

## FROM NEANDERTHALS TO GREEK MYTHS: FREUD'S ATHEISM ON STAGE

**Marc GRENIER,**

Chang Jung Christian University,  
TAIWAN,

Email: meshiya121453@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*Here we argue that powerful atheistic ideational forces largely shaped the content and contours of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Freud made it clear that his aim was to construct a theoretical model to overturn established forms of religious thought and morality. The explicit atheistic aim for developing a theoretical model to explain human thought and behavior was to replace the Judeo-Christian concepts of original sin and salvation with psychoanalytic concepts such as 'libido' and the 'Oedipus Complex'. In this way, guilt for having contravened religious laws is suddenly transformed into subjective 'psychological problems' that can now be attributed to other secular sources such as childhood traumas, sexual dysfunctions, and maturation difficulties rather than to sinful human nature. The predominant influence of atheism over Freud's psychoanalytic theory is also illustrated and strongly supported by other evidence reviewed here such as the historical relationship to atheism in anthropology and the link to the atheistic philosophies of Nietzsche and especially Schopenhauer. This essay shows that many of the ideas that constitute the core of Freud's psychoanalytic theory were, in fact, first laid out fully and clearly in almost the same terms employed by the great atheistic German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer.*

**Keywords:** Greek mythology; Neanderthal; psychoanalysis; atheism; the unconscious; Eros-Thanatos; neurosis; Schopenhauer; Nietzsche; grand mavin of revision;

### INTRODUCTION

Arguably, Freud's ideas about God and religion have helped to shape modern thinking in highly significant ways at least equivalent to the impact of Darwinism and Marxism, and the overall impact of Freudian thought on modern culture is surely analogous. Freud's system of ideas has been one of the most dominant influences on 20<sup>th</sup>-century culture, comparable only to Darwin and Marx. Ellenberger (1970, p. 546) claims that the impact of Freud's thought literally permeates all aspects of modern culture, even so far as to have fundamentally altered our way of life and conception of humanity. Given such laudatory commentaries from expert scholars, perhaps it would be unwise to discount Freud's contributions to modern thought and culture compared to Darwin or Marx.

Another important way in which Freud's thinking is similar to Darwin and Marx is the extent to which he altered, revised, qualified, revamped, reversed, abandoned, recreated, and withdrew just about all of his statements and views on every aspect of his psychoanalytic theory from the start to the very end of his professional life including ideas about motivation, anxiety, and personality (Hall, 1983). As such, of the three great wizards of revision that

constitute the core of modern thinking, Freud tops the list as the grand mavin of qualification, far outshining his atheistic counterparts who themselves were not dilettantes in this important consideration by any stretch of the imagination.

Freud was a master at couching the admission of erroneous foundational theoretical relationships in the nebulous language of necessary steps in the advance of research flirts perilously close to a slippery dishonesty, not proof of Freud's reflexivity. It is literally impossible to prove empirically or scientifically the claims that Freud makes, a problem which plagues all of his writings. Just like it's impossible to refute any of these central arguments in Freud's book, it's also impossible to refute Freud's theses, too (Siegel, 2005). For example, it is ludicrous to believe a wish for death (Thanatos) can be empirically proven.

In making the sexual impulse in particular the sovereign ruler of mental processes, Freud's claim harkens back to Schopenhauer's (1969, p. 514). The uncanny similarities between Freud's and Schopenhauer's theoretical systems have been established in the scholarly literature for nearly half a century. Freud directly extracted Schopenhauer's ideas and just substituted his own vocabulary for them: "Many of the ideas that constitute the core of Freudianism were set out fully and clearly by Schopenhauer" way before Freud's ruminations on the subject of the 'unconscious' (Magee, 1989, p. 283). Sin and guilt are no longer the result of transgressing some kind of eternal objective moral code hovering over or brooding within every sinful human being by nature. Therefore, sin and guilt have a naturalistic foundation, not a divine one.

Very much in line with Marx's view of religion, Freud pointedly referred to God as a fantasy based on internal biological and psychological needs existing at the early stages of human development and civilization, adopting an implicit anthropological view of human origins reminiscent of Feuerbach's anthropological atheism noted earlier. The anthropological connection to Freud's thinking is not fortuitous, to be sure, especially when celebrated anthropologists of Freud's time were among the first advocates of Freud's theory. The link between atheism and anthropology, therefore, is not coincidental.

The evolutionist paradigm which characterized anthropology at the time lay at the very heart of psychoanalysis, so it is not surprising at all that Freud (and other early psychoanalysts like Jung) turned to anthropological interest even if only from the armchair. This is especially the case after 1909 when Boas issued his direct challenge to the evolutionist paradigm in his address at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Clarkson University in Worcester, Massachusetts in that year (Boas, 1910).

In any case. Freud's psychoanalytic theory met with considerable applaud and opposition from the very start from just about all corners and academic quarters of society. It was not unusual to see steadfast opponents combine noteworthy statements of respect and praise for a variety of reasons. Even anthropologists who fervently disagreed with all or some aspects of Freud's perspective acknowledged considerable indebtedness.

## **1. ANTHROPOLOGISTS ON FREUD**

Perhaps a brief story about one of the founding fathers of modern social anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), can illustrate this point quite well. Malinowski was the famed Polish-British anthropologist and ethnologist who studied the Trobriand islanders, and who first received his doctorate with honors in mathematics and physics, not anthropology. It was only later after being stricken with tuberculosis that he took up anthropology during his recovery time (Bohannon and Glazer, 1972).

In 1927, he wrote a book based on his Trobriand participant-observer study, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (2001), in which he did not mince his words in criticizing Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Among other critical commentaries in that book, he denounced Freud's concept of 'Oedipus complex' as not being universal and psychoanalysis itself as being merely a popular rage of the day. He goes on to say:

"I have never been in any sense a follower of psycho-analytic practice, or ... adherent of psycho-analytic theory ... impatient of the exorbitant claims of psychoanalysis, of its chaotic arguments and tangled terminology..."

But even at this point in his condemnations, he stops to reconsider and to deliver a modicum of homage to Freud's theory: "I must yet acknowledge a deep sense of indebtedness to it for stimulation as well as for valuable instruction in some aspects of human psychology."

Another staunch critic of Freudianism is the Jewish born German-American anthropologist, Franz Boas (1858-1942), sometimes regarded as the father of American anthropology. Even though Freud's armchair ethnological theories were stimulating new branches and schools of anthropological research at the time such as Psychoanalytic Anthropology, he thought that Freud's ethnological theories were quite untenable. In fact, he thought that Freud's entire psychoanalytical procedure was so illogical that it would soon fade away like other intellectual fashions. Psychology just cannot do anthropology for what he felt were fairly obvious reasons:

"... the anthropological phenomena, which are in outward appearance alike, are, psychologically speaking, entirely distinct, and that consequentially psychological laws covering all of them cannot be deduced from them." (Boas, *ibid.*)

For Boas, the primary task of the anthropologist was not to apply universal psychological laws to the great varieties of peoples and races around the world ranked or gradated along a continuum from savage to civilized societies in order to demonstrate the supposed unity of humankind from one evolutionary source. In his mind, anthropology properly understood is not consistent with discovery of an assumed hierarchy of human development from savage to civilized peoples, a perspective totally inapplicable to primitive societies given the particular and distinct geophysical and historical features of such societies.

The great anthropological task was only to try to understand the complex inner workings, human behaviors and thoughts, and unique histories of particular societies in their own terms. Psychological laws that may or may not operate in civilized societies, but subsequently applied to or imposed upon primitive societies, are unlikely to take into account the particular histories and environments of such societies. Indeed, the very concept of 'primitive societies' itself imposes a foreign hierarchical theoretical viewpoint upon extremely unique societies and distinct cultures formed by particular geographical disparities, climate variations, and divergent psychologies.

Boas's best advice to psychological theorists at the time like Freud (and Jung, for example) was to get out of their armchair theorizing about the psychological processes of the human mind in search of imagined general evolutionary laws or developmental laws of human thought that allegedly apply to all cultures and actually go out to study other cultures and societies. The counsel was to go out to do some real-life, in-depth, and respectful field investigations of these societies without imposing upon them evolutionary stages of gradated human development, mental or otherwise, in order to forge a comparison with modern societies.

