he was free to explore the religious and mythological aspects of human psychology. He expanded Freud's obsession with sexuality and the mythological Oedipus complex to include *all* myths as 'archetypes', or fundamental symbols, of the unconscious. These symbols, Jung found, were beyond rational definition, remaining open to interpretation in the 'vague' language of metaphor.<sup>117</sup> According to Fromm, Jung was the first analyst to recognize religious and mythological ideas as profound insights and apply them to his own psychology.<sup>118</sup>

Freud's commitment to maintaining the dominance and universality of the Oedipus complex, which was perhaps a projection from his own childhood experiences, is strongly contrasted by Jung's broad conception of the unconscious. Indeed, according to Konrad Adler, another dissenter from psychoanalysis, Freud's whole psychology, including the Oedipus complex, reflected “the thinking characteristics of a spoiled child.”<sup>119</sup> Unlike Freud, Jung expanded his theorizing; he outlined the basic introvert-extrovert character types, the structure and activity of the unconscious, the collective unconscious, archetypes, the individuation process, and synchronicity.

The earliest signs of a split were in response to Freud's patronizing dismissal of his mythological considerations. According to Jung, Freud was placing personal authority above truth. He suspected that Freud's own latent religious feeling had been projected into his theory of sexuality: where normally Freud was critical and skeptical, sexuality elicited dogmatic vehemence.<sup>120</sup> Freud wrote the following to Jung to underscore his stance: “Promise me never to abandon the sexual theory. That is the most essential thing of all. You see, we must make a dogma of it, an unshakable bulwark...against the black tide of mud...of occultism.” By occultism, says Palmer, Jung “understood Freud to mean all [that] philosophy, religion and parapsychology had learned of the psyche,” and “dogma was faith to suppress

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111 Freud-Jung Letters, p.144

112Palmer, p.89

113Freud-Jung Letters, 51J

114Prick, p.30

115Freemasonry: a secretive fraternal organization with esoteric, if not occult associations

116Palmer, p.86

117Philp, p.111

118Fromm, p.10

119Roazen, p.40

120Palmer, p.90

doubts, not scientific judgment but personal power drive. This struck at the heart of their friendship.”<sup>121</sup> Although Jung had not yet found any evidence contrary to Freud's sexual theory, he still declined using it as a central dogma.<sup>122</sup>

Jung also turned away from psychoanalysis because he felt he was being treated like a patient, as all Freud's followers were.<sup>123</sup> In fact, new analysts would eventually have to go through years of analysis themselves as part of their training. Freud could wield the one-sided power of his science over his followers by referring to their traumas and complexes, just as a cult leader can dismiss pertinent questions from his members as stemming from their innate ignorance. And, through his institutional hierarchy, Freud could simply deny their theoretical and scientific methods (as in Adler's case, who was attacked for his use of sociological and biological perspectives).

The publication of Jung's new theories in 1912, and the resistance to them by Freud and most of the psychoanalytic community, led to his resignation the following year. It appears that Freud only tolerated inferior thinkers and conformists in his institution, and, as mentioned before, slander and character assassination typified Freud's treatment of dissenters. As Freud's letters to another follower, Szandor Ferenczi, show, Jung was publicly scapegoated as an occultist and anti-Semite as soon as he was out of the picture.<sup>124</sup>

Jung, however, was much more forthcoming as a psychologist. He observed religion and its experience as a psychological phenomenon, and was open if not positive towards its virtues. Ideas like 'god,' though unprovable, were to Jung “empirically evident psychic realities.” The fact that people, through their belief, behave as though god is real, was enough to warrant serious study and assessment. Taking the opposite stance from Freud, Jung believed that not the presence but the *absence* of religion is a neurosis.<sup>125</sup> Jung also took the philosophical implications of psychoanalysis much further than Freud did. Moreover, he remained largely agnostic about them, whereas Freud, according to Roazen, by refusing to address the philosophical implications, had left psychoanalysis vulnerable to appropriation by the preachers of morality.<sup>126</sup>

