

DEMOCRACY WITHIN: RELIGION, POLITICS, AND THE  
AMERICANIZATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS DURING AND AFTER WORLD  
WAR II

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This dissertation is about the ways in which discussions of religion and those of psychoanalysis intersected and shaped each other in post-war America. Anyone who believed in either a salvation-based religion or a rational psychology found his or her beliefs challenged by the momentous developments of the mid-twentieth century – World War II, genocide, atomic destruction, and the cold war. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and religious leaders with interests in those fields found mental and emotional causes for these catastrophes and blamed repression, fear, and neurotic projection. In their views, just as Nazism and Stalinism had been fueled by psychological drives, democracy and liberty, to be maintained, had to be projected from deeply within the souls and psyches of Americans. The project of developing psychologies and models of the brain that reflected external commitments to freedom and democracy moved to the forefront of both popular and professional psychotherapy.

My thesis argues that discussions of psychoanalysis in the middle decades of the twentieth century offered American religious thinkers from diverse backgrounds an opportunity to introduce the values that they associated with their religion into the worlds of psychology – both professional and popular. While behavioral and biological models threatened, in the view of many religious onlookers, to dehumanize

the practice of psychiatry, psychoanalysis introduced discussions of ethics, freedom, and the meaning of life. From religious leaders, to psychiatrists who practiced faith, to patients who were spiritual seekers, the same impulses appear in their work – the desire to find, in psychoanalysis, an antidote to the materialism that they feared was lurking within the psychiatric world, and a longing to apply their discoveries to larger political philosophies. Hence, the phrase “democracy of the mind” emerges from these efforts to identify a psychiatry and a way of thinking that bolster democratic values as defined by twentieth century modernists and liberals – freedom of expression and religion, pluralism, tolerance and reverence for the individual. The democratic mind is ordered so as to avoid “dictatorship” in the form of repression and to allow free expression among various thoughts and desires.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mary Miles grew up in State College Pennsylvania, with brief stays in Rhode Island, Georgia, Virginia, and Hershey, PA. After graduating with honors from the University Scholars Program at the Pennsylvania State University with a degree in History in 1994, Mary went on to obtain a Masters degree in American History from that same university in 1997. She enrolled in the Cornell Ph.D. program in 1997. Mary has been teaching courses on the history of psychiatry and religion, as well as on writing, at Penn State since 2002. She is very active in animal welfare activities.

To all who have helped along the way

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: RELIGIOUS OUTSIDERS AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

As mature men and women we should regard our minds as a true democracy where all kinds of emotions and ideas should be given freedom of speech. If in political life we are willing to grant civil liberties to all sorts of parties and programs, should we not be equally willing to grant civil liberty to our innermost thoughts and drives, confident that the more dangerous of them will be outvoted by the decent and creative majority within our minds?

Rabbi Joshua Liebman, 1946

...ours is not an age of peace – either individual or social. It is an age where men and women are tormented and torn, riven with all kinds of inner conflicts...an era such as ours needs a creative partnership between religion and psychiatry, the sanctuary and the laboratory. Such a partnership can...aid men and women blessed with new sanity and perspective to become architects of a more just and peaceful world.

Rabbi Joshua Liebman, 1948

If one attempts to assign to religion its place in man's evolution, it seems not so much to be a lasting acquisition, as a parallel to the neurosis which the civilized individual must pass through on his way from childhood to maturity.

Sigmund Freud, 1939

Sigmund Freud did not believe in God. Paradoxically, Rabbi Joshua Liebman believed not only in God, but in the wisdom of Freud as well. Both thinkers argued that psychoanalysis would enable individuals to maintain the type of healthy inner lives that would allow them to contribute to strong democratic communities. Only Liebman, however, proposed that religion could work in tandem with analysis to establish “true democracy” within the minds of individuals. He urged his audiences to organize their thoughts in accordance with the same values that they associated with democratic societies at the mid-twentieth century – free speech, civil liberties, pluralism, and tolerance. He construed Judaism, psychoanalysis, and American democracy to be mutually reinforcing. The first psychoanalyst of Jewish background – Freud himself – spent much of his lifetime working to disprove religion and identify its negative effects upon civilization. Liebman, a rabbi engaging psychoanalysis, spent many of his short years assessing Freud’s ideas in terms of the ways that they worked to sustain and reinforce religious faith, enabling both the science and the religion to bolster democratic communities. While Liebman, as the above quotation shows, defines maturity as contingent upon the cultivation of democracy within, and urges a partnership between religion and psychiatry to nurture a peaceful and just society, Freud argues that religion is an impediment to both individual and social maturation.

This dissertation is about the ways that discussions of religion and those of psychoanalysis intersected and shaped each other in post-war America. Anyone who believed in either a salvation-based religion or a rational psychology found his or her beliefs challenged by the momentous developments of the mid-twentieth century – World War II, genocide, atomic destruction, and the Cold War. Psychologists,

psychiatrists, and religious leaders with interests in those fields found mental and emotional causes for these catastrophes and blamed repression, fear, and neurotic projection. In their views, just as Nazism and Stalinism had been fueled by psychological drives, democracy and liberty, to be maintained, had to be projected from deeply within the souls and psyches of Americans. If genocide and war could emerge from individual neurosis, then the preservation of personal mental hygiene would become a political imperative. The project of developing psychologies and models of the brain that reflected external commitments to freedom and democracy moved to the forefront of both popular and professional psychotherapy.<sup>1</sup>

Both psychological professionals who believed in religion, and religious leaders interested in psychology, aimed to discuss inner life in ways that denied the materialism, reductionism, and determinism that they believed had contributed to the rise of “totalitarianism” and could undermine modern political liberties. Foreign threats were not the only forces that seemed to threaten individual liberties among Americans. Technology, federal bureaucracy, the modern workplace, expanding consumerism, and commercialization also fueled American worries about freedom. The medical and psychiatric professions, as well, waged heated debates over biological determinism, materialism, and authority that challenged participants to reflect upon individual freedoms.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The works that articulated these concerns are further discussed later in the text at length. The notion that Nazism and totalitarianism are fueled by psychological and internal dysfunctions is aggressively articulated by both Eric Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, inc., 1941) and Joshua Liebman in *Peace of Mind* (New York : Simon and Schuster, 1946). The sense that external conditions mirror internal, however, is raised by a great number of popular and influential writers from the era. Some prominent examples include Catholic Bishop Fulton Sheen in *Peace of Soul* (New York : Whittlesey House, 1949); Quaker Elton Trueblood in *The Life We Prize* (New York : Harper, 1951); Norman Vincent Peale in *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York ; Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1952); and Jewish analyst and memoirist Lucy Freeman in *Fight Against Fear* (New York : Crown Publishers, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> On Cold War American concerns about freedom, see James MacGregor Burns, *The Crosswinds of Freedom*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), pp. 274-276. On democracy and the psychiatric profession, see Katherine Pandora, *Rebels Within the Ranks: Psychologists Critiques of Scientific*

Freud's psychoanalysis provided a stimulating point of debate within these discussions. While criticizing Freud's avowed atheism and the materialism that seemed to drive his theories, some American thinkers also found that his focus on freedom from repression mirrored their own fixation on liberties. Therefore, discussions about psychoanalysis, whether critical or affirmative, always provided opportunities to discuss the issues of the day: the dangers of materialism and the psychology of liberation. While there is a long history in America of melding ideas about mental and spiritual health, the path that led religious thinkers into the realms of psychiatry took a distinctive turn, in my view, with their responses to Freud and psychoanalysis. Religiously based discussions of Freudian psychoanalysis gained a particularly political edge due, in part, to the World War II and post-war era in which they occurred. They also attracted religious and social "outsiders" who perceived themselves as holding – by virtue of their peripheral status – unique insight into the workings of democracy.<sup>3</sup>

My primary thesis is that discussions of psychoanalysis in the middle decades of the twentieth century offered American religious thinkers from diverse backgrounds an opportunity to introduce the values that they associated with their religion into the worlds of psychology – both professional and popular. The language and practices of psychology were becoming increasingly influential in American popular culture and political discourse. While behavioral and biological models threatened, in the view of many religious onlookers, to dehumanize the practice of psychiatry, psychoanalysis introduced discussions of ethics, freedom, and the meaning of life.

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*Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> A brief note on definitions: I have used the term "psychology" as a descriptive category including all topics pertaining to mental health, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and therapy. I use "psychiatry" to indicate the medical profession, which, during much of this time period, included psychoanalysts. The term "psychotherapy" I use to refer to the actual engagement between a therapist and his or her patient.

From religious leaders, to psychiatrists who practiced faith, to patients who were spiritual seekers, the same impulses appear in their work – the desire to find, in psychoanalysis, an antidote to the materialism that they feared lurked within the psychiatric world, and a longing to apply their discoveries to larger political philosophies. Hence, the phrase “democracy of the mind” emerges from these efforts to identify a psychiatry and a way of thinking that bolster democratic values as defined by twentieth century modernists and liberals – freedom of expression and religion, pluralism, tolerance and reverence for the individual. The democratic mind is ordered so as to avoid “dictatorship” in the form of repression and to allow free expression among various thoughts and desires. The quest for the democratic mind is an effort to do everything psychologically possible to protect and empower the freely choosing will – unrestrained by delusion or neurosis.

The tenor and constituency of the discourse upon which I focus introduces new components to the current historiography of the era and subject. The ideas that I address have tended to be obscured for various reasons. Scholars and critics have often construed the growing interest in psychology after World War II to be a kind of displacement of religion, an index of secularization, and a turn away from politics. When they have recognized the role of religious interests in the development of psychology and psychiatry, many have constructed a narrative in which late-nineteenth and twentieth century psychologists were led to study the mind by their questions about religion, but ultimately allowed psychology to become their faith, abandoning the religious beliefs of youth. When historians have analyzed the cultural spaces where psychology and religion overlapped they have tended to color these areas in shades of grey; places where both faith and science lost their distinctive hues. Academic reflections on the post-war years have leaned towards interpreting Americans’ attempts to merge religion and psychology as manifestations of

secularization, capitalism, individualism, and, ultimately, narcissism. Their stories have been told from the perspective of Protestantism, pointing to the “natural” progression from faith in Protestantism to faith in psychology.

How did this historiography take shape? I would suggest that these trajectories began to develop during Freud’s early encounters with American supporters. A brief reflection upon one of these exchanges will point to the roots of both the historiography and the situation that I propose to analyze. Let us turn, for a moment, to 1910. At this time, Freud was maintaining an active correspondence with James Jackson Putnam, a Harvard neurologist that he met during his inaugural – and last – visit in America to deliver a series of lectures at Clarke University during the summer of 1909.

***The Americanization of Psychoanalysis as History and Historiography:***

Putnam wrote to Freud hoping to study matters of religion with him “at some length.” While reassuring his new friend that he understood the psychoanalyst’s view that “we get the formal explanation of our religious conceptions through ‘projection’ of our anthropomorphic ideas,” Putnam remained intrigued by the notion that “we can obtain a knowledge of the existence of a form of consciousness and personality higher than ours.” Eschewing his former tendency to let “natural science be the arbiter of everything,” Putnam argued that a science of psychology divorced from philosophy and metaphysics was limited. Like his pragmatic colleague William James, Putnam sought to take in “all sources of knowledge and all motives and inducements for progress.” Putnam’s interest in religion was more than theoretical and personal; he hoped to bring ethics into the treatment of his “psychopathic patients,” who needed “more than simply to learn to know themselves.” Putnam believed that “if there are reasons why they should adopt higher views of their obligations [as based on the belief

that this is a morally conceived universe, and that ‘free-will’ has a real meaning], then these reasons ought to be made known to them” for the social good.

Freud responded to his friend’s espousal of free will, higher consciousness, and a moral universe graciously, yet with skepticism. “It would be a great delight to me to discuss religion with you since you are both tolerant and enlightened,” he assured Putnam, “yet I am afraid that it [religion] may be only a pious wish-fulfillment.” Freud reminded Putnam that he believed a “‘Just God’ and ‘Kindly Nature’ are only the noblest sublimations of our parental complexes, and our infantile helplessness is the ultimate root of religion.” Freud furthermore found “little evidence for the existence of an ethical order in the world,” based on his view of that world. He was quick to point out, however, that his atheism was not necessarily a “logical consequence of psychoanalysis.” As psychoanalysis was a science, not a religion itself, “one may or may not graft religion onto it.” Freud’s primary concern was that “as a matter of principle I should not like to have psychoanalysis placed at the service of any specific doctrine.”<sup>4</sup> A noted chronicler of the psychoanalytic movement in America, Nathan Hale, emphasizes that Freud distrusted “American open-mindedness” – exemplified by Putnam’s pragmatic willingness to absorb knowledge from alternative sources -- and their “remarkable public enthusiasm for psychotherapy” because of its association with religion.<sup>5</sup>

Freud was extremely wary of American intellectuals’ active engagement with religion. Perhaps the “open-mindedness” and “public enthusiasm for psychotherapy” to which he referred were embodied by Putnam’s colleagues: William James and other members of the “Metaphysical Club” whose philosophy sought to recognize truth in

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<sup>4</sup> Nathan Hale, *James Jackson Putnam and Psychoanalysis: Letters between Putnam and Sigmund Freud, Ernest Jones, William James, Sandor Ferenczi, and Morton Prince, 1877-1917* (Cambridge, MA: 1971), pp. 95-97.

