

FREUD, CIVILIZATION, RELIGION, AND STOICISM

Douglas Kirsner, PhD
Deakin University

Freud's debt to stoicism has been seldom discussed. His attitude toward science had a distinct ethical slant taken from the ancient world, via Freud's humanistic education. Freud's method involved detachment but did not imply moral coldness and indifference any more than stoicism did. The stoics wanted to be therapists of the mind just as physicians cared for the body. For both Freud and the stoics, reason was in battle with the passions and required clear sight to have a chance of prevailing over them. In contrasting religious worldviews with the scientific approach, Freud failed to see his own approach as ethical. Freud made extensive forays at individual and collective levels but in the years since Freud's death, the psychoanalytic vision has narrowed. At 150 years after his birth, the authors can still admire Freud's exceptional ethical courage and recognize that if psychoanalysis is to survive, it needs to regain his cultural range and spirit of critical inquiry.

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In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud stresses the consequences of our vulnerability as human beings and our need for protection from each other as well as from the forceful elements of nature. Certain results flow from the premises of our biological vulnerability as well as from the fact that the nature of living in any culture whatever inevitably involves fundamental ineluctable conflicts, not only between individuals or between societies but between individual and society. The essential point is that we live in privation or lack—our wishes for pleasure cannot be fulfilled in any of these arenas. According to Freud, the “purpose of life” is simply “the program of the pleasure principle” which “dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start” and is, though efficacious, “at loggerheads with the whole world, with the macrocosm as much as with the microcosm. There is no possibility at all of its being carried through; all the regulations of the universe run counter to it” (Freud, 1930/1961c, pp. 76–77). Happiness has little role in that world. It follows from this crucial premise that happiness is not achievable through

Douglas Kirsner, PhD, Faculty of Arts, Deakin University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Douglas Kirsner, PhD, Faculty of Arts, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Victoria 3125, Australia. E-mail: douglas.kirsner@deakin.edu.au

the direct functioning of the pleasure principle, except in sudden and intense episodes. However, unhappiness is quite a different matter. It emanates from 3 sources: From the ravages of the body, the external world and, most painfully, from other people. The idea that we need to proceed from our fragility or vulnerability was a central notion in Greek philosophy (Nussbaum, 1986) and also formed the basis for Hobbes's view of the social contract that moved us beyond the nasty and brutish state of nature. Although we would like to fulfill all our wishes, this is simply not possible. Therefore, it is a question as to how we fare against other people and the elements, which will inevitably frustrate us.

Freud has a tragic view of civilization. On the one hand, much individual and social neurosis and misery derives from the creation of civilization, which requires renunciation of so many of our fundamental drives. The normal civilized person is neurotic (Freud, 1908/1959)—Freud's psychoanalysis is therefore politics. On the other hand, primitive life without civilization would be, as Hobbes put it, nasty, brutish, and short, even though many of our basic drives would not need to be repressed. In stoic fashion Freud wanted to deconstruct illusion and live in reality. For Freud, we never properly developed beyond our cultural childhood. As he famously argued during World War I, "Our mortification and our painful disillusionment on account of the uncivilized behavior of our fellow-citizens of the world. . . were unjustified. They were based on an illusion. . . . In reality our fellow-citizens have not sunk so low as we feared because they had never risen so high as we believed" (Freud, 1915/1957, p. 285).

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/1955b), Freud argues that the pleasure principle, which holds that we seek the immediate gratification of our drives, must be modified with the advent of civilization by the reality principle, which involves the subservience of the pleasure principle to the demands of reality (e.g., work is required to bring about future pleasure). By channeling our sexual instincts toward a new nonsexual aim, we can perform valued tasks such as artistic creation and intellectual inquiry. Freud called this sublimation. Work, which can be immediately unpleasurable and involves the inhibition of our erotic wishes, becomes socially valued and sexuality becomes downgraded. Moreover, human beings are not gentle creatures whose main aim is to be loved. Rather, we are by nature aggressive and destructive. Our mutual hostility constantly threatens civilization with disintegration. The death drive vitiates the possibility of a harmonious cultured human unity. The history of civilization is the struggle between *Eros* and *Thanatos*, between the life and death drives.

