

Freud and the Devil: Sexual Seduction and Splitting

IN THIS CHAPTER, some significant pathological characteristics of Freud's personal psychology are discussed. This is needed in order to provide an understanding of his preoccupation with the Devil; in particular, a portrayal of Freud's psychology is needed to understand his demonic pact.

Was Freud Sexually Seduced as a Child?

There are serious reasons proposed by Krüll to believe that Freud was sexually seduced or at least significantly eroticized as a child.¹ We have already seen a hint that the nanny might be associated with something of the kind, but there is evidence that points in other directions as well. In any case, it will become clear that the issue of Freud's possible childhood seduction is central to an understanding of Freud's relationship both to religion and to the Devil.

I begin by quoting a statement of Freud's (part of which has been quoted in Chapter One). Freud was writing to Fliess about his nanny, his brother Julius (who died), his half-nephew John, God, and Hell:

I still have not got to the scenes which lie at the bottom of this. *If they emerge, and I succeed in resolving my hysteria* [emphasis added], I shall have to thank the memory of the old woman who provided me at such an early age with the means for living and surviving. You see how the old liking breaks through again.²

In this statement, by referring to his own hysteria, Freud also implied that, whatever the cause of hysteria might be, he had experienced it himself. Now, in the mid-1890s, Freud very strongly believed that all hysteria was traceable to sexual seduction and abuse. His

¹ Krüll (1979) appears to have initiated the scholarly investigation of this question about Freud.

² Origins (pp. 219-220).

claim for such an origin for hysteria was first published in 1896,³ and his commitment to this idea was strong for a number of years; indeed, to some extent, he always considered real sexual abuse as an important factor in hysteria. This theory, known as the “seduction theory,” he later modified and replaced with the now well-known psychoanalytic alternative: namely, that hysteria, although sometimes due to actual childhood sexual seduction, is not always the result of such abuse. Instead, hysteria is understood as more often the result of childhood *fantasies* of sexual seduction. Freud always, however, assumed that childhood seduction could be a factor in mental pathology; that is, he never completely abandoned the seduction theory.⁴

This particular issue has quite recently received widespread attention in the writings of Jeffrey Masson, who claims that Freud abandoned the original theory, in spite of solid supporting clinical evidence, because it was so badly received by his colleagues.⁵ Freud, according to Masson, essentially “chickened out” and substituted the fantasy world of incest (e.g., the Oedipus complex) for the real world of actual sexual abuse. Masson’s case for this interpretation of Freud’s motivation is in fact, not very convincing. Typically, his critics have pointed out that the evidence proposed by Masson is weak and often forced.⁶ In addition, Sulloway has amply documented that Freud’s psychoanalytic theory was part of a long-term systematic intellectual evolution.⁷ And, of course, there was evidence of sexual abuse *not* resulting in hysteria, as well as cases of hysteria without any actual sexual seduction or abuse.

Also to the point, both Peter Swales and Marianne Krüll have provided differing but mutually supportive alternative explanations of the factors behind Freud’s abandonment of the original seduction theory. Thornton and Swales, besides showing the relevance of cocaine to Freud’s concept of libido (sexual energy),⁸ both identify cocaine as a factor in Freud’s powerful fantasy life.⁹

More relevant to our present concerns is Swales’s important work on the intellectual impact of the late medieval theory of witchcraft and demonic possession proposed by Johann Weier in 1563.¹⁰ Weier proposed that the many witches who freely confessed to being such were suffering from *fantasies* of making pacts with the Devil and of committing crimes against others—fantasies often brought on by terrible “melancholy” (i.e., depression).¹¹ Freud acknowledged the persuasiveness of Weier’s theory,¹² and in 1896 and 1897 (just prior to his rejection of the seduction theory), this medieval

³ S. Freud (1896a, S.E., 3; pp. 191-221; first made public in a lecture of May, 28, 1896); see also S. Freud (1896b, 1896c).

⁴ See the discussion of this issue in Masson (1984, pp. 195-200). In spite of Masson’s argument that Freud completely abandoned the seduction theory, the 1916, 1924, and 1925 quotes from Freud (pp. 195-198) make it clear to me that Freud always maintained a modest but significant belief in real sexual trauma as a cause of neurosis.

⁵ Masson (1984, e.g., Ch. 4).

⁶ See, for example, McGrath (1985).

⁷ Sulloway (1979, pp. 198, 206-208, 313-314, 512-518).

⁸ Swales (1983c); Thornton (1983).

⁹ Swales (1983c, e.g., pp. 10-11).

¹⁰ Swales (1982b, 1982c).

¹¹ Swales (1982b, p. 6).

¹² Origins (pp. 187-188); Letters (p. 269).

understanding assumed a central place in his letters to Fliess.¹³ For our purposes, it is only necessary to emphasize that Freud very strongly connected hysteria to witches and to real (or more often fantasized) early sexual seduction, and that he connected all of this to a pact with the Devil.

As already stated, I do not think Masson's explanation for why Freud changed his seduction theory is correct. Nevertheless, I do believe that some of Masson's claims are both important and valid. In particular, Masson's emphasis on the frequency with which children (especially girls) suffer sexual abuse is justified, not only because sexual abuse is far more frequent than previously supposed—especially in the lives of those seeking psychological help—but also because psychoanalysis has without doubt overemphasized the fantasy world as a source of mental pathology.¹⁴ Indeed, the essential argument of this chapter is that Freud himself suffered from a moderate degree of childhood sexual abuse, and that this experience helps us to account for some of his own psychopathology as well as his persistent intellectual interest in early sexual trauma.

It is plausible to assume that Freud's theoretical constructs were commonly derived from his response to at least a kernel of actual experience similar to that of his patients. For example, Krüll's interpretation (discussed in Chapter Two) that Freud witnessed his mother's affair with Philipp makes Freud's Oedipal theory an elaboration of an early experience, not the expression of an innate mental predisposition or structure. Likewise, if Freud suffered early sexual abuse, then his own theories can be interpreted in part as the response of a victim, and his failure to keep focused on real experiences as a way of protecting those who abused him. (For example, the basic argument of Krüll is that Freud wanted to protect his father from the charge of abusing his own children.) Masson cites moving examples of the great reluctance of children to accuse their own fathers or mothers.¹⁵ Therefore, it is proposed that Freud's own failure to do the same with those who perpetrated abuse of him fits into this familiar pattern.

Now, if Freud was sexually seduced as a child, and his great preoccupation with the subject stemmed from this abuse, the next question is this: Who was the guilty party? To begin with, Freud noted that the most frequent perpetrators of sexual abuse are fathers. In a recently disclosed letter, he wrote, "Unfortunately, my own father was one of these perverts and is responsible for the hysteria of my brother (all of whose symptoms are identifications) and those of several younger sisters."¹⁶ In another letter of the same period (one central to Krüll's thesis), Freud also implicated his father in respect to his own hysteria: "Then the surprise that in all cases, the *father* [emphasis in original], not excluding my own, had to be accused of being perverse..."¹⁷ (The words "not excluding my own" were censored out of the original published letters.¹⁸) Krüll and Balmory have independently concluded from these passages that Jakob Freud was probably guilty of seducing or otherwise eroticizing, if not Sigmund, then some of the

¹³ See Swales (1982b) for the extensive evidence.

¹⁴ For good recent treatments of the great importance of childhood abuse for the development of later psychopathology, see, as examples, Finkelhor (1979); Herman (1981); Miller (1983, 1984).

¹⁵ Masson (1984, Ch. 2).

¹⁶ Quoted in Blumenthal (1981, p. C5); see also S. Freud (1985, pp. 230-231).

¹⁷ S. Freud (1985, p. 264).

¹⁸ S. Freud (1985, p. 266).

other children.¹⁹ They both propose that Freud turned away from the original seduction theory in large part to spare his father's memory.

However, are these quotes of Freud to be given great weight, at least with respect to Freud's *own* possible childhood seduction? I think probably not. Beside the fact that a father's homosexual seduction of a son is rare, Freud never again in his voluminous writing raised the issue, nor did any of his case histories deal with such a seduction. In view of the strong autobiographical character of the case histories that he chose to write about, such a life-long silence would have been very strange. It should also be noted that Freud's comments about his own father primarily implicate Jakob with respect to Freud's siblings, not himself. Finally, Freud's own psychology had relatively little of a homosexual character; what there was was centered primarily around men his own age, not father-figures. Freud loved and hated men on a pattern that he said himself reintegrated his relationship to his half-nephew John (of Freiberg), already mentioned in connection with his screen memory.²⁰ Of course, it is still possible that Freud's father was the source—or at least one source—of Freud's own sexual seduction. If this was the case, such a seduction would *strongly* support much of the interpretation of Freud's relation to the Devil that is proposed below. Nevertheless, I do not think, as argued above, that Freud's father seduced young Sigmund.

Another possible candidate for this abuse is Freud's nanny. Krüll has developed such a proposition.²¹ As the reader may recall, Freud made to Fliess the following curious comment: "She was my instructress in sexual matters, and chided me for being clumsy."²² The "she" is assumed to have been Freud's nanny (although the possibility of a young servant girl is also supported by material given below). If we assume that it was the nanny, and that this was not just a fantasy,²³ what could the sexual "seduction" of a two or three-year-old boy have consisted of, especially given the picture of the nanny as old, ugly, and rather strict?

One interpretation presented by Krüll is that the nanny would rub or stroke the boy's penis in order to soothe or quiet him.²⁴ Such an activity would certainly eroticize both

¹⁹ Krüll (1978, 1979); Balmory (1979/1982).

²⁰ Jones (1953, pp. 8-9). With reference to John, Freud wrote: "An intimate friend and a hated enemy have always been indispensable to my emotional life; I have always been able to create them anew, and not infrequently my childish ideal has been so closely approached that friend and enemy have coincided in the same person; but not simultaneously, of course, as was the case in my early childhood." (Swales (1982d) gives a striking and detailed analysis of this mixture of hostility and "homosexuality" in Freud's relationship to Fliess. The Schreber "case" (see S. Freud, 1911a), based on the published comments of Dr. Paul Schreber, fits Freud's "homosexual" pattern well. That is, the homosexual relationship was between two "brother"-figures, Schreber and a Dr. Flechsig; the only "father"-figure in the case was God, who was viewed as castrating, not as a homosexual seducer. One curious autobiographical note in this case is that Schreber suffered from two distinct periods of mental crisis and deterioration: The first lasted from the autumn of 1884 to the end of 1885; the second started in October 1893 and lasted till 1895-1900 (S. Freud, 1911a, C.P., 3, pp. 390-393). These two periods rather closely correspond to Freud's own periods of maximum psychological disturbance. One can assume in this case that Freud identified with Schreber in his Flechsig relationship, on a pattern set up in Freud's early relationship to John and later shown in Freud's relationships with Fleischl, with Fliess (i.e., Flechsig), and also probably with Jung (i.e., John).

²¹ Krüll (1978; 1979, pp. 144 ff.).

²² Origins (p. 220).

²³ Grigg (1973, p. 111) has suggested that it was a fantasy.

²⁴ Krüll (1979, p. 146).

the boy and his relationship with his nanny—and, by generalization, Freud’s relationship to his mother and other mother-substitutes. This kind of behavior on the part of the nanny might appear bizarre or even perverse by contemporary standards. Yet such a thing has been common and even today is probably far from rare. Philippe Ariès, in his classic *Centuries of Childhood*, documents that events very like this occurred in the French royal household in the early 17th century. Ariès notes that the one-year-old future King of France, Louis XIII, “laughed uproariously when his nanny waggled his cock with her fingers.”²⁵ During Louis’s first three years, nobody in the household “showed any reluctance or saw any harm in jokingly touching the child’s sexual parts.”²⁶ According to Ariès, this was common in the treatment of children at this time. By the age of seven, however, the future king was expected to behave properly; others were no longer allowed to touch him, nor was he permitted to display himself to others or to be otherwise sexually explicit at court.²⁷

Ariès notes that this kind of attitude is still found in certain parts of Islamic society today.²⁸ Perhaps it was also a part of mid-19th-century Moravian culture? There are reasons to think it may still be reasonably frequent in the West today. For example, two friends of mine mentioned to me that they knew of such practices in their own families—that is, the stroking of the penises of little boys, presumably as a way of quieting them. It would certainly be easy for such a habit to get started while a child was being bathed or having his diapers changed. Freud himself addressed the issue clearly when he remarked: “It is one of the commonest things—psychoanalyses are full of such incidents—for children’s genitals to be caressed, not only in word but in deed, by fond relations, including even parents themselves.”²⁹

Freud also refers in the Fliess letter to being chided for his “clumsiness.” This may mean only that Freud recalled being scolded for touching his genitals. (Such a scolding could easily set up a castration fear; see the discussion of the Wolf-Man case, below.) Of course, a scolding for his “clumsiness” might also have been nothing more than a criticism for soiling his pants. However, it may refer also to something explicitly sexual. The questions raised by this language require that we explore more carefully Freud’s early years, using material scattered throughout his writing—material that is, as we know, highly biographical in character.