<sup>5</sup> Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK: 1995), p. 7.



ideas as perpetually under construction rather than fixed, and who left ample room for the coexistence of religion within a scientific world view. The pragmatic philosophers – G. Stanley Hall, Charles Eliot Norton, and Charles Pierce, for example – were part of a generation of American intellectuals whose experiences had conditioned them to shun absolutes in both religion and science. The recent example of the Civil War had led many to see “crusades” buoyed by moral certainty – like abolition – as dangerous impetuses towards war and unfathomable bloodshed. Caution, compromise, and reasoned debate gained new appeal.<sup>6</sup>

As the Civil War and failure of Reconstruction challenged political certainties, Darwin introduced notions that prompted liberal Protestant intellectuals to resurrect the Kantian and enlightenment project of reconciling religion and science. Much of the work accomplished by the first “official” school of American philosophy was geared towards articulating a philosophy that allowed religious beliefs to coexist alongside scientific inquiry. Working in this mind-set, Putnam saw no reason why Freud’s avowed atheism should prevent religious Americans from trying his theories. He felt too, however, that the “social good” would be best served if psychotherapy operated under a rubric of liberal theism – a “morally conceived universe” with “higher views” of obligations and “free will.” His agenda reflects the metaphysical views of his pragmatic cohort – truth is in flux; if both psychoanalysis and a view of the universe as innately moral and accommodating of free will serve the social good, then they hold truth and value.

Why did this so distress Freud? His views of the enlightenment and social progress were quite different. Drawing on an intellectual tradition with roots in the eighteenth century struggle between dogma and reason, Freud construed the

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<sup>6</sup> This argument is advanced in Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

enlightenment project to be one of dispelling superstitions and exposing them to the light of reason. Biological instincts, passions, and repressed memories lay at the root of religious “delusion”, in his view, and had to be revealed, recognized, and abandoned in order for society to progress. Freud returned to the theme of religion continually throughout his career and articulated a multi-pronged argument against not only its validity, but its utility as well.<sup>7</sup>

In *The Future of An Illusion* (1927), Freud argues that the origins of religion lay in wish fulfillment and the projection of oedipal tendencies. Freud asserts that each child, born into helplessness and the terror that results, develops a desperate need and longing for the protection of his or her father. For a helpless infant, father represents an omnipotent protector. Though he possesses a fearsome and absolute control over the helpless child, through love, the potent father offers safety and solace. These conflicting and all encompassing abilities in the father – to exert absolute control as well as protection, create ambivalent feelings in the growing child; both hate and love. As individuals age and recognize the limitations of their biological fathers, they find themselves exposed to a dangerous world where they remain helpless in the face of the forces of nature and decay. They long, fiercely, for that remembered sense of security. Adults then wish that the overwhelming powers of nature might, like fathers, be infused with the kind of love that would make them benevolent. Freud supposes that our needs are relieved, our terrors assuaged, through wishing and illusion. The wish that a loving father figure might stand behind the disturbing realities of life becomes, through the activities of the imagination, a perceived fact -- an illusion that seems fully real to those holding it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Freud’s enlightenment based position against religion has been articulated by many historians. One example can be found in Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time* (New York, Norton: 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Doubleday, 1964) (first published in German in 1927). These ideas are well summarized in Andrew Fuller, *Psychology and Religion: Eight Points of View* (Lanham, Md. : Littlefield Adams, 1994). Armand Nicholi also discusses Freud’s views on

Freud further suggests that the conflicting feelings that individuals have towards their fathers – the famous “Oedipus Complex” -- shape individuals’ understandings of God. Biological fathers inspire both fear and love, as well as rebelliousness. The images of God in various human cultures, according to Freud, reflect these same ambivalences. In texts like *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) Freud suggests that theism and monotheism are not only projections of individual relationships with fathers, but of actual historical and social events. A primal hoard, Freud argues, driven by their resentment of their father’s authority, murdered him. Later, in remorse born of the love they felt towards him, early human beings established totems to honor his memory. Freud elaborates by suggesting that Moses urged a religion of monotheism upon the ancients. They, resenting his authority as they had the original father’s, murdered him as well. In a replicating pattern, their remorse pressed them to adopt the monotheism of their victim.<sup>9</sup>

While these theories explain why Freud believes that religion is an illusion and a projection, they do not fully capture his argument for why it is a social ill. In assessing religions’ impact on the individual, Freud asserts that it arrests the person at an infantile phase of development. Maturity, in Freud’s view, means facing reality and abandoning illusions. If religion is simply a wish and a projection, then it stands as a barrier between the individual and the unencumbered free will. The goal of analysis is to recognize the passions and the delusions that prevent individuals from exercising perfect reason and rationality. In this vein, Freud compares obsessive compulsion with religion. Compulsions are repetitious activities that are undertaken

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religion – and his ambivalence in that area – in *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Sex, Love and the Meaning of Life* (Lanham, Md. : Littlefield Adams, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (New York: Random House, 1946) (first published in German in 1913); Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Random House, 1967) (first published in German in 1939).

under the illusion that they will exert some influence over external events – providing protection and predictability. Freud construes the prayers and rituals of modern religion to be a type of “universal obsessional neurosis” in which all participants are distancing themselves from reality.<sup>10</sup>

Freud describes the religious view as “distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner...and...forcibly fixing [individuals] in a state of psychological infantilism.” He believes that the doctrines of religion “bear the imprint of the times in which they arose, the ignorant times of the childhood of humanity” and reflect “...the gross ignorance of primitive peoples.” Freud sees social, as well as individual, progress towards maturity as a process of secularization. He believes that it is actually dangerous to link social order and moral standards to religious faith. Since he supposes that human beings will eventually “grow up” and recognize that God does not exist, he worries that they will no longer adhere to the instructions attributed to religion. “If the sole reason why you must not kill your neighbor is because God has forbidden it and will severely punish you for it in this or the next life – then when you learn that there is no God and that you need not fear His punishment, you will certainly kill your neighbor without hesitation.”<sup>11</sup>

Freud prefers to pin his hopes for social order on enlightened self-interest. He believes that educated people would naturally sublimate their passions to the standards of ethics because their reason insists that would be in their best interests. He argues that the uneducated need to be given reasons for following basic moral precepts. For example, if the masses were told not to kill “in the interest of their communal existence,” they would not murder. Freud argues that “it would be an undoubted

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<sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* (London : Hogarth Press, 1955-1974, v. 1, 1966), vol. XXI, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XXI, pp. 84-85; Freud, *The Question of a Weltanschauung*, in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XXII, p. 168; Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XXI, p.39.

advantage if we were to leave God out altogether and honestly admit the purely human origin of the regulations and precepts of civilization.” He supposes that “along with their pretended sanctity, these commandments and laws would lose their rigidity and unchangeableness as well,” opening them to the analysis of reason.<sup>12</sup>

The divergent views of Putnam and Freud represent two streams of thought that have shaped the historiography of religion and science in modern America. One adheres to Freud’s expectation of secularization and his aversion to the conjoining of faith and science; the other concerns itself with Putnam’s interest in the role of liberal Protestantism in the shaping of psychology and culture. Historians, though not necessarily personally committed to either philosophy, have tended to attend closely to one or the other of these thinkers’ predictions. Scholars of science and academia have found processes of secularization that would have pleased Freud. Joan Brumberg, for example, has elegantly articulated the process of medicalization by which a cluster of symptoms and behaviors – like those now associated with anorexia – became defined as disease in need of scientific investigation. Perceptive studies of the American academy such as those by James Turner and George Marsden have shown that religion has been purged from intellectual discourse in many fields of study. While these studies work extremely well in their particular areas, the use of secularization as an overarching explanatory device obscures the continuing impact of certain types of religion in realms like philosophy and medicine. Thus, when religion emerges in academic or scientific discussions, it appears to operate within a story of declension, growing progressively more insignificant and lacking in social or political vision.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Freud, quoted in Nicholi, p. 72-3.

<sup>13</sup> Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Fasting Girls : the history of anorexia nervosa* (New York, N.Y. : Penguin Books, USA, 1989); James Turner, *Without God, without Creed: the Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: from Protestant Establishment to Established Non-belief* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1996).

Other scholars go beyond simply identifying processes of secularization and construct critiques of them. In these views, modernization is not the advancement of scientific authority, but the dissipation of clear communal values in any realm. Articulating Freud's fears, they outline a degeneration of culture in which faith and science are mixed and both are vulgarized. They have posed trenchant challenges to what they termed "therapeutic culture," portraying it as both a corruption of religion and science and also a bastion of apathy and stagnation. The originator of the descriptor, "Culture of Narcissism," Christopher Lasch has been one of the most vehement and persuasive promoters of this viewpoint. He emphasizes the tendency of psychological and self-help literature to focus all attention inward towards the individual and his or her needs and desires. This fascination comes at the expense of active engagement with other people and the larger community. Lasch paints therapeutic culture as a carrier of self-absorption and social apathy. In Lasch's view, the enthusiasm that Americans have shown for psychology, self-help, and "positive thinking" in the post-war years has become a sort of contagion that corrupts the disciplines that it infiltrates. In this interpretation, religion has been corrupted as psychological theories and practices have intruded into theology and pastoral counseling.<sup>14</sup>

Jackson Lears, in his analysis of anti-modernism, *No Place of Grace*, supports this general picture. He criticizes Lasch for overstating the importance of institutionalized psychology and underestimating the influence of psychological ideas in the larger culture. Lears does, however, agree with Lasch's story of secularization and applauds his use of the term "weightlessness" to describe a culture infused with therapeutic language and beliefs. Lears, too, tells a story of declension, as ideas about

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (U.S.A.: Norton, 1978).

psychotherapy, along with other “scientific” theories, cause individuals to question and doubt any deeply held religious beliefs. Even those who struggle against this infusion of “modernism” end up with inauthentic, artificial worldviews that serve only to coat their doubts in a superficial veneer that simply distracts from the emptiness that seems to be invading their belief systems. In his later work, Lears continues to equate therapeutic culture with a “mind-cure” mentality that does little to bring any vitality or sense of authenticity into the lives of modern Americans. Instead it simply reinforces the dominant consumer culture by urging believers to seek ever increasing gratification in a limitless economy of desires that can be realized through the simple act of wishing and consuming. With Lasch, he sees therapy as reducing both the spiritual and enlightened life to passivity and ultra-individualism to the detriment of community.<sup>15</sup>

The suggestion that the melding of religion and psychiatry in America has represented a turn away from political questioning and engagement has been further supported by Donald Meyer, Philip Rieff, and Robert Bellah. Meyer argues that while early promoters of “mind-cure” like Mary Baker Eddy actively challenged entrenched authorities – from complacent Episcopalians to dogmatic evangelicals – later “positive thinkers,” Norman Vincent Peale or Dale Carnegie, for example, served as cheerleaders for the status quo. They advocated that “believers” adapt to, rather than challenge, the worlds in which they lived so as to find “peace.” Rieff supposes that the Americanization of Freud has engendered a culture of needy individuals, unrestrained by social ties and ever in need of increasing gratification. Robert Bellah, in *Habits of the Heart* impugns the way that a modern language of individualism figures so prominently in psychological discourse, arguing that commitments to others have

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<sup>15</sup> Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (Basic Books, USA: 1994).

become “enhancements of the sense of individual well-being rather than moral imperatives.” He proposes that the efforts of therapists and philosophers to shore up individualism bankrupted modern morality. Modern individualism, in his view, has advanced to the point at which personal choices should not be contingent upon relationships to others. People are not accountable to friends, family, or institutions like church or government.<sup>16</sup>

Self-absorption and political apathy were not the legacies that Freud sought for psychoanalysis. At the same time neither were they the outcomes that Putnam envisioned when he discussed the relationship between Protestant religion and psychoanalysis. Putnam was an early supporter of the Emmanuel Movement, a church-based initiative in which ministers administered psychotherapy. Though short-lived, it has been credited as a forerunner to the modern pastoral counseling phenomena, as an impetus for the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, and as a major force in the popularization of psychoanalysis. Putnam, himself a product of liberal Protestant theology and transcendental thought, saw a social gospel mission in the efforts to introduce medical theory into spiritual counseling. Though he, along with other neurologists eager to protect their scientific authority, later withdrew his support from the movement, his early enthusiasm for the Emmanuel project represents an expectation that psychotherapy in America would be advanced through a partnership with Protestant ministers. These expectations were mirrored not only among Putnam’s contemporaries, but also by historians.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Donald Meyers, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Bellah, Robert Neelly, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) p. 6, 47, 143.

<sup>17</sup>Sanford Gifford, *The Emmanuel Movement (Boston, 1904-1929): The Origins of Group Treatment and the Assault on Lay Psychotherapy* (Boston: Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, 1997); Eric Caplan, *Mind Games: American Culture and the Birth of Psychotherapy* (Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press, 1998).