In Boas's view, armchair theorizing in the service of applying general universal laws of human origin, thought, behavior, or culture does not constitute empirical evidence. The implication was that such investigations would inevitably lead them to reject the notion of universal laws of psychic processes:

“Freud's comparison of primitive culture and the psychoanalytic interpretations of European behavior seem to lack a scientific background. They appear to me as fancies in which neither the aspect of primitive life nor that of civilized life is sustained by tangible evidence.” (Boas, 2022, p. 176)

A devastating critique of Freud, to be sure. But even here Boas compliments the psychological approach just a few pages earlier in the same book for illuminating how unconscious experiences often impact upon human thought and behavior. At the end of his critique, he points out “that in many cases diverse (anthropological) phenomena are based on similar psychic processes”, genuflecting to the importance of psychology in understanding primitive culture. For this reason, the investigator cannot rely mainly on outward appearance as an indication of general psychological laws. He states that in his essay, he has simply tried to point out how and why “anthropological data may be used to good advantage by the psychologist” (ibid., p. 384).

Clearly, Boas objected strenuously to the notion of ‘psychological laws’ purported to govern the mind of all human beings and making them applicable to the biological and mental manifestations of human life as they appear everywhere in different societies across the world. For Boas, it was wrong to assume general similarities of mental reaction based on appearances, even in societies similarly structured. Generalized psychological laws determining the forms of human thought in these societies cannot be deduced from such appearances and similarities. The specific histories and environments of cultures compel many variations to occur that may only appear similar to generalized psychological laws when viewed from outside those cultures but, in fact, are not.

Totemism, for example, can express itself in a great variety of ways, but finds its source in incredibly divergent psychological elements even within one culture, let alone across different cultures. The same logic applies to many other ideas and behaviors in primitive cultures such as life after death, the valuation of human life, incest, or even murder. Such ideas express themselves in an incredible variety of ways each of which contains entirely distinct emotional and rational elements. This means that different forms of the idea of life after death, for example, come into existence by different psychological processes that are, in essence, incomparable.

For this reason, identifying common psychological features cannot be dependent upon outward ethnic similarities but, rather, from observed or inferred similarities of psychological processes. Many key early anthropologists also objected to the application of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to primitive societies on very much the same grounds such as A.R. Ratcliff-Brown and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, both of whom had nothing particularly favorable to say about Freud.

## **2. ASHLEY MONTAGU'S UNDYING PRAISE**

On the other hand, as intimated above, there were many others who complimented favorably in some way, and this was the common response to Freud's theory. A case in point is the prolific British-American anthropologist, Ashley Montagu (1905-1999), with nearly endless publications on gender, aggression, and human nature. In his introduction to an intended short compilation of Freud's works written in 1947 that was later declined by Freud's family, Montagu writes: "Psychoanalysis is largely the creation of one man, Sigmund Freud ... (an) enormous contribution ... the most insightful contribution to our understanding of human nature in the history of humanity."

Montagu was one of those many anthropologists at the time coming to hold the position that anthropology could be vastly improved by conversing openly and impartially with other academic fields. In line with this belief, many of Montagu's subsequent books abound with references to Freud despite the failure of the planned compilations project to reach printing at the time, and even extended to interests in alternative branches of psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, Montagu played an important role in the widespread introduction of Freudian psychoanalytic concepts and Freud's works to the field of anthropology.

Another celebrated anthropologist and ethnologist who expressed indebtedness to Freud and yet challenged psychoanalytic concepts applied to primitive cultures more often than he praised Freud was the French-Jewish born Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009). Although trained early in line with devout religious upbringing, he adopted atheism fairly early in his adult years (Loyer, 2019).

For the most part, he was usually highly respectful in his references to Freud, despite admitting great skepticism toward psychoanalytic theory in general. In one of his books, *Tristes Tropiques (A World on the Wane)*, an autobiographical memoir, he identifies Freud as one of the three greatest influences on his intellectual development as he was passing through his student years, along with Marx and geology. But in many other books, *La Potiere Jalouse (The Jealous Potter)*, for example, Levi-Strauss challenges Freud's theory of myth and symbolism in myth with his own approach, along with many other Freudian concepts.

One of the great leading American anthropologist and folklorist, and a former student of Boas at Columbia University, Ruth Fulton Benedict (1887-1948), was also indebted to Freud's psychoanalytic ethnological studies in her own work, but with an opposite point of view. She was interested to study the relations between cultural patterns and individual creativity and personalities, championing cultural relativism or the notion that each culture has its own personality, morals, and values.

Along with other culture-personality theorists within anthropology at the time (Margaret Mead, Edward Sapir, Abram Kardiner, and Cora Dubois), Benedict accepted Freud's idea that early childhood experiences strongly influence adult personality. However, adult behavior and personality are culturally patterned by and reflected in the cultural beliefs and social institutions of a society, such as religion. By contrast, Freud began with internal

psychic processes shaping external social and cultural environments or the belief that individual psychology causes external social behavior. Even though Benedict largely shied away from explicitly applying psychoanalytic theory in her professional life, she thoroughly embraced it in her private life even to the point of sharing direct mutual psychoanalytic experiences with friends (Groark, 2014).

### 3. PSYCHOANALYSIS AS A PRECONDITION FOR ANTHROPOLOGY

Our final look at well-known anthropologists who demonstrated great indebtedness to Freudian psychoanalytic theory in their own work is highly instructive of Freud's impact on the field of anthropology at his time and afterwards (Denham, 2014). The Jewish-born Hungarian-French ethnologist and psychoanalyst, George Devereux (1908-1985), often considered the founder of ethno-psychiatry, was a very early figure in the link between ethnology and psychology. Although he approached Freud's psychoanalytic theory after achieving his degree in anthropology, his core priority lay with Freud to the point where psychoanalysis was a precondition for becoming an anthropologist: "If you want to become anthropologists, you have to undergo psychoanalysis first", he was once quoted as saying (Laplantine, 2014).

He engaged in fieldwork beginning in the early 1930s on the Mohave Indians and other native American Indian groups in California, Nevada, and Arizona. It is through this fieldwork that he comes to appreciate the importance of Freud's theory. He credited the Mohave for showing him the key significance of Freud in coming to understand primitive culture when he learned by living among them how they used interpretation to gain aid from their dreams (Gaillard, 2004). Like for many other anthropologists and psychoanalysts at this time, Devereux considered religion to be a psychotic illusion, a kind of addiction, and he wanted nothing to do with it (Laplantine, *ibid.*).

#### **Atheism at Play in Anthropology and Psychology**

We see here perhaps more clearly in the historical relationship between anthropology and psychology the key element of atheism mutually at play, that is, the atheism in anthropology interacting and reinforcing the atheism in psychoanalytic theory, and vice versa. Freud claimed the idea of God was founded upon a deeply-ingrained infantile need for safety and security through a dominant father figure. Human beings as a species have violent impulses and religion can help to restrain these impulses until science and reason emerge as human beings and civilization develop (Armstrong, 1993, p. 357).

Arguably, Freud's ideas about God and religion have helped to shape modern thinking in highly significant ways at least equivalent to the impact of Darwinism and Marxism, and the overall impact of Freudian thought on modern culture is surely analogous. Frosh (1987, p. 1) points out that Freud's system of ideas have been one of the most dominant influences on 20<sup>th</sup>-century culture, comparable only to Darwin and Marx. Ellenberger (1970, p. 546) claims that the impact of Freud's thought literally permeates all aspects of modern culture, even so far as to have fundamentally altered our way of life and conception of humanity. Given such laudatory commentaries from expert scholars, perhaps it would be unwise to discount Freud's contributions to modern thought and culture compared to Darwin or Marx.

### Grand Mavin of Revision

Another important way in which Freud's thinking is similar to Darwin and Marx is the extent to which he altered, revised, qualified, revamped, reversed, abandoned, recreated, and withdrew just about all of his statements and views on every aspect of his psychoanalytic theory from the start to the very end of his professional life including ideas about motivation, anxiety, and personality (Hall, *ibid.*). As such, of the three wizards of revision that constitute the core of modern thinking, Freud tops the list as the grand mavin of qualification, far outshining his atheistic counterparts who themselves were not dilettantes in this important consideration by any stretch of the imagination.