Let us first consider Freud’s *Screen Memories* paper, already reliably accepted as disguised autobiography. Freud started the paper by referring to hysteria and obsessional neuroses as the kinds of pathology that provide the observational basis for his interpretation of screen memories. (Freud is also on record as referring to himself and to Oedipus as obsessive types.³⁰) After emphasizing the then radical point that great pathogenic importance must be attributed to the earliest years of childhood, especially the ages of two to four,³¹ he referred to a study that had just appeared; in it, V. and C. Henri had published the earliest childhood memories of 88 adults. Freud mentioned

²⁵ Ariès (1962, p. 100).

²⁶ Ariès (1962, p. 100).

²⁷ Ariès (1962, p. 102).

²⁸ Ariès (1962, pp. 103-104)

²⁹ S. Freud (1909a, S.E., 10, p. 23, note 2)

³⁰ For example, see S. Freud & Jung (1974, pp. 33, 82).

³¹ S. Freud (1899a, S.E., 3, pp. 303-304).

only two of the memories referred to in this study. The first memory was that of a professor who recalled a table with a basin of ice—a memory dated from between the ages of three and four. Freud interpreted this memory as a screen for the death of the child's much-loved grandmother, an event that occurred at the same time. The selection by Freud of this memory within the autobiographical context of the paper is easily interpretable as an analogue to the loss of his own loved nanny—a loss that I have proposed occurred for Freud in late May or early June 1859, when he was between the ages of three and four. The only other memory picked out by Freud was a man's early recollection of a walk during which he (as a child) broke off or pulled off the branch of a tree. (I take up Freud's interpretation of this shortly.) Then Freud launched into his own biography; of course, he made an initial attempt at disguise by saying that the man in question was 38 (five years younger than he) and in a very different field. (Bernfeld comments that, here, Freud was simply "lying."³²)

The screen memory described in detail by Freud was that of the meadow with yellow dandelions, discussed in Chapter One. The scene, we may recall, involved Freud (when he was about three years old) and his cousin John (John was actually Freud's half-nephew), who fell upon and took a bunch of flowers from Pauline, John's sister. At the top of the meadow stood a nursemaid and a peasant woman. The children rushed to the top of the meadow, where the peasant woman gave Pauline and the two boys some delicious bread; she cut the bread with a long knife. Freud gave a lengthy interpretation of the associations and psychological meaning of this recollection as representing the themes of love and hunger.

What is odd is that Freud gave no really clear trauma or decisive event as hiding behind the screen. The theme of "deflowering" the little girl by stealing her flowers and the knife as a symbol of castration anxiety were mentioned, but there was no obvious trauma for the young Sigmund. If, however, we use Freud's interpretation of and associations to the memories (taken from the Henri study), then two painful events worthy of being screened do suggest themselves. There is the obvious possibility that what the memory screened was the loss of Freud's nanny. The loss might have occurred shortly thereafter, or perhaps the nursemaid in the screen memory was a new nanny, one hired to cover the short time before the departure from Freiberg after the very recent loss of Sigmund's beloved "Nana." Another, slightly different, interpretation concerning loss is that the nursemaid in the screen memory was the nanny of John and Pauline, and that the scene remembered took place just after the dismissal of Freud's own nanny.

The other possible trauma that might have been screened is suggested by Freud's interpretation of the second memory from the Henri study that he brought up—the memory of a child pulling off a branch. Freud mentioned that the expression "to pull off" in German is a vulgar expression for masturbation. Freud then continued (about himself): "The scene would then be putting back into early childhood a seduction to masturbation—someone was helping him to do it—which, in fact, occurred at a later period."³³

I propose, then, that Freud's screen memory covered or screened two things: the loss of

³² Bernfeld (1946, p. 16).

³³ S. Freud (1899a, S.E., 3, p. 319).

his nanny, and a seduction (perhaps at a later time) to masturbate by a party unknown. A shift in time is not rare, as Freud specifically noted that screen memories may shift an event to a different place or time, and that such memories may have “merged two people into one or substituted one for the other....”³⁴

Let us look at more supporting evidence for the sexual abuse of Freud as a child. In 1896, Freud stated in *Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses* that a passive sexual experience before puberty—usually in the age range of two to five years—is the specific cause for hysteria.³⁵ (Here it should be noted once again that since Freud so often wrote out of his own experience, that the presence of an autobiographical element behind his primary theoretical preoccupations should always be considered a strong likelihood.) In his next paper in the same year, *Further Remarks on the Defence Neuro-Psychoses*, Freud continued on the same subject by reiterating the childhood sexual trauma theory, and then went on to present evidence for his ideas, based on 13 cases of hysteria that he had observed in his practice. All of these people suffered from “grave sexual injuries.”³⁶ He described the perpetrators:

Most prominent among *the people who were guilty of these abuses with all their serious consequences were nursemaids, governesses, or domestic servants*, to whose care children are all too thoughtlessly abandoned, and teachers and tutors appear regrettably often; *in seven of the thirteen cases, however, assaults were perpetrated by innocent childish assailants, mostly brothers, who had for years carried on some kind of sexual relation with somewhat younger sisters*. The course of events was probably in all cases similar to that which we were able to follow in some individual cases—namely, the boy was *first misused by a person of the female sex*, by which his libido was prematurely awakened and then a few years later he committed a sexual aggression reproducing exactly the procedure to which he himself had been subjected. [Emphasis added in all cases.]³⁷

Freud continued by observing that masturbation is a common pathological consequence of seduction, and that it is not a cause but rather a long-lasting symptom or expression of psychoneurosis. Just a few lines after the passage quoted above, Freud introduced a short but important case history:

[O]n one occasion I was able to observe a brother, a sister, and a somewhat older male cousin who were all ill. I learnt from the analysis which I undertook with the brother that he suffered from self-reproaches for being the cause of his sister’s illness; he had been seduced by his cousin, who in his turn—as was known in the family—had himself been the victim of his nursemaid.³⁸

The similarity of Freud’s own family situation to this case history is striking, to the point of raising one’s suspicion that this is a disguised self-description. Freud had a somewhat older half-nephew, John (the “cousin” in Freud’s screen memory); he had a younger sister (several, in fact); he described himself as being an hysteric. Moreover,

³⁴ S. Freud (1899a, S.E., 3, p. 322).

³⁵ S. Freud (1896b, C.P., 1, p. 149).

³⁶ S. Freud (1896c, C.P., 1, p. 157).

³⁷ S. Freud (1896c, C.P., 1, pp. 157-158).

³⁸ S. Freud (1896c, C.P., 1, p. 158).

Freud was preoccupied with nursemaids and servants as sources of sexual trauma leading to neurosis. He was especially so preoccupied during this period of his self-analysis.

A page or so later, Freud remarked that obsessions are always reproaches related to a sexual deed performed with pleasure in childhood. This pleasure usually means masturbation, but also included is the pleasure involved in the seduction of another, such as a sister. Further on, Freud introduced a case history of an 11-year-old boy who suffered from obsessive rituals engaged in before he was able to go to bed. The explanation Freud provides is that “years before, a servant-girl, who had put the handsome boy to bed, took the opportunity of lying upon him and abusing him sexually.”³⁹ This kind of comment makes one wonder about Freud’s remark, already quoted from the autobiographical *Screen Memories* paper, that a screen memory involves “putting back into early childhood a seduction to masturbation” that had “in fact occurred at a later period.”

In yet another paper of 1896, *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, Freud reiterated that every case of hysteria has its origin in early sexual experience,⁴⁰ and he listed three kinds of abuses. This list was based on his experience with now a total of, 18 cases of pure hysteria or hysteria combined with obsession—6 men and 12 women. In a few of these cases, the abuser was a stranger who assaulted the child, and the primary experience of the child was terror. The most numerous cases of sexual abuse were due to “some adult attendant of the child—a maid, nurse, governess, teacher, unhappily only too often a near relation....”⁴¹ The third category involved sexual relations between two children of a different sex, and Freud added: “[W]here there had been a relation between two children I was sometimes able to prove that the boy—who played the aggressive part—had previously been seduced by a woman....”⁴²

Krüll proposes that Freud’s famous staircase dream indicates the nanny as a source of sexual seduction.⁴³ This dream was first mentioned in a letter to Fliess in 1897. Freud wrote to Fliess:

...I dreamt that I was walking up a staircase with very few clothes on. I was walking up very briskly...when I noticed that a woman was coming up behind me, whereupon I found myself rooted to the spot, unable to move, overcome by that paralysis which is so common in dreams. The accompanying emotion was not anxiety but erotic excitement.⁴⁴

Whether this was the nanny or some other woman is not clear. Freud called her a “woman” here, but a “maid-servant” later when referring to a nonsexualized, more toned-down version of the dream in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).⁴⁵ Relevant

³⁹ S. Freud (1896c, C.P., 1, p. 167).

⁴⁰ S. Freud (1896a, S.E., 3, pp. 198, 201).

⁴¹ S. Freud (1896a, S.E., 3, p. 203).

⁴² S. Freud (1896a, S.E., 3, p. 204).

⁴³ Krüll (1978).

⁴⁴ Origins (pp. 206-207).

⁴⁵ S. Freud (1900, S.E., 4, p. 238).

here is a remark Freud made just after the passage quoted above: He claimed that earlier in the night before the dream he was discussing, he had climbed the stairs from the flat below, and it had occurred to him at the time “that I might meet a neighbor.”⁴⁶ One wonders whether Monika Zajic (a member of the landlord’s family) or some other neighbor girl back in Freiberg was the female source of this early sexual excitement.

Let us stop here and take stock. Obviously the evidence so far does not allow a definitive answer; however, it does strongly imply that Freud was sexually seduced as a child, or at least that he was masturbated or taught to masturbate, and that this prematurely eroticized him. (That Freud had a long-term “problem” with masturbation originating in childhood has been suggested by Jones⁴⁷ and by Bernfeld,⁴⁸ and supported in some detail by Swales.⁴⁹)

In any case, it is certain that Freud’s own seduction was associated by him in some way with a nursemaid or female servant. It is possible that his own nanny was the cause of this association, but in view of Freud’s young age and his later connection of the nanny to strong castration anxiety, it seems more likely that she was not a true “seducer” and that some other nursemaid or servant girl was involved. A seduction experience even from the Vienna years, however, easily could have been projected back in time and associated with the nanny. Finally, the evidence also suggests that Freud was explicitly initiated into masturbation by his half-nephew John, and that this was brought on by John’s being seduced earlier by his own nanny. Because we know Monika Zajic was hired by Emanuel as the nursemaid for John and Pauline, and because of the case history noted above, Monika Zajic is again suggested as a seducer for the young Sigmund. There is also the implication that young Freud “seduced” or eroticized one of his own sisters, possibly at a later date in Vienna.

A seduction by “cousin” John gives a reason for Freud’s life-long ambivalence in the many later adult relationships that Freud said were patterned on his friendship with John.⁵⁰ These relationships (e.g., Freud-Fleischl, Freud-Fliess, Freud-Jung, *et al.*) combined homosexual and aggressive elements—a kind of Cain-and-Abel or Romulus-and-Remus pattern. Jones claims that this John was the most important figure for Freud’s psychological development other than his parents in the Freiberg years.⁵¹ It is of considerable interest that the one time “cousin” John visited the Freud family in Vienna, Freud and John read parts from a play. John played Caesar, and Sigmund played Brutus!⁵²

The point of this interpretation is to make clear that, whatever the particular facts may have been, at a minimum Freud connected a nanny figure to sexual seduction, *at least psychologically*. Such a deep and early association—even if, as seems likely, it was a fusion of two or more experiences with different people—would nevertheless have

⁴⁶ Origins (p. 207).

⁴⁷ Letter from Jones dated February 20, 1952, Bernfeld Collection; cited in Swales (1983b, p. 5).

⁴⁸ Bernfeld to Jones, letter dated February 13, 1952, Bernfeld Collection; cited in Swales (1983b, p. 5).

⁴⁹ Swales (1983b, e.g., pp. 17-18).

⁵⁰ Jones (1953, pp. 8-9).

⁵¹ Jones (1953, p. 8)

⁵² Jones (1953, p. 23).

added an extra dimension to Freud's neurotic ambivalence toward his nanny and all she stood for. It would also help explain the erotic component of his Oedipus complex, since his nanny was so thoroughly part of the mother for him.