Most of the pioneering historical works on the relationship between religion and psychology in American life have tended to focus on Protestants. Brooks Holifield's *History of Pastoral Counseling* and Donald Meyer's *Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop-Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts*, for example, focus almost exclusively on Protestants, highlighting their story to the exclusion of the Jews, Catholics, and secularists who discussed psychology in spiritual terms. Meyer, like the majority of historians of American religion, focuses on the development of Protestant mind-cure as a coherent thread running through American cultural life. While identifying an important and previously under-acknowledged phenomenon in American life, his overarching theme sometimes obscures the distinctions among various approaches to religion and psychology, placing novel ideas about faith and mental health under an umbrella category that encompasses the thought of all from Phineas Quimby to Normal Vincent Peale. This reduces the use of psychology in religion to a single dimension and ignores its meaning for "minority" religions.<sup>18</sup>

The standard historical narrative further addresses the internal conflicts that mainline Protestant churches faced as fundamentalism grew in protest against modernizing tendencies. They cast modernization as a particularly Protestant dilemma in which liberals fared poorly. Richard Fox, for example, suggests that, by the 1920's, the paths of evangelical and liberal Protestants diverged, leading the former to institutional dominance and the latter to an ill-defined cultural presence. As advocates for tolerance, pluralism, rationalism, and individualism, liberal Christians carried beliefs that were much more difficult to define, package, and promote than those of dogmatic, proselytizing faiths. Fox points out that the key paradox of liberal Protestantism is that its goal has always been to sanctify the secular, "to bring forth

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<sup>18</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (U.S.A.: Abingdon Press, 1983); Donald Meyers, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

out of the natural and human worlds the divine potential contained within them.” When the ethics and ideals of liberal religion are subsumed within secular organizations, this is a bittersweet triumph for their institutions.<sup>19</sup>

Susan Curtis reinforces these views in *A Consuming Faith*. She argues that when liberal Protestants campaigned to establish their cherished values of tolerance and social welfare in political and governmental structures, they ended up reducing the need for their own institutions. When government engaged in social and moral uplift, they assumed the primary cultural function of liberal churches. Lacking social significance and demoralized by the horrors of World War I, liberal theologians foundered. While the intellectual pursuit of theological modernism continued in seminaries, the social movement became more marginal to the actual beliefs and practices of Protestant congregations that remained more traditional and pious.<sup>20</sup>

In assessing the transformation that emerged from the cultural clashes of the early twentieth century, historians have tended to place Protestants into two camps: the fundamentalists who defended themselves against the encroachments of modern life, and the liberals who essentially surrendered their social and political agendas by capitulating to secularity. The modernists, in this narrative, packaged a message of personal solace – a “feel good” spirituality that would enable believers to easily accommodate themselves to modernity. While this narrative may not fully explain even Protestant encounters with modernity, it clearly neglects those of Jews and Catholics.

Recently, however, some scholars have been uncovering developments that would have surprised both Freud and Putnam, while subtly reshaping the evolving

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<sup>19</sup> "Experience and Explanation in American Religious History" in Harry Stout and Darryl Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

historical narrative. Andrew Heinze, for example, has interrogated what he calls the “myth of Protestant origins.” In, *Jews and the Soul of American Culture*, Heinze writes that a myth is “...not a false story but one that, for all its richness, remains radically incomplete and therefore misleading.” Heinze defines the myth of Protestant origins as one in which “modern American views of human nature are aftereffects, mutations, or extenuations of Protestant modes of thought, starting with the Puritans and moving up in time through such seminal thinkers as John Dewey and William James, who were raised as Protestants and ended up as great post-Protestant thinkers of the twentieth century.” Heinze challenges this myth very directly, simply by exploring the significant role that Jews played in the shaping of the modern American “soul.” He points to Jewish psychologists and writers who urged closer attention to issues of pluralism and prejudice, for example.<sup>21</sup>

***Project Description:***

This is the point at which I would like to enter the historical discussion. In this dissertation, I have tried to engage the above dialogues from some new vantage points. What if we looked at the history of psychology from the perspective of Catholics, Jews, and other “religious outsiders” as well as from that of Protestants? What if we found psychotherapists who, rather than finding their faith displaced by their study of psychiatry, sought ways to negotiate the conflicts between their religious beliefs and their scientific studies, and aimed to maintain, or even reconcile, both? What if, rather than focusing on treatises of “self-actualization”, we examined psychological theories about communities and human relationships?

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

The pursuit of these questions leads us to conclusions that render the exchange between Freud and Putnam both ironic and prescient. By the 1940's, liberal religious leaders and psychoanalytically inclined therapists were both returning to the fundamental questions about enlightened democracy that occupied Freud and Putnam. Their concerns, however, did not fall neatly along the threads of either secularization or mainstream Protestant modernization. The discourse among religious outsiders during and after World War II presents a very different form of the Americanization of Freud and the interaction of religion and medicine.

Many of these outsiders experienced the crisis of the mid-twentieth century with an immediacy and urgency that was merely vicarious for the majority of their mainstream Protestant colleagues. Jews were, of course, drastically destabilized by the rise of Nazism. A number of our subjects are Jewish refugees whose engagement with Americanization was colored by their desperate flight. The years following World War II were pivotal for American Catholic identity as well. Catholics increasingly sought influence in popular and academic venues. Religious outsiders whose positions were further marginalized by either immigrant status or mental illness appeared to gain even sharper insights into dilemmas of democracy. Questions about the role and treatment of peripheral individuals were pressing and real to them.

A major theme in this project is the notion that these outsiders used their unique perspectives to assert that they had special insights into the maintenance of democratic, enlightened communities. They entwined their arguments about psychoanalysis and religion into dialogues about contemporary politics. By asserting that their philosophical and religious views had great bearing upon the political vitality of American democracy, they bestowed their ideas with both urgency and popular appeal.

To explore this situation, I have assembled a series of case studies from the post-war years that temper the established lines of historiography and invite further explanation. This work is by no means a comprehensive history of the religious responses to Freud in America. It is, instead, a reflection on the ways that diverse groups of Americans contributed to the construction of a shared vision of internal health and liberation, and on how that picture shaped ideas about American identity, religion, and psychiatry. I am also particularly concerned with situating these developments in the context of World War II and the post-war years, as this environment presented formative challenges to marginalized thinkers. By focusing upon the input of various types of “outsiders,” I am able to analyze the way that they accommodated and adapted to their understandings of “mainline” culture, while also showing the ways that they created unique contributions and challenges to that culture, effectively weaving their own interests and experiences into the tapestry of American psychological and religious discourses.

These outsiders take the story out of the familiar realm of mainline Protestant modernism and its capitulation to secularism and individualism and offer a fresh way of understanding the Americanized debate over Freud and religion. They address the possibilities of psychoanalysis not from the perspective of adaptation to modern science, as do the early twentieth century Protestants, but from the standpoint of the post-war anxiety over the possibilities for a citizenry of rational, self-aware participants in the democratic process. These questions assume urgency in light of World War II, the Holocaust, and the Cold War. They bring to these issues the perspective of outsiders to American democracy and members of minority groups – Europeans haunted by encounters with fascism, veterans of mental hospitals, women seeking spiritual engagement in an era of conformity and rigid gender roles, renegades within professional psychiatry, and modernizers in churches and synagogues. Though

offering different solutions, they all addressed the possibilities of a humanistic take on Freud as a counter to behavioral and biological psychiatry that provided space for religious and spiritual ideas. Far from providing a path toward passivity and radical individualism, these thinkers attempted to invigorate American liberal democracy against the tide of totalitarian temptation by calling for a renewal of faith and psychological self-awareness – a liberation of the mind.

My methodology involves intellectual history – the analysis of various ideas and types of rhetoric in their cultural context and in relation to each other – as well as biography – tracing the intellectual development of individuals and their theories. I hope, however, to extend this analysis into aspects of cultural history. By focusing on “public intellectuals,” writers and speakers who crisscrossed the boundaries between scholarly and popular work, operating in academic settings (hospitals, universities, and seminaries), but also in popular arenas (therapy sessions, best-selling books, and public media), I am striving to develop a conception of how many types of Americans grappled with the emotional and spiritual upheavals of the mid-twentieth century. Rather than centering on the institutional structures of either religion or psychoanalysis, I am looking at both as cultural forces, influences on the ways that many Americans conceived of their internal lives. I hope also to cross certain boundaries of national history. While this book focuses on discourses about America and democracy, the participants are international, including immigrants and overseas observers. Ironically, conversations about American exceptionalism and notions of why America was uniquely suited for democratic, liberation-based psychology became loci for the exchange and fusion of ideas from Europe as well.

### ***Chapter Outline:***

I have tried to arrange the ensuing chapters so that they capture the relative enthusiasm and engagement of Jews and Catholics in these discussions. I hope, too, to convey the influence of additional layers of “outsiderness” – immigrant status, gender, and mental illness. Part I addresses Jewish and Catholic thinkers who explicitly aimed to articulate the relationship between their faith and psychoanalysis. Part II is comprised of two specific American discourses that provided cultural spaces in which religious outsiders influenced the development of American conceptions of faith, psychiatry, and democracy in the years following World War II. The first looks at Americans’ efforts to assess the psychological impact of the Holocaust, while the second deals with women’s autobiographical narratives of mental illness and treatment with psychoanalysis. In Part III, the conclusion, I aim to trace the impact of outsiders on the way that religious and psychological thinkers understood themselves to be constructing an American vision of the relationships among their minds, their politics, and their spirituality.

I begin, in Chapter 2, “Democracy of the Mind: Rabbi Joshua Liebman’s Analysis of Judaism, Psychoanalysis and American Politics,” with the American thinker who was, perhaps, the most enthusiastic about the potential merger of religion and psychoanalysis: Joshua Liebman. American-born and active in Mordecai Kaplan’s Synagogue Center movement, Liebman was termed an American “spokesman for Judaism” by contemporaries. His work directly links Judaism, psychoanalysis, and American democracy. More so than any of the other thinkers, Liebman pinned his hopes on liberal Judaism and psychoanalysis to forge and preserve democracy. Liebman most vividly described a “democracy of the mind.” Popular and controversial, Liebman initiated widespread interest in Freud and religion.

Our analysis of his work introduces the major themes that will resonate throughout this dissertation.

Liebman, however, did not live past the 1940's, so the outcome of his hopes and expectations can best be assessed through the responses of others. The dissertation continues by situating Liebman among concordant and responsive discourses. In Chapter 3, "Therapeutic Heresy? Catholic Critiques of Freud", I turn to the realm that nurtured Liebman's most outspoken critic: the American Catholic community. Fulton Sheen railed against both Freud and Liebman. He went so far as to pen his own response to *Peace of Mind, Peace of Soul*, in which he articulates a Catholic critique of Freud and argues that when individuals turn to analysis for help they turn away from the only authentic spiritual solace available – full participation in Catholic life. Like Liebman, Sheen directs his message to those beyond his own denomination and he emerged as a popular spokesperson for Catholicism at mid-century. Other Catholics – like journalist Clare Booth Luce – joined Sheen in his attacks. They were bolstered in their opinions by the growing popularity of Austrian émigré and advice writer, Rudolf Allers. Seeking logical inconsistencies in psychoanalysis, Allers sought to mediate its influence in both religion and psychology.

There is irony and ambivalence running through these Catholic critiques of Liebman and Freud. While all assailed Freud for his alleged materialism and urged audiences not to revere psychoanalytic authority over Catholic, they also recognized the significance of psychoanalysis in their communities and saw a clear relationship between analysis and religious practice. They rode the rising popularity of Freud by writing books about his theories. While couching their ideas in critiques of Freud, they actually ended up supporting many of his fundamental assertions – the viability of talk therapy, for example, and the significance of relationships. Ultimately, their discussions centered on the same questions that concerned Liebman: how will religion



shape psychological culture in America and how will both bolster American freedom and democracy?

The American Catholic community, however, was not united behind Sheen's and Luce's attacks. In the next chapter, "Existential Exorcists: Freud's Catholic Champions", I argue that Catholics were not as monolithically opposed to psychoanalysis as spokesmen like Sheen would have liked to believe. Leo Bartemeier, for example, became the first Catholic to take the presidency of the American Psychoanalytic Association. He became a very public supporter of psychoanalysis, championing it as a useful science and obtaining approval from the Pope to take the helm of the APA.

I devote the rest of this chapter to the work of two Catholics with some remarkable similarities. Converts, immigrants, doctors, psychoanalysts, and writers, Gregory Zilboorg and Karl Stern worked extensively to bring what they perceived to be "Catholic" values to the practice of psychoanalysis. Each presents conversion narratives that operate on several levels. Both were born into European Jewish families, but, by the 1940's, operated as prominent Catholic spokesmen on psychoanalysis. Their decisions to become Catholic despite that community's ambivalence towards their professions seem puzzling. Both Zilboorg and Stern, however, worked to reconcile their chosen faith with their professional callings. They did so not by maintaining boundaries of separation between their religion and their work, but by analyzing each in terms of the other – arguing that Freud, though unintentionally, upheld the fundamental values that shape Catholic belief. This conviction made them eager to herald psychoanalysis among fellow doctors and potential patients in the hopes that its advancement would slow the spread of biological materialism. Both also enthusiastically embraced the liberal politics of

their new American homes and argued vociferously that a psychoanalysis tempered by Catholic influence would help to shore up democratic ideals.