For Freud, then, civilization is a compromise. At best an uneasy peace exists between antagonistic drives, which are not fulfilled. Civilization implies frustration. The communists believed private property creates aggressiveness. They held that the death drive is culturally produced, that aggressiveness is the result of bad social organization. But Freud maintains just the opposite. Civilization can never bring harmony, depending as it does on the serious impairment of our sexual life and the suppression of our aggressiveness through internalizing it as guilt (the superego). The mark of civilization is its discontents.

It might seem ironic that the inventor of the pleasure principle, the priority of the drives and their seeking of satisfaction was so skeptical about the fulfillment of pleasure and so alive to the extent of destruction and death. However, Freud was intent on describing reality and stressed how pivotal it was for humans individually and collectively to recognize and work within it. He was no Calvinist who thought that pleasure was sinful or that there was anything wrong with pleasure at all. To the contrary, he thought the fulfillment of pleasure was central, but the way to achieve this was to recognize the primary role of reason in organizing our affective life. Freud did not want to discard or even reject emotion, but he did not want us to be subject to them. His method of achieving

this was through the adoption of what he thought of as the scientific method of detachment and cool rational assessment of evidence. In the realm of therapy, this meant having the detachment of the surgeon.

How best can we live our lives? The issue of Freud's scientific approach has often been seen as independent of his ethics. Freud has been seen as somehow caught up in the flow over of the burgeoning of science in the 19th century, that he wanted to curry favor for himself or psychoanalysis with medical or scientific authority or that he needed to express his new discoveries in the language of the time. Although there is validity to each of these viewpoints, they do not address the degree or kind of enthusiasm with which Freud embraced the scientific attitude. His relentless search for the sources of behavior in unconscious motives, mostly with sexual and childhood contexts, seemed to have the air of science as it assumed determination (but not determinism) that were instances of wider laws at work. Moreover, Freud's concept of psychoanalytic neutrality marked the centrality of the recognition and withdrawal of emotional investment in understanding our psychological world and relationships together with the recognition of boundaries. Not only does it reflect an attempt to be distant from the patient in the name of science as such, but it reflects an underlying mood in Freud's work expressing an ethical viewpoint.

The extent to which Freud was a stoic thinker has been seldom discussed in the psychoanalytic literature. Philip Rieff mentions stoicism twice in his classic work *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*. Rieff noted how far Freud's attitude to the body and its demands was realistic, which was in stark contrast to religious cures of souls. Rieff saw psychoanalysis as "much closer to the Stoic view, another form of dialectical explanation, which recognized the influence of mind without repudiating the body" (Rieff, 1965, p. 17). Although Rieff notes the connections between Freud's theory of the constitution of mind with those of the stoics, I am not discussing these here. My interest is rather in how issues of values, ethics and stance are common to Freud and the stoics. Rieff comments that Freud's "taste for Shakespeare—whose characters and situations embody many of the precepts of the Stoic psychology—is further evidence of an indirect but genuine affinity between psychoanalysis and the psychological theories of Stoicism" (Rieff, 1965, p. 17). Rieff proposed that stoicism compounded the prophetic aspects of Freud's ideas: "Both prophet and Stoic have as their chief duty the maintenance of self-identity in the face of permanent crisis. The Stoic function of Freud's crisis psychology is the day-to-day maintenance of self-identity" (Rieff, 1965, p. 218). Carlo Strenger (2002) is more explicit:

Freud's ethic is stoic: he believes that the clash between inner nature and external reality is essential to the human condition. There is no preestablished harmony between the structure of the world and the nature of our desires. Like all stoics from Zenon through Seneca to Spinoza he points out the extent to which we are able to influence fate is extremely limited. Hence he believes that the one way we have to live a more or less decent life is to curtail our own desires. Freud does not believe that happiness is something we can reasonably strive for. (p. 89)

Strenger suggests that on this view we can reasonably strive for "dignity, the sense of standing up to the hardships and complexities of life without losing our lucidity." Strenger argues that Freud's "ideal of the stoic healer" is helpful to the patient and for professional ethics, keeping the analyst from the seductions of both illusion and flesh (2002, pp. 89–90). He explains the classic Freudian ethic as stoic: "maturity and mental health depend on the extent to which a person can acknowledge reality as it is and be rational and wise" (p. 119). Rorty (1996) discusses Freud's stoicism in terms of the connections with his theory of mind, and Robertson elucidates (2005) some useful connections between

stoicism and psychotherapy. Shabad (1991) explores the way that claims to reality can represent defenses against wish and disillusionment, representing the denial of superego functioning instead of rational appraisals.