Of the endless reversals, withdrawals, and revisions that Freud artfully tottered through during his career, more than a few of them hold significant import in terms of the present study. In proclaiming the central role of dream interpretation in curing neuroses, for example, Freud steadfastly discounted the potential genetic link even when its importance was underlined by fellow psychologists such as the pioneering French psychologist, physician, philosopher, and psychotherapist, Pierre Janet (1859-1947).

At least early on, both Freud and Jung had other ideas about the causes and nature of neurosis. Jung argued it was caused by unresolved tensions between opposing attitudes located in the ego and the unconscious part of the human psyche. To Freud, neurosis occurs mainly when the ego attempts to manage its desires through unhealthy means such as repression or displacement: "A person only falls ill of a neurosis if his ego has lost the capacity to allocate his libido in some way" (Freud, 1953-74, p. 387).

In neither case, not only is hereditary not given any degree of prime consideration for explaining neuroses, but also anything else even remotely related to physiological processes. In fact, in 1923 when Freud published his book, "The Ego and the Id", he suggested that he had finally unloosed the chains of physiology that had imprisoned the field of psychiatry for so long (Freud, 1990). Yet, the connoisseur of qualification adopts a different view for explaining the nature of neuroses in the revised edition of his New Introductory Lectures in 1932. There he seems to champion the idea that physiology will one day explain neurosis and become the foundation for psychoanalysis. In one moment, physiological factors such as genes and heredity, are discounted, while in the next moment physiology is championed as foundational for psychoanalysis.

Later, we even see the same kind of subtle, finetuned, and cleverly-worded reversal from original positions and statements when it comes to the foundational psychic bases of psychoanalytic theory itself. Generally, Freud had originally based psychoanalysis upon the battle between the unconscious and conscious elements of the human psyche, as it is still very much viewed in a lot of contemporary psychoanalytic therapy (Pick, 2015). Then in a paragraph tucked away deeply in one of his later publications, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (2010, pp. 95-96), he appears to suggest that the entire psychoanalytic enterprise is fallacious:

"Neurosis appeared as the outcome of a struggle between the instinct of self-preservation and the claim of the libido, a struggle in which the ego was victorious but at a price of great renunciation and suffering. Every analyst will admit that none of this even now reads like a statement long since recognized as erroneous. All the same, modifications had to be made as our researches advanced..."

While Freud seems to admit error in early formulation of his psychoanalytic theory and to suggest that this error has long been recognized and corrected, even present-day psychoanalytic theory and practice applies the same identifiable psychic conflicts and various other original psychoanalytic ideas to treat patients and as a guide to engage in scholarly research and other activities. In other words, the official recognition of error located in the foundation of the theory itself cited in the above quote has yet to come forth.

To some people, couching the admission of erroneous foundational theoretical relationships in the nebulous language of necessary steps in the advance of research flirts perilously close to a slippery dishonesty, not proof of Freud's reflexivity. When broad-based theories about the functioning of the human mind are not based on hardcore empirical observation and research, interpretation and analysis often become speculative exercises highly prone to error which likely indicates serious theoretical defect.

Although many aspects of Freud's theory have been criticized by contemporary psychologists and psychotherapists especially in the field of child psychosexual development, Freud's writings and ideas about dreams, defense mechanisms, and the unconscious element of the human psyche continues to provide a great deal of inspiration and guidance in research on why people behave as they do. Veazey (2023) boldly claims: "Freud's theory of the unconscious remains a cornerstone of modern psychology ... Modern psychotherapy approaches ... draw heavily from Freud's foundational work..."

### **Impossible to Prove Empirically**

Circuitously admitting the erroneous foundations of psychoanalytic theory is one thing, proving them when they are applied to interpreting and explaining human events, behavior, or thought is quite another story altogether. Even in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* cited above, it is literally impossible to prove empirically or scientifically the claims that Freud makes, a problem which plagues all of his writings.

That book rests on three core arguments none of which can be scientifically proven: civilizational development mimics or reflects individual development; the primary purpose of civilization is to repress the natural aggressive instincts of human beings but at the cost of great suffering to them; and an ongoing struggle occurs within each human being between the desire to live (Eros) and the wish for death (Thanatos). Just like it's impossible to refute any of these central arguments in Freud's book, it's also impossible to refute Freud's theses, too (Siegel, *ibid.*). For example, it is ludicrous to believe a wish for death (Thanatos) can be empirically proven.

### **Freud's Initial Physiological Stance**

Like others of his time due to strong scientific and Darwinian influences rampant in Victorian society particularly in highly-educated elite culture, Freud was also highly receptive to the potential physiological grounding of human thought and mental disorders. The pressure to make everything reducible to physiological processes was surely a heightened feature of the intellectual environment of the times. In fact, a famed American psychologist and historian of science has argued in his work, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*, that Freud's biological theories and concepts like 'libido' were firmly rooted in the biological theories contained in Darwin's work which strongly influenced Freud such as theories by Kraft-Ebing, Molland, Havelock Ellis, Haeckel, and Wilhelm Fliess (Sulloway, 1992).



Contrary to the emphasis upon identifying ‘unconscious’ processes of the human psyche, psychiatrists at that time dealing directly with a variety of mental defects during this time, such as schizophrenia, paranoia, bipolar depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders, were especially sensitive to the possibility that mental disorders could be explained by specific physiological dysfunctions in the human brain. Perhaps they, too, were as subject to strong Darwinian influences as were Freud and his followers at the time. Initially, Freud himself was no less pulled in a similar direction. After all, Freud was a practicing neurologist, and as such, and intrinsically viewed mental disorders as dysfunctions of the human nervous system that regulates and coordinates bodily activities. At that time, it was known that the two major divisions of the central nervous system were the brain and the spinal cord. Therefore, medical knowledge and training predisposed Freud to look for or at least be receptive to the possibility of physical symptoms and causes of brain disorders.

Perhaps this explains why Freud initially sided with the physiological view of mental disorders until a breakthrough hysteria case with patient ‘Anna O’ occurred in medical practice in the mid-1880s to change his mind. At that time, the Austrian physician Josef Breuer (1842-1925) was well known as a friend and mentor to Freud who advised him on his career, regularly sent him patients, and collaborated with him in investigating the nature of hysteria, identified as a nervous ailment afflicting upper-middle class Jewish female patients.

Breuer was a doctor to one of these patients, Bertha Pappenheim (‘Anna O’). Breuer developed a talking cure or what he called a cathartic method which successfully treated and relieved Anna O’s hysteria with associated symptoms of limb paralysis as well as vision and speech disturbances. Breuer noticed that her symptoms drastically reduced or ended after he had put her under hypnosis and asked her to describe them for him. After Breuer described the success of this treatment to Freud, his talking method was employed and developed by Freud as a foundation for psychoanalysis.

Later, Breuer and Freud documented the success and discussions about Anna O and other case studies in their 1895 book, *Studies in Hysteria* (Breuer and Freud, 1950). Unlike Freud the neurologist, however, Breuer’s experience as a physician led him to be open to many different causal ways of explaining and treating hysteria and its symptoms. So, consequently, over time the two men became increasingly estranged. Freud was always looking for a monocausal explanation of mental disorders, whereas Breuer’s experience pushed him in the opposite direction (Zangwill, 1987). When Freud found his monocausal approach in unconscious mental processes, that’s when he declared that he had finally freed psychiatry from its physiological prison, more or less (Freud, 1966, p. 21).

### **Mental Processes are Essentially Unconscious**

Freud’s general monocausal approach to social and cognitive phenomena noted earlier is well expressed in a sweeping statement he made about the human mind in his work, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (2018), originally published in 1917, consisting of a series of 28 introductory lectures given by Freud on the topic in 1915-1917. In this work, Freud summarizes his thoughts on the unconscious, dreams, and neuroses, and offers new technical material to advanced readers.