Part II consists of two thematic chapters that illustrate how the notion of inner democracy intersects with discussions of religion and psychoanalysis in specific realms. Chapter 5, “‘Light must Endure the Burning’: Viktor Frankl and the Psychological Impact of the Holocaust,” resumes a theme that will have emerged during Part I: the psychological and spiritual impact of the horror of the War and Holocaust upon vicarious observers in America. Frankl’s autobiography of his experiences in a concentration camp became one of the most widely read survivor narratives of the post-war era. In it he describes the way that his experiences reshaped his views towards both his religion – Judaism – and his profession – psychoanalysis. His work demonstrates that efforts to combine religion and psychoanalysis did not always entail a turn away from politics and a repression of trauma. Frankl proposed a way for individuals to confront horror and find meaning in it. He argues that in so doing, community members protect themselves from anti-democratic forces and maintain their free will.

In Chapter 6, “Ascent from the Pit: Three Narratives of Madness and Analysis,” I continue to explore the experiences of individuals in “extremis.” Trauma for these individuals, however, begins in their own minds. This chapter is about sufferers of mental illness who are treated through analysis. Two are confined to mental institutions and one undergoes long-term therapy. Each of these narratives present psychoanalysis as a process not only of spiritual growth, but also of liberation. Their stories begin with individuals ensnared in anti-democratic forces – restrictive biological treatments, materialism, conformity, authoritarianism, and neurosis. The process of analysis, in each, liberates the patient and prepares her to become a contributing member of liberal, democratic communities.

In Part III, Chapter 7, I use a final analysis of the way that mainstream professionals in psychiatry responded to the notions of outsiders to draw conclusions about the way that these post-war discussions have shaped modern psychological culture. Historian Rachel Rosner, at the Annual Cheiron Convention in 2000, identified significant questions in the historiography of psychotherapy: How did psychology become such a fixture in 20<sup>th</sup> century life? How do we explain its persistent and broad appeal despite the divergent views and controversies that have shaped its development? In her project on James Putnam and the relationship between religion and psychotherapy, she further wonders, “where did the ministers go?” In Rosner’s view, the active presence of ministers, given past history, ought to be more prominent in modern therapy. I argue that this gives rise to a further query: “without the ministers, how do we explain the presence of so much religion in modern psychology?” From 12 step programs, to the ceaseless representation of inspirational literature on best-seller lists, to the spiritual discussions between therapists and patients, religion remains present and vital in our modern psychological culture. Despite the resurgence of biological interpretations of mental illness and the widespread use of psychotropic medication, talk therapy and spiritually based recovery programs retain their prominence. Spiritual seekers continue to be drawn to psychological ideas in their quests for answers.

In my final chapter I examine large trends that shaped psychiatry in the later twentieth century, and seek areas in which efforts to define religion and psychology as mutual reinforcers of democracy continued to evolve. Ironically, that political edge has been forgotten by historians, and has tended to wane over the years. The fading of these social concerns has led the field closer to the quagmire that cultural critics have identified and attacked – apathy and narcissism.

Contemporary psychology, however, remains well suited for a resurgence in discussions of the ways that individual mental well-being can, and should, contribute to healthy democratic communities. This suitability, in my view, stems from the political, psychoanalytic, and religious interests that intersected in the decades following World War II and proved formative in the development of American psychological culture. The extraordinary popularity of psychoanalysis in these years was not accidental. Freud wove his analysis of the human mind into a political philosophy that revitalized enlightenment ideals and liberal politics. Religious outsiders were drawn to Freud by these themes, and recognized in his ephemeral popularity an opportunity to articulate a vital role for spiritual concerns in those discussions. While Freud's particular theories may have lost favor among academic psychologists and psychiatrists, his cultural influence continues.

Ultimately, I argue that this investigation changes the way we understand the continual presence of religion and spirituality in modern mental health care. Evidence of religious influence pervades contemporary psychology – in rehab centers, on best-seller lists, and in therapists' offerings. This is not, as previously thought, a sole result of secularization and Protestant liberalism. It bears the imprint not only of other religious groups – acting at various points to either accommodate or react against the Protestant mainstream – but also from the specific context of the United States during the era of World War II as an expression of Enlightenment and Liberalism. It harbors, too, the continuing impact of Freudian psychoanalysis. While today's practices might surprise Freud and Putnam, they reflect both thinkers' commitment to internalizing democracy.

## CHAPTER 2

### “DEMOCRACY OF THE MIND”: RABBI JOSHUA LIEBMAN’S INTERPRETATIONS OF JUSAIMS, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND AMERICAN POLITICS DURING THE WORLD WAR II ERA

#### *Introduction*

By 1946, Friday night services at Temple Israel in Boston had become somewhat of a mob scene. When Rabbi Joshua Liebman delivered his sermons, his congregation, augmented by hundreds of non-Jews, stormed the doors in such numbers that the police were frequently called. Over a thousand people were regularly turned away from the overflowing synagogue. One evening, Liebman struggled through the throngs of people to reach his synagogue, only to be met at the door by a janitor who, failing to recognize him barked “Go away; no use hanging around. Rabbi Liebman preaches here – you don’t think there’s an empty seat do you?” One wonders if Liebman sensed the irony in a situation where the crowds that moved with such agitation and aggression to find seats in his audience were there to hear sermons that usually revolved around the theme, “peace of mind.”<sup>22</sup>

This topic formed the cornerstone of Liebman’s agenda, both for his rabbinate at Temple Israel and his career as a popular author and radio preacher. When he assumed his post in Boston in 1939, Liebman adopted the slogan, “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people,” to guide his ministry as he tended to his congregation throughout World War II and its aftermath. Inspired by his experiences in Freudian analysis, Liebman inaugurated a pastoral counseling program and made emotional well-being and psychological health primary goals at his house of worship. These

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<sup>22</sup> Personal correspondence with Betsy Abrams, Archivist at Temple Israel in Boston; “Meet an American Rabbi and his Family,” *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1948; Jack Stenbuck, “No Peace of Mind the Author of *Peace of Mind*,” *Magazine Digest*.

goals defined Liebman's message as he began writing and speaking to a popular audience on the potential roles of religion and psychology in modern America. In 1946 he summarized these ideas in *Peace of Mind*. The work rapidly climbed to the top of bestseller lists throughout the country and sold over 1.5 million copies within its first decade of publication. In his bestseller, Liebman argued that the key to a healthy society was the development of psychologically healthy individuals. He heralded Freud's psychoanalytic theories and American Judaism as compatible thought systems that embodied all of the ideals that Americans longed to associate with their nation as they worked to define their political and cultural significance in relation to the global events that were re-configuring the world around them.<sup>23</sup>

As Americans emerged from a world war fought against fascist dictators and stood poised to enter the Cold War, Liebman added his voice to that of the politicians and religious leaders who idealized America as the last bastion of democracy, liberalism and freedom in a global struggle against totalitarianism. In Liebman's vision, this ideal society was defined by its commitment to pluralism in a community that welcomed diverse contributions to a democratic forum, and to progress as a continual re-evaluation of conditions with the aim of improvement. Liebman pointed to psychoanalysis as a system that enabled individuals to become functioning, contributory members of this community. Arguing that psychoanalysis generated a "liberation of the mind" that mirrored the political liberation of democratic societies, Liebman urged individuals to order their inner lives in a manner that would reflect their outward commitment to a free and open society.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sales figures for *Peace of Mind* are included in Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>24</sup> For background on the political implications of religion during the Cold War see James Hudnet-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and its Critics, 1945-1960* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1994); Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II* (New York, Simon and Schuster: 1988); Stephan Whitefield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

In his expansive interpretation of Jewish beliefs and tradition, Liebman presented Judaism as the religious system most compatible with the pursuit of psychoanalytic health and freedom from repression. Judaism, in Liebman's view, nurtured individual freedom and responsibility, facilitated the open expression of emotions and ideas, and encouraged progress. By writing about Judaism as a collection of traditions that had universal appeal and utility in any American's quest for peace of mind, Liebman posited the faith as a model, an inspiration, for all Americans. By presenting Judaism as the most healthy minded -- and therefore, the most truly American -- religion, Liebman enshrined the faith at the heart of a major trend in popular religious culture: the wave of inspirational self-help literature that emerged in the post-war era.

Liebman wrote during a time when Americans generally were increasingly coming to understand their identity in terms of where they stood vis-à-vis popular cultural trends. By World War II, radio programs and best-selling books were generating a popular culture with a mass audience. By far the most widely-read author to interpret Judaism in modern America, Liebman shaped the image of Judaism as it appeared in these mass markets. Family friends told Liebman that his book was "the first Jewish epistle to the world in our modern era." While friends may have been inclined to hyperbole, it is arguable that more Jews experienced their faith, and more non-Jews learned about Judaism, through Liebman's book and radio program than through the work of any other single thinker of the time. *Peace of Mind* had become required reading in medical school psychiatry classes, it had been released as a condensed article in Reader's Digest, and, by 1956, had outsold all other inspirational

texts from any religion with the exception of Protestant minister Norman Vincent Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking*.<sup>25</sup>

“Peace of Mind” assumed a position alongside of the phrase “positive thinking” as the descriptors of the sort of popular religion that prevailed during the 1940s-50s. As the author of the first major bestseller to combine religion and psychology after the war, Liebman inaugurated this trend, serving, in Martin Marty's view, as a “pioneer,” and a “harbinger of the new trend in popular religion.” As a Jewish author, however, Liebman stands out as an anomaly in the historical narrative that chronicles the evolution of inspirational religion. An examination of Liebman's work constructs the story of Jews' encounters with psychology and popular self-help that has largely gone untold.<sup>26</sup>

Liebman was not only concerned about the representation of Judaism in popular culture, but also with the condition of Jewish communities themselves. Liebman assumed a position of prominent leadership among Jews who supported Mordecai Kaplan's vision of reconstructed Jewish communities. In this construction, synagogues and centers would become places where Jews of varying orientations – Reform, Orthodox, Zionist and anti-Zionist – would come together to form a pluralistic community and develop a common sense of Jewish identity. As global

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<sup>25</sup> Letters in the Joshua Liebman papers at Temple Israel in Boston, including one from Arthur Morsky from the May Institute for Medical Research in Lincoln, Ohio, April 1, 1946, indicate that *Peace of Mind* was used in medical schools; Martha and Slomo Marenof telegraphed that *Peace of Mind* was an “epistle” on Mar. 29, 1946; Schneider and Dornbusch provide sales figures for inspirational texts, and advance the general argument that Americans were becoming increasingly interested in popular literature as religion after World War II. For a good book about Norman Vincent Peale, see Carol George, *God's Salesman: Norman Vincent Peale and the Power of Positive Thinking* (Oxford: 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Martin Marty, *Modern American Religion Vol. 3: Under God, Indivisible, 1841-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts* (New York: Pantheon, 1980); For additional discussions of popular religion during this era see Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont, CA, Wadsworth: 1992); Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Ch. 9; Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).



events on the scale of the Holocaust and the founding of Israel called American Jews to reflect on the condition of Judaism in their own country, Liebman hoped that synagogues and centers would be places where Jews would find a “sense of at homeness in Judaism and Americanism.” Vigorously urging Jews to actively participate in the development of thriving religious communities, Liebman continually sought to integrate his popular ideas about psychoanalysis, Judaism, and American politics into a program that would revitalize Jewish religious communities in America.<sup>27</sup>

While Liebman strove to strengthen Jewish community life, his critics have argued that he was undermining that very goal through his activities in popular culture. Will Herberg, among others, has pointed to Liebman’s popular work as an example of the sort of personalized, generalized self-help that led to a devitalization of historic religions. The crowds outside of Liebman’s synagogue in Boston point to some of the tensions inherent in his simultaneous pursuit of both popularity and vitality for Judaism in America.<sup>28</sup>

When Liebman announced that Jews had a message for the nation, he invited the general citizenry into his synagogue, creating a situation in which his own congregants had to compete for seats. As they struggled through the crowds, members might have wondered whether the religious concepts discussed in a synagogue should claim a universal nature or seek to garner a mass audience through best-sellers and radio programs. Were the conduits of popular culture a helpful way for Jews to

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<sup>27</sup> Liebman campaigned for the Reconstruction movement throughout his career. Significant addresses on the topic include “Twenty-Five Years of Jewish Community Life in America,” speech to the Jewish Welfare Board, April 18, 1942; “New Trends in Reform Jewish Thought,” speech at Hebrew Union College, 1948; and the keynote address to the annual meeting of the Jewish Welfare Board, reprinted in the *JWB Circle*, June 1948. For background on Kaplan and the Reconstruction movement, see Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont CA, Wadsworth: 1992) ch. 2. 2; Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Naomi Pasachoff, *Great Jewish Thinkers* (New Jersey: Behrman, 1992); Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>28</sup> See conclusion for further discussion of Herberg and other critics.

experience their religion and non-Jews to learn about it? They may have pondered the extent to which the activities of listening to sermons on peace of mind, seeking pastoral counseling, or striving to implement Liebman's psychological techniques into their own modes of thinking were expressions of their Jewish faith. As they learned the full extent of Hitler's genocide, members might have wondered if the atmosphere at Temple Israel would help American Jews and immigrant survivors come to grips with that trauma. These questions posed the dilemmas that haunted Liebman throughout his career.