I want to develop the idea of Freud as stoic still further. Because the stoics, both Greek and Roman, advocated detachment, this is often misinterpreted as indifference to pain and pleasure in the sense of being almost ideally robotic. But they were, together with the Epicureans and the skeptics of Hellenistic philosophy, trying to be therapists of the mind on the model that physicians took care of the body. If philosophy is seen as therapy, the stoical stance can be understood as a way of mastering external reality and a way of living. My concern here is not with whether Hellenistic philosophers understood unconscious processes but with their attitude and values they adopted in how they approached the world. Philosophy was no arcane activity but a practical therapeutic endeavor. It was a practice for the soul as medicine was for the body. As Nussbaum puts it:

The Hellenistic philosophical schools in Greece and Rome—Epicureans, Skeptics, and Stoics—all conceived of philosophy as a way of addressing the most painful problems of human life. They saw the philosopher as a compassionate physician whose arts could heal many pervasive types of human suffering. They practiced philosophy not as a detached intellectual technique dedicated to the display of cleverness but as an immersed and worldly art of grappling with human misery. (Nussbaum, 1994, p. 3; see also Oatley, 1997)

The philosophers of Ancient Greece were an essential, recognized part of the society that produced them and to which philosophers from the sophists to the stoics responded in practical terms to practical issues (see Bryant, 1996). Philosophy and medicine were even seen by Plutarch as a single field which apply both to passion and physical illness. Passion or Pathos is the root of “pathology,” which has both senses (see Foucault, 1986, pp. 54, 142).

The Greeks thought that *eudaimonia*, often translated as *happiness*, was not to be seen as a psychological state of pleasure. Rather, happiness lay in the fulfillment of human goals, of the flourishing of personal capacity. It meant the achievement of human capacities over a wide range of goals. A feeling of pleasure may accompany the active fulfillment of a goal but happiness was not itself psychological pleasure. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle distinguished between the pursuit of happiness as an end in itself and the view that happiness was constituted by the fulfillment of the collection of the goals a person has. The feeling of happiness is not an aim but comes as a side effect of the fulfillment of goals and the state of happiness derives from the flourishing in the fulfillment of the potential or goals and is thus not a state of mind.

Sometimes stoicism is understood to be an attempt to be indifferent to pleasure or pain, which seems at odds with the pleasure principle. Yet the way to pleasure may not be a direct hedonistic one. Pleasure in Freud’s pleasure principle relies on pursuit of the fulfillment of the particular drive. The fact that Freud compared growing up as importantly (though scarcely entirely) going beyond pleasure-seeking indicated that he was not advocating simple hedonism. Like the Greeks, Freud recognized the centrality of the passions and their struggle with reason. This ongoing struggle meant that although the passions were by default the stronger party, it was better for humans both individually and collectively that the passions did not predominate. Freud did not discard or even reject emotion but believed it best for us not to be subject to them and to be guided by reason.

The term *stoic* is often used today for someone who can suffer pain without displaying feelings or complaining. It derives from the *stoa poikile*, the Greek term for the painted porch that the ancient school’s founder Zeno spoke from in the Athens Agora in 308 BCE.

Not being dominated by emotion, the stoic can make levelheaded decisions based on reason in a clear, logical, and unbiased way that relies on reality rather than being distracted by wishes and emotion. Pursuing the truth was seen as a major virtue without the distraction of anguish and suffering which stood in the way of clear and sound judgment. Although detachment from the passions was prerequisite, this did not preclude suffering from being an intrinsic part of life. Nonetheless, it meant that it did not rule life. Attachments were to be chosen not determined. Their promotion of apathy derives from the original meaning of the Greek term *apatheia*, relating to *a-pathos*, “without feeling, suffering or emotion.” Pathos originally meant “what befalls one.” This relates to a base involving suffering or enduring and makes it clear that the idea of suffering involves passively (as in the word “patient”) being victim to control by suffering. Apathy, then, involves overcoming such control and putting some agency into the human being. This approach clearly has resemblances to important aspects of religions such as Buddhism. Reason, logic, and values thus merged for the stoics—objectivity was central to being able to be in control of one’s suffering instead of vice versa.