So far, I have only examined Freud's minor and brief case histories. But, in fact, *all* the major relevant case histories of Freud present substantial and curious similarities to Freud's life. The identification of these autobiographical elements reinforces the picture of Freud's childhood sexual abuse described above. (The reader should keep in mind that we are going into all this so as to better comprehend Freud's relationship to the Devil, as well as Freud's view of religion.)

Brody has identified the major or most detailed case histories of Freud; there are only 12 of these—eight female and four male patients.⁵³ The four major male case histories are those most relevant for understanding Freud. One of these four is the already discussed case presented in *Screen Memories* and known to be actual autobiography. Another of these four is Freud's famous "Wolf-Man" case. I now take this case up in some detail, because, besides being similar to Freud's own life, it involved important religious elements. In fact, it was the *only* major case history of Freud that dealt with religion at all,⁵⁴ and even here Freud was only giving an interpretation of the patient's childhood religious beliefs. (That is, the patient himself was an adult nonbeliever, and had been so for some years prior to entering psychotherapy.)

The Wolf-Man case⁵⁵ centered on a neurotic disturbance that began when the patient was three years old. The neurosis lasted into the tenth year, and it was analyzed retroactively by Freud, for the patient was treated when he was in his 20s. That is, Freud was thus, as usual, treating childhood memories. The disturbance began as an anxiety-hysteria (an animal phobia—fear of wolves), then changed into an obsessive neurosis with religious content. The major facts were these: The patient's father (like Jakob) was often absent, in this case at a sanitarium; the mother (like Amalia) was also not always present, as she suffered from "physical illness and as a consequence she had relatively little to do with the child."⁵⁶ Instead, "the boy as far back as he could remember was looked after by a nurse (nanny), an uneducated woman of peasant birth with a deep affection for the boy."⁵⁷ The nanny was called "Nanya" and had a simple, devout Christian faith. (Sounds familiar!) Apparently, this woman to whom the boy was devoted was rather old and ugly; an English governess hired by the family when the boy was four or five referred to the Nanya as a witch. The nanny spoke a Slavic language (not Moravian Czech, but Russian), while the boy and apparently the parents (like the Freuds) spoke German. The boy was sexually seduced, by his older sister, at age three and a quarter. The boy's parents appear to have been nonreligious, although the mother did teach the boy Bible stories. For some years, the family lived on a country estate. Then the parents sold the estate, and moved into a large town (like Vienna). In short, the basic family situation of the boy has a truly uncanny similarity to Freud's own early situation. (Most of this information was given by Freud under the section title "The

⁵³ Brody (1970).

⁵⁴ For example, none of the other cases identified by Brody (1970) have any religiously significant elements

⁵⁵ S. Freud (1918, C.P., 3, pp. 473-605).

⁵⁶ S. Freud (1918, C.P., 3, p. 481).

⁵⁷ S. Freud (1918, C.P., 3, p. 481).

Seduction and Its Immediate Consequences.”) There were, of course, differences from Freud’s own life: It was the boy’s slightly older sister who sexually seduced him (a servant-girl figure?); there were both a nanny *and* a grandmother; and, after the age of six or seven, the patient’s life diverged from Freud’s. Thus, I am not suggesting that this was an example of disguised autobiography, but rather that Freud was drawn to and perhaps even chose to write up patients whose past life and psychological traumas were similar to his own.

Besides the objective similarity to Freud’s life, there is also in this case clear evidence that Freud projected his own preoccupations onto the patient and introduced his own concerns as though they were the patient’s. The psychoanalyst Donald Spence shows in a recent book that the Wolf-Man case was heavily contaminated by Freud’s own psychology or “countertransference.”⁵⁸ Spence, in particular, shows how in Freud’s report of a crucial memory of the Wolf-Man, he added important details and subsequently treated them as part of the original report of the patient, even though Freud’s own written record shows that this was not the case. In a most illuminating example, Spence documents how Freud himself introduced a castration threat into the report, and then a page or so later assumed that this threat was a major part of the Wolf-Man’s own psychological problem.⁵⁹

Now the nanny in the Wolf-Man case was not involved in any sexual seduction of the boy, although she was a source of castration anxiety. After being involved in masturbation with the older girl, the Wolf-Man was rejected by her. The boy, motivated by a passive sexual desire to be touched, then turned to the Nanya and played with his member in her presence. The Nanya scolded him for this and threatened castration. So he turned away from her in fear, and his later sexual attachments involved servant girls.

The Wolf-Man got his name from a frightening anxiety dream he first had at about age four. This was a repeating dream of white wolves sitting in a tree, wolves that he was afraid would eat him. The wolves came in part from his knowledge of fairy tales, but the deeper themes involved castration anxiety and fear of his father, for Freud interpreted the wolves as father-symbols. Freud gave a long discussion of the significance of the boy’s probable witnessing of a primal scene involving his parents (Amalia and Philipp?). He then turned to an explanation of obsessional neuroses, from which the boy suffered from the ages of about four and a half to ten; his obsessions were associated with his mother’s reading New Testament stories to him. (One is reminded of Sigmund’s Bible-reading period starting at about the same age; in Freud’s case, however, the Bible stories were from the Old Testament and were read to him by his father.)

The boy’s neurosis centered around his identification with Christ, followed by his religious doubts and rejection of Christ. (Such an identification with Jesus also probably occurred when Freud was with his nanny. It certainly showed up in his response to Christian paintings of the Madonna and Child.) The Wolf-Man’s doubts were such as these: How could God be the father of Jesus? In what sense was Mary’s husband, Joseph, a father? (the theme of ambiguous paternity). Why was Christ so passive in response to God’s harsh treatment? He then began to connect God to blasphemous ideas

⁵⁸ Spence (1982).

⁵⁹ Spence (1982, pp. 117-122).

(e.g., “shit,” “swine.”) The guilt caused by these blasphemies and doubts was atoned for and controlled by various actions, such as making repeated signs of the cross and holding his breath to keep in the Holy Spirit. Most of these obsessive acts came to an end through the influence of a skeptical and rationalistic German tutor, who came on the scene when the patient was about ten.

We now turn briefly to the autobiographical element in Freud’s other two major cases dealing with male subjects: the Rat-Man and Little Hans. The Rat-Man, in his early 20s, was plagued by an obsessive fantasy in which a pot containing rats was put on the buttocks of someone.⁶⁰ The rats then bored or ate into the anus of the person. (The victim of the fantasy was a lady whom the Rat-Man admired.) The patient reported a sexually stimulating experience when he was three or four years old, involving a pretty, young governess; he was eroticized by touching her genitals. Later, with another such governess (servant girl), Fraülein Lina, he remembered being criticized as sexually “too clumsy.”⁶¹ The Rat-Man had an early problem with masturbation between the ages of three and four or five, and it arose again later when his neurosis expressed itself through the symptom of masturbation in adolescence. The Rat-Man had a severe castration fear associated with his father, who had strongly opposed his son’s prematurely developed erotic life. Also part of this early castration complex was a nanny who was especially important for the Rat-Man during the ages of three and four.

The Little Hans case⁶² involved only one session with Freud; the rest of the material was provided in written form by Hans’s father, a friend of Freud’s.⁶³ Nevertheless, several of its themes were similar to those of the preceding three cases. The Little Hans case, like the others, was based on the boy’s castration anxiety and the fear of his father—again, all beginning at the age of three and a half. (It was this article that contained Freud’s reference to the common practice of parents’ or caretakers’ caressing a child’s genitals.⁶⁴) Hans had a little sister Hannah (like Freud’s sister Anna), whom Hans associated with a box, his mother, and travel (to Gmunden). Associating a sister with a box is reminiscent of Freud’s memory (see Chapter One) in which he recalled his half-brother Philipp’s opening a cupboard for him and his own thoughts of his nanny as “boxed up”; young Freud then connected the cupboard or box to his mother’s now being thin after having given birth to his new baby sister. (There were also other but less relevant autobiographical elements.)

From all the preceding material, I conclude again that Freud as a child was eroticized by his nanny or by some other female servant, and that his half-nephew John also probably contributed to this; the seductions set up a kind of compulsive masturbation combined with sexual fantasies. The childhood erotic behavior was also severely challenged by a strong castration threat, reinforced by the nanny but ultimately traceable to Freud’s father. All of this was enough to make Sigmund preoccupied, fearful, and obsessively fascinated with the effects of such sexual experiences, and it was enough to make him “disturbed” in other ways as well.

⁶⁰ S. Freud (1909b, C.P., 3, pp. 304-305).

⁶¹ S. Freud (1909b, C.P., 3, p. 299).

⁶² S. Freud (1909a, S.E., 10, pp. 5-147).

⁶³ S. Freud (1909a, S.E., 10, pp. 5-6).

⁶⁴ S. Freud (1909a, S.E., 10, p. 23).

Freud's Personality: Splitting

Before I take up Freud's personality, some preliminary remarks are called for. Although I propose here that Freud suffered from moderate degrees of various psychological pathologies, such as splitting and aspects of borderline personality disorder, such diagnoses should not be misinterpreted to mean that I suggest that Freud was seriously disturbed. Instead, I believe that such conditions, present in a limited degree, gave Freud an essential first-hand understanding of such pathology. That is, his own mental states were the primary sources of his psychological observations and insights. The remarkable fact about Freud, however, was not that he suffered from such conditions, but that he refused to succumb to them like countless others, and that he went on to understand them and finally to conceptualize them in such a way as to create not only his own particular theories but to establish a major new conceptualization of psychology.

In 1919, Freud published a rather well-known essay, *The 'Uncanny,'* in which he analyzed the nature and origin of this feeling. In the first part, he surveyed the various dictionary definitions and historical origins of the words for "uncanny" in German and other languages. He noted that in German *Heimlich* ("homelike or familiar") and *Unheimlich* ("uncanny") are not simple opposites, but often similar⁶⁵; he observed that often the unfamiliar turns out to be a special or odd form of the familiar.⁶⁶ He also commented that the Hebrew word for "uncanny" means "demonic".⁶⁷

Freud then went on to comment on a fantastic tale by Hoffmann, called "The Sand-Man."⁶⁸ The story begins, not unlike that of the Wolf-Man, with the childhood recollections of a student, Nathaniel. The Sand-Man is described by Nathaniel's mother as just a figure of speech, not a real person. But Nathaniel's nurse (nanny) gives much more detailed information. She reports that the Sand-Man is a wicked old man who punishes children who won't go to bed by tearing their eyes out. He often does this by first throwing hot coals into the child's eyes; later he takes the eyes out and feeds them to his bird-beaked children. Hoffmann's strange story is not easily summarized, but certain themes were singled out for special emphasis by Freud. Having one's eyes torn out was interpreted as a disguised expression of castration, and, not surprisingly, the Sand-Man was seen as representing both a demonic figure and the boy's familiar father.⁶⁹ In the story, the Sand-Man's presence is fear-inducing; his hypnotizing stare can bring his victim to suicide.⁷⁰ Such uncanny figures carry malign, secret power, of a kind that Freud mentioned as present in Mephistopheles and intuitively sensed by Margaret.⁷¹ (At this point Freud made the interesting suggestion that psychoanalysis might easily be judged as uncanny by many.⁷² One wonders whether Freud ever thought

⁶⁵ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, pp. 370, 375, 399).

⁶⁶ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 377).

⁶⁷ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 371).

⁶⁸ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 379).

⁶⁹ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 384).

⁷⁰ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 382).

⁷¹ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, pp. 396-397).

⁷² S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 397).

of himself as the Sand-Man. As a young doctor he practiced hypnotism, and throughout his adult life his powerful, arresting gaze was commented upon by many.) As for what creates an uncanny effect, Freud claimed that it is often brought about by conditions that remove the distinction between imagination and reality.⁷³ Such conditions make a thing one thought of as only imaginary now appear as real. That is, the uncanny experience occurs when a past fantasy unexpectedly seems to become a present reality—a condition common in the experience of neurotics.

Freud's interpretation of the Sand-Man further reinforces the picture of his father as the primary source of castration fear, and of the nanny as a secondary source of this fear.⁷⁴ The crucial theoretical concept in Freud's essay, however, was that the demonic, uncanny Sand-Man is a kind of alter-father, or image split from the father, who is dreaded because he threatens castration and death through his stare.