This last concern over the role of religion in shaping Americans' response to the Holocaust is a particularly vexing issue that is often disregarded in analysis of religious life during the era. Neither popular religious culture nor organized institutions seemed able to foster an environment that encouraged survivors or observers to openly address that catastrophe. Liebman's other questions, too, were central concerns for larger debates about religion and culture after the war. What does popularization do to religion? Do efforts to combine religion and psychology lead to a turn away from social and political issues as individuals focus on their inner lives?

Liebman's struggles have implications for the larger story of Americans' efforts to redefine spiritual life after World War II. R. Laurence Moore points out that among minority groups, Jews have made a "smashing success out of interpreting America to other Americans." In their movies, Christmas tree ornaments, and, in Liebman's case, inspirational books, Jews have demonstrated a particular talent for fulfilling the desires of a democratic public. Liebman grasped the popular ethos of his time and Americans saw their own dilemmas reflected in his work. The questions

that vexed Liebman are important ones to ask about American religious life during his era.<sup>29</sup>

### ***Rabbi Liebman's Quest for Peace of Mind***

Joshua Liebman was born April 7, 1907 in Hamilton Ohio to Sabina (Loth) and Simon Liebman. As a child, Liebman's sense of family security was challenged when he was two years old and his parents divorced, sending him to live with his paternal grandfather Lippman Liebman. As an adult interpreting Freudian theory, Liebman argued that individuals can augment or replace inadequate relationships with their parents by finding inspiration through identification with "heroes of the spirit." As the founder of the first Synagogue in Youngstown Ohio, and an early American Reform rabbi, Lippman Liebman may have been one such hero for his young grandson, and expressed hopes that Joshua would "follow in his footsteps" and become a rabbi. A great grandfather who was a distinguished German rabbi, and a great uncle, Moritz Loth, the first president of American Hebrew Congregations rounded out the pantheon of paternal role models in Joshua's family. From an early age, Joshua could see himself as part of a family with an established tradition of leadership in the Jewish community, especially as it developed an American heritage.<sup>30</sup>

When he was nine years old, Liebman left his grandfather's home to move to Cincinnati with his mother. By this time, he had demonstrated pronounced intellectual abilities and proclivities. A self-proclaimed bookworm and acknowledged child prodigy, Liebman skipped three grades by the age of ten and when he was thirteen,

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<sup>29</sup> R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> Personal Correspondence with Betsy Abrams, archivist, Temple Israel, Spring, 1999; "Joshua Loth Liebman," *Current Biography*, 1946; Rebecca T. Alpert, "Joshua Loth Liebman: The Peace of Mind Rabbi," *Faith and Freedom* (Great Britain: 1987), pp. 177-191.

began augmenting his high school education with classes at the Hebrew Union College until he graduated at age fifteen. Continually surrounded by students much older than himself, Liebman described his childhood as extremely lonely. Yet, he continued to outpace his peers academically. By age 19, he had received a B.A. and Phi Beta Kappa membership from the University of Cincinnati and had begun teaching philosophy and German courses there. By this point, his genius no longer ostracized Liebman, but enabled him to take leadership roles in academic and extracurricular activities throughout his educational experiences.<sup>31</sup>

It was in his capacity as a teacher that Liebman met his wife, Fan Loth, a distant cousin and student in one of his courses. By all accounts, their marriage was loving and devoted, but patterned upon the gender expectations of their era. Although educated and intelligent, Fan's role in the family was one of emotional support rather than intellectual collaboration. This pattern was evidently established early in their relationship when Liebman assigned a "B" to the student who had become his fiancée midway through the course, even though he admitted that she deserved an "A." When she protested at the time, he responded, "But honey, how would it look if I flunk the football stars and give my sweetheart an A?" The patterns established in Liebman's personal life paralleled his professional ideas, as he never substantively challenged the gender distinctions embedded in Freudian theory, or the gendered cultural expectations of mid-twentieth century America.<sup>32</sup>

In 1930, Liebman received his degree and ordination from Hebrew Union College and won the Simon Traveling Fellowship which enabled him to study at Hebrew University in Palestine. His experiences there were religiously and professionally invigorating for the young rabbi, who returned with a passionate

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.; "No Peace for the author of 'Peace of Mind'," Magazine Digest, 1946.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; letter, Geoffrey Nathon to Liebman, Mar. 23, 1946, Liebman Collection, Temple Israel, Boston.

commitment to Zionism and a zealous desire to shape the future of Judaism in America. “I came to Palestine a young rabbi versed in the theories of Judaism,” Liebman recalled, “but I left Palestine a Jew, filled with a burning fire of a humble pride that I was a member of a cosmic race.” He returned hoping to “bring back with me some goals with which to gear the hearts and minds of the American Jews.” Liebman also returned to America as the first reformed rabbi to openly embrace Zionism. By this point Liebman felt an overt personal identification with a global Jewish community, a responsibility to define America’s national position within that community, and a sense that his opinions bore political significance.<sup>33</sup>

Liebman spent the rest of the 1930s serving as Rabbi of Congregation Kehillath Anshe Maarab in Chicago, and completing his Doctorate of Hebrew Letters at HUC by writing a dissertation, *The Religious Philosophy of Aaren den Elijah*, which dealt with the major concepts of medieval Jewish philosophy in relation to Plato and Aristotle. During these years, Liebman also served as a visiting lecturer at nine of the most famous eastern Protestant theological schools under the sponsorship of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In this capacity, Liebman became the first Rabbi to assume the responsibility of teaching Christian theological students about Judaism.<sup>34</sup>

Each of these activities provided the young rabbi with opportunities to analyze Jewish history and philosophy and to construct his own approach to the religion. His education in the Reform tradition of Judaism at Hebrew Union College colored his understanding of Judaism. Evolving out of nineteenth century Jew’s desires to situate their religion in the context of the Enlightenment and their recent “emancipation” from many forms of explicit prejudice and exclusion, the Reform tradition emphasized that

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<sup>33</sup> “Statement on a Visit to Palestine,” Joshua Liebman Collection, Boston University.

<sup>34</sup> Abrams Correspondence, *Current Biography*; Dissertation Abstract, Liebman Papers, Temple Israel.

Jews constituted a religion and an ethical tradition rather than an ethnic or national culture. Reform Jews transformed orthodox understandings of Judaism in the hopes that they would be able to operate alongside Protestants as full participants in a changing society informed by the Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood. Downplaying the idea that Jews were a “chosen” people, as chosenness implied difference and outsiderhood, Reform Jews rejected the expectation of a Jewish messiah who would lead them back to Palestine and called for a universalized Messianic age of justice and peace. Replacing the notion that Jews had a homeland in Palestine with the idea that Jews found their home, just like everyone else, wherever they exercised the rights of citizenship, Reform Jews replaced distinctive practices, such as prayer shawls or chanting, with more decorous religious observances that were similar to those of the churches around them.

During the 1930’s, Liebman also encountered a critique of some aspects of the reform tradition in the Reconstruction movement pioneered by conservative rabbi, Mordecai Kaplan. Concerned that Jewish communities were growing to be defined less by common cultural attributes or social convictions, and only by shared religious beliefs, Kaplan worried that Jews were losing important components of their group identity. Troubled also by the conflicts among Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews, Kaplan strove to create a more unified Jewish community in America. Calling for an understanding of Judaism as a “religious civilization,” Kaplan advocated a compromise between Jewishness as an ethnic identity and Judaism as a religion. Kaplan’s emphasis on Jewish centers as places where Jews of varying viewpoints would come together to reinforce this civilization became central to Liebman’s vision.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on the Reform and Reconstruction traditions in Judaism see Albanese, Glazer and Meyer.

An aspect of both Reform and Reconstruction viewpoints that Liebman adopted fully was their treatment of Judaism as a fluid and adaptable set of traditions and beliefs that shifted in response to changing conditions. Liebman encountered this notion in the philosophy of HUC:

Judaism is both in spirit and fact a continuously progressive religious discipline and that it must be kept constantly liberal and spiritually alert...that if it is to live and expand in America it must be open to every positive influence of modernism, must square itself with every advance in scientific thought, and must engender that type of religious devotion which will evoke the uncompromising loyalty of every Jew.

Liebman adopted this pragmatic approach in his historical and philosophical analysis of Judaism, studying Jewish heritage but refusing to see his faith as a static set of fixed tenets. Instead, Liebman stressed that Jewish truths were continually being re-imagined.<sup>36</sup>

Liebman achieved his greatest fame for his efforts to reconcile his conception of Jewish belief with Freudian theory. Just as his years at Chicago had enabled the Rabbi to engage in the intense study of Judaism, they also prompted him to explore the psychoanalytic processes that he would eventually wed to Judaism in his intellectual marriage of religion and psychology. Serving as a rabbi of his own synagogue for the first time, Liebman saw the importance of the clergy's pastoral role. According to his future assistant, Albert Goldman, Liebman "began to deal with the many personal problems brought him," and recognized that "he could never be content to be merely a spectator; he had to be a friend and counselor." Goldman posited this

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in *Current Biography*.

desire to help his congregation as the impetus for Liebman to investigate psychoanalysis, and undergo analysis himself:

While yet a rabbi in Chicago, he began to sense his own inadequacy in dealing with human problems. The courses in practical theology which he had received at the seminary did not enter into the deeper levels of human behavior, and he realized...that more profound insights were needed if he were to help the troubled in the solution of their problems...For years then he subjected himself to the rigid discipline of analyzing the depths within himself, exploring the layers of his own personality, digging deep into the recesses of his heart, probing mercilessly into his experiences until he came to fuller recognition of the importance of the teachings of Freud and their meaning for our time.

Liebman later explained to an interviewer that before entering analysis, “he was floundering in his dealings with the big human problems, and that he had to understand himself perfectly before he could pretend to understand others and the forces that made them tick.” In an analysis of Liebman’s reconceptualization of the rabbinical role, Rebecca Alpert suggests that Liebman probably had personal as well as professional motivations for undergoing analysis. She cites letters from Liebman in which the rabbi wrote of his time in Chicago as one “of great stress and strain with many overwhelming problems adding to the burden of my health,” and reflected that “there burns within me an intense impatience and a sort of spiritual dissatisfaction with the achievement of the moment.” Evidently, Liebman began his analysis in Chicago with both intellectual curiosity and a desire to heal his own psyche.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Albert Goldman, ed., *Psychiatry and Religion*, prologue; *Magazine Digest*; Alpert.



We can speculate that analysis was helpful for Liebman, as he left Chicago in 1939 to embark on the most productive and creative period of his life, his tenure as Rabbi of Temple Israel in Boston. Assuming this position just as Europe plunged into war, Liebman dedicated himself to making the synagogue a center of community and nurturance in a world plagued by brutal war and genocide. Liebman transformed the synagogue from the mold of a classical Reform congregation to the Jewish Center pattern. Countering a conception of synagogue participation as just another form of “church” attendance, Liebman cancelled Sunday morning worship and held Friday evening services. He introduced more traditional liturgical forms and reinstated Bar Mitzvahs. At the religious school, Liebman established more traditional holiday observances and altered the curriculum to teach more Jewish culture, Biblical and Jewish history, Hebrew, and a pro-Zionist perspective. Social activities also flourished under Liebman’s guidance. One interviewer commented that entire families, “from Junior to Grandma, find some Liebman inspired activity...to claim his or her full-hearted attention.” The Rabbi himself taught religious classes and conducted a “fascinating story hour for the youngest members” who assured interviewer that “no one ever told a story better.”<sup>38</sup>

***“Message of Israel”: Judaism and American Politics***

Liebman’s assumption of leadership at Temple Israel coincided with a dramatic increase in his public speaking engagements. As the war began in Europe, Liebman found himself in demand as a “spokesman” for the American Jewish position. Invited by the Harvard Teachers Association to speak in March, 1940, Liebman called his address, “Dictatorship vs. Democracy: The Jewish Attitude,” a title

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<sup>38</sup> Abrams; *Magazine Digest*.

which reflects Liebman's growing confidence in his position to represent *the* Jewish attitude to a general audience. As his first significant speaking engagement after the start of the war, this talk rehearses the major issues and opinions that Liebman would present repeatedly in his speaking and writing throughout the war years.<sup>39</sup>

Liebman presented his historical interpretation of the roots of both dictatorship and democracy through the lenses of his psychoanalytic and political beliefs. Anticipating the framework of consensus historians, Liebman made the development of democratic, liberal ideals the core of his story. He represented democracy as part of the "quest for freedom and maturity" which fostered an attitude of "expansive optimism" as "men" before the war were "enthralled by the prospects of democracy converting the world." Science played a role too, as the potential "liberator and emancipator, the redeemer of civilization." The redeemed civilization, the goal of this triumphalist narrative was a society that nurtured individual liberty, religious freedom, and the continual pursuit of progress and new ideas. This state of perpetual fluidity and adaptation to new conditions was particularly fundamental to Liebman's vision of the modern world operating at its best.<sup>40</sup>

Alongside of this progress-driven teleology, however, Liebman posited another tendency in "Western Civilization" that ran counter to the development of democracy and formed the roots of dictatorship. The surface pursuit of democracy was conducted with such an emphasis on rationalism and reason that "primitive and barbaric instincts" became repressed, "stored up dynamite." Just as repressed drives cause psychological problems within individuals when they break through to the surface, the

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<sup>39</sup> J.M. Stenbuck, "A Modern Joshua in the book Stalls," Boston Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, 1946, Joshua Liebman Collection, Temple Israel; "Dictatorship vs. Democracy: The Jewish Attitude," Speech to the Harvard Teachers Association, Mar. 16, 1940, Liebman Collection, Boston University.