Yet his attitude toward science had distinct an ethical slant taken from the ancient world, via Freud’s humanistic education. Richard Sterba, who worked closely with Freud, noted the influence of humanistic studies on Freud’s character, values, and attitude. From 1868 to 1873, Freud attended a humanistic *Gymnasium* where he intensively studied Greek and Latin together with the major literary works of the ancient period. Eight hours a week was devoted to Latin over 8 years while 6 hours a week were devoted to Greek over 6 years and all the major authors, such as Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Tacitus, and Seneca, were studied in class as well as private lessons with the professor (Sterba, 1974, p. 170). Sterba suggests that Freud’s

values as well as his attitude and behavior seem in many features to be shaped according to what the Romans designated as ‘*virtus*.’ ‘*Virtus*’ comes from ‘*vir*,’ the Latin word for man designating masculinity, referring to personal emotional fortitude, self-discipline, endurance in defeat, and restraint in victory. But the Roman ‘*virtus*’ is more than this. Its essence is the devotion to a cause far beyond one’s personal interest. For the Roman citizen of antiquity, ‘*virtus*’ implied before anything else the devotion to the Roman state, the public cause, the *res publica*. It was this devotion which expressed itself in the ‘*constantia*,’ a main feature in the complex of attitudes comprised by the term ‘*virtus*’... What strikes me is that Freud’s devotion to his cause, his ‘*res*,’ the scientific edifice which he built, is comparable to the *virtus* of the Roman expressed in his devotion to the ‘*res publica*.’ (Sterba, 1974, p. 175)

Sterba maintained that in adverse circumstances in which he tore the mask off deception and civilization, Freud followed Horace’s advice: “Keep your cool if things get tough.” It is this endurance and *constantia* that we admire so much in Freud. In this he followed the great examples of antiquity which his humanistic education had made alive for him (Sterba, 1974, p. 176). The values are clear in a letter Freud wrote to James Jackson Putnam on March 30, 1914: “The great ethical element in my work is truth and again truth and this should suffice for most people. Courage and truth are of what they are mostly deficient” (Hale, 1971, p. 171).

Notwithstanding that Freud is often regarded as being interested in the pursuit of pleasure, Freud’s views owe more to the stoics than to Epicurus or the utilitarians. Happiness is not, for Freud, a psychological state to be aimed for but lies in the fulfillment of the drives. Even his much criticized concept of sublimation is to do with the giving up of pleasure for long-term benefits. Civilization was itself for Freud based on sacrificing a portion of happiness for a portion of security. Although the pleasure principle meant the

pursuit of pleasure, the reality principle involved the view that reality cannot be massaged into utopia or even a good society. A stoic attitude would bring longer and deeper happiness.

Although Freud adopted the stance of the scientific method, this in itself did not mean moral coldness and indifference any more than stoicism did. Detachment is not indifference, and Freud saw detachment as efficacious. In his lecture “The Question of a Weltanschauung” (Freud, 1933/1964, pp. 158–183), Freud contrasted religion as a Weltanschauung with psychoanalysis, which, he claimed simply relied on scientific method and evidence. But without recognizing it, Freud adopted his own Weltanschauung, which was colored by his own stoic ethics.

Freud contrasted the religious Weltanschauung with the scientific approach as polar opposites but failed to see his own attitude clearly as an ethical approach. For Freud, the religious Weltanschauung was built on wish and illusion, which had its basis in the mainsprings of childhood emotion whereas, in contrast, the scientific approach was built on real issues and how best to deal with them. They bring opposite affects for Freud. Religion brings about hallucinatory emotional satisfaction and misguided comfort whereas science is the long-term winner: “In the long run, nothing can withstand reason and experience, and the contradiction that religion offers to both is palpable” (1927/1961b, p. 54).

The special role of reason in ethics was scarcely a rousing cheer for reason, but Freud at least granted the quality of insistence: “The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest till it has gained a hearing. Finally, after a countless succession of rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points on which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind. . . . The primacy of the intellect lies, it is true, in a distant, distant future, but probably not an *infinitely* distant one” (1927/1961b, p. 53). The double negative of the “not infinitely distant” demonstrates how little hope Freud had in the short or even medium term for mankind. He regarded “our best hope for the future” as lying in the intellect or reason being able to establish in time “a dictatorship in the mental life of man.” Freud postulated the crucial role for “such a domain of reason” that it would prove “the strongest uniting bond among men and lead the way to further unions.” In contrasting this liberating role, which would bring people together with that of religion, Freud shows us why he saw religion in such a negative light. “Whatever, like religion’s prohibition against thought, opposes such a development, is a danger for the future of mankind” (Freud, 1933/1964, pp. 171–172).