He begins Lecture 1 by proclaiming that there are “two tenets of psycho-analysis which offend the whole world and excite its resentment” because they conflict with its intellectual, moral, and aesthetic prejudices. These prejudices should not be underestimated because they are “powerful... residues of valuable, even necessary stages in human evolution. They are

maintained by emotional forces...” Then Freud proceeds to specify the two displeasing tenets in question: “The first of these displeasing propositions is this: that mental processes are essentially unconscious, and that those that are conscious are merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity.... (The) next proposition... consists in the assertion that impulses, which can only be described as sexual..., play a particularly large part... in the causation of nervous and mental disorders...”

### **Physiological Impulses Sneak Back In**

Here Freud appears to be self-contradictory and incoherent. As noted above, he proclaimed to have liberated psychiatry from the chains of physiology largely due to adopting Breuer’s cathartic or talking method of treating mental disorders.

Defining all mental processes as “essentially unconscious” would seem to support this claim since it was believed that this talking method of treatment could provide unprecedented direct access to this hidden “unconscious” region of the human brain in order to reveal perceivable defects.

However, the freed-from-physiology proclamation and assumption quickly disappears when Freud introduces his second ‘displeasing proposition’ on sexual impulses, or perhaps it never left. Always on the lookout for a monocausal source to mental disorders, and perfectly in sync with physiological doctrine, Freud moves forward to fully sexualize his ‘unconscious’ and to ground it in physiological impulses viewed neurologically. In other words, Freud the neurologist comprehensively trained in the dominant physiological doctrine of the time firmly grounds conscious and unconscious mental activity within the physiological processes of ‘impulse’, mainly ‘sexual impulse’.

Evidently, the term ‘unconscious’ to a neurologist means something quite different than it does to a bona fide psychologist; that is, unconscious at the neurological level of human existence. From this point of view, no one would be capable of being aware of the transmission of electrical messages through neurotransmitters at the neurotransmitter level.

From a neurological point of view, even back then mental processes were conceived as unpremeditated waves of excitation transmitted through tissues, nerve fibers, and muscles that result in either physiological activity or inhibition.

There is no deliberation, no premeditation, no decisive conscious activity per se; just a sudden and compelling urge, incitement, or inclination to act or not act. Freud’s neurological view of mental processes appears to simply define it as electrical signals travelling along nerve fibers in response to a stimulus, signals serving to transmit a record of sensation from a receptor or an instruction to act, very much in robotic or animal-like fashion.

Clearly, then, it seems that the potential determining influence of Freud’s professional training and status as a practicing neurologist upon his conception of mental processes has been seriously neglected or underestimated by many critical scholars investigating and assessing the merits of Freud’s conceptual system.

When the neurological view of ‘impulse’ dominant at that time is taken into consideration, the initial claim about freeing psychiatry from physiology is rather laughable if not ludicrous. It was much more rhetorical posturing than factual assertion, if not downright dishonesty, because Freud knew exactly what he meant.

#### 4. FREUD'S DEBT TO SCHOPENHAUER

What's more, making the sexual impulse in particular the sovereign ruler of mental processes harkens back to Schopenhauer's (1969, p. 514) proclamations about sexual impulse at the time, sexual desire being:

“.... The invisible central point of all action and conduct (which) peeps up everywhere, in spite of all the veils thrown over it. The sexual impulse is the most vehement of all cravings, the desire of desires, the concentration of all our willing. It constitutes even the very nature of man”.

In the same book, Schopenhauer claims sexual impulse as a manifestation of the malevolent and hungry human 'will' that is the fundamental basis of all life, the source of all suffering, the underlying essence of everything.

Here Schopenhauer's atheism shines through bright and clear. That's why one of the consummate kings of atheism himself, Nietzsche (1974, p. 357), described him as “the first admitted and uncompromising atheist among us Germans ... the ungodliness of existence counted for him as something given, palpable, indisputable”. Being a highly educated and well-read atheist himself, Freud would have been intimately familiar with the atheistic sexual philosophies of these thinkers, despite his occasional denials and references to coincidences.

The allegations tend to reach much further than such claims, however. The uncanny similarities between Freud's and Schopenhauer's theoretical systems have been established in the scholarly literature for nearly half a century. Going as far back as 1819 where Schopenhauer declared that the human “will manifests itself in sexual desire” (2021, p. 514), many scholars have noted the near equivalence of Freud's 'id' with Schopenhauer's 'will' and the centrality of sexuality to both thinkers.

The similarity in the doctrine of sexuality between them had been noted since Gardiner's work in 1963, *Schopenhauer*. Five years later, Mann is much more emphatic in underlining the similarity between Freud's and Schopenhauer's thought linking both to the altar of atheism: “From Schopenhauer the line runs from the psychological radicalism of Nietzsche straight to Freud and the men who built up his psychology of the unconscious” (1968, p. 408).

Two years later, Ellenberger outlines the centrality of the sexuality doctrine and many other identical features between Schopenhauer's and Freud's thinking. He begins by stating that there were many philosophers of the 'unconscious' during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so Freud was by no means alone in the endeavor. “There cannot be the slightest doubt”, he surmises, “that Freud's thought echoes theirs.” But out of them all, he asserts resolutely, Schopenhauer is the most important (1970, p. 542). Ten years later, Gupta is even more firm in linking Schopenhauer to Freud's main ideas and concepts: “In Schopenhauer's writings are to be found many of the piercing insights which were later developed and elaborated by Freud” (1980, p. 226).

Almost a decade later, Magee is much more forceful in making Freud's system of thought dependent upon Schopenhauer, even to the point of suggesting that Freud directly extracted Schopenhauer's ideas and just substituted his own vocabulary for them: “Many of the ideas that constitute the core of Freudianism were set out fully and clearly by Schopenhauer” way before Freud's ruminations on the subject of the 'unconscious' (1989, p. 283). Five years later, in a summary of the scholarly literature examining the links between

Freud and Schopenhauer, Young and Brook (1994) claim categorically that Schopenhauer anticipated most if not all of Freud's core theoretical ideas and at least a few of his clinical discoveries. In fact, they discovered so many parallels between Freud's work and Schopenhauer's thoughts it led them to openly suspect that such parallels were unlikely to be accounted for by coincidence alone.

Schopenhauer presented a detailed theory of dreams well before Freud. Further, they insist that Schopenhauer displays an absolutely astounding knowledge and expertise in neurophysiology for his time and professional discipline. Other parallels pertaining to death, insanity, and repression abound, as well as to many other concepts, expressions, and ideas. There were so many parallels on repression that it led another scholar to state quite flatly that they were far from being mere coincidences even given Freud's insistence that he read Schopenhauer late in life (1986, p. 148).

Regardless of Freud's denials, the underlying atheistic thematic link between Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Freud remains solid. Moreover, beyond the connection to Freud, the indebtedness of Darwin's theory to Schopenhauer's theory of sexuality had already been suggested as far back as 1870 (Asher). Schopenhauer, it turns out, had a magnanimous influence on a great variety of thinkers during and after his time quite beyond the assumed impact upon Freud or Darwin such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and, of course, Nietzsche, who was deeply inspired by Schopenhauer's atheistic notion of the world and life itself as a tragic form of suffering. A large number of eminent artists and writers have expressed recognition of Schopenhauer's influence especially Richard Wagner, George Santayana, Thomas Hardy, Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Samuel Beckett, as well as many others (Magee, *ibid.*).

### **Eros and Thanatos**

Just like Freud developed a concept to signify instinctual physiological or psychic energy emanating largely from sexual impulses associated with all constructive human activity that were guided by a life instinct or 'eros', he also proclaimed that this life instinct within human beings was opposed by destructive urges within them, a death instinct or 'Thanatos'. Although dominated by sexual impulses, the life instinct also included more fundamental physiological impulses like thirst and hunger.

By contrast, the death instinct or 'Thanatos' included destructive impulses like hate, anger, and aggression. All variations of human behavior were largely due to the push and pull of these two opposing physiological impulses within all human beings as a constitutive part of human nature. Freud first introduced the idea of 'Thanatos' in his book, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Taken from Greek mythology, 'Thanatos' was the son of Nyx, the night goddess, and the twin brother of 'Hypnos', the god of sleep. Thanatos was death personified whose sole function it was to carry people to the underworld after life expired.