<sup>40</sup> For examples of the Consensus School of American History see Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men who Made it* (New York: Vintage Books, 1948); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace 1955); Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948).

darker instincts stored away during the “age of enlightenment” exploded when the fascist dictators called them forth. These “dissatisfied and unhappy men,” unable to “find their proper place in this white washed world” succeeded in “penetrating to the store room of repressed instincts, releasing the darker aspects of human nature.”<sup>41</sup>

Liebman asserted that the lure of tyranny had its deepest roots in psychological and philosophical conditions and could not be adequately explained by economic or political answers. Echoing Freud’s thesis in *Civilization and its Discontents*, and anticipating Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom*, Liebman argued that modern men and women felt isolated and overwhelmed by the responsibilities and decisions that freedom entails and longed to escape by abdicating the responsibility for making their own choices and regressing to childlike dependence on an authoritarian leader. The dictators, “the new Mephistopheles,” promised “tired and uncertain masses security and happiness in return for individual character and freedom of will.” They inaugurated an age of regression in which individuals were reduced to the “status of puppets” and reverted to the past – “polytheism, tribalism, primitive fears and prejudices and a blood cult.”<sup>42</sup>

Just as inner experiences fostered the conditions for fascism, Liebman believed that the weapons to fight it would be forged within the mind. “Ideas are indeed the most powerful weapons, whether for good or evil,” he asserted, “they are the dynamite which blasts through the rock and stone of habit and convention.” By representing Jewish history as a “quest for freedom” and painting Jewish structures and traditions as emblems of democracy, Liebman heralded Judaism as a threat to the dictators, countering Hitler’s invidious vision of the Jewish threat to racial purity with an intellectual challenge. Liebman presented Judaism as a religious civilization -- both

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<sup>41</sup> “Dictatorship vs. Democracy.”

<sup>42</sup> “Dictatorship vs. Democracy;” Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*; Eric Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*.

the history of a specific group of people and a set of beliefs -- that embodied democracy and contradicted dictatorship.

Beginning with the Exodus from Egyptian slavery, Liebman chronicled the Jews' ancient history as a set of experiences that shaped a sort of group mentality among them. "When Jews were uprooted and homeless, without the rights of free men," he asserted, "the obsession with freedom burned into their memories an ancestral compulsion, an ethnic heritage that never adopted a slave mentality, never abandoned loyalty to liberty." Although he harnessed these passages to an argument about democracy and individual liberty, he was aware of the dangers of using psychoanalytic language to define the mentality of a particular society. To suggest that religious groups bear ancestral compulsions and ethnic heritage in the context of racial anti-Semitism was risky, and as his career progressed, Liebman increasingly began to embed these assertions amidst excessive qualifications. But in this particular speech he implied a direct correlation between Jews' ancestral experiences and their tendency to "treasure liberty." Once they established their own nation in Israel, Jews created a liberal, non-hierarchical society: no one man had dictatorial power, the ancient San Hedrin was the first "spiritual democratic parliament in history," each man was considered as having something valuable to contribute, and leaders were "guides of people" not "lords over them."

According to Liebman, Jews' experiences as a people were not the only forces that prompted them to establish democratic structures. In his broad conception of Jewish belief, the religion encouraged an ethos of individual responsibility. Because "no class had a monopoly on truth," Liebman argued, "every Jew had the responsibility and privilege of approaching God and living the moral life without benefit of intermediary." This spiritual style taught him to be "self-reliant and mature,

take responsibility for sins, and accept the consequences of transgression, bound by the results of his own decisions.”

For Liebman, Jews’ belief in a coming Messiah reinforced these lessons, inculcating Jews with a future-minded, pragmatic sense that all options are open and that the universe is a place of limitless possibilities. Indeed, Liebman implied that passion for freedom fostered messianic dreams as well as vice-versa, asserting that the “Messianic dream of a future of this earth is a by-product of passion for freedom, belief in an open and not a closed universe with many possibilities, among which man can choose.” In the context of this vision, Liebman argued that “man feels himself free, he is not bound to the wheel of the past and limitless vistas open up before him and for mankind.” Moving to a contemporary perspective, Liebman asserted that while Judaism represented future-minded, freedom enhancing aspects of messianic belief among religions, America embodied it among nations: “American democracy is future minded rather than past minded. At its heart it is passionately messianic and prophetic, dreaming of the better world which is yet to be created...we are not living in a static society but a dynamic world.”<sup>43</sup>

This message must have fallen easily upon the ears of a largely Christian, Protestant, audience of Harvard teachers. After all, Protestantism was a messianic faith, Protestants did not like the idea of mediators between themselves and God, and they did like to believe in individual responsibility. The Jews’ role in Liebman’s history seems to mirror that played by Protestants in popular understandings of an American drama that commenced with the Puritans’ efforts to find religious freedom in a new world. His story was also compatible with the then nascent theories of consensus historians who came to envision the American past as one in which

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<sup>43</sup> “Dictatorship vs. Democracy.”

divergent streams of thought flowed together in their common adherence to the liberal ideals which could reach full fruition in the new land's virgin political terrain.<sup>44</sup>

This notion of America as a place unimpeded by memories of past tyranny was particularly significant to Jews, for whom tyranny in Europe had often meant ghettos or expulsion. With each day that American soldiers spent in battle against the Nazis, this contrast between America and Europe became sharper. As he viewed the progression of the Nazis in Europe, Liebman became increasingly interested in explaining to Jews at home exactly why their position in America was so different, and so fortunate. Speaking to the Jewish Welfare Board in April, 1942, Liebman called for American Jews to recognize the tremendous advantages of their position in the United States and assume the mantle of leadership for the imperiled global community of Jews.<sup>45</sup>

Liebman's efforts to heighten the contrast between Jews' predicament in Europe versus their situation in America is evident in the way he drafted the speech. Discussing the catastrophic dangers facing Jews in the era, Liebman listed names of men who symbolized the "mortal combat" between "death and life" upon the "stage of our time." The side of death was originally comprised of "Hitler, Mussolini, and Coughlin," that of life, by Roosevelt, MacArthur and Churchill. But in his revised version, Liebman repressed his original impulse to include the American anti-Semite, Charles Coughlin, on his list of enemies, and deleted Churchill from the side of right. This left a list with a clear-cut message: good guys are Americans, evil resides in Europe.

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<sup>44</sup> Liebman's message would hold even greater appeal to listeners in an academic community in Boston, where the mythology surrounding American Puritans permeated the culture. Both Arthur Schlesinger and Richard Hofstadter published work that contributed to the consensus school in 1948, suggesting that they, among others, might have been pondering the ideas around the same time that Liebman gave his speech in 1940.

<sup>45</sup> "Twenty-five Years of Jewish Community Life in America," Address to the Jewish Welfare Board, April 18, 1942, Liebman Collection, Boston University.

Not a trained analyst himself, Liebman's understanding of Freud was that of an amateur. Liebman did read Freud, however, citing Freud's texts in his own work, and did not hesitate to "psychoanalyze" historical actors. Noting that individual psychology teaches that the experiences of a child may be deeply buried for decades in the unconscious, then explode with "devastating fury," Liebman applied this insight by analogy to the American nation to declare "that this country alone of the countries of the earth has had a normal childhood and therefore has the infinite capacity to resist abnormalcy in maturity." Liebman pointed out that every major nation in Europe had anti-Semitism in its youth as a collective pattern of action, through pogroms, expulsion and persecution, meaning that "Europe has had an evil childhood with dark, brutal memories and distorted perspectives." America, on the other hand, "from the time of its founding under Washington, Jefferson and Adams, has had a psychically healthy, spiritually tolerant pattern to follow," and has not had to "repress or disavow centuries of brutal history." Liebman drew enthusiastic applause by invoking the sacred sites that are touchstones for American patriotism and infusing them with psychoanalytic significance: "America is not Germany and will not become a concentration camp of the spirit until Lincoln's tomb and Mt. Vernon and Valley Forge are wiped, not only off the surface of the earth, but erased from the memories of all America."

Liebman continued to use psychoanalytic language and concepts to discuss the new role of American Jews in the global community. Over the last twenty-five years, American Jews had progressed through developmental stages in a global family drama. Their European parents had provided intellectual and cultural nourishment to the adolescent American community until World War I severed "the umbilical cord." The "adolescent" Jewish community in America was forced to become more and more self-reliant and then gradually to take over "the responsibilities of the family." The

Second World War marked the complete transition of American Jews from adolescence to maturity.

Pointing to this new leadership position, Liebman called for the American Jewish community to serve as a model of progressive, democratic ideals, not just for other Jews, but for other Americans as well. He lauded the Jewish Welfare Board for setting the pattern for Jewish community life in America by serving as a “laboratory of democracy.” The guiding ethos for this model was a respect for pluralism. Reformed, Conservative, Zionists, and anti-Zionist Jews could come together in “a forum for discussion of Jewish destiny.” Furthermore, these healthy, democratic religious communities would enable Jews to define themselves as a distinct group with unique contributions to make in the context of broader American pluralism. Liebman railed against the “negative assimilationist trends of our day,” and insisted that Jews should remain “a minority group, distinctive in our spiritual and social outlook,” with a unique vision. Liebman framed this vision as a psychological “mood” of “optimism and healthy-mindedness.” Much of the work of Jewish communities was psychological and emotional as well, in Liebman’s view, as they strove to “conquer one of the fundamental sources of dictatorship in our day – the modern man’s feeling of loneliness, worthlessness and uprootedness,” by performing the “function of fellowship, of giving the soldiers of democracy the sense of belongingness...a sense of status, and at-homeness, both in Judaism and Americanism.”<sup>46</sup>

In 1942, Liebman turned his attention towards representing this optimistic understanding of “the Jewish vision” for popular audiences when he began his weekly radio addresses, “Message of Israel.” Speaking to general audiences, Liebman spent less time discussing Jewish communities and gave increasing attention to his psychological views. Judaism remained an important theme, as he presented the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



religion as a modal for psychological health, but Liebman's focus on the radio program was "Peace of Mind." In speeches titled "V is for Victory – Over Fear" (1942), "How to Remain Normal in Abnormal Times" (1943), and "The Road to Inner Serenity Today" (1943), Liebman argued that the most important function of both religion and psychology on the home front was to help individuals maintain the kind of mental health that would enable them to contribute to the rebuilding of democratic societies after the War. Liebman had convinced himself that this attention to inner peace was not selfish escapism, but a moral imperative for individuals concerned with contributing to the world around them. In "How to Remain Normal in Abnormal Times," Liebman asserted:

We should not confuse normalcy with complacency...in this war of nerves we are all soldiers, the man who grows completely morbid, who drowns himself in the sorrows of the world, will prove to be of no help to his age....We Americans particularly will have the greatest responsibility for the healing of the world's wounds after this struggle is over; we who have the best chance of emerging from this holocaust relatively powerful and free, have a moral obligation to keep ourselves sane and balanced and integrated. Panic and hysteria are emotional luxuries which we must be prepared to sacrifice in a time of crisis, when our courageous normalcy may become the contagious pattern for a frightened world.

In what is by now a common theme in Liebman's work, he argued that emotional health is not only important because it enables individuals to act well, but because it serves as a model that influences others. Liebman had psychoanalytic justifications for this emphasis on models, noting that Freud's theories demonstrate

that the actions and attitudes that one individual demonstrates to another sink into the latter's unconscious, literally creating the person he or she would become.<sup>47</sup>

As he addressed Americans during the war, Liebman was careful to avoid delivering a message that sounded like mind-cure or positive thinking. At no time did he suggest that people could change the world through their thoughts alone, and he did not tell people to stop worrying about the real problems that face the world. In fact, worry over real problems motivates individuals to seek solutions and should not be eradicated. The demons in Liebman's world were the irrational fears that consumed energies that could be better devoted to real world problems and left individuals so anxiety ridden and weakened that they could not function in useful ways. "When we speak of victory over fear," Liebman explained, "we refer to victory over unjustifiable, superfluous fear." In Liebman's view, only a "religious charlatan" would dare to offer "the illusory hope that all fear can be conquered." But victory over excess anxiety was nothing less than a "religious duty," and "the creation of adjusted human personalities is one of religion's supreme tasks." In these wartime speeches, Liebman began to form his ideas about the specific connections between religion and psychology that would shape his bestseller.<sup>48</sup>

Liebman's message struck a chord with listeners of all denominations. Stations estimated that between one and two million listeners tuned in each week. Liebman received thousands of fan letters, evenly split between "Jews who rate him a genius," and non-Jews, "just as unreserved in their praise." Well before the publication of *Peace of Mind* might have expanded his listenership, Liebman received a letter from the managing editor of *The Jewish Advocate* who had overheard a discussion among advertising executives that revealed "just how large your audience

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<sup>47</sup> "How to Remain Normal in Abnormal Times," *Message of Israel*, 1943. Liebman Collection, Boston University.