Reason was in battle with the passions and needed at least clear sight to have a chance of prevailing over them. As is evident from this quotation, for Freud, the role of the passions was so great that a long battle was necessary to keep them in place to some extent. That for Freud was the human condition. Freud suggested in his *Introductory Lectures*, delivered in Vienna during the dark days of World War I, that his was the most wounding of the 3 great blows to human narcissism—that the earth moves around the sun, that we are descended from the apes and not the angels and that of psychoanalysis that the ego is “not even master in its own house” (Freud, 1917/1963, pp. 284–285). This final blow was hardest to take in as it committed us to the greatest change in our attitudes and behavior, with, not surprisingly, the least chance of success. It is interesting that Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud were scientists who saw themselves as using a rational scientific method. The fact that there are other great blows to human narcissism that Freud did not mention such as earthquakes, illness, or many religious doctrines demonstrates that Freud’s emphasis was on the scientific dethroning of the ego.

The scientific approach that Freud adopted was a matter of temperament that fitted

with the stoic morality. His particular mood of investigation was stoicism mixed with science, a science with the heuristic assumption that everything is determined was mixed with a stoic outlook or perspective. Why Freud adopted the natural scientific umbrella may have been connected with his stoic outlook. The unbiased, impartial, objective, distant, even mooted indifference to the outcome from a disinterested perspective. Of course, many later developments including by Ferenczi, British object relations schools and self psychology explicitly went beyond Freud in their assumptions and mood in their approach to human experience.

Freud's famous statement about the importance of psychoanalysts modeling their treatment on that of the surgeon abundantly illustrates the issue of stoic detachment at least as much as that of "science." Freud insisted with force, "I cannot advise my colleagues too urgently to model themselves during psycho-analytic treatment on the surgeon, who puts aside all his feelings, even his human sympathy, and concentrates his mental forces on the single aim of performing the operation as skillfully as possible" (Freud, 1912/1958, p. 115). Note his analogy with the skill required for an operation in the context of setting aside all feelings for the success of the psychoanalytic operation. He emphasized this further: "Under present-day conditions the feeling that is most dangerous to a psycho-analyst is the therapeutic ambition to achieve by this novel and much disputed method something that will produce a convincing effect upon other people" (Freud, 1912/1958, p. 115). Here he was again stoical in being resolute about performing the function itself no matter what its impact on popularity. He explicitly recognizes "requiring this emotional coldness in the analyst" which he justifies by saying that it creates the most advantageous conditions for both parties" (Freud, 1912/1958, p. 115).

Freud's well-known analogy of the analyst as mirror also displays a stoic approach. He writes that the analyst must be "opaque to his patients and, like a mirror, should show them nothing but what is shown to him" (Freud, 1912/1958, p. 118). This is presented in the context of Freud's responding to the question as to whether analysts should share their defects, conflicts, intimacies, and confidences with their patients, thereby placing them "on an equal footing." Freud condemns this affective technique as involving suggestion and straying from the main task, which is the analysis of the patient not the doctor. In particular, it muddies the waters of the resolution of the transference, all of which means that the modifications to psychoanalytic technique differ from true psychoanalysis (1912/1958, pp. 117–118). Of course, the true psychoanalysis of the period was an informal affair of a few months duration, not the superanalyses of decades later nor had training analysis yet been invented. Freud's case histories of the period do not provide a rigid picture of Freud's technique. It useful to think of Freud's technique as classical and later approaches, particularly in the United States, as modern (see Freud, 1909/1955a; Lipton, 1977). This implies that the mirror analogy is simply an analogy and that it need not be forbidding or rigid, although it means that Freud's view was that the unconscious needs to be observed at work in the most neutral of circumstances. Analytic neutrality means that the analyst is disinterested (not uninterested), impartial and as objective as possible in helping the psychoanalytic process along.

I am suggesting that Freud does have a *Weltanschauung*, that of a stoic, which from his viewpoint, contrasts remarkably with religion. Religion, for Freud, primarily involves consolations, the fantasized fulfillment of childish needs and drives, the need for protection and the need for a greater force to protect us: "Religion is an attempt to master the sensory world in which we are situated by means of the wishful world which we have developed within us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. But religion cannot achieve this. Its doctrines bear the imprint of the times in which they arose, the

ignorant times of the childhood of humanity. Its consolations deserve no trust" (1933/1964, p. 168). Freud demonstrates a *Weltanschauung* that incorporates critique of the dominance of passions and argues that the passions should be subservient to reason.