Since Freud is imposing upon human nature a view devoid of God as explicated in Genesis of the Judeo-Christian Bible, it's important to be clear here what exactly Freud is saying about death. The assumption is that the human organism by nature seeks to partake in activities which cause its demise. The human organism is programmed by nature by a physiologically grounded death drive or instinct, not just a life instinct. Since Freud could not attribute conscious awareness to human beings as the dominant feature of the human mind, he found it very difficult to explain harmful human conduct, and Freud was looking for

opposites because he was fond of employing dialectical forces or pressures to explain human thought and conduct.

Supposedly, a pleasure principle was not consistently capable of explaining behavior that harmed others and or human beings harming themselves. The possibility that harm could be rendered to others and to one's self strictly through the agency of a 'pleasure' principle is certainly not out of the realm of practical reality. Human beings seeking to maximize pleasure at any expense to others are certainly capable of harming others in doing so. Moreover, since he rejected the notion of human behavior motivated or caused by a deep-seated sinful component of human nature, he was compelled to look for alternative explanations to fit a purely secular theoretical model (Gay, 2006, pp. 523-587).

Maintaining a solid, unyielding, and critically unreflective neurophysiological view of human beings presented Freud with a restricted range of possibilities particularly for explaining aggressive human behavior. After all, Freud was more interested in building a secular theoretical model in line with his militant atheistic views (Gay, *ibid.*, p. 525-7) than he was in providing an authentic scientifically reliable explanation of human thought and behavior. Thus, he employed 'Thanatos' or a death instinct to explain why people engage in aggressive or harmful behaviors. Like all other parts of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, there is a great deal of controversy surrounding his application of Greek mythology to explain any kind of human thought and behavior (Ackerman et al, 2023; Gay, *ibid.*, pp. 401-11; Meisner, 2018, 2009).

For Freud, however, there was more involved in the maturation process than the mere appearance and flowering of the id, ego, and superego components of the human psyche working through the opposing forces of life and death instincts. It is virtually impossible to properly understand Freud's view of human development without taking into prime consideration Freud's view of religion in general and the Judeo-Christian God in particular. First, we need to take a slight detour to address Freud's central atheistic aim for developing a theoretical model to explain human thought and behavior, and how Darwin fits into those efforts.

### **Overturn Religious Thought**

Freud made it clear in talks and writings from the beginning and throughout the development of his psychoanalytic theory that the aim was to construct a theoretical model that would overturn established forms of religious thought and morality. For example, he fiercely opposed the Christian concept of the atonement, positing that sin and guilt are nothing but societal constructs. Briefly, in Christianity sin and guilt prevent reconciliation with God, and atonement is the process by which individuals employ particular means to remove these obstacles and reestablish or strengthen their relationship to a divine biblical God. They adopt this view because they believe that Jesus Christ's death and salvation made it possible for human beings to participate in the process of atonement and also achieve salvation.

Before Jesus, salvation was achieved by compliance with the laws given to Moses by God on Mt. Sinai and later set down in the Jewish Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible). For Christians, salvation is the essential part of maintaining a relationship with God while on Earth and in the afterlife in Heaven. This is because Christ's death on the cross acted as a sort of payment in full for the sins committed by all of humanity due to violation of God's laws. Faith in Christ for Christians means receiving God's grace and blessing, enabling them to live a good Christian life while on Earth and to live in Heaven with God in

the afterlife (Cross, 2005). What Freud was attempting to do intentionally was to replace the Judeo-Christian concepts of original sin and salvation with the ‘libido’ and the ‘Oedipus Complex’ or the young boy’s reaction against his father over love for his mother, to be discussed in more detail below. This is why Freud argues in his work, *Totem and Taboo*, that this Oedipus Complex is where religion, morals, society, and art converge to establish moral codes of behavior in the very beginning of the maturation process. The implication here is that moral codes do not derive at all from a divine being but, rather, from socialization processes and cultural indoctrination. In other words, they are social constructs.

If moral rules are socially created, they are not divinely created. If morality is acquired through socialization processes and cultural indoctrination, and if human nature does not have a divine origin, as Freud certainly claimed, then it stands to reason that there can be no objective standards of Right and Wrong thought and behavior. That means that Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and analysis can step in to fill the need for curing human guilt according to its own standards.

Guilt for having sinned against God’s laws suddenly becomes transformed into ‘psychological problems’ that can now be attributed to other sources such as childhood traumas, sexual dysfunctions, and maturation difficulties. Sin and guilt are no longer the result of transgressing some kind of eternal objective moral code hovering over or brooding within every sinful human being by nature. Therefore, sin and guilt have as their basis a naturalistic foundation, not a divine one. What’s interesting at this point in Freud’s argument is how Darwin comes into the psychoanalytic focus.

### **Darwin’s View of Human Emotions Revisited**

In Freud’s view, each one of these psychological problems have to be investigated within a Darwinian theoretical framework. Why Freud adopted this position will become clear after a brief review of Darwin’s 1872 book, *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. In that book, Darwin tries to interpret emotional expression on strictly physiological grounds especially the expression of rage. Darwin claims that the expression of rage in human beings can be intensified or worsened merely by its free or unrestricted outward expression.

The opposite happens when the outward signs are limited or repressed, that is, limiting the outward signs of rage reduces or softens the intensity. The same principle applies to other emotions. For example, controlling or limiting the outward signs of fear will reduce its intensity while failing to limit them will magnify it. Freud adopted Darwin’s concept of human emotions to construct his own psychoanalytical theoretical framework about human thought and behavior.

Like Darwin, Freud also believed human emotions are solely the physiologically grounded results of natural selection. In essence, humanity’s pre-historic ancestors developed adaptive responses to their own physiological drives and environmental conditions. At some point along the line of human physiological development, consciousness emerged when our ancestors became self-aware (Kaloyirou, 2021; Zimmerman, 2016).

### **Human Beings as Neanderthals**

Needless to say, but must be said nonetheless, Freud’s implied account of what he deemed to be the ‘true’ nature of human beings is highly questionable at its core. It is at once suspect and logically implausible especially without hardcore empirical substantiation

beyond the therapeutic couch. Freud's theory implies that what human beings present others in civilized society is quite different than the cauldron of volcanic violence that Freud believed laid hidden deep within them. At heart, they are simply growling Neanderthals, not cultivated brainiacs.

Taking his cue from the Darwinian primordial perspective of human nature dominant at the time, Freud conjured that barbaric, primitive impulses from caveman days still ruled over the contemporary emotional nest of so-called 'civilized' human beings. The implication, of course, was that no one in civilized society was truly safe because no one knows when these barbaric impulses would erupt. It was viewed as a powder keg ready to be ignited and due to explode at any time. In short, every human being was a veritable barbarian in disguise whose primitive impulses needed to be subdued and redirected into predictable and productive quarters. Mothers beware of the seething savage growling beneath the innocent mask of your child. Clearly, then, submission to the primacy of biological impulses was the orientation of the day. The source of humankind and human nature was not the Genesis Creator God of the Judeo-Christian Bible but, rather, simian evolution. From Freud's point of view, humanity's real nature is an undignified barbarism and civilization is simply the shadow of an illusory dignity cast over it in order to legitimize and fortify it. Given Freud's militant atheism, he was vehemently unwilling to rely upon any body of religious beliefs to equipose, uplift, and civilize the fundamental animalistic barbarity that was grounded into humanity's biological makeup, with all the ideological and political ramifications wrapped up in such a view of human nature.

At the individual level of analysis, one of the main effects of this doctrine of human nature put into actual practice by psychoanalysts and their followers was presumably to free them to varying degrees from the clutches of religious authority in both the bathroom and the bedroom as they stumbled through the various stages of Freud's psychosexual development now to be championed as standard biological behavior and not to be impeded, interfered with, or otherwise interrupted.

As far as biology is concerned, no behavior is abnormal behavior but, rather, just part and parcel of phases that all human beings go through. Obviously, the door here is left wide open for the legitimate introduction of strong progressive liberal values into the ethical makeup of human beings, effectively establishing themselves as counters against the application of traditional religious values within a personal, family, and social context.

At the societal level of analysis, among other things, psychoanalysis becomes a very potent weapon to be used mercilessly against those individuals opposing such psychoanalytic and Darwinian biological and evolutionary conceptions of human nature. Arguably, what we appear to have here is the birth of a professional medical group charged with the potential responsibility of identifying and correcting (treating?) problematic individuals suspected of harboring religiously-conservative or reactionary views in opposition to the liberal progressive views of psychoanalysts and their followers in modern society.