<sup>48</sup> "V is for Victory -- Over Fear," *Message of Israel*, 1942. Liebman Collection, Boston University.

really is.” Trying to peddle chocolate milk, the ad men determined that it would be useless to purchase time opposite Liebman because he commands such a great listening audience.” Children would not hear the advertisements because their parents would be attuned to “Message of Israel.” The editor also assured Liebman that “the radio station carrying your talks is well aware of the audience which has been built up on your program and considers the time inviolable – in other words, not to be shifted or moved or taken off the air except for a national emergency or for a message from the President of the United States.”<sup>49</sup>

### ***Civil Liberties for Thoughts: Psychoanalysis, Judaism and Democracy in Peace of Mind***

In 1946, Liebman wove the strands of thought he had been developing in speeches into his book on religion and psychology. Liebman opened *Peace of Mind* with the assertion that “social peace can never be permanently achieved as long as individuals engage in civil war with themselves.” Liebman maintained that “a cooperative world can never be fashioned by men and women who are corroded by the acids of inner hate,” and warned that “our much-heralded ‘society of security’ will remain a utopian vision so long as the individuals composing that society are desperately insecure, not only economically but emotionally and spiritually.” Liebman understood the properly ordered inner life to be not only a signifier of, but an impetus towards, his most cherished political goals.<sup>50</sup>

Liebman constructed an analogy in which Freud’s vision of a healthy mind mirrored healthy democratic societies. In Freud’s model, psychological problems develop when individuals refuse to acknowledge the deep and primal desires that they

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<sup>49</sup> Article in *Magazine Digest*; Letter from Benjamin Bartzoff to Liebman, Jan. 20, 1944, Liebman Collection, Temple Israel.

<sup>50</sup> Joshua Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York, Simon and Schuster: 1946), p. 9.

have been taught to interpret as inappropriate or morally wrong. Rather than consciously analyzing these impulses, people repress them, or diligently strive not to think about them. But the shunned desires, forced from the realm of consciousness where they are palpable and evident, submerge into the depths beneath conscious awareness where they continue to influence subjective experience. Freud's psychological "cure" consists of discovering these repressed impulses and bringing them into the light of consciousness where they can be analyzed and understood rather than feared and ignored, thus robbing them of the power that they gain by operating in mysterious ways beneath the surface.

By acting as a censor and judge, declaring certain desires to be unacceptable and refusing to grant them an audience in the palpable realm of thought, the conscious mind tyrannizes "inappropriate" wishes, invoking the specter of dictatorship. "Dangerous thoughts" inflict harm as well, operating like fascists who do their real damage in the shadowy depths hidden beneath the theatre and pageantry of false surface expressions. In discussing Freud, Liebman used rhetoric that invoked these analogies between the emotional and political realms: "Dynamic psychology proves that if the evil is driven out of the light of consciousness, it merely goes underground...outraged by tyrannical oppression, our unconventional or unacceptable impulses outwit us by disguising themselves in new forms. They become our worst inner enemies, assaulting our nerves, laying siege to our peace of mind, tormenting us with a sense of failure."

Liebman understood Freud's cure as a means of fostering open, democratic encounters among thoughts: "Instead of outlawing our evil thoughts, we are encouraged to acknowledge them in fantasy and thought, thereby permitting the conscious part of our ego to face them in full light, to disarm them, to triumph over

them, and even to put their energies to good use.”<sup>51</sup> Liebman emphasized that Freud’s model of mental health is a “democracy of the mind,” complete with civil liberties and a benevolent majority of voters:

As mature men and women we should regard our minds as a true democracy where all kinds of emotions and ideas should be given freedom of speech. If in political life we are willing to grant civil liberties to all sorts of parties and programs, should we not be equally willing to grant civil liberty to our innermost thoughts and drives, confident that the more dangerous of them will be outvoted by the decent and creative majority within our minds?<sup>52</sup>

Liebman extended his metaphorical connection between Freud’s psychological theories and political structures. Freud called for a balance among the drives and desires that coexist within each individual. Problems emerge when the conscious mind represses desires, but also when unconscious drives overwhelm other aspects of the mind, as in the case of individuals driven by paranoia, greed or lust:

There is not only Dictatorship in the world at large. There is tragic dictatorship going on in millions of individuals. Whenever we subordinate everything to one drive, whether it is for prestige, possession or power, or drink or sex, we create our own concentration camp where innumerable creative forces in our personality are imprisoned...I assure you there is a disarmament of the soul as tragic as the disarmament of conquered peoples – a stripping of the weapons of defense from

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. pp. 34-35.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 90.

the conscious and the consciousness of man and an exaltation of one or two instincts into the role of omnipotent dictator.<sup>53</sup>

In Liebman's view, however, the establishment of democracy in the mind was only one step along the way to individual and global peace and purpose. His main argument in *Peace of Mind* is that psychoanalysis merely provides the means towards the ends defined by religious belief. Religion establishes higher goals and purposes – a reason for individuals to want to be happy and psychologically healthy. Psychology is the “key to the temple,” not the temple itself. In Liebman's metaphor, the temple represents the highest aspirations of humanity, the desires for justice, peace, and goodness that rest on religious foundations. He maintained boundaries between psychological theory and religion, asserting that “psychology and psychotherapy are scientific disciplines, not basically concerned with moral judgments, whereas religion inevitably lives in the realm of ethical concepts.” For Liebman, “psychotherapy is committed to utter neutrality in moral affairs and goes beyond its province when it makes value judgments about the total meaning of life.” This distinction between psychoanalysis as a science and religion as an ethical, spiritual world-view is central to Liebman's argument and distinguishes him from many others who struggled to reconcile religion and psychology.<sup>54</sup>

Freud's system presented a clear challenge to religious believers. Freud insisted that the core of the individual was not a supernatural soul, but a self created by the utterly rational processes of experience, memory, and repression. Religious belief was actually a psychological disorder in Freud's view – an abdication of personal

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<sup>53</sup> Liebman had presented this idea first in “The Road to Inner Serenity Today,” on *Message of Israel*, 1943, Liebman Collection, Boston University, before including it in *Peace of Mind*. This particular quote is from the radio program.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Chapter 9.

responsibility and independence and a regression towards an authoritarian father-figure image of God, or towards oceanic submergence into experiences that compromise the boundaries between the self and the world. Some believers attacked Freud as an enemy to their faith. Liebman's Catholic counterpart in popular religion, Bishop Fulton Sheen, argued in his own bestseller that Freud's ideas were simply incompatible with religion. He asserted that psychoanalysis created a closed spiritual system in which individuals turn inwards to their own feelings and memories, shutting out God. Other religious thinkers, however, have found themselves drawn to Freud's theories but still unable to accept a system that left no room for the soul or God.<sup>55</sup>

One temptation for religious leaders was to distort Freud's system by abandoning his insistence that the subconscious was a product of scientific processes. In Europe, Carl Jung proposed that the unconscious was actually the repository of religious truths. Jung's promotion of these ideas in Nazi Germany had dangerous implications. By suggesting that the unconscious was pre-determined, Jung raised the possibility that religious groups might be marked with inherent differences which shaped their culture – lending pseudo-scientific support to the Nazi's racism. In America, William James did not suggest that the unconscious was pre-determined but did see a place for religious experience in Freud's system. By mid-century, psychoanalyst Smiley Blanton and Norman Vincent Peale re-envisioned the unconscious to fit into their program of positive thinking by suggesting that an individual could actually shape his own unconscious by stuffing it with religious affirmations and positive thoughts.

Liebman rejected these lines of reasoning. It was precisely because psychotherapy was understood to be a science that it was relevant to Liebman's discussions of religion. When psychoanalytic tenets either *paralleled* or *reinforced*

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<sup>55</sup> Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents, Moses and Monotheism*; Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949).

religious beliefs they lent an air of objective validation to those beliefs. For example, the religious notion of a “universal brotherhood of man” was reinforced when psychoanalysis “proved” that all individuals are interconnected because they create each other through their interactions. “Our moods, our gestures, the tone of our voice, mold the emotional attitudes of children and adults within the orbit of our influence,” he asserted, “other people become what they are by identification with us.” To Liebman, this implied a new “ethical duty” – to become “free, loving, warm, cooperative, affirmative personalities.” In its demonstration that uncovering “the truth” leads to psychological health, psychoanalysis seemed to “prove” the value of the commandment against lying. Because psychoanalysis is a progressive process, moving toward the goals of maturity and mental health, it paralleled the optimistic teleology of messianic religion. These are the kinds of logical connections, rather than metaphysical relationships, which Liebman wanted to forge between religion and psychology.<sup>56</sup>

Because Freud proposed to have discovered the processes which would lead most directly to individual maturity and happiness, his ideas provided an evaluative framework for religion as well. In Liebman’s view, certain religious practices and beliefs encouraged the healthy progress towards maturity, while others created psychological problems, repression or dependency. Liebman tended to draw dysfunctional examples from Christianity and models of healthy-minded approaches in Judaism. As in his discussion of psychology and general religion, Liebman tread on dangerous intellectual territory when he suggested an affinity between Judaism and psychoanalysis. When Carl Jung introduced the Nazi’s new psychological journal by suggesting that “the Aryan unconscious has a higher potential than the Jewish” and “it was an error of the hitherto existing medical psychology that it applied unwittingly the

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<sup>56</sup> Liebman, ch. 9.



Jewish categories...to Germans and Christian Slavs” he transformed Freud’s theories into “Jewish science,” rather than universal knowledge. Opening up psychoanalysts as a professional group for Nazi persecution, these ideas also called into question the utility of psychoanalysis for non-Jews.<sup>57</sup>

Liebman was extremely careful to avoid any implication that psychoanalysis was a *product* of Judaism or that it was directed specifically towards Jews in any way. In *Peace of Mind* it is a happy coincidence that Jews managed to cultivate a number of healthy-minded approaches to life, which could now serve as examples to others. Liebman did not even mention Freud’s Jewish heritage, but emphasized instead that he was antagonistic to religion. This cast Freud into the role of objective scientist, and Liebman confronted him as such, viewing Freud’s critique of religion as a logical challenge. Liebman directly addressed Freud’s aversion to religion generally and his specific allegations that it led to repression and dependency. By maintaining a separation between psychoanalysis as a science and religion as a set of ethical and spiritual ideals, Liebman was able to remain enthusiastic about each as he strove to show how they could work in harmonious, rather than antagonistic, cooperation in the pursuit of human happiness.

On a broad level, Liebman construed Freud’s general aversion to religion as a product of his cultural context and personal biography. “Freud’s negative approach to religion was partly a reflection of his detached scientific temperament,” Liebman argued, “partly a mirror of the century in which he lived, “an age devoted to objectivity and rationality, and “also the result of his own bitter personal experiences with organized religion’s intolerance of his pioneering investigations.” Although he recognized the importance of historical context in the development of Freud’s ideas,

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<sup>57</sup> Jung quoted in Franz Alexander, *The History of Psychiatry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 407.

he did not use this to explain away Freud's theoretical critiques of religion. Liebman took seriously Freud's allegations that religion could foster repression and dependency rather than maturity, and analyzed them in terms of American religious life.<sup>58</sup>

Liebman presented a fairly typical recapitulation of Freud's ideas about repression in "western religion." He found much that was repressive in the American religious traditions that drew on the ideas of "Paul, Augustine, Calvin and Luther" whose call, in Liebman's characterization, was "atone you miserable human worm! Smite yourself with the rod of self-punishment." By emphasizing sin and guilt, many "western religions" taught individuals that their evil thoughts made them into evil people. This prompted individuals to continually repress any thoughts or desires that seemed inappropriate, trapping them in the unconscious where they would foster much of the "grief, illness, and anxiety that lash the soul of modern man." Liebman implicated both Catholics and Protestants in this view. The Catholic confessional offered little psychological relief for Christians caught in this repressive cycle. Liebman contrasted confession, where individuals go "as a child to its father, seeking forgiveness and expecting punishment," with the therapy session, where patients go to "speak without being judged," and be "strengthened in his capacity to face himself with honesty and make his own decisions." The western religions' lessons about sin, guilt and forgiveness were necessary stages in their early social development, just as children needed authority figures to teach them right from wrong. A continued focus on sin and guilt, however, was as repressive and harmful to the evolution of a mature, free society in America, as the inability to develop a mature, self-directed conscience was to the development of a mature individual.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Liebman, p. 165-166.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. pp. 30-39.

Liebman faulted western religions, not only for fostering the repression of “impure thoughts,” but for repressing emotion generally:

Liberals saw how many traditional faiths wallowed in oceans of feeling and allowed superstition and myth to govern men’s destinies. Revolting against this undisciplined emotionalism, they went to the other extreme and built chilly meetinghouses upon the cold pillars of abstract reason...the fear of emotion which characterizes liberal religion is part of the world mood in this epoch of history...objectivity became the watchword of progress...the dictators of our age, recognizing that human beings become moral and spiritual invalids on a diet of abstract science, invaded the sphere of the emotions with their death dances and blood symbols...they recognized that humanity was being starved by the abstract and mechanical disciplines of physical science.