Where Jung encountered non- or pre-rational aspects of consciousness, such as dreams, or the imagination, he refuted the notion that they were inferior. Instead, he said, they constitute a different language, a mythic language, from a hereditary database common to all humans. He called this expansion of Freud's unconscious the *collective unconscious*. Freud's unconscious is just a small part of it, causal and reductive like the Oedipus complex,<sup>127</sup> and inherently negative. Neurosis, which Freud also reduced to a pathological state of the psyche, was nuanced by Jung as a necessary disharmony between the conscious and unconscious mind; it calls the individual to active change or development and a constant effort to maintain psychic equilibrium. In the words of Jung, “Neurosis [such as religion] is by no means only negative: it is also positive. Only a soulless rationalism could and does overlook this fact, supported by a purely materialistic philosophy of life.”<sup>128</sup>

Note that Jung transcended the prejudice of 'rationalism' by admitting both positive and negative

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121Palmer, p.90-1

122Palmer, p.94

123Prick, p.24

124Phillips, p.29

125Palmer, p.92

126Roazen, p.45

127Palmer, p.95

128Philp, p.21

aspects to neurosis. Still, he has been called both an agnostic<sup>129</sup> *and* a dogmatist in equal measure to Freud.<sup>130</sup> The vehemence of his opposition certainly speaks for the latter judgment, but, unlike Freud, Jung constantly redefined, improved, and expanded his own ideas.<sup>131</sup> He is also pejoratively referred to as a mystic or occultist, the very epithet which Freud tried so hard to evade, perhaps because he refused to impose a reductive rationality on the irrational as the “so-called science of psychology” was believed to demand.<sup>132</sup>

An interesting revelation from Jung puts the science of psychology in a decidedly non-Freudian perspective; he admits that every psychology “has the character of a subjective confession...Even when I deal with empirical data,” he says, “I am necessarily speaking about myself.”<sup>133</sup> Jung's final complaint against Freud then, was that he denied his own subjectivity:<sup>134</sup> that he built a dogmatic, religious-ethical science – which is meant to be objective – out of the subjective experience of his own psyche.<sup>135</sup>

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### **Freud and Religion, Science and Dogma**

We have now set up enough of a background for a critique of Freud's fixation on Reason. Freud used Reason publicly in the Holy of Holies – in the corners of his own mind – but he was also incapable of questioning his own reliance on Reason. His dualistic perspective, says Roazen, was tantamount to the “tyranny of reason over intellect.”<sup>136</sup> Witness the subsequent induction of a universal model of human behavior – psychoanalysis – which, if it had been pushed through like religion in an earlier past, might have fully suppressed individuality as the Frankfurt School philosophers predicted. Indeed the Fifties, when psychoanalysis was at its peak, seems to have been the most socially repressed decade of the Twentieth Century. Freud was contributing to his own cycle of social control, and instead of delivering man from his dependence on hegemonic rulers, religions, and dogmas, became a successor to the problem he himself had perceived.

The historical success of psychoanalysis can be attributed at least in part to its Enlightenment roots: according to Bruner, the West was ready and waiting to accept a naturalistic explanation of the mental world after the Enlightenment. “The rise of naturalism as a way of understanding nature, and man witnessed a corresponding decline in the explanatory aspirations of religion....The elucidation of the human plight had been abandoned by religion and not yet adopted by science.”<sup>137</sup> This was exactly the niche which Freud attempted to fill.

The Enlightenment ideal of promoting individual thought was to have been upheld by psychoanalysis. But instead it encouraged conformity. And individual thought was set aside in favor of a professional authority figure, since the final interpretation of personal experience – and the very definition of what was rational – were in no one else but the psychoanalyst's hands.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, by

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129Palmer, p.125

130LaPiere, p.52

131Prick, p.141

132Roazen, p.45

133Palmer, p.91

134Not to mention the subjectivity of others

135Prick, p.127

136Roazen, p.29

137Bruner, p.27

138Fromm, p.64

recognizing Logos as his god,<sup>139</sup> Freud made his science a temple unto Reason. It became too sacred to question; and he made himself into the high priest who dictated Its word. The fact that Freud, as well as Enlightenment thinkers, perceived science to be surrounded by enemies,<sup>140</sup> may have driven him to this extreme. By becoming an 'enlightened absolutist', the king of the psychoanalytic movement, he could protect his own individual ideals at the cost of everyone else's.