Why was Freud so tough on religion? I think it was because Freud saw it as the direct opponent of science—Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud were all scientists who pushed back illusion. Yet the point of psychoanalysis in particular is that in addition to providing scientific insight into understanding the human world, it challenged the driving force behind our illusions, tracing the genesis of their motivational origins of their all-too-ready appeal. Freud identified religion as an illusion in the title of his most famous work on that topic *The Future of an Illusion* (Freud, 1927/1961b). Freud deconstructed religion as so prototypical an illusion as to be what he termed

the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father. If this view is right, it is to be supposed that a turning-away from religion is bound to occur with the fatal inevitability of a process of growth, and that we find ourselves at this very juncture in the middle of that phase of development. Our behavior should therefore be modeled on that of a sensible teacher who does not oppose an impending new development but seeks to ease its path and mitigate the violence of its irruption. Our analogy does not, to be sure, exhaust the essential nature of religion. If, on the one hand, religion brings with it obsessional restrictions, exactly as an individual obsessional neurosis does, on the other hand it comprises a system of wishful illusions together with a disavowal of reality, such as we find in an isolated form nowhere else but in *amentia*, in a state of blissful hallucinatory confusion. (1927/1961b, p. 43)

Did he get it right? Religion was surely a major competitor for a *Weltanschauung* for Freud in discussing the big questions. Psychoanalysis and its institutions have themselves been compared to religious denominations (e.g., Kernberg, 1986; Sorenson, 2000), and I have termed the manner of much transmission of psychoanalytic mantle occurring via annointment (Kirsner, 2000). The attraction of psychoanalysis as a religion or ideology as well as a heuristic device needs to be factored in. To claim that others have a *Weltanschauung* while he simply had the position of a pure scientist was at best rhetoric. At worst, it gave way to the effects of systematic ideological blindness on psychoanalysis as science, psychotherapy, and movement. Freud saw only 1 edge of the 2-edged sword of psychoanalysis here. That meant he was blind to how much he had created a *Weltanschauung* of his own reflected in the psychoanalytic cause and movement. This lack of sight had damaging effects on further encapsulating the psychoanalytic institutions and movement.

Historically, religion has been a human need that enshrines values, a way of understanding the human world, which can lead us to focus on a way of living. The major achievement of the enlightenment lay not so much in the replacing of religion by science as in the separation of church and state. Instead of religion being dominant in all spheres of life (including politics and science), it became a private matter. When state religions prevailed, this was for the advantage of the state supported sociopolitical system. Marx thought religion would simply fall away as advances in society were able to replace the need for religion. Marx's view of religion was as a projection and ersatz satisfaction of human needs. Freud disagreed. He thought such needs could not be satisfied by society and therefore religion would continue to be attractive always as a false promise. It was a stoic response. Freud was against ideology, yet failed to understand the grip of ideology or *Weltanschauung* in the movement he himself created. He failed to confront this powerful need he found in the human condition itself as developed through psychoanalysis. Systematically, he did not understand what a powerful tool he had discovered that itself

impacted on the science he established. How much had the religious Weltanschauung impacted on what he often revealingly termed our science? How much had it become part of that science in the cult like way that psychoanalysts often behaved scientifically?

Freud denied adopting a Weltanschauung and thought psychoanalysis could help us understand why we thought we needed one. Freud deconstructed the religious Weltanschauung, as he said “by showing how religion originated from the helplessness of children and by tracing its contents to the survival into maturity of the wishes and needs of childhood” (Freud, 1933/1964, p. 167). He saw religion as a closed system because it stopped at a certain point and adopted a Weltanschauung opposed to the open system of science. The influence of religion could diminish as people increasingly saw that the scientific way was better. Yet with all its deconstructionist advantages, I find Freud’s image of religion was rather simplistic even if the model he opposed is taken to be the version the masses imbibe. It is a generalization to assume that religion is mainly, if not wholly, about illusory protection. Other aspects of religion, such as important human values, models for behavior, feelings of togetherness, could also be seen as primary. In fact the etymological origin of the term “religion” has the sense of a bond from the Latin word *religare*, meaning to reconnect or bind together as in “to place an obligation on.” But it also relates to rely in the sense of depend and trust. The bond and trust between humans and between humans and their deemed gods is central. Freud acknowledges no such social functions. Emile Durkheim’s sociological analysis of the functions of religion was far more inclusive than Freud’s approach. Sociologist Lewis Coser cites Durkheimian scholar, Harry Alpert’s classification of