“Splitting,” as a psychopathological phenomenon, refers to the tendency found in some people for consciousness to break into two or more distinct centers, each more or less separated from and ignorant or ill-informed about the other. Extreme forms of this condition are found in people suffering from “character disorders” (in particular, the “borderline character disorder”)⁷⁵ and the “multiple personality syndrome.”⁷⁶ The latter condition is rare, although in recent years it has received considerable documentation and even public attention. Those who are familiar with multiple personalities have discovered several factors that appear to be the commonest causes of this condition.⁷⁷ The first is sexual seduction or sexual abuse in childhood, the most frequent victims being young girls abused by their fathers or stepfathers. An abused child struggles with the experience of sexual trauma, and in order to escape the meaning or identity given to him or her by the perpetrator of the sexual abuse, the child attempts to create a new, ideal identity. This new center of personal identity and consciousness allows escape from the traumatic past, but only if the new center is separated or dissociated from the rest of the personality. Multiple new centers of consciousness occur because the original fantasized new identity often needs to be changed as the child's circumstances change, e.g., as he or she gets older and needs a more sophisticated new identity. Dissociation is also a characteristic experience of patients suffering from splitting. In mild cases such as that proposed here for Freud, the experiences of being “cut off” or dissociated from one's normal consciousness are of short duration; in the rare, extreme cases, such states might last for days. Other quite reliable characteristics of this syndrome include an extensive fantasy life and frequent use of repression; in addition, involvement in the occult characterizes about 20% of those diagnosed as “multiples.”

Now Freud did not come close to suffering from the true multiple personality syndrome. But Freud's own early diagnosis of himself as an hysteric means that he suffered from a

⁷³ S. Freud (1919, C.P., 4, p. 398).

⁷⁴ The Sand-Man is also reminiscent of the stone Commendatore at the end of *Don Giovanni* and of the glaring *Moses* of Michelangelo.

⁷⁵ American Psychiatric Association (1980, pp. 312-323); for a discussion of the borderline disorder in particular, see the same source (pp. 321-323).

⁷⁶ American Psychiatric Association (1980, pp. 257-259).

⁷⁷ Personal communications (letters) from the following psychiatrists, all with special knowledge of multiple personality disorders; Ralph B. Allison, M.D.; Philip M. Coons, M.D.; Donald W. Schafer, M.D.; Dale P. Svendsen, M.D.

mild form of splitting or “fracturing,”⁷⁸ and that his understanding of splitting was in large part due to a sensitive observation of his own psychology. Freud was in fact one of the first psychologists to give the notion of splitting serious theoretical attention.

The claim that Freud analyzed his own splitting is not unique: The psychoanalyst Gedo has already proposed that it is reasonable to infer that Freud first became aware of splitting within his own personality.⁷⁹ Gedo also subscribes to the position of Sadow and his collaborators⁸⁰ that “a successful piece of *self-analytic* work had been the source of clinical evidence on which Freud...erected each portion of his theory.”⁸¹ We have already seen ample evidence of the presence of autobiographical elements in Freud’s case histories and other theorizing.

Although Freud referred to splitting at various times throughout his subsequent years of work, he did not explicitly return to the topic in a paper until many years later in one of his final contributions: *Splitting of the Ego in the Defensive Process*. In this unfinished article, Freud introduced a summary of an earlier case history. He did not explicitly reference the case, but it was either the Wolf-Man or a very similar case.⁸² Here is the case-history:

A little boy while he was between the ages of three and four years of age, had become acquainted with the female genitals through being seduced by an older girl. After these relations had been broken off, he carried on the sexual stimulation which had been set going in his way by zealously practicing manual masturbation; but he was soon caught at it by his energetic nurse and was threatened with castration, the carrying out of which was, as usual, ascribed to his father. There were thus present in this case conditions calculated to produce a tremendous effect of fright.⁸³

Freud went on to say that although often a boy can avoid the trauma of castration anxiety, this was not possible in this particular instance, because for the boy in question the extreme threat of castration was tied to the memory of the girl’s genitals: That is, she had been castrated; hence the fear was confirmed. Given the conflict, what did this particular boy do? The usual response would be to give up masturbation, but this patient did not. The boy continued with his masturbation as though it implied no danger to his penis, but at the same time

...he developed an intense fear of his father punishing him, which required the whole force of his masculinity to master.... The boy produced yet another

⁷⁸ Freud proposed in an early paper (1894, C.P., 1, p. 60) that “it may be taken as generally acknowledged that the syndrome of hysteria...justifies the concept of splitting of consciousness.” He continued in the same paper to describe splitting as primarily the result of trying to cope with an intolerable sexual idea—usually a sexual memory.

⁷⁹ Gedo (1968/1976, p. 289); see also Stamm (1969/1979).

⁸⁰ Sadow et al. (1968/1976, pp. 257-285).

⁸¹ Gedo (1968/1976, p. 288).

⁸² This case history, according to Roazen (personal communication, 1985), refers to Mark Brunswick. Regardless, its close similarity to the Wolf-Man case makes it another example of the autobiographical character of the cases Freud tended to concentrate on. For relevant material on Mark and Ruth Brunswick and the Wolf-Man, see Roazen (1975, pp. 420-426).

⁸³ S. Freud (1940, C.P., 5, p. 373).

symptom, though it was a slight one which he has retained to this day. This was an anxious susceptibility against either of his little toes being touched, as though, in all the to and fro between denial and acknowledgement, it was nevertheless castration that was finding the clearer expression....⁸⁴

This interesting discussion contains evidence that points to its autobiographical nature. The psychoanalyst Spence, as mentioned earlier, has shown that in the original Wolf-Man case it was not the patient who introduced the nurse's threat of castration, but Freud himself. Freud subsequently treated the threat as part of the patient's report. This same (presumably projected) threat of castration loomed large in the case at hand, which was apparently a summary of the Wolf-Man case.

But let us return to splitting. In Freud's discussion, the sexual conflict between the drive to masturbate (caused by the earlier seduction) collided with the fear of castration to cause splitting; that is, there was a "conflict between the demand of an instinct and the command of reality."⁸⁵ The boy chose to allow both drives to be satisfied, but at a real price:

[T]his success is achieved at the price of a rift in the ego which never heals but increases as time goes on. The whole process seems so strange to us because we take for granted the synthetic nature of the workings of the ego.⁸⁶

And, as Freud pointed out, this synthetic function is subject to many serious disturbances.

In summary, then, because of Freud's life-long tendency to focus theoretically on psychological conditions from which he himself suffered; because of the evidence that Freud was sexually seduced; and, finally, because of the autobiographical aspects of his writings on splitting, it is reasonable to assume that Freud suffered from occasional splitting of his ego (i.e., splitting sometimes consciously experienced). (A specific example of this is provided in Chapter Six.)

Freud's Personality: Borderline Personality Disorder and the Devil

I now turn to a more detailed investigation of Freud's multiple identifications, and to the evidence that he suffered from reduced (but still noticeable) aspects of borderline character disorder with narcissistic elements. I have already mentioned Freud's habitual tendency to identify with certain kinds of positive male models—heroes who often took on the function of alter-egos for Freud. This tendency can be interpreted as a seeking of idealized identities, with each hero serving to help focus and define one aspect of Freud's fractured ego (really, an integrated ego with a number of serious fault lines). Each part of his ego somewhat anxiously sought to provide a new identity better than his father could provide. This search for new identities often was also an expression of Freud's narcissistic grandiosity—for example, his comparing himself to Moses.

⁸⁴ S. Freud (1940, C.P., 5, p. 375).

⁸⁵ S. Freud (1940, C.P., 5, p. 372).

⁸⁶ S. Freud (1940, C.P., 5, p. 373).

Here is a list of figures Freud is known to have identified with at some time of his life. Some were simply strong military heroes: Alexander the Great; William the Conqueror⁸⁷; Napoleon and his general Massena. Others were part of his anti-Rome ego: Hannibal, Hütten, Oliver Cromwell, Garibaldi.⁸⁸ Still others were part of his complex Jewish identity: Moses, who, according to Freud, wasn't a Jew; Jacob,⁸⁹ who wrestled with the angel; Joseph,⁹⁰ the interpreter of dreams. Others were part of his pro-Christian or ambivalent Christian self: Jesus, Scipio, St. Paul, and Brentano and Romain Rolland⁹¹ (both ex-Catholics). Some were part of his anti-Christian identity: Satan or the Devil, Oedipus, the Anti-Christ, Faust, Frolo, and perhaps Leonardo⁹² and Goethe⁹³ belong here. Others were scientific, professional, or artistic models whom Freud greatly admired: Brücke, Charcot, Fleischl,⁹⁴ Fliess,⁹⁵ and Schnitzler.⁹⁶ These different models all captured different parts of Freud's ego—different spirits (or demons) of Freud's personality. These identities and the motivation behind them can help account for the multicentered ambivalence of Freud, as well as his intense, often overriding fantasy life. The strength of Freud's fantasies, especially those fantasies connected to castration anxiety, was described by Jung as so strong that they could cause Freud to faint.⁹⁷ (One is also reminded here of Freud's involvement in the occult, his hearing of voices in Paris, the effects of cocaine, his belief in "revenants," and the like—all related to splitting.)

The symptoms of Freud described here are similar to those of various character disorders. The character disorder syndromes often have hysterical elements as well, and the various forms of character disorder are related to one another also. Specifically, I would like to propose that the previously mentioned "borderline character disorder" is probably the condition most relevant to an understanding of Freud's own abnormal psychology. Again, no claim is made that Freud was suffering from a typical "borderline character disorder," but only that aspects of this condition appear to have been present in him. Among them are the following conditions, all identified in the official DSM-III psychiatric diagnostic description:

⁸⁷ For Freud's identification with William the Conqueror, see Jones (1957, P. 228).

⁸⁸ For Garibaldi, see Roazen (1975, pp. 38-39).

⁸⁹ For Jacob, see Origins (pp. 318-319).

⁹⁰ For Joseph, see Shengold (1961/1979).

⁹¹ For Rolland, see Kanzer (1976/1979).

⁹² See footnote 169; Leonardo da Vinci (with whom it is clear Freud identified) was associated by Freud to the Anti-Christ. This theme is explicit in an historical novel based on Leonardo's life, *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* by Merejkowski (1902/1928; available in German translation from the original Russian in 1908 or earlier), which Freud read before writing his essay on Leonardo and cited in the essay several times.

⁹³ *Faust* obviously contains much of Goethe's character; it is a small jump, really, from Goethe's Faust to Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ* (1895/1931).

⁹⁴ Jones (1953, pp. 89-90).

⁹⁵ See Origins, especially the early letters; see also Jones (1953, Ch. 13) and Schur (1966/1979).

⁹⁶ See Letters (pp. 251, 339-340).

⁹⁷ Jung (1961, p. 156); see the discussion of Freud's tendency to fainting spells in Shengold (1976/1979, pp. 225-228); see also Rosenberg (1978, Part III).

1. Considerable uncertainty about identity; great concerns with the issue “Who am I?”⁹⁸
2. Very emotionally changeable evaluations of others, moving from complete idealization to extreme rejection.⁹⁹ Freud’s extreme idealizations and intense rejections of Breuer, Fliess, Jung, and others have already been noted.
3. Some substance abuse.¹⁰⁰ Freud’s cocaine use is of course applicable here, as well as his excessive and compulsive cigar smoking (i.e., serious nicotine addiction).¹⁰¹
4. Marked affective changes.¹⁰² Here, for example, can be considered Freud’s depressions of some duration.

The presence of this number and degree of the borderline character disorder diagnostic categories is the basis for my claim that Freud suffered from the problems of an attenuated “borderline character.”

We can now turn at long last to Freud’s explanation of the Devil who, he said, is the result of splitting.¹⁰³ Here are his major theoretical comments on the psychological origin of the Devil. The first interpretation was proposed by Breuer and Freud in *Studies on Hysteria*:

The split-off mind is the devil with which the unsophisticated observation of early superstitious times believed that these patients were possessed. It is true that a spirit alien to the patient’s waking consciousness holds sway in him; but the spirit is not in fact an alien one, but a part of his own.¹⁰⁴

As for the origin of this splitting, Freud proposed later that splitting “creates” the Devil by breaking the original father-image into two figures with opposite attributes. Indeed, for Freud, God and the Devil were once one, and were later split into two figures.¹⁰⁵ He proposed that a similar splitting happens in each individual to account for the psychological representation of God and the Devil: They are the representation of the good and bad father. Elsewhere, Freud suggested that the Devil is caused by a splitting of the *self* into good and bad representations.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ American Psychiatric Association (1980, p. 323).

⁹⁹ American Psychiatric Association (1980, p. 322).

¹⁰⁰ American Psychiatric Association (1980, p. 322).

¹⁰¹ Schur (1972, e.g., pp. 40-62, 91, etc.). Schur proposes that Freud had a heart condition combined with nicotine addiction in the 1890s. Cocaine may also have been a contributing factor, since this drug is now known to cause heart attacks.

¹⁰² American Psychiatric Association (1980, p. 323)

¹⁰³ My discussion here owes a great deal to a paper by Rizzuto (1976).