Obviously, the term 'progressive' is meant to convey an individual's positive orientation towards reform and social change in general. From Freud's atheistic point of view in line with Enlightenment thinkers, that was pivotally important. In a past world viewed by psychoanalysts and 'moderns' as dominated by an 'evil' religious authority called the Judeo-Christian Bible, evidently it makes sense to be on constant guard to protect 'modern' society against the warped delusional thinking and impulses of those who cling to conservative religious doctrines.

If the aim is to promote the continued secularization and atheism of modern society, there is hardly a better place to do this effectively than the psychotherapist's couch. Psychoanalytic 'therapy' could now be used under the guise of professional medical license to identify, control, and hopefully convert the 'disturbed' irrational personalities upholding traditional religious doctrine. In other words, the ideological and political functions of psychoanalytic therapy become just as important to liberal-minded progressives in modern society as the alleged therapeutic functions become to individual patients (Ingleby, 1987; Matson, 1954). The fact that psychology professors are least likely among all disciplines to believe in God and psychologists themselves are the least religious of all professors indicates rather poignantly, among many other current social facts, the power and influence of atheistic doctrines over the mind, life and value systems of members of modern society.

### Re-enter Schopenhauer, Stage Right

As a diehard atheist, when Freud declared in his work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, that "the aim of all life is death" while introducing his death drive alongside the life instinct, he was faithfully echoing the words of another diehard atheist, Arthur Schopenhauer, written nearly a century earlier, "death is the aim and purpose of life" (Jacquette, 1999; Schopenhauer, 2021). As we learned earlier, by no means was Schopenhauer just an average or typical run-of-the-mill philosopher nor atheist, for that matter.

Rather, he was the first great Western philosopher to openly and proudly declare atheism at a time when it was downright dangerous, and not simply unbecoming. He widely preached his atheistic beliefs in such highly articulate, committed, and learned ways that they were indeed greatly welcomed by a large proportion of elite 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers. These were the same polished well-to-do thinkers who occupied a larger and larger space in the atheistic elite European cultural petri dish, as mentioned earlier in the present study. He even came to strongly influence major scientists, novelists, musicians, philosophers, and other eminent figures such as Einstein, Tolstoy, Kafka, Wagner, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and yes, even Freud (Pitcock, 2022).

What's more, Freud explicitly stated his debt to Schopenhauer in many places with regards to the death instinct concept, even well before the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920. Freud's eminent biographer and author of many key works about Freud, Peter Gay, Sterling Professor of History at Yale University, notes that Freud had told his long-time friend, Lou Andreas-Salome, in the summer of 1919 that:

"...he had stumbled onto a strange idea via the drives and was reading all sorts of things, including Schopenhauer. The result was his vision of two elemental pugnacious forces in mind, Eros and Thanatos, locked in eternal battle" (Gay, 2006, p. 401).

Further, at the point in his 1920 work where Freud declares that the aim of all life is death, that all living organisms are driven by an instinct to return to an inorganic state (Freud, 2010, pp. 612-613), Freud explicitly refers to Schopenhauer:

"We have unwittingly steered our course into the harbor of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For him, death is the 'true result and to that extent the purpose of life', while the sexual instinct is the embodiment of the will to live" (Ibid., p. 618)



There are serious ethical concerns surrounding the use of the term ‘unwittingly’ here, despite complicating the matter with later denials that he had even read Schopenhauer’s works until later in his life. Although it is still a hotly debated issue in the scholarly literature to this day, even a partial review of the pertinent literature will leave little doubt that Freud is more than just simply indebted to Schopenhauer for many of his psychoanalytic ideas.

In his 1925 work, *Autobiographical Study* (1950), although Freud suggests his indebtedness to Schopenhauer for more than solely the death instinct, he clearly denies taking his own ideas from Schopenhauer. Although worded in Freud’s characteristically convoluted manner, still his comments leave little room to doubt the overall message he is trying to convey. Freud states:

“The large extent to which psychoanalysis coincides with the philosophy of Schopenhauer – not only did he assert the dominance of the emotions and the supreme importance of sexuality but he was even aware of the mechanism of repression – is not to be traced to my acquaintance with his teaching. I read Schopenhauer very late in life” (p. 38).

The separate claims that Freud’s psychoanalytic thinking is not to be linked to Schopenhauer’s teachings and that he only read any of his writings late in his life are both highly questionable assertions. At the very least, what Freud’s adamant disclaimer above means about his psychoanalytical conceptual system is that it was derived from much more than just an ‘unwitting’ splash into Schopenhauer. It turns out that the uncanny parallels between Schopenhauer’s thoughts and Freud’s psychoanalytic system of ideas are so profound that only robotic Freudian cult enthusiasts would dare to claim they were the result of coincidence or serendipity (Bischler, 2017; Cybulska, 2015; Ellenberger, 1970; Gupta, 1980; Herzog, 1987; Magee, 1997; Procter-Gregg, 1956; Sulloway, 1992; Young and Brook, 1994 – just to name a few).

These studies suggest rather strongly that Freud didn’t just develop his ideas out of thin-air speculation and then fortuitously stumble into Schopenhauer’s philosophical harbor. They also suggest rather strongly that Freud’s denial he even read Schopenhauer’s works until later in his life is patently disingenuous. The real question is not whether Freud did or didn’t claim Schopenhauer’s ideas for his own but, rather, just how much did Freud know about Schopenhauer’s philosophical and psychological ideas prior to that 1925 admittance and especially before formulating his psychoanalytic theory. To the extent that he did know, it would certainly cast a dark shadow over subsequent repeated denials. Once this is established, we can determine just how much of Freud’s psychoanalytic ideas are simply Schopenhauer’s earlier atheistic views wrapped up in a new psychoanalytical robe.

## **5. INTEGRAL LINKS BETWEEN FREUD AND SCHOPENHAUER**

Much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century German-speaking intellectual world was obsessively preoccupied with the central philosophical and psychological notions of the human will and unconscious, just as Freud was. However, the origin of these central themes is not to be found in Freud, nor Nietzsche, for that matter but, rather, Schopenhauer. In fact, so much of Freud’s signature ideas can be found in Schopenhauer’s thoughts and writings, the correspondences so detailed and extensive, that they cannot simply be explained away as

fortuitous. As well, the popularity of Schopenhauer's philosophical ideas during Freud's youth cannot explain the extent of these correspondences within Freud's theory.

When we review Schopenhauer's writings carefully and thoroughly, Young and Brook (1994) point out that key components of Freud's psychological doctrine correspond quite well to them. Across the literature reviewed below, Schopenhauer's key notion of the 'will' with sexual stimuli as the central process impacted heavily upon his psychological views and became the basic motor of human thought and conduct. As such, 'will' becomes shockingly similar to what Freud later christened as the 'id', also with sexuality as the central motoring process.

Generally, Schopenhauer's investigation of the etiology of madness identified a process of repression in a language so similar to Freud's discussion of repression that fortuitous correspondence is highly unlikely. Further, Schopenhauer's views on the intimate connection between mental health and madness even foreshadows Freud's first writings about neurosis, arguing like Freud that mental health is closer to madness than most people think. Additionally, Schopenhauer's extensive discussions about association and linking the so-called 'threads' of memories as ways of recovering forgotten memories and dreams articulates rather well many of Freud's later thoughts.

Earlier studies of the similarities between Schopenhauer and Freud tend to focus upon shared philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic views, and largely shied away from conceptual and theoretical similarities. For example, the Bischler study in 1939 limited similarities to their shared pessimistic view of life, the beauty of art, and human spirituality traced back to primitive evolutionary and instinctual stimuli. Although they shared similar philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical outlooks, the only focus upon features of their psychological doctrines is when Bischler notes they didn't share the same ideas about love.

We don't stumble upon studies of similarities between the psychological doctrines and thoughts of Freud and Schopenhauer until the Proctor-Greg study in 1956. But even here, the examination is cursory and restricted. That study commented briefly on the link between their views on mental illness and how it should be treated. It also underlined the very close similarities between central aspects of Schopenhauer's psychological doctrine and Freud's topographical model, while pointing out aesthetic and ethical similarities, too.