Durkheim’s four major functions of religion as disciplinary, cohesive, vitalizing, and euphoric social forces. Religious rituals prepare men for social life by imposing self-discipline and a certain measure of asceticism. Religious ceremonies bring people together and thus serve to reaffirm their common bonds and to reinforce social solidarity. Religious observance maintains and revitalizes the social heritage of the group and helps transmit its enduring values to future generations. Finally, religion has a euphoric function in that it serves to counteract feelings of frustration and loss of faith and certitude by reestablishing the believers’ sense of well-being, their sense of the essential rightness of the moral world of which they are a part. . . (R)eligion as a social institution serves to give meaning to man’s existential predicaments by tying the individual to that supraindividual sphere of transcendent values which is ultimately rooted in his society. (Coser, 1977, p. 139)

Like Marx, Freud saw religion as illusion that was little more than a symptom of alienated needs although they differed as to whether they were remediable. They shared the progressive scientific view that the need for religion was itself a symptom of social ills and the way to abolish religion was not so much to abolish its inherent illusions but, as Marx put it in his *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law: Introduction*, in the demand to abolish the conditions that require illusions. For Freud, religion provided a hallucinatory fulfillment of needs that were produced by the human condition as such. This meant that our weakness, inevitability of death, the lack of control we have over the inevitable vagaries of nature and our fellow beings mean that we turn to religion to satisfy these otherwise insatiable needs. They helped us with satisfaction, protection, and ethics. We experience these needs especially as children but do not really grow out of them and they continue to exert influence on us. These are part of a Weltanschauung that he contrasted with psychoanalysis: “No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere” (1927/1961b, p. 56).

However, in “The Illusion of a Future,” a direct and sympathetic response to Freud’s

The Future of an Illusion, Oskar Pfister (Roazen, 1993) marshals significant arguments against Freud's generalizations about religion, including the fact that there are other functions of religion than wish-fulfillment; the fact that religions are often quite different in their doctrines; that wish-fulfillments are not unusual in the history of science so there is nothing unique about religion in this regard (p. 563); that anthropomorphisms exist in other fields, even in psychoanalysis such as the idea of a "censor" (p. 565). He argues that although Freud may well be right about some forms of religion, he has moved from some to all without evidence (p. 567). He refutes Freud's assumption that religion is intrinsically hostile to thought (pp. 567–569) and suggests, "Religion should become for us not a police force that conserves, but a leader and beacon toward true civilization from our sham civilization" (p. 569). Pfister makes many more friendly objections to Freud's simplistic view of the nature of religion, including Freud's scientism and his undue optimism about science and its adequacy (pp. 570–576).

Freud made a seminal distinction between the drives with their satisfactions and their sublimations in the flourishing of civilization. Without the renunciation of the drives, according to Freud, the accretions of civilization would not have taken place. Not only does civilization mean that we are better protected from our fellow humans (as in Hobbes's development from the state of nature) but we are able to achieve real advancements such as in health, welfare, quality of life, art, literature, and architecture. All this depends on cooperation between humans not just under threat or fire. Humans are vulnerable, which makes us in need of protection and help. We are not self-sufficient as individuals, and our sociality is virtually inescapable. However, Freud stresses the importance of our fear of each other and how to deal with it.

Freud expressly compared the history of the journey of civilization with that of the development of the individual, although he also said they were "analogies to help understand social phenomena" (1927/1961b, p. 43). Significantly, both journeys require not just compromise and balance but renunciation. However, he describes the impulses as being suppressed and not repressed. (Suppression is conscious and repression involves unconscious ideation). According to Freud, "Civilization is after all built entirely on renunciation of instinct, and every individual on his journey from childhood to maturity has in his own person to recapitulate this journey of this development of humanity to a state of judicious resignation. Psychoanalysis has shown that it is, predominantly, though not exclusively, sexual instinctual impulses that have succumbed to this cultural suppression" (Freud, 1924/1961a, p. 207). One portion allows itself to be diverted from its immediate aims and thus to be of service to sublimated aims. (How exactly a culture is a living entity that can do any such thing Freud never explains). However, another part persists in the unconscious and still seeks satisfaction directly. The point is that the civilized part of the drives through sublimation does not directly seek pleasure as such. Civilization is beyond pleasure.