¹⁰⁴ Breuer & Freud (1893/1895, S.E., 2, p. 250).

¹⁰⁵ S. Freud (1923b, C.P., 4, pp. 446-451).

¹⁰⁶ See Rizzuto (1976, pp. 168, 169).

On the basis of the preceding Freudian analysis, one can, I believe, conclude that Freud's psyche was to some extent fractured into separate centers, and that at least one significant part of him was identified with the Devil. For example, in January and in August 1884—the year of the proposed April 30 cocaine-*Walpurgisnacht* pact—Freud referred to himself as a “miserable devil”¹⁰⁷ and a “poor little devil.”¹⁰⁸ One is also reminded of Freud's description of the Rat-Man, a description that seems apt for Freud himself: “[H]e had, as it were, disintegrated into three personalities.”¹⁰⁹ Presumably that part of Freud that identified with the Devil was mostly unconscious, was associated with his early sexual abuse, and represented the frightening aspects of his father-image initiated by the threat of castration.

That Freud's involvement with the demonic was something like this allows me to agree wholeheartedly with Shengold, a psychoanalyst, who, after summarizing Freud's struggle with Jung, proposes: “Freud discovered that he was Mephistopheles as well as Faust; the devils were not without but within.”¹¹⁰

Freud's Personality: Splitting and Object Relations Theory

In recent years, Freud's early theory on the nature of splitting has been augmented, and to some extent replaced, by a different interpretation based on object relations theory.¹¹¹ This theory of splitting is really a set of related interpretations proposed by such psychoanalysts as Mahler, Winnicott, Fairbairn,¹¹² Kernberg,¹¹³ and others. A common assumption by these writers is that splitting derives from the mother, rather than the father, and that it is a consequence of inadequate or traumatic mothering in the pre-Oedipal period (i.e., prior to the age of three). In this earlier period, especially from one and a half or two years of age to three, the child is involved in separating from the mother and developing an individual identity. If the mother is seriously inadequate, if she is absent for a prolonged period, or if she otherwise traumatizes or abuses the child, then splitting of the child's ego will often occur, and the process of separation and individuation will be incomplete. The child's internalized representation of the mother is split into “good mother” and “bad mother” components. Since this image is an important part of the child's own ego, the child therefore suffers from splitting.

Some object relations theorists, especially Melanie Klein, claim that the mother's behavior is only a secondary source of the bad mother.¹¹⁴ She proposes that the child is born with large amounts of innate rage and anger (a kind of death instinct theory), and that this is projected onto the mother by the child. Although I lean toward the more

¹⁰⁷ Letters (p. 85).

¹⁰⁸ Letters (p. 124).

¹⁰⁹ S. Freud (1909b, C.P., 3, p. 383).

¹¹⁰ Shengold (1976/1979, p. 200).

¹¹¹ For example, see the recent summary of these theories by Greenberg & Mitchell (1983).

¹¹² See Greenberg & Mitchell (1983, Ch. 9). For Mahler, see also Blanck & Blanck (1974, Ch. 4); Mahler (1971); and Mahler, Pine, & Bergman (1975). For Winnicott and for Fairbairn, see Greenberg & Mitchell (1983, Chs. 6 and 7).

¹¹³ Kernberg (1975, 1976); see also Greenberg & Mitchell (1983, Ch. 10).

¹¹⁴ See Greenberg & Mitchell (1983, Ch. 5).

environmentally determined origin of Freud's pre-Oedipal object relations problems, a Kleinian interpretation can also account for Freud's early psychology. For present purposes, since both theories can be used to interpret Freud's pre-Oedipal problems, there is no need to choose between them.

In the case of Freud, an object relations interpretation predicts that the negative aspects of his functional mother, the nanny, would have split or partially split to form a separate part of his ego. This "bad mother" or "bad nanny" component would be a kind of "witch image," and because the nanny told Freud about Hell and presumably about the Devil, this internalized bad mother would be closely linked to demonic themes. Freud's letters and other writings certainly do show a significant preoccupation with witches. Here it should be noted that witches are central figures in Goethe's *Faust*, especially at the *Walpurgisnacht* orgy. We may recall that Freud's important letter to Fliess of January 24, 1897 was all about witchcraft: He mentioned the *Malleus Maleficarum*, referred to a patient's nurse as a witch, and so forth.¹¹⁵ His theory of hysteria as analogous to possession implied that all female hysterics are witches; his description of the patient's nanny as ugly and elderly made her out as witch-like.

Peter Swales has very powerfully documented the witch theme in Freud's thought in three of his papers on Freud.¹¹⁶ For an understanding of the depth of Freud's personal "witch psychology," the reader should read them. But some of this involvement is captured in two quotes of Freud. In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, using a line from Goethe's *Faust*, Freud wrote: "We can only say, 'So after all we must bring in the witch'—the witch Meta psychology."¹¹⁷ Here he connected the witch to all higher speculation (i.e., "Meta psychology," and, by implication, theology). And in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Freud wrote, "we must have recourse to the witch prehistory or phylogenesis."¹¹⁸ In the context of the letter, Freud was implicitly connecting the witch to his own prehistory—his origins in early childhood.

The actual trauma precipitating the split could have been the nanny's abandoning Freud (when she was dismissed), as well as possible sexual abuse. Any tendency of Freud's own mother, Amalia, to reject young Sigmund (e.g., to stop nursing him, or to nurse a younger sibling, or even to leave him with the nanny much of the time) could also have contributed to the "bad mother" image. Otto Kernberg notes the close association of the internalized "bad object" to the tendency to use the mechanism of projection.¹¹⁹ In addition, he points out that grandiosity and omnipotent thoughts and feelings, aspects of which often characterized Freud's personality, are common features of people suffering from splitting.¹²⁰ Kernberg also links experiences of the internalized "bad" object to feelings of the uncanny¹²¹—an emotion already documented as being of significant interest for Freud.

The previous evidence, discussed above, is that Freud had some degree of serious

¹¹⁵ Origins (pp. 188-190).

¹¹⁶ Swales (1982b, 1982c, 1983a).

¹¹⁷ S. Freud (1937a, S.E., 23, p. 225).

¹¹⁸ S. Freud & Andreas-Salomé (1972, p. 80).

¹¹⁹ Kernberg (1975, p. 30; 1976, p. 150).

¹²⁰ Kernberg (1975, p. 33).

¹²¹ Kernberg (1975, p. 266; 1976, p. 64).

identification with the Devil or with matters demonic. The “witch” or “bad mother” or “bad nanny” interpretation has been brought in as an example of Freud’s involvement with a closely related theme. It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence that Freud actually identified with the witch, but only that this subject was for Freud closely linked to the Devil.

This association is well captured in a passage from the Witch’s Kitchen scene In *Faust*, quoted by Freud to Lou Andreas-Salomé in a letter discussing masturbation: “You are on familiar terms with the devil, and yet you shrink back from the flame.”¹²² These words are addressed by Mephistopheles to Faust, who is taken aback by a potion that emits a flame. A moment later, Faust drinks the potion to seal his *Walpurgisnacht* pact.

Freud’s Pact: Part Two

We return now to Freud’s pact as understood by Bakan: namely, that for Freud the Devil was a kind of metaphor derived from his experience of the powerful sexual and aggressive forces in the unconscious. Bakan argues that Freud perceived the impulses from the unconscious (or the id) as a kind of Hell, which his own self-analysis allowed him to be the first to explore.¹²³ Thus, Bakan explains the “pact” with the Devil as a kind of psychological strategy, by which Freud decided to suspend his superego—his moral or higher judgmental capacities—in order to explore the lower, hellish world of the unconscious. This explanation, of course, means that Freud had no pact with the Devil as a supernatural figure or even as a personal figure in any psychologically real sense, but instead that he reached a special kind of internal agreement: He had to be willing to go to Hell, to delve into psychological “Hell,” in order to understand his own instinctual passions. (It should be pointed out that neither Aeneas nor Dante, whose voyages to the nether regions Freud referred to, was obliged to enter into such a pact in order to descend into Hell.)

Before returning to Bakan and the issue of a pact, let us take up Freud’s psychological explanation of the Devil, given in his 1923 paper *A Neurosis of Demoniacal Possession in the Seventeenth Century*. There Freud explicitly claimed:

What in those days were thought to be evil spirits to us are base and evil wishes, the derivatives of impulses which have been rejected and repressed. In one respect only do we *not* subscribe to the explanation of these phenomena current in medieval times; we have abandoned the projection of them into the outer world, attributing their origin instead to the inner life of the patient....¹²⁴

The paper itself was a detailed discussion of a case history from the 17th century in Austria, in which it was reported that a painter, one Christoph Haitzmann, had twice made a pact with the Devil and had been redeemed through the Virgin Mary. A

¹²² S. Freud & Andreas-Salomé (1972, pp. 72, 225). Freud quotes the same line to Jung in a letter (see S. Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 211).

¹²³ Bakan (1958).

¹²⁴ S. Freud (1923b, C.P., 4, p. 437). Apropos of this case, Freud also made the interesting comment: “Despite the somatic ideology of the era of ‘exact’ science, the demonological theory of the dark ages has in the long run justified itself” (S. Freud, 1923b, C.P., 4, p. 436).

noteworthy thing about Freud's treatment of the case was the set of reasons why the artist made the pact, reasons to which Freud gave considerable prominence. The man was motivated to sign up with the Devil not for money, power, or women, but rather because (1) his father had recently died; (2) he was depressed (suffered from melancholia); and (3) he was unable to work and thus was anxious about the future.¹²⁵

Now Bakan shows very persuasively that all three of these reasons were clearly present in Freud's life in the decade of the 1890s.¹²⁶ During these years Freud was often very depressed, and as a consequence unable to work. As a further consequence, he was concerned about his livelihood—about just meeting the daily expenses of his rather large household. Freud's depression was also in many respects the result of his lack of advancement and success—for example, his failure to get promoted to the rank of professor while others around him were being promoted. And, of course, Freud's father died in 1896, and he described this as a deep and troubling loss. Cocaine use and withdrawal symptoms would constitute another major source of depression. As a result, Bakan's case for the remarkable similarities between the situation of the painter Haitzmann in the 17th century and that of Freud in the 1890s is in many respects quite convincing.

But there are sound reasons to believe that there was much more to Freud's dealings with the Devil than Bakan's purely "psychological" interpretation would suggest—that they started earlier, and had deeper, more complex, and less rationalistic roots. First, as pointed out above, what about Swales's discovery of Freud's *Walpurgisnacht* cocaine, procured from Merck and taken 12 years before the death of his father? (The cocaine was taken, we should note, at a period when Freud's psychological preoccupations—his separation anxiety and the depressions triggered by his fiancée's move away from Vienna—were even more conducive to a pact than later.) And what of his early 1886-1888 articles, in which he referred to hysterical symptoms as being like those of witches and other people described as possessed?¹²⁷ (The connection of cocaine use with the occult and black witchcraft has been rediscovered in recent years.)

If we look again and more carefully at Freud's fascination with the Devil and demonic pacts, it is not hard to come to an interpretation of Freud's pact that is more specific and more extreme than Bakan's thesis, but an interpretation that is generally consistent with Bakan's position. In order to develop this proposed more explicit notion of a pact, it is important to remember Bakan's essential argument. Bakan claims that the Haitzmann article, whatever it might show about Haitzmann, definitely expressed Freud's own psychological state; that it was filled with Freud's own projected concerns, and hence that it implicates Freud in some kind of pact. This understanding is accepted here, and it gives the basis for looking for additional important autobiographical elements in this case.

First, the similarities of the Haitzmann case to Goethe's *Faust* clearly underline the special psychological attraction of the story for Freud. Besides involving a demonic pact, the Haitzmann case begins with the Devil, as a merchant with a black dog, much like the start of *Faust* (see Figure 5-1). The story ends with the pact being broken and

¹²⁵ S. Freud (1923b, C.P., 4, pp. 443 ff.).

¹²⁶ Bakan (1958).

¹²⁷ S. Freud (1886, S.E., 1, p. 11; 1888, S.E., 1, p. 41).

Haitzmann saved through the intervention of a beautiful young woman—in this case, the Virgin Mary (see Figure 5-2).