It was not until Canadian psychiatrist Henri Ellenberger's classic encyclopedic study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century psychology that the similarities of the psychological doctrines between these two great thinkers become a subject of analysis and commentary. Ellenberger was a well-respected scholar at the time, so his views on the correspondences between Freud and Schopenhauer were taken very seriously within the academic community. He was a highly accomplished thinker and scholar in several fields including psychiatry, medicine, criminology, and history.

He studied and worked in Paris under such luminaries as Henrik Baruk and Jacques Lacan, later moving to Switzerland to study under Oskar Pfister. Still later, he first moved to America to become a lecturer at the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, and then to teach in the departments of Psychiatry at McGill University and Criminology at the University of Montreal, in Quebec, Canada. Even here, however, the analytical focus is cursory since the author attempted to cover a large number of relevant thinkers during that century. Still, Ellenberger makes more than a few interesting links.

Throughout his study, he credits Schopenhauer many times with originating key psychological views that are later adopted within Freud's psychoanalytic theoretical

apparatus. In his mind, the correspondences between Schopenhauer's ideas and Freud's theory were so extensive that he felt comfortable identifying Schopenhauer in definite terms as "among the ancestors of modern dynamic psychiatry" (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 205). Ellenberger even goes so far as to stress that psychoanalysis itself could not be adequately understood and practiced in the absence of a thorough review and understanding of the applicability of Schopenhauer, thereby agreeing with previous scholars who had made similar claims (*ibid.*, p. 542).

He concluded his comparison by emphasizing that Schopenhauer was the first and most significant among the 19<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers to develop coherent notions about the 'unconscious'. Very cautious to generalize his central argument rather than to identify and specify Schopenhauer's primary role, Ellenberger emphasizes there can be no doubt that Freud's central ideas about the unconscious "echoes" the thoughts of 19<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers (Micali, 1994). Despite the cursory glance at the doctrinal psychological connections between Freud and Schopenhauer, Ellenberger's contributions are noteworthy.

In Michael Fox's edited work on Schopenhauer in 1980, Gupta (1975) continues to find significant connections between the psychological doctrines of these two thinkers. Gupta's academic credentials are highly respected inside and outside of India. He was the eminent first psychologist in India who also published several works in different academic fields including biology, chemistry, and economics (2012a, 2012b). Gupta's chapter in Fox's edited book makes many penetrating connections between Freud and Schopenhauer's systems of psychological ideas that are nearly impossible to reject.

He begins analysis by stating outright that Schopenhauer's writings contain many if not all of Freud's primary ideas and concepts later developed within his psychoanalytic theory (Gupta, 1980, p. 226). He confirms Ellenberger's earlier observations about the intimate links between Freud's 'id' and Schopenhauer's 'will' (*Ibid.*, pp. 226-228), as well as between the centrality of sexuality in Schopenhauer's psychological doctrine and Freud's later psychoanalytic theory. He also points out that Freud's ideas about rationalization and repression were clearly anticipated by Schopenhauer, even the adverse effects of repression on personality development. Even Freud's emphasis upon the impact of early childhood experiences upon the formation of adult personality is to be found in Schopenhauer (*Ibid.*, pp. 231-232).

Several authors writing books about Schopenhauer have also commented to varying degrees about the intimate links between Freud's and Schopenhauer's psychological ideas. In an earlier work (1963), the British academic philosopher and Oxford Fellow, Patrick Gardiner, refers explicitly to the similarities between their ideas about repression and sexuality as well as the links between Schopenhauer's 'will' and Freud's 'unconscious'. Bryan Magee, the British philosopher, broadcaster, politician, and writer, also wrote a masterful text on Schopenhauer in 1983. Magee's widely acclaimed and most comprehensive original text is still believed to be the definitive study on this great philosopher.

In this work, Magee exposes numerous uncanny similarities between Freud and Schopenhauer, ties that are exceedingly difficult to explain away by coincidence alone. He states flatly that the core ideas of Freud's psychoanalytic theory had been previously "set out fully and clearly by Schopenhauer," (1983, p. 283). The links between them are not simply at the level of a few secondary or tertiary Freudian ideas. In a subsequently revised and greatly enlarged edition in 1997 where Magee added three new chapters and made several minor revisions and corrections, he is even more adamant about his views on the Freud-

Schopenhauer connection. He claims that it would have been virtually impossible for Freud to legitimately claim independence from Schopenhauer's body of psychological ideas.

Perhaps not in a quirk of historical coincidence, the German novelist, social critic, philanthropist, essayist, and Nobel Prize in Literature laureate, Thomas Mann, visited Freud in 1936 to read a speech he had composed for him to celebrate Freud's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. In that speech, he made some profound observations on the Freud-Schopenhauer connection, after having previously published essays on Schopenhauer in 1938 and 1947.

Mann's international fame as a writer ran fairly parallel to Freud's celebrated fame, and they greatly respected each other's views and works, psychological and otherwise, as evidenced by several visits Mann made to Freud's home. Despite all the great reverence and accolades, Mann still tended to be somewhat suspicious about some of the central claims made in psychoanalysis, and had even often satirized Freud's analytic theories in some of his own works. Further, Mann's two essays on Freud emphasized the values of instinct over reason in Mann's own views, not in terms of Freud's theory (Meyers, 2020-21).

Regardless, the speech is more revealing about the connections Mann made between Schopenhauer's ideas and Freud's psychoanalytic theory rather than about the reverence between them. To begin with, he boldly proclaimed Schopenhauer as the veritable father of all contemporary psychology. According to Mann, the psychological historical time line begins with Schopenhauer's 'will' concept, which more or less genuflects at the altar of Nietzsche's radical ideas about the human psyche as it then proceeds to travel straight to Freud. In other words, Mann asserted that Freud, as well as all those thinkers who had further developed his ideas about the 'unconscious' and then established them in the mental sciences, were foundationally indebted first and foremost to Schopenhauer (Mann, 1947, p. 408). Obviously, Mann took the similarities between Schopenhauer and Freud to be much more than simply coincidental, running much deeper than surface correspondences in psychological outlook. On Freud's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Mann announces that Schopenhauer's theory of will and intellect tied into Freud's theory of id and ego directly and indelibly, not by theoretical accident. By any stretch of the imagination, that proclamation was highly significant and did not meet with any overwhelming denials from anyone, including Freud himself.

As Young and Brook pointed out in their 1994 study, Freud explicitly linked his views on the centrality of sexuality and the sexual impulse to Schopenhauer in his work, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 20 years before the previously cited 1925 denial. In the last paragraph of the Preface, Freud acknowledges Schopenhauer's (and Plato's) teachings on the centrality of the sexual impulses to all human activities:

“...some of what this book contains – its insistence in the importance of sexuality in all human achievements and the attempt that it makes at enlarging the concept of sexuality... We might be astonished at this; ... For it is some time since Arthur Schopenhauer... showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by sexual impulses... And as for the stretching of the concept of sexuality..., anyone who looks down with contempt upon psychoanalysis... should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato” (1905, p. 134).

At this point, it is difficult to be truly astonished be at all about Schopenhauer's central contribution of sexuality to Freud's theory but, rather, how Freud could have denied reading Schopenhauer twenty years later. Once again, as Young and Brook insist and empirically support, the strong implication here is that Freud read Schopenhauer well before that denial and understood Schopenhauer's psychological doctrine quite well. Perhaps we should be a bit astonished to learn that the expression 'divine Plato' that Freud notes above is also borrowed directly from Schopenhauer himself (1844, p. xv). Moreover, Young and Brooke point out that the enlarged concept of sexuality to which Freud refers is not to be found anywhere in Freud's book at all.

In a word for word, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph comparison of Schopenhauer's with Freud's writings, Young and Brook demonstrate that most of Freud's psychoanalytic ideas are not novel scientific discoveries in the slightest but, rather, derive directly from Schopenhauer. The empirical evidence indicates that the striking similarities between their psychological doctrines is more than simply striking and rules out coincidence and all other influences including cultural as a way of explaining them.