Although Freud collected icons and clearly loved literature and art, he was not enamored of civilization itself. Who could blame him? His lifelong experience in Vienna was from trenchant antisemitism through the war to end all wars of 1914 to 1918 followed by the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Great Depression, the rise of Nazism, and the *Anschluss*. Dynamic intrinsic conflict within culture itself produces progress while maintaining, even increasing, some problematic modes of dissatisfaction as evidenced in war. However, it would be wrong to conclude here that this is simply a war between instincts that demand satisfaction. The higher results of sublimation are not simply a delayed form of instinctual pleasure, they are real human achievements that relate to their origins as the cooked transcends the raw or the Mona Lisa goes beyond just paint and

canvas. Although Freud deplored so much about civilization, its achievements differed in kind from the elemental forces that produced it.

The *New Introductory Lectures* (Freud, 1933/1964) were written in the still darker period soon after. The contrasting of deconstructing the attractions of the idea of a *Weltanschauung* as opposed to a scientific approach was understandably uppermost in Freud's mind. But in contrasting these approaches and putting psychoanalysis clearly into the category of science, he stopped deconstructing too soon. He did not inquire into what happens to a science that has become a "movement," which even shared significant characteristics with the religion he so opposed. What are the consequences for psychoanalysis as scarcely an ideal type science but is also a movement, a body of knowledge, professional associations, theories of human nature and culture, educational institutions—and ethics? Freud often conflated ethics and science, and his scientific approach was really often colored by an unrecognized ethical one. As Paul Roazen suggests:

The problem of ethics itself. . . is one which has traditionally been difficult to establish securely as a legitimate subject within psychoanalysis. Yet Freud. . . has been flourishing in countries like France where psychoanalysis has been kept closely allied to philosophy. Freud's effort to demarcate psychoanalytic psychology from ethical thought was taken literally in America, thus not absorbing the full implications of all Freud's writings, which certainly included an explicit moral component. The future of psychoanalysis may depend on the extent to which the political, social, and strictly philosophic sides of psychoanalysis continue to be explored. Such an enterprise should make it less likely that clinical practices become rigidified. (2003, p. 55)

As Roazen suggests, this approach is necessary for the future of psychoanalysis if it is to survive well. Freud displayed tremendous courage in making forays into such varied regions as religion, anthropology, philosophy, war, biology, sexuality, culture, society, education, and neurosis at both individual and collective levels. A look across the range of the wide-ranging titles of Freud's works reveals his fundamental interest in the human nature and the way we live our lives together. The vision of the Freud whom W.H. Auden claimed was often "wrong, and at times, absurd" but became "a whole climate of opinion under whom we conduct our different lives" was far broader than the current, constricted view of the role of psychoanalysis. Renowned literary critic Harold Bloom went so far to recently state that "Freud's conceptions are so magnificent that they now form the only Western mythology that contemporary intellectuals have in common" (Coutu, 2001, p. 65). Freud suggests, "I have always been of the opinion that the extramedical applications of psychoanalysis are as significant as the medical ones, indeed that the former might perhaps have a greater influence on the mental orientation of humanity" (Freud to Hendrik de Man on December 13, 1925, cited in Gay, 1988, p. 310n). In his last decades Freud's vision increased still further, reaching out to a wider scope.

However, in the years since Freud's death, the psychoanalytic vision has narrowed and become truncated, often insular. In many parts of the world, psychoanalysis is in retreat, further than ever from being taken to be a cultural asset, a framework for discussion and a theory of human nature and the human condition which has clinical consequences, not the other way around (see Kirsner, 2004). One hundred fifty years after his birth, we can still admire Freud's exceptional ethical courage and treat his contributions as an ethical view of the human condition, subversive of our taken-for-granted assumptions. The range of Freud's relentless concerns amounted to a form of life that contrasted with the way that the field subsequently narrowed from collective philosophical concerns toward focusing on questions of technique. Freud's ethic has come to seem almost beside the point and

relatively little of the ethical courage of Freud's daring and far-reaching spirit of inquiry remains today. Psychoanalysis is even in danger of disappearing from the cultural, intellectual, and even therapeutic scene because it has become so self-encapsulated and self-preoccupied in its narrowed scope.

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