Figure 5-1. Haitzmann, *The Devil as Merchant*.
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

There is also now new evidence provided by Vandendriessche that supports Freud's tendency to project his own psychology onto the Haitzmann case.¹²⁸



Figure 5-2. Haitzmann, detail of *The Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus* (devotional painting from the town of Mariazell). The painter represents himself at the bottom kneeling in front of four monks.
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

In his interpretation of the meaning of the historical documents, Freud first identified the painter's motives for making a pact (already noted above). Freud then focused on the documents' reference to Haitzmann's making *two* pacts with the devil—the first in ink, the second in blood (see Figure 5-3 and 5-4). Since the dates of these two pacts

¹²⁸ Vandendriessche (1965).

appear to have been a year apart, and because of various ambiguities in other dates and in Haitzmann's response to the supposed two pacts, Freud tried to show that there was only one pact with the Devil—the one in blood. The first pact in ink was presumed by Freud to be a fabrication by Haitzmann, and Freud tried to argue that the painter unconsciously slipped in ways to show that the ink pact never really occurred. This very peculiar concern of Freud—that only the blood pact was real—was the central issue of the paper. One would think that Freud might have attempted to psychoanalytically explain in some detail the neurotic basis behind belief in the Devil; instead, he was preoccupied with showing that Haitzmann made only *one* pact.



Figure 5-3. Haitzmann, *The Devil with the Ink Pact*.
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

Vandendriessche's rebuttal of Freud's evidence that the ink pact was fabricated is extremely thorough. (As already noted, it is important to keep in mind that in this case all the evidence exists in historical documents that are available for anyone to study, unlike a normal case history). Vandendriessche has studied the documents carefully, and his conclusions are simple and firmly supported by objective evidence. He concludes that there were, in fact, two pacts, and that if Freud had known more about history (especially the history of legal documents), he would have been less likely to deny the first pact, the ink pact. Vandendriessche shows that in Austro-German culture at the time of the Haitzmann pact, it was customary to have a legal contract in "two consecutive yet unequal phases, each of which gave rise to the signing of a document."¹²⁹ The first of these was a provisional text (in the Haitzmann case, this would be the ink pact), and the second was a more officially binding document (for Haitzmann, the blood pact). Vandendriessche also shows that Freud's attempt to explain away the first pact in ink on psychoanalytic grounds was "insufficiently free from his own preoccupations: it [Freud's interpretation] transmits an historical picture that repeatedly assumes the form of Freud's own problem."¹³⁰ That is, Vandendriessche documents that Freud was insufficiently objective, even with the facts at his disposal.¹³¹ For example, it is not at all clear that Haitzmann's father had recently died; the word used in the document reporting the death just meant a parent or possibly just a member

¹²⁹ Vandendriessche (1965, p. 175).

¹³⁰ Vandendriessche (1965, p. 167).

¹³¹ Vandendriessche (1965, pp. 164-167).

of the family. The basic bias of Freud, however, was to consider important information in the case as having its roots in deception when straightforward historical information could account for the supposed problems.



Figure 5-4. Haitzmann, *The Devil with the Blood Pact*.
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

The arguments against Freud in the Haitzmann interpretation are very analogous to those of Meyer Schapiro and of Jack Spector in their mutually supportive rebuttals of Freud's interpretation of Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* (already discussed in Chapter One). In that instance, also, Freud projected himself and his preoccupations at the cost of distorting the facts available to him, as well as at the cost of ignoring historical explanations.¹³² In other words, the fact that Freud showed a strong tendency to project himself into his interpretations of historical cases supports my intention of looking for additional evidence of his projection.

But if Freud was really putting much of his own psychology into the Haitzmann interpretation, the question arises: What does that imply about Freud's pact with the Devil? I propose that Freud's language describing a pact is an apt description of his own pact. Freud interpreted Haitzmann's pact as a "neurotic fantasy,"¹³³ and not merely as some kind of metaphor for a suspended superego. Thus I propose that Freud had neurotic fantasies about the Devil and that at some time, while fantasizing, he concluded a pact.

Now one hypothesis is that Freud, as in his interpretation of Haitzmann, made only one pact (not two), and that he made this in blood. That is, he "sealed" his fantasy pact by cutting himself slightly in order to use real blood. When and how might this have taken place? Here, the Swalesian interpretation of Freud's taking cocaine on *Walpurgisnacht* in 1884 strongly suggests a considerably earlier date than Bakan considers. Perhaps shortly after April 30, 1884, or perhaps later, in the 1890s, Freud took cocaine via

¹³² The other major Freudian analysis of a historical figure is the well-known Schreber case (S. Freud, 1911a, C.P., 3, 390-466). Here again, the historical evidence has been looked at by others, and Freud has again been found to be in error and to have grossly distorted things through his own preoccupations. See Schatzman (1976) and also Israëls (1981).

¹³³ S. Freud (1923b, C.P., 4, p. 448).

hypodermic needle and in the process bled slightly, thus “fortuitously” allowing a blood pact to be sealed. (Swales has proposed that Freud might have injected himself with cocaine on occasion. Freud very early suggested in print that the hypodermic needle be used to administer cocaine; he later denied he made such a suggestion, thus showing his anxiety about this method of taking cocaine.¹³⁴)

Here, a very strange statement by Freud, made in a letter to Fliess, suggests itself as relevant.¹³⁵ The situation involved a patient of Fliess and Freud’s named Emma, who had been badly treated by Fliess in an operation on her nose. Another doctor discovered that Fliess had left “at least half a meter of gauze”¹³⁶ in her nose by accident. The bungled operation resulted in the patient’s bleeding, even to the point of coming close to death. Freud, in trying to cover up for Fliess, went so far as to argue that this hemorrhaging, obviously caused by the botched operation, could be attributed to the patient’s neurotic fantasies—that is, to her being an hysteric. Freud wrote; “Emma has a scene [in mind] where the *Diabolus* sticks pins into her finger and puts a piece of candy on each drop of blood.”¹³⁷ This quote sounds much more like Freud’s reminiscences of needles and cocaine—and the occult—than the natural expression of Emma Eckstein, a Jewish woman of 32 and a strong feminist.¹³⁸

It is very possible that Freud’s frequent use of cocaine itself induced neurotic fantasies (hallucinations) of a demonic kind, not unlike those in *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. Again, the specifics are hard (and perhaps impossible) to track down, but the evidence certainly points to something more than a metaphoric pact. (This is no criticism of Bakan, whose thesis appeared years before much of the present evidence was available. Indeed, in retrospect, Velikovsky’s hypothesis and especially Bakan’s thesis of a pact are remarkably prescient.¹³⁹)

Another hypothesis concerning Freud’s pact is a variation on the preceding. This interpretation, also modeled on the Haitzmann case, is that Freud, like Haitzmann, made two pacts at different times in his life. Presumably, the first would have been in 1884, on April 30 or shortly after; the second would have been not too long after his father’s death, during his self-analysis. This would have been some time between 1896 and 1898, when his letters to Fliess were filled with Roman themes and references to the Devil. This was also a time of serious depression and of professional, doubt. Indeed, this is when Bakan proposes that Freud made his metaphoric pact,¹⁴⁰ and this is also the time of those dreams that Velikovsky argues show Freud making a Faust pact.¹⁴¹ It is even possible that Freud’s first pact was in writing and the second, at the time of the

¹³⁴ Freud suggested using a needle in 1885 (S. Freud, 1885/1974, p. 109), and denied it in his discussion of the Irma dream (S. Freud, 1900, S.E., 4, p. 117).

¹³⁵ The letter is available in Schur’s “Day Residues” paper; see Schur (1966/1979).

¹³⁶ Schur (1966/1979, p. 96).

¹³⁷ Schur (1966/1979, p. 114).

¹³⁸ Swales (1982b, p. 9); Masson (1984).

¹³⁹ Jones also seems to have some intuition of Freud’s “pact” when he writes that Freud “was a man possessed by a daemon—a man vouchsafed an overwhelming revelation that took possession of his soul and never let him go.”

¹⁴⁰ Bakan (1958); see also Kanzer (1961/1979) for a discussion of Freud’s frequent “demonic” references to his own psychology.

¹⁴¹ Velikovsky (1941, p. 490).

“Emma” quote above, in blood. (Freud’s labored interpretation of the Haitzmann case, according to this second hypothesis, would therefore have been an expression of Freud’s denial of his own first pact.)

There is a curious piece of information to support the hypothesis of Freud’s two pacts. On April 28, 1885, one year (minus two days) after his 1884 *Walpurgisnacht* cocaine episode, Freud wrote to Martha that the chemist was to pay him for his cocaine research on April 30, a kind of one-year anniversary payment. He then went on to tell Martha that he had almost finished destroying “all my notes of the past fourteen years, as well as letters, scientific excerpts, and the manuscripts of my papers.”¹⁴² He would presumably have completed what he called a “worthy funeral” for his papers (a kind of *auto-da-fé*) by April 30, the first anniversary of his *Walpurgisnacht* pact. This destruction of his papers, Freud wrote, would be resented by “a number of yet unborn and unfortunate people—my biographers.”¹⁴³ (And he was absolutely right about this!) However, let me suggest that at this time, April 28, 1885, as the memory of his pact was revived and as the first severe criticisms of his cocaine work were starting to surface, Freud burned his own written pact along with his other notes and writings. Of course, the memory remained to serve later as the motive for his denial of such a pact in the Haitzmann paper. One other piece of possibly relevant evidence for Freud’s making two pacts is that he destroyed his letters and personal writings *two* times in his life—the first in April 1885, the second in 1907.¹⁴⁴ This latter date would have been about nine years after his proposed second pact—a “pact” that others suggest took place near the end of his self-analysis (i.e., circa 1898).

For my part, I find it hard to choose between these two hypotheses. But let us now leave the pact issue to focus on a related issue: Freud’s involvement with the occult. It is clear that Freud was far from being a consistent scientific rationalist.

Freud and the Occult

Throughout his life, Freud was strongly attracted to the occult in various forms. Ernest Jones gives a great deal of evidence for Freud’s involvement in such phenomena.¹⁴⁵ As to the reality of spirits, telepathy, and the like, Freud vacillated rather sharply between a very skeptical “no” and a believing “yes.” His relationship with the occult had certain important similarities to his relationship with religion. In both, there was a tendency to public denial and private acceptance, no doubt expressing Freud’s great ambivalence. For example, all of Freud’s publications relating to psychical or occult forces provided rationalistic interpretations in terms of psychological processes, mainly unconscious. But in private conversations and in his letters, Freud voiced very different sentiments. And Jones admits that Freud’s favorite quotation, when such questions arose, was “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Letters (p. 140).

¹⁴³ Letters (p. 141).

¹⁴⁴ Jones (1953, p. xii).

¹⁴⁵ Jones (1959, Ch. 14).

¹⁴⁶ Jones (1959, p. 381).

Freud was often quite superstitious—a fact that he admitted on several occasions. He was, in particular, almost obsessed with numbers, especially with those that he thought foretold the year of his death. (Two of Freud’s psychoanalytic colleagues, Jung and Ferenczi, were very involved in the occult and at times had a strong influence on him.¹⁴⁷) There were moments when Freud expressed great enthusiasm for psychical research, and he once wrote that perhaps if he had his life to live over again he would “devote myself to psychical research rather than to psychoanalysis.”¹⁴⁸ Later, he denied that he had in fact written this, thus revealing his ambivalence and repression of the issue.¹⁴⁹ Freud was particularly inclined to believe in telepathy or thought transference, and often referred to its possibility; however, in public—in his scientific writings—only his skeptical position was expressed.

Freud did acknowledge, in an essay written with the express purpose of interpreting rationally and hence “debunking” belief in spirits, that at times he found himself believing in them: “Consider now the fact that belief in spirits, apparitions and returning souls, which finds so much support in the religions to which, at least as children, we [!] have all clung, has by no means entirely vanished among all educated people.”¹⁵⁰ Jones, who quotes this, goes on to describe how taken aback Freud was on encountering the sister of a dead patient, whom she closely resembled. Freud said that he thought to himself, “so after all it is true that the dead may return.”¹⁵¹

If part of Freud could believe in telepathy, poltergeists, and the returning spirits of the dead, then part of him could certainly believe in the Devil.

Freud and the Anti-Christ

Freud’s memory slip with respect to the Signorelli frescos has been introduced earlier (see Chapter Three), but it turns out that this incident is rich in connections to Christianity, and I return to it here. Freud’s own analysis of his inability to remember the name of this artist was not just a trivial lapse; rather, within psychoanalysis, it is considered to be “the prime specimen of a ‘Freudian slip.’”¹⁵² Much of its deeper psychological and some of its important religious significance has been identified by the psychoanalyst Schimek, and in this treatment I draw on his insights. To set the stage, the reader should look at these frescos, found in the exquisite small cathedral (*duomo*) at Orvieto; details of the frescos are shown in Figures 5-6, 5-7, and 5-8.

Now Freud could not remember the artist’s name. His closest association was “Botticelli”; he had the last part right but missed the crucial first part, “Signor.” Zilboorg,¹⁵³ as mentioned above, sees this as evidence of Freud’s repression of God’s name: “*Signor*” and “*Herr*.” Schimek, though unaware of Zilboorg’s earlier short

¹⁴⁷ Jones (1959, pp. 383-407).