The wordings, expressions, and ideas expressed by Schopenhauer are so consistently close to Freud's that even serious ethical concerns and questions can be raised. Schopenhauer almost flawlessly anticipates Freud in so many different parts of psychoanalytic theory that it can no longer be doubted. The two thinkers agreed on the power of sexuality over all of human life, sexuality as species survival, the key importance of childhood to later adult life, the sexual drive distinguished from the life-producing or self-preservation drive, infants start life blindly discharging energy in a haphazard process, negative views of pleasure and the operation of the will, the primacy of the will or the id, the overriding significance of the unconscious, the relationship the conscious to the unconscious, consciousness is not the natural state of the psyche, the role of free association in memory and dreams, madness as a way of coping originates in a problem of memory, the connection between mental illness and regular psychological processes, the nature of repression, the concept of resistance and the trauma theory of neurosis, the therapeutic function of making the unconscious conscious, dream theory, and many other parallels and correspondences, to be sure.

There are a few divergences between their psychological thoughts but, for the most part, the similarities are remarkable and outstanding. Young and Brook note that while Freud fully recognized the deep parallels between psychoanalysis and Schopenhauer's philosophy after 1915, in that year he still made the dubious claim that repression was first created by psychoanalysis even though one of his own teachers specifically credits Schopenhauer's work in 1851, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, as the creator. At the very least, such evidence as does exist seems to suggest that Freud had read and well-understood Schopenhauer even before 1892, and this evidence is both circumstantial and direct, assert Young and Brook.

As suggested above, even the circumstantial evidence is enough to seriously impugn Freud's claims and suggestions that he made his newly psychoanalytic discoveries entirely on his own, fully independent of any other thinker's central doctrines, idea, and concepts. The direct empirical evidence compromises that claim even more so. It is clear beyond doubt that Freud's thought at his time was directly and deeply shaped by the system of ideas linked to major thinkers like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Von Hartmann, Brentano, Charcot, and one of his own teachers, Meynert, among many other less notables, all of whom were to varying degrees committed to aggressive if not militant atheism and anti-clericalism (Micale, 2008). To deny, downplay or otherwise disregard the primary foundational impact and determining

influence of atheism in the emergence and development of psychoanalytic theory and its offshoots in all essential features, let alone other dominant theoretical streams along the way, is to brazenly disclaim historical fact.

Moreover, the atheistic doctrine unleashed in modern times by Enlightenment so-called ‘luminaries’ and carried forth by eminent followers into subsequent centuries have shaped modern civilization well beyond Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. As such, then, and like Darwin and Marx, Freud is likely much more indebted to atheism as a powerful body of philosophical thought than to any other causal influence, the atheism of many contemporary academic scholarly opinions notwithstanding (Buckley, 1990, 2004; Bullivant and Ruse, 2021; Draper, 2022; Hunter, 2023; Hyman, 2010; McGrath, 2004; Stephens, 2014; Thrower, 1971; Whitmarsh, 2015).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Ackerman, S. et al. 2023. "Thanatos: Is Freud's Concept Still Relevant?" IN Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 71 (4): 669-702.
- [2] Alexander, C.N. 1990. Growth of Higher Stages of Consciousness: Maharishi's Verdic Psychology of Human development. IN C.N. Alexander and E.J. Langer. eds. Higher Stages of Human Development. Perspectives on Human Growth. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [3] Alexander, C.N. and E. J. Langer. eds. 1990. Higher Stages of Human Development. Perspectives on Human Growth. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [4] American Psychiatric Association (APA). 2022. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, pp. 76-669. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.
- [5] Armstrong, K. 1993. A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. New York: Ballantine Books.
- [6] Asher, D. 1870. Schopenhauer and Darwinism. IN Journal of Anthropology: 312-332. Baldwin, T. 1995. Sartre. IN T. Honderich. ed. The Oxford Companion to Philosophy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [7] Barry, J.M. 2021. The Great Influenza: The Story of the Deadliest Pandemic in History. London: Penguin Books.
- [8] Beers, C.W. 2010 (1909). A Mind That Found Itself. Whitefish, MO: Kessinger.
- [9] Benjamin, L. 2007. A Brief History of Modern Psychology. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- [10] Bergmann, M.S. 2011. "The Dual Impact of Freud's Death and Freud's Death Instinct Theory on the History of Psychoanalysis." IN The Psychoanalytic Review 98 (5): 665-686.
- [11] Berman, D. 2014. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism. IN D.A. Leeming et al. eds. Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion. Boston, MA: Springer. 1990. A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell. London: Routledge.
- [12] Bischler, W. 2017. "Schopenhauer and Freud: A Comparison." IN The Psychoanalytic Quarterly 8 (1) December: 88-97.
- [13] Boas, F. 2022 (1910). The Mind of Primitive Man. Silver City, NM: Legare Street Press. 1910. "Psychological Problems in Anthropology." IN American Journal of Psychology 21: 371-384.
- [14] Bohannon, P. and M. Glazer. 1972. High Points in Anthropology. New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc.
- [15] Borch-Jacobsen, M. 2021. Freud's Patients: A Book of Lives. London: Reaktion Books.
- [16] Brentano, F. 1973 (1874). Psychology From an Empirical Standpoint. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1950 (1895). Studies in Hysteria. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- [17] Breuer, J. and S. Freud. 1950 (1895). Studies in Hysteria. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- [18] Buckley, M.J. 2004. Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism. New Haven, CT: Yales University Press. 1990. At the Origins of Modern Atheism. New Haven, CT: Yales University Press.
- [19] Bullivant, S. and M. Ruse. 2021. eds. The Cambridge History of Atheism. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- [20] Cade, J.F.J. 1949. "Lithium Salts in the Treatment of Psychiatric Excitement." IN Medical Journal of Australia 2 (36): 349-352.
- [21] Caligor, E. et al. 2015. "Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Diagnostic and Clinical Challenges." IN The American Journal of Psychiatry 172 (5) May: 415-422.
- [22] Callender, J.S. 1996. Book review of: T. Webster. 1995. Why Freud was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis. New York: HarperCollins. IN The British Medical Journal (February): 312.
- [23] Capps, D. ed. 2001. Freud and Freudians on Religion: A Reader. New Hven, CT: Yale University Press.
- [24] Caruth, C. 2014. "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence, and Survival." IN Intervalla: Platform for Intellectual Exchange 2: 20-33. 1996. Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- [25] Cavendish, R. 2008. "Saint Bernadette's First Vision at Lourdes." IN History Today 58 (2) February.
- [26] Cioffi, F. 2005. Sigmund Freud. IN The Oxford Guide to Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press. 1998. Freud and the Question of Pseudoscience. Chicago, IL: Open Court.

- [27] Coleman, D. 1990. "As a Therapist, Freud Fell Short, New Research Suggests." IN The New York Times, March 6, Section C, Page 1.
- [28] Crenson, M. 1999. "Freud's Theory of Dreams Evolves." IN Los Angeles Times, October 31.
- [29] Crews, F.C. 2006. Follies of the Wise: Dissenting Essays. Berkeley, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard.
- [30] Cross, F.L. ed. 2005. Atonement. IN F.L. Cross. ed. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [31] Cybulska, E. 2015. "Freud's Burden of Debt to Nietzsche and Schopenhauer." IN Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology 15 (2( October: 1-15. d' Aulaire, I. and E.P. d' Aulaire. 1962. Greek Mythology. New York: Doubleday.
- [32] DeLeon, P.H. et al. 2011. Psychotherapy, 1960 to the Present. IN J.C. Norcross et al. eds. History of Psychotherapy: Continuity and Change. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- [33] Denham, A. 2017. "An Introduction to Psychoanalytic Anthropology: The Background (1/2)." IN Reflexivities, July 28.
- [34] Denker, P.G. 1946a. "Results of Treatment of Psychoneuroses by the General Practitioner." IN New York State Journal of Medicine 46 (October): 2164-66. 1946b. "Results of Treatment of Psychoneuroses by the General Practitioner; a Follow-up Study of 500 Cases." IN Journal of Nervous Mental Disorder 104 (September): 323-335.
- [35] Draper, P. 2022. Atheism and Agnosticism. IN E.N. Zalta. ed. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Summer Edition. Stanford, CA: Metaphysical Research Lab, Stanford University.