In his book *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud explains religion away as a mass illusion. Although he concedes that it is not necessarily false, as it is unverifiable, he does consider it a psychological bulwark against our weakness in the face of nature's chaotic power. On the other hand, he says, “anyone who admits to a sense of man's insignificance or impotence [is] irreligious in the truest sense of the word.”<sup>141</sup> This not only generalizes the self-conceptions of religious believers, it also ignores the implications of Freud's own science. Observe that the subjecting of every aspect of the mind to reason - imposing order on the chaos of our mental history - also satisfies the illusion of understanding and control over nature. According to the philosopher-psychologist William James, this need for control leads to a reductionist and premature claim to a monopoly on knowledge, as we have seen happen to religions.<sup>142</sup> Now, in Modernity, we see it happen to psychoanalysis as well. Freud could not live without certainty; and 'premature' or not, his science provided a system of meaning for rational secularists.

Freud recognized the option of constructing “personal” neuroses,<sup>143</sup> to transcend the mainstream dogmas, but seems to have denied this ability to most people other than himself. Transcending dogma – acknowledging ignorance, abstaining from a conscious or subconscious prejudice, learning something new, etc – is a historically ambiguous and slow-moving process. Even when science replaces religion, or when it replaces an earlier science, it may indicate the development of a substitute dogma: in this case, that of Freudian psychoanalysis. “Apparently,” says LaPiere, “few men can for long face the uncertainty and disappointments of innovative endeavor, scientific or otherwise;” nor are many accustomed to making their own knowledge. A new dogma is therefore needed time and time again.<sup>144</sup>

Connotations aside, dogma is not necessarily negative. It seems to be a human phenomenon, manifesting itself in both 'rational' and 'irrational' worldviews and institutions, and is therefore at least one of the major links between religion and science. If we see History as a record of our own evolution, then dogmas can be analyzed for their relative successes; indeed, Freud himself saw the total secularization of society as a slow evolutionary goal, and through psychoanalysis assumed he could achieve it.<sup>145</sup> In a larger historical perspective, whatever we think of this goal, and whether he contributed to it or not, the theories of psychoanalysis count as evolutions of our interpretation of reality.

## Conclusion

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139Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.54. Logos represents the rational principle governing the universe.

140Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.50

141Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.32-3

142Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.23

143Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.44

144LaPiere, p.31

145Gay, *A Godless Jew*, p.5; Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

Having investigated some of the carry-overs from 'religion' to 'science,' such as the continuing need for a transcendental dogma, the centrality of idolized leaders, and the psychological comforts of conformity, the line which denotes 'modernity' seems blurred. To see a substantial historical shift, from a religious to a scientific paradigm,<sup>146</sup> simplifies and minimizes these continuities. The transference of certainty from 'irrational' to 'rational' knowledge – from the belief in God to the belief in Science – and Freud's hierophantic role in this transference recalls the adage; *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.<sup>147</sup>

It seems inevitable that science would explore the familiar areas of the psyche, with all its reasoned, intuitive and emotional aspects, to greater and greater depths, and sometimes appear to lose itself in the process. It was also historically feasible that a conformity-oriented science like psychoanalysis would spearhead the search for a secular religion in modernity. The hierarchy through which it promoted Reason was well matched to mainstream sentiments and psychical traditions in the West, with its new and old ideas converging under Freud's sober vision. The conciliatory and empowered views on religion and science of some of his peers, all of whom respected both fields from their own unique perspective, were perhaps no less dogmatic, but they simply did not resonate as strongly with the general psychological trends.

As we have seen, Freud's science, aside from his own institutionalization of its doctrines, was expanded on and appropriated by Christian and agnostic colleagues. The forces of nature, interpreted by religion or science, are still the same forces; Jung studied both of them empirically as they pertain to the development of the psyche. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, did not consent to such a choice. And perhaps it could not, as Freud, in his perpetual confusion of religion and dogma, vehemently stuck to a negative analysis of anything besides the rational.