¹⁴⁸ Jones (1957, pp. 391-392).

¹⁴⁹ Jones (1957, pp. 391-392).

¹⁵⁰ S. Freud, quoted by Jones (1959, p. 383).

¹⁵¹ Jones (1959, p. 383).

¹⁵² Schimek (1974, p. 210).

¹⁵³ Zilboorg (1962).

discussion, comes to the same conclusion as part of his deeper theoretical analysis.

Freud explained his lapse by associations to the place to which he was traveling, Herzegovina.¹⁵⁴ “Herzegovina” he connected to “*Herr Doktor*”—that is, the “Lord Doctor,” but not the “Lord God.” He also associated this country with the Turks, and with an anecdote about the alleged great importance attached to sexuality by these people (exemplified by the belief that it is better to die than to lose one’s capacity for sex). All this reminded Freud of a recent unpleasant message from one of his patients, with whom he had taken a great deal of trouble. This patient had just committed suicide on account of his depression over an incurable sexual disorder. Freud concluded that these associations accounted for his own repression of the name “Signorelli.”

It is curious that Freud began the investigation of his slip by the categorical (and unsupported) statement: “The reason why the name Signorelli was lost is not to be found in anything special about the name itself or in any psychological characteristics of the context in which it was introduced.”¹⁵⁵ As Schimek so aptly puts it, Freud’s denial was an example of what Freud himself described as the defense of negation: “You ask who this person in the dream can be. It’s *not* my mother.”¹⁵⁶



Figure 5-6. Signorelli, *Hell* (detail).
(Archivio Fotografico Plurigraf Narni-Terni-Italia)

Somewhat later, Freud did hint that there may be some connection between the painting and the themes of death and sexuality, but he did not follow it up; he left the reader with the slip “explained” on the basis of the external surface associations mentioned above.

¹⁵⁴ S. Freud (1901, S.E., 6, pp. 2-4).

¹⁵⁵ S. Freud (1901, S.E., 6, p. 2); Schimek (1974, pp. 211-212).

¹⁵⁶ Schimek (1974, pp. 213-214).

Schimek's primary point is that Freud's deep, underlying anxiety about death, sexuality, and religion was a far more probable basis for the memory failure. Schimek rejects Freud's explanation as superficial; I summarize his interesting remarks here.

Schimek notes that once one has seen the paintings in question, one need not seek far to find a connection to the topics of death and sexuality: These frescos of Heaven and Hell consist in large part "of an apocalyptic vision of hundreds of naked bodies in various postures of lust and torment"¹⁵⁷. Schimek then goes on to underline the theme of the "guilty therapist" (or the "bad doctor") as it involves the paintings and Freud's associations to them. One of the events that Freud connected to his slip was, as mentioned, the recent suicide of one of his patients. This raised the issue of his therapeutic competence in a most painful way. Freud had often been plagued by doubts about his therapeutic competence. Schimek mentions the Irma (Emma) dream as having a heavy preoccupation with what Freud termed "professional conscientiousness."¹⁵⁸ The dream is regularly interpreted as containing evidence of Freud's guilt over the bad treatment of Emma (the woman with the nasal hemorrhage).¹⁵⁹ Schimek also identifies the relevance of Freud's nanny to the religious themes of the paintings—Heaven and Hell—and also to sexuality. In Freud's recollection of his early years, he wrote in his letters to Fliess:

[T]he whole dream was full of the most wounding references to my present uselessness as a therapist...she [presumably the nanny] encouraged me to steal (coins) to give her.... The dream can be summed up as bad treatment. Just as the old woman got money from me for her bad treatment of me, so do I get money for the bad treatment of my patients.¹⁶⁰

All of this highlights the complex links between and among the anxiety over his patient's recent suicide, the topics of the frescos, his old nanny, his identification with her and her bad treatment, and the themes of death and sexuality.

There are still other connections here that are not developed by Schimek, but that are well worth our attention. Details of the fresco that Freud remembered the most clearly, a fresco devoted to the Anti-Christ, are shown in Figure 5-7 and 5-8. We know that Freud saw and remembered this particular fresco, because he explicitly said, "I saw before my eyes, with special sharpness, the artist's self-portrait—with a serious face and folded hands"¹⁶¹; this self-portrait is shown in Figure 5-7.

¹⁵⁷ Schimek (1974, pp. 213-215).

¹⁵⁸ Schimek (1974, pp. 222-223).

¹⁵⁹ For example, see Schur (1966/1979).

¹⁶⁰ *Origins* (p. 220).

¹⁶¹ S. Freud (1898, S.E., 3, p. 290).



Figure 5-7. Signorelli, *Preaching of the Anti-Christ*
(Archivio Fotografico Plurigraf Narni-Terni-Italia)

Now there are several reasons to think that Freud may have associated himself with the Anti-Christ. This figure, like Faust, is portrayed here as carrying out false miracles (in particular, false cures); also like Faust, he is shown with the Devil whispering in his ear. Freud early in his career used hypnotism for psychological “cures,” but later dropped the technique as being seriously inadequate. Yet he wrote that while using hypnotism he enjoyed “the reputation of a miracle worker.”¹⁶² It was at about the same time that Freud often visited the Anna von Lieben household to treat Anna; here he was known by the children as “The Magician.”¹⁶³ (We may recall also that in Goethe’s work, Faust makes a point of describing his medical cures as accidents, as fakes.) Such a Faust-and-Mephistopheles pair as is portrayed in the fresco (see Figure 5-8) would certainly have attracted Freud. Swales, who first brought these connections to my attention, has also pointed out that there is even a certain physical similarity between the face of the Signorelli Anti-Christ and that of Freud. See also the iconographic and thematic similarity of this Signorelli portrayal to two other paintings of significance for Freud: Titian’s *Maundy Money* and Dürer’s *The Kiss of Judas*.

¹⁶² S. Freud (1925, S.E., 20, p. 17).

¹⁶³ Swales (1985).



Figure 5-8. Signorelli, *Preaching of the Anti-Christ*
(Archivio Fotografico Plurigraf Narni-Terme-Italia)

Finally, while it is clear that the theme of the “bad doctor” was implicit in the recent suicide of Freud’s patient, Freud’s sense of guilt as a false healer would also probably have come from his earlier advocacy of cocaine—a drug that brings temporary relief at the frequent price of long-term destruction. And his approach to the cure of hysterics may well have posed the same questions: Am I really curing my patients? Are they really getting better, and if so, is it my therapy that is healing them? (Evidence of the curative character of psychoanalysis was always rather weak, and in fact still is; Freud took to expressing a lack of interest in the whole issue of whether psychoanalysis cures patients.)

The idea of the Anti-Christ is an interesting one, and since it bears so directly on Freud, it needs a brief introduction. The Anti-Christ is a figure referred to in a few of the prophetic passages of the Old and New Testaments. The idea of the Anti-Christ has been elaborated by writers over the centuries. As a result, the Anti-Christ has become a complex figure with many literary and legendary features, which surround and sometimes overlie its scriptural origin. Certain characteristics are usually agreed upon, however.¹⁶⁴ The Anti-Christ is most commonly understood to be an actual human being, possessed by the Devil, who will come during a time of world wide troubles. These troubles will involve great disasters and are interpreted as the Last Days. During this time, Rome will be destroyed, and Christians will be hunted out and killed in large numbers. The Anti-Christ is supposed to reign for a period of three and a half years. He is supposed to be of Jewish origin and will be a false Messiah for many Jews, and for many others as well throughout the world. Often it is assumed that he will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This period, the reign of the Anti-Christ, will end with his destruction and with the Second Coming of Christ.

¹⁶⁴ See Maas (1907, pp. 559-562); Rodriguez & Dyer (1967, pp. 616-618); Boussett (1895/1896); and Miceli (1981).

For our purposes, only a few aspects of the Anti-Christ legend are relevant. These are that he will be an enemy of Christ, a true Anti-Christ; that he will be Jewish in origin; and that he will be a real person who will, as St. Jerome put it, be possessed of all of Satan's energy.¹⁶⁵ He will be associated with the destruction of Rome, and may be a pseudoMessiah for the Jews (perhaps even destroying their true Messiah). A powerful figure, he will be known for his false miracles and false cures.

It should be kept in mind that in the later part of the 19th century, the notion of the Anti-Christ was, to a considerable degree, in the intellectual atmosphere. I think it can hardly be doubted that Freud knew Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ* (1895/1931). Some years earlier, Renan, a favorite of Breuer, had published his *Anti-Christ* (1873/1899). Editions of both these Anti-Christ books are listed in Freud's personal library: the Renan in French (no date); Nietzsche's in two forms (as part of Nietzsche's complete works, and in an English translation dated 1928).¹⁶⁶ In early 1900, Freud wrote to Fliess that he had "just acquired Nietzsche, in whom I hope to find words for much that remains mute in me...."¹⁶⁷ Wilhelm Boussett's *The Anti-Christ Legend* (1895/1896) is also a possible influence on Freud—not to mention the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which, as noted in Chapter Four, refers to the Anti-Christ. It should also be kept in mind that Faust is in many respects an Anti-Christ figure and that the Anti-Christ concept contributed to the origins of the Faust legend.¹⁶⁸

One further piece of evidence suggests itself. In 1910, prior, to writing his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, Freud read *The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci* by the Russian writer Dmitri Merejkowski. Freud certainly knew this work well, since he cited it often in his essay,¹⁶⁹ and Freud's portrayal of Leonardo was similar to that of the Russian writer. Merejkowski's historical romance is part of a trilogy called *Christ and Anti-Christ*, and without doubt the author represents Leonardo as a kind of Renaissance Faust or Anti-Christ figure. The story comes complete with a dramatic *Walpurgisnacht* scene,¹⁷⁰ as well as regular references to Leonardo as impious and sometimes perhaps as the Anti-Christ.¹⁷¹ Like Faust, Leonardo in the novel is haunted by a woman of great beauty; also like Faust, in spite of his life of religious skepticism (even apostasy), Leonardo is portrayed as receiving the last rites and dying as a faithful son of the Church.¹⁷² The atmosphere of this lengthy novel is much like that of C. F. Meyer's works set in Italy. That is, it is a somber, complex, Italian Catholic environment, in which great historical figures interact in ways rich with irony, sophistication, ambiguity, and ambivalence. At the center stands Leonardo–Faust–Anti-Christ.

In short, the possibility that Freud saw himself, at least in certain aspects, as the Anti-Christ must be taken seriously. And, indeed, it is only in this light that Velikovsky's hypothesis of a diabolical pact involving baptism might make sense. That is, Freud's notion of himself as the Anti-Christ might have required his conversion—his entry into

¹⁶⁵ Boussett (1895/1896, Ch. 10).

¹⁶⁶ See Lewis & Landis (1957) for the Renan; see Trosman & Simmons (1973) for the Nietzsche.

¹⁶⁷ S. Freud (1985, p. 398).

¹⁶⁸ Wegner (1962, pp. 15-16, 125).

¹⁶⁹ S. Freud (1910a, S.E., 11, e.g., pp. 81, 122; footnotes, pp. 73, 102, 103, 104, 111).

¹⁷⁰ Merejkowski (1902/1928, pp. 112-119).

¹⁷¹ Merejkowski (1902/1928, pp. 13, 19, 32, 38, 61, etc.).

¹⁷² Merejkowski (1902/1928, p. 626).

the Church. Some of Bakan's Sabbatian evidence can also be viewed as part of an Anti-Christ identification; that is, the Anti-Christ is part of a Jewish tradition of a false Messiah (though Bakan does not introduce this idea).

One other important characteristic of early psychoanalysis seems relevant here. In 1913, Freud established a special committee of loyal followers of his thought. This inner sanctum, at its start, consisted of Otto Rank, Sándor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones, and Hanns Sachs. This committee's existence and actions were to be "strictly secret." Each member, to signify his membership, was given an antique Greek intaglio to be mounted on a gold ring. Roazen comments that these rings "marked the recipients as specially chosen bearers of his [Freud's] message."¹⁷³

Sachs, a lawyer by training, soon became an important training analyst, one who devoted himself to analyzing future psychoanalysts. Roazen notes that Sachs wrote about his training period in a way that shows his view of psychoanalysis as a religion, not as a science:

Religions have always demanded a trial period, a novitiate, of those among their devotees who desired to give their entire life into the service of the supermundane and the supernatural, those, in other words, who were to become monks or priests.... It can be seen that analysis needs something corresponding to the novitiate of the Church.¹⁷⁴

The possibility that important aspects of Freud's thought represent a systematic critique of and rival to Christianity requires that we now take up a major new topic.

Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus

The central concept in Freud's work, aside from the unconscious, is the now well-known Oedipus complex. In the case of male personality development, the essential features of this complex are the following: Roughly during the age period from three to six, the boy develops a craving for power, hatred of his father, and a strong sexual desire for his mother. At the same time, the boy develops an intense fear of the father and a desire to supplant him. The hatred is based on the boy's knowledge that the father, with his greater size and strength, stands in the way of his desire. The child's fear of the father may explicitly be a fear of castration by the father, but more typically it has a less specific character. The son does not really kill the father, of course, but patricide is assumed to be a common preoccupation of his fantasies and dreams. The "resolution" of the complex is supposed to occur in part through the boy's recognition that he cannot replace his father, and in part through the fear of castration (which eventually leads the boy to identify with the father, the aggressor, and to repress the original frightening components of the complex).

Freud also elaborated a cultural-historical model of this complex, which he described in

¹⁷³ Roazen (1975, p. 323).

¹⁷⁴ Sachs, quoted by Roazen (1975, p. 323). The cult-like and religious aspects of Freud and his students are also noted by Fromm (1959).

Totem and Taboo (1913). In this book, Freud greatly extended the idea of Oedipal man by hypothesizing an Oedipal origin of religion. Freud put his ideas very pithily, and I quote him here at some length. He began by postulating that the earliest stage of society consisted of “a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up.” However,

one day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end to the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually.¹⁷⁵

Freud explained the eating of the murdered father by declaring that

in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind’s earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion.¹⁷⁶

Freud concluded his interpretation with a reference to motivation of an Oedipal type:

After they had got rid of him, had satisfied their hatred and had put into effect their wish to identify themselves with him, the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance, which coincided with the remorse felt by the whole group. The dead father became stronger than the living one had been.... They revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for their father; and they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free.¹⁷⁷

This development in *Totem and Taboo* closely parallels Freud’s presentation of the Oedipus complex elsewhere—for example, in *The Ego and the Id* (1923a)—with, however, one interesting difference. In Freud’s discussion of the origin of religion in *Totem and Taboo*, there was relatively more concern with violence (i.e., the sons’ hatred of and rebellion against the father) than in his other Oedipal writings, where Freud placed heavier emphasis on the sexual link to the mother (the incest theme).

Now central to Christian theology is the doctrine of original sin, the essential nature of which is rebellion against God. As we have seen, this theme of rebellion against God was an obsessive preoccupation of Freud’s; it is central in much of the literature in which he immersed himself. Intrinsic to such rebellion is the attempt to replace God in his role as ruler over human life. Lucifer leads an army of angels against God, hoping to take His place on the throne of Heaven. Adam and Eve disobey the Creator, after having been tempted with the promise, “You will be like God.”¹⁷⁸ Freud’s concept of the

¹⁷⁵ S. Freud (1913, S.E., 13, p. 141).

¹⁷⁶ S. Freud (1913, S.E., 13, p. 142).

¹⁷⁷ S. Freud (1913, S.E., 13, p. 143).

¹⁷⁸ Genesis 3:5.

Oedipus complex is obviously interpretable as a powerful psychological representation of the universal desire to be like God: to sin by rebellion, by disobedience, by striving to become the autonomous ruler over one’s own and others’ lives.

Now, in a Christian framework, Jesus provides the model for the negation—in fact, for the canceling out or removal—of the Oedipal structure. In contrast to Oedipal man, Jesus shows not intense hatred but perfect love for God the Father. This love is expressed in what has been called “radical obedience”—that is, total identification with the Father’s will (whereas Oedipal man shows radical disobedience). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently speaks of doing his Father’s will and not his own: “I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me”¹⁷⁹; “not my will, but thine, be done.”¹⁸⁰ The result of this radical obedience is the death of the Son. He is not killed by the Father, but by a group of conflict-filled, frightened, and hateful men. That is, the group of brothers kills not the Father but the Son. It is then the Son’s death that occurs, and not the Father’s, as was the case for Oedipal man. The results of this death are not the guilt and remorse that follow the Oedipal murder, but atonement, resurrection, and joy. There is a “rebirth,” in which the Father and Son are now together and not estranged. The followers of Jesus—the new group of brothers (brothers in Christ)—are called to become sons of God by modeling their lives on that of Jesus. One important way in which this is done is through Holy Communion, in which the followers are commanded to eat the body and drink the blood of the Son in the bread and wine; this “totemic” meal is the opposite of Freud’s postulated ancient father-focused Oedipal meal.

To round out the Anti-Oedipal pattern, Jesus shows no sign of sexual desire for his mother; in fact, by choosing celibate life, he explicitly puts sexuality completely aside as a determining motivation. In short, the life of Jesus is the life of *Anti-Oedipus* (see Table 5-1).

Table 5-1. Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus: A Summary of the Ways in Which the Life of Jesus is the Negation of the Life of Freud’s Oedipal Man

Oedipal Man: The old man (from Freud)	Jesus: The new man (from Gospels)
1. The son hates the father.	1. The Son loves the Father.
2. The son shows radical disobedience to the father.	2. The Son shows radical obedience to the Father.
3. The son wants sexual possession of the mother (or all women of the group)	3. The Son renounces sexual possession of all women.
4. Radical disobedience results in death of the father, in fantasy or supposedly in fact in the ancient past.	4. Radical obedience results in death of the Son
5. Death of the father is caused by the son or by a band of brothers (sons) who hate the father.	5. Death of the Son is caused by a band of brothers who hate the Son.

¹⁷⁹ John 5:30.

¹⁸⁰ Luke 22:42.

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| <p>6. Death of the father is followed by failed resurrection in the form of a created father-totem, by emotions of guilt and remorse, and by permanent separation and estrangement of father and son.</p> <p>7. Death of the father leads to the son's identification with the father, now incorporated as superego, or to the band of brothers' identification with the father-totem.</p> <p>8. The old sons identify with the father in a totemic meal in which the father is eaten</p> <p>9. The new band, feeling guilt partly from their sexual motives, renounces the women and creates the rule of outmarriage (exogamy). Thus, the women take the name of some other group's father.</p> <p>10. In short: Hatred and disobedience leading to death of the father bring original sin.</p> | <p>6. Death of the Son is followed by resurrection of the Son, by the emotions of joy and happiness, and by the complete reunion and identity of Father and Son.</p> <p>7. Resurrection leads to the sons' identification with the Son, who is the center of morality and of ideals (a new Superego); the new band of brothers identifies with the "totem" Son.</p> <p>8. The new sons (or band of Christians) identify with the Son in a "totemic" meal in which the Son is eaten.</p> <p>9. The new band of sons <i>and daughters</i> takes the name of the Son (Christians); the women are not excluded from the "tribe," but take the same name.</p> <p>10. In short: Love and obedience leading to death of the Son bring redemption.</p> |
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Now the extraordinary fact is that Freud was, in many important respects, aware of this logic, which is at the very center of the Christian view of man. He commented in an important, apparently almost completely overlooked, passage near the end of *Totem and Taboo*:

There can be no doubt that in the Christian myth the *original sin* was one against God the Father. If, however, Christ redeemed mankind from the burden of *original sin* by the sacrifice of his own life, we are driven to conclude that the sin was a murder. The law of talion, which is so deeply rooted in human feelings, lays it down that a murder can only be expiated by bloodguilt. And if this sacrifice of a life brought about atonement with God the Father, the crime to be expiated can only have been the murder of the father.

In the Christian doctrine, therefore, men were acknowledging in the most undisguised manner the guilty primaeval deed, since they found the fullest atonement for it in the sacrifice of this one son. Atonement with the father was all the more complete since the sacrifice was accompanied by a total renunciation of the women on whose account the rebellion against the father was started. But at that point the inexorable psychological law of ambivalence stepped in. The very deed in which the son offered the greatest possible atonement to the father brought him at the same time to the attainment of his wishes against the father. He himself became God, beside, or more correctly, in place of, the father. A son-religion displaced the father-religion. As a sign of this substitution the ancient totem-meal was revived in the form of communion, in which the company of brothers consumed the flesh and blood of the son—no longer the father—obtained sanctity thereby and identified themselves with him. [Emphasis added in all cases except the last.]¹⁸¹

In the exposition above, an orthodox Christian would agree with Freud, except when he

¹⁸¹ S. Freud (1913, S.E., 13, p. 154).

arrived at his final inaccurate conclusion that Jesus replaced the Father—that Christianity is a “son-religion.” Freud appears not to have understood that in Christianity the Son does not replace the Father: “I and the Father are one.”¹⁸²

Setting aside Freud’s curious interpretation of Jesus as replacing the Father, we can certainly see that he probably did understand much of the essential message of Christianity when he wrote (and this is, after all, a rather astonishing quotation): “He [Christ] sacrificed his own life and so redeemed the company of brothers from *original sin* [emphasis added].”¹⁸³ This concept of Jesus as the Anti-Oedipus is a rich one, with ramifications that go deeply into the psychology of atheism.¹⁸⁴ In this book, however, I can only bring out, briefly, the connections between this theme and Freud’s identification with the Anti-Christ. Specifically, to the extent that Freud identified with and championed Oedipal man, he also identified with and championed the Anti-Christ, for just as Jesus is the Anti-Oedipus, Oedipus is the Anti-Christ. (Swales, in particular, makes a systematic case that Freud identified with Oedipus.¹⁸⁵) But insofar as Freud understood Oedipal motivation to be a natural and unfortunate fact that had to be reluctantly accepted, to that extent Freud can be viewed as a brilliant psychologist of fallen human nature, who showed us, with Oedipus, that the Anti-Christ is Everyman. In this sense Freud has provided, in the Oedipus complex, a profound modern interpretation and analysis of the ancient concept of original sin.

Conclusion

The exact nature of Freud’s relations with the Devil still remains uncertain, and perhaps must always remain so; the same is true of his identification with the Anti-Christ. In any case, there is much evidence that Freud’s personality (or unconscious ego) was to some degree “split,” and that an important part of him was involved in a neurotic fantasy pact with the Devil.

I am inclined to think, however, that whatever Freud’s diabolical identification may have been, his substantially stronger affinities were with God in Heaven. In this respect, it must be emphasized that Goethe’s *Faust*, after all, ends with the salvation of Faust; *The Temptation of St. Anthony* concludes with the ongoing hope of salvation; *Paradise Lost* implies *Paradise Regained*; Virgil’s *Aeneid* ends with the founding of Rome; and Dante’s *Inferno* is the first part of a journey that ends in Paradise.

The question of Freud’s ultimate allegiance is, of course, a very central one. This book argues that Freud’s early traumatic experiences, later amplified by cocaine, determined (along with his temperament and abilities) those emotions, problems, and pathologies that would preoccupy him as an adult. Although I assume this degree of psychological determinism, I also assume that Freud’s attitude toward his pathological past was open to a free choice. In this respect, it should be emphasized that Freud chose to wrestle directly with his past, intellectually and emotionally, and not to deny or repress it.

¹⁸² John 10:30

¹⁸³ S. Freud (1913, S.E., 13, p. 153).

¹⁸⁴ Vitz & Gartner (1984a, 1984b).

¹⁸⁵ Swales (1982a).

Where does he choose to stand with respect to the basic moral issues of good and evil, God and the Devil? Here I am unable to decide what Freud's final psychological commitment was; indeed, such a judgment is always difficult. (And, of course, any ultimate moral judgment about Freud, or anyone else, is outside the proper sphere of human evaluation.) But, as noted above, my estimate is that in his more fundamental aspects Freud chose the side of the angels. The curious state of the entire question of Freud's Christian unconscious is captured in his own words: "Do you not know that I am the Devil? All my life I have had to *play* the Devil, in order that others would be able to build the most beautiful cathedral with the materials that I produced [emphasis added]."¹⁸⁶

Freud never lost his memory of Notre Dame, with its "entirely new idea of perfection." And though the cathedral to which he referred remains to be built, I believe Freud would consider that he had done his part.

¹⁸⁶ S. Freud, quoted by Bakan (1958, p. 181). Freud's involvement with the demonic, and the opposition of much of his theory to the life and principles of Jesus, combined with the competition of psychoanalytic practice with the Church, show that in some respects psychoanalysis developed as a kind of anti-Christian gnostic cult—a form of religious sect. These religious elements, presented in the guise of a new, emerging science, probably lie behind much of the widespread appeal of Freud's thought to 20th-century intellectuals. As the scientific pretensions of psychoanalysis are removed through criticism (e.g., Grünbaum 1984), perhaps its pervasive literary and religious character will be more widely understood and publicly acknowledged. Important parts of this religious character are identified by Roazen (1975, e.g., pp. 322-331). For more on Freud's identity as the Devil being tricked into building a church, see Roazen (1975, pp. 327-328).