In Gay's opinion, Freud could have called himself the first “servant” of his science.<sup>148</sup> For better or worse, just as the servants of god ruled man's spirit, the servants of psychoanalysis tried to rule man's psyche. The hierarchy separating truth producers and consumers, institutionalized in both religion and science, seems more or less maintained in post-Enlightenment society, and the disconnect between man and nature, also inherited from religion, has not been overcome by Reason. Western societies still yearned for and received one-sided dogmas.

Unlike most religions, however, science encourages its own evolution, and psychoanalysis has lost its dominant position both professionally and academically.

Since, as Bruner writes, it is “in the light of the view an age takes of man that we establish laws, set our aspirations for learning, and judge the fitness of men's acts,”<sup>149</sup> Freud's pessimistic vision of humanity has cast a long shadow over man's self-image. By denouncing religion and the irrational in its entirety, Freud aggressively blocked individual maturity;<sup>150</sup> just as religions had blocked it by denouncing any criticism of their creeds. Extreme rationalism therefore reveals itself as another self-limiting buffer zone against the unknown. Whether psychoanalysts are much better off than, say, Jungian psychologists, or Christians, is untestable; however, even Freud was dejectedly aware of the fact that his “psychoanalysis has not made the analyst better, more distinguished, or full of character”<sup>151</sup> than

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146A paradigm shift, as in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

147From the French: the more things change, they more they stay the same.

148Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.76

149Bruner, p.23

150Palmer, p.106, 108

151Prick, p.4; Quoted from a letter Freud wrote to Putnam dated 13 November, 1913, in: Hale 1971, p.371

the average man.

How much have we learned about ourselves in modernity – and how powerful was Freud's claim to self-knowledge? Both Gay<sup>152</sup> and Bruner<sup>153</sup> see an increase in paranoia and systematized suspicion. Illness, like evil, is all around us; and yet modern psychiatry can still do little more than prescribe medication to suppress the symptoms of our diseases. The modern age, as exemplified by Freud, used science to question and overcome (or at least move on from several) religious claims to truth; but Freud did not make it his business to challenge and overcome those of science as well. He pathologized the wishful thinking of religious belief, calling it illusion, neurosis, and delusion; by his own reasoning then, the historical judgment of his dogmatic belief in Reason must be the same. Psychoanalysis, as a science-based dogma, faith, or illusion, shows that even secular society has religion.

## Appendix

Freud was one of the first scientists to use cocaine, an “intensely erotic drug”<sup>154</sup> which inflates one's ego, after its availability as a pharmaceutical product in 1883. Two months after first trying cocaine he wrote scientific articles<sup>155</sup> exalting this “magical carpet” as a local anesthetic, anti-depressant, stimulant, and virtual panacea. However, when the wider psychiatric and medical community distanced itself from cocaine – as addiction, overdose and other problems rose to the surface – Freud seems to have toned down his use and rewrote his paeans as if he had been skeptical all along.

Many psycho-active substances are known to induce 'religious' experiences, 'revelations,' insights and 'delusions.' Lamentably, studies of cocaine remain focused on clinical, not experiential characteristics,<sup>156</sup> as it is in the experiential realm where it becomes important to consider cocaine as a source of Freud's religiously dogmatic convictions.

Around the time of his experimentation with cocaine Freud also experienced his most creative years, in which the basis of his theory – that of the primacy of human sexuality in our psychic constitution – was realized. There is some evidence (e.g., as presented in E.M. Thornton's *Freud and Cocaine: The Freudian Fallacy*) that the insights he gained through his own consciousness from this experience found its way into psychoanalysis; in other words, that there might be a causal link between the facts that, on the one hand, he was one of the first to use a drug which energizes the ego and stimulates sexuality, and on the other, that his general theory of the constitution of the ego and its neighbors was based upon sexuality.

Many texts on Freud, whether revisionist, apologist, or otherwise, altogether omit this episode in his life, or attempt to neutralize it with defensive details about the incipency of cocaine research (seeing as he used cocaine before its criminalization). This dearth of information seems to me to harm our understanding of history. Most alarmingly, however, the creative influence cocaine may have had on

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152Gay; Freud, *Jews and Other Germans*, p.46

153Bruner, p.27

154Totton, Nick; *Freud's Nose*

155See Freud, *On Cocaine*, 1884

156Totton, Nick; *Freud's Nose*

the development of psychoanalysis seems completely lost upon us.

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