While Freud would have agreed with the “liberals’” fears that intense emotional religious experience could compromise the boundaries of the self, Liebman believed that their reactions took religion too far in the opposite direction, encouraging believers to repress rather than express emotions. Liebman saw particular problems with the ways that modern religions encouraged people to respond to grief. Liberal rabbis and ministers alike arranged “funerals in such a way as to make death itself almost an illusion.” They planned the ritual to “prevent tears, emotional outbursts and undignified scenes...proceeding on the assumption that men should not give into themselves, that indulgence in emotion is harmful, that the bereaved must be protected against despairing thoughts; that the tragic realities of life should be glossed over.”<sup>60</sup>

Liebman’s allegations of repression in western religion implicated liberal Jews as well as Christians. But when it came time to utilize specific examples, he referred

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pp. 180, 117.

to Calvin, Luther and the Catholic Confessional rather than to Jewish traditions. These traditions came into his narrative as positive examples, antidotes to the repressive tendencies in modern religious life.

Jewish traditions and rituals provided a particularly useful example of healthy ways to deal with grief. Liebman argued that Jewish practices encouraged believers to follow the grieving processes that Freud advocated – recognition and expression of emotions, acknowledgment of loss and appreciation for the lost loved one, followed by an ability to gradually detach oneself from that person, and reinvest one’s energies in new directions:

Traditional Judaism...had the wisdom to devise almost all of the procedures for healthy minded grief which the contemporary psychologist counsels...the ancient Jews thus arranged for the expression of grief and stimulated that expression by ordaining wailing, the tearing of the garment, the repetition of the tearstained pages of the Bible – the creation of an unashamed atmosphere of sorrow. Furthermore, the rabbis prescribed that the conversation in the house of mourning should revolve around the dead person, thus providing the mourner an opportunity to articulate his sense of loss...traditional Judaism arranged a kind of hierarchical order in the process of mourning: the first days after the burial being the period of most intense mourning, with a gradual tapering off of that intensity of grief, by well-arranged steps – seven days, thirty days, one year.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Liebman saw the Jewish ritual calendar as a mediator between liberals’ fears of “undisciplined emotion” and their repression of emotion entirely.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp. 116-117.

Jewish traditions created a system for the organized expression of emotion, and channeled its energies in useful directions:

The older forms of the Jewish religion intuitively understood the part played by emotion in the collective life of Israel. The builders of Judaism utilized emotion in order to sublimate the passions, the angers, the dreams of the people...the great holydays and festivals of Judaism; how artistically they arranged for the expression of feeling and the harnessing of emotion. The New Year and the Day of Atonement were occasions for the collective expression of sin and guilt; the participation of the entire group in this verbalization did bring cleansing and inner peace. Jews expressed, rather than repressed, their shortcomings and inadequacies and sins...Chanukah and Purim enabled the people to express their aggressive emotions, to sublimate their feelings of wrath and hatred, and through this verbal release to achieve new serenity. Passover represented the passion for freedom, and Shavuot the joy and the acceptance of the Law. The whole calendar of the Jewish year wisely arranged for systematic and collective-feeling outlets, the purge of the emotions, the control of the inner life by what the psychologist of today would call a process of verbalization and sublimation.... Jewish holydays and festivals in dark ages became substitute therapy for the frustrated and persecuted Jewish soul.<sup>62</sup>

Through this example, Liebman prompted readers to re-examine the emotional and psychological implications of their religious practices.

Liebman further believed that Judaism carried the antidote to Freud's accusation that monotheism was a displacement of the childish dependence on the father onto the father figure of God. Liebman acknowledged the immaturity of this

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pp. 181-182.

tendency and argued that America, as a society, has reached a point in its cultural development that necessitated a new vision of God. Because American culture was steeped in the values of equality and democracy, Liebman argued that it had “little of the father complex in it” and “would find it increasingly difficult to submit to the idea of a dominant father.” Therefore, according to Liebman, Americans needed to re-imagine their God. “We must be brave enough to declare that every culture must create its own God idea,” He asserted, “rather than rely on outworn tradition.”<sup>63</sup>

To replace the father figure image of God, Liebman proposed “a new God idea for America” which was drawn from the theology of Jewish thinkers such as Abraham Heschel and Mordecai Kaplan. These writers reconfigured the relationship between God and human beings, proposing that God was not an all-powerful authority figure, but an impetus towards goodness and justice that needed human collaboration to realize its full potential. In this view, God and humans are co-creators of reality, working together to redeem the world. Liebman urged Americans to adopt this vision of god, as “the Power who needs our collaboration, and who looks to man to be his able partner in the developing evolution of a better world.”

Liebman suggested that all Americans adopt an image of God that had been developed by Jewish thinkers. Conversely, he also argued that America was the one place where this “Jewish” conception of God had a chance of being fully realized. The notion that God and humans were co-workers “was contained in the Jewish tradition,” but could “never be deeply felt so long as men lived in cultures that were not free and equal.” A partnership with God would be hard to fathom if daily life found human beings enslaved or exploited. Harking back to one his favorite theories, Liebman emphasized that Europeans experiences with oppression had left them

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pp. 159-163.

psychologically ill-prepared to envision themselves as co-creators with God, while Americans had developed a society that reinforced that “empowering” conception:

In Europe the emphasis was too often upon obedience and dependence upon some strong power to whose will man had to submit. In America, as the anthropologist Mead points out, the emphasis has been upon self-reliance, upon every new generation doing better than its fathers... One of the great troubles is that in our religion we have continued to picture our relationships to God in terms of the helpless, poverty-stricken, powerless motifs in European culture. Now, a religion that will emphasize man’s nothingness and God’s omnipotence; that calls upon us to deny our own powers and to glorify his – that religion may have fitted the needs of many Europeans, but it will not satisfy the growing self-confident character of America. There is a chance here in America for the creation of a new idea of God; a God reflected in the brave creations of self-reliant social pioneers; a religion based not upon surrender or submission, but on a new birth of confidence in life and in the God of life. We can really begin to think of ourselves as responsible co-workers with God.<sup>64</sup>

Just as the establishment of democracy in the mind was more than just a symbol of political democracy, but an actual way for individuals to fortify themselves against anti-democratic forces, the new God idea had a role to play in Liebman’s political agenda. Liebman worried that God was portrayed in “feudal or monarchical terms” which created a spiritual and cultural lag” that separated individual’s lived experiences in democracies from their theological formulas. “The church and synagogue alike can help men everywhere to resist the economic and political slavery

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 160.

threatening to engulf human dignity and freedom,” Liebman declared, “by teaching belief in a God who wants cooperation, not submission.”<sup>65</sup>

When Liebman proposed his new God idea, he dethroned the king that he had seen reigning over the emotional and spiritual lives of Americans. In his place, Liebman inaugurated an enlightened and benevolent corroborator who derived his power from the people. Reconfiguring the nature of divine authority, Liebman completed his development of a democracy in the mind. Banishing the threat of tyranny from repression, Liebman created an inner world governed by the same political tenets – civil liberties, freedom of speech, and individual liberty – that he most valued in American politics. By presenting Judaism as a system that reinforced democracy and political liberation, Liebman gave his religion a functional, viable position in this inner world and in his vision of American society. In *Peace of Mind* the individual becomes the embodiment of liberal politics, perpetually enacting democratic processes both within and without.

### ***Response to Peace of Mind***

The publication of *Peace of Mind* generated a flurry of reviews in major publications and an avalanche of letters to its author. The range of venues that featured enthusiastic reviews – *The New York Times*, *Christian Century*, and *The Jewish Circle*, for example – are indicative of the book’s broad appeal. Psychiatrists, doctors, lawyers, clergymen of all faiths, booksellers, students, former servicemen, and housewives all felt compelled to write to the author personally. Commentators universally lauded Liebman’s general efforts to combine religion and psychology as a particularly useful endeavor for the “troubled times,” the “hectic, irrational and fearful age,” that was modern life in America. The word “useful” appeared in almost every

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 159.



review, as in Rabbi Milton Steinberg's (Park Avenue Synagogue, New York) assertion that "it is a useful book, useful to the average man struggling to make something of his inner life and equally useful for the clergyman and physician for its pioneering into that realm where religion and psychiatry meet." With equal uniformity, reviewers and letter writers emphasized that Liebman's ideas were pertinent to readers of all religions, not only Jews. Even Nash Berger, who wrote in the *New York Times* that there might be objections to some of the characteristics Liebman assigned to "western religion," asserted that there were "wide areas of agreement with Dr. Liebman possible to anyone truly concerned with the need of our harassed age for an affirmative faith."<sup>66</sup>

The book found a particularly supportive response in the medical and psychiatric communities. Liebman was invited to speak at the American Psychiatric Association Convention in 1948 and notable experts in psychology including Karl Menninger and Paul Johnson sent letters of praise. Doctors wrote to say that they were using the book in their psychiatry classes. Franz Alexander, the first analyst to graduate from the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, lauded the book in *Book Week*:

Writing devoted to the utilization of the new science of dynamic psychology for helping man toward the achievement of the good life presented so honestly, ably and confidently, would always command admiration. In these times in which the most diabolic attempt has been made to make use of psychodynamic knowledge for psychological warfare and for the education of youth to evil, destruction and the cynic adulation of the law of the jungle, in times in which we are using our mastery of nature's forces primarily for destruction, this book fills a need of unparalleled urgency.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Steinberg's endorsement used in Simon and Schuster's advertising; Nash Burger, *New York Times*, April 7, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Franz Alexander, *Book Week*, April 7, 1946, p. 4.

Just as the psychiatric community welcomed Liebman's insights into their professional realms, clergymen also found the book valuable. Rabbis and Protestant ministers of diverse creeds praised *Peace of Mind*. Reviewer Nash Burger may have revealed why Liebman's religious theories were so compatible to so many different views when he explained that Liebman developed "a reasonable, tolerant faith," whose "positive features constitute a sort of ethical monotheism, showing as much the influence of Greek philosophy as of Hebrew prophecy and of clinical research as of mystical speculation." Protestants easily jumped on Liebman's bandwagon. Smiley Blanton wrote from Norman Vincent Peale's Marble Collegiate Church to praise the book. Reverend Samuel Miller of the Old Cambridge Baptist Church composed his own treatise "Exploring the Boundary Between Psychiatry and Religion," suggested by Liebman's *Peace of Mind* and raved that "obviously we need more of this illuminating reflection of the meaning of human experience in the light of these newer specialties of knowledge, and nowhere is this more profitable than in the field of religion and psychiatry." Rabbis such as Dr. Julian Feibelman, Temple Sinai, New Orleans, agreed that the book would "be of real value to the ministries of all creeds, learning to bring modern psychological treatment to their congregations."<sup>68</sup>

The individuals who constituted "the general reading public" sent all of the highest accolades that one might expect to find in the files of a best-selling author. Liebman's book "changed my life" and "inspired me," "everyone should read it," and "I will give it to my friends." Although Liebman received letters from college students who wanted to become psychiatrists because of him, servicemen who believed he had helped them readjust to civilian life, broken-hearted War widows who found solace in his work, heart torn lovers looking for advice, and individuals who characterized

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<sup>68</sup> Alpert; Julian Feibelman to Liebman, February 13, 1946.

themselves as “very ill mentally,” many of his letters came from the group historians suspect comprised the largest readership of self-help literature – middle class housewives. Ruth Halleuk’s letter from Michigan is representative:

It seemed to me, as I read, that you were addressing me personally....After reading the article I realized that what I want more than anything is peace of mind. Recent personal experiences have made me feel unsure of my place in the world – a world comprised of my husband and three boys. Feelings of inferiority never previously experienced made me look in the mirror to see the defects of which I had never been so acutely aware. How I wish I could talk to you. Believe me, I shall read it again and again.

Halleuk’s comments are important for understanding the process by which popularization redefines an author’s message. Halleuk did not see Liebman’s work as a discussion of the relationships among Judaism, psychoanalysis, and American politics, but as an inspirational text that could help her feel better now. However, Halleuk, among other readers, was struck by the fact that a Rabbi helped to fill these needs. “My religious affiliations are not the same as yours,” she wrote, “but never has a priest given me the solace and comfort that I received from this wonderful article” (Readers Digest article, May, 46, condensed version of peace of mind). Hilda Orleans, from Greenbelt, Maryland, wrote that she was “especially glad the book was written by a Jewish Rabbi.” She felt that “too few religious books come from the Jewish faith” so “it will prove to narrow minded groups that a great religious work can come from the Jewish Church as well as the Catholic or Protestant.” Elsie Stokes, President of Stokes and Stockell Bookshop in Nashville explained that “being a gentile, I read some parts cautiously, but what tact and breeding is Dr. Liebman’s.”

Such responses demonstrate that readers were struck by the presence of a Jewish voice on their roster of inspirational texts.<sup>69</sup>

Members of the publishing and book selling industries also worked to push the book into the category of “inspirational literature.” “I think back over the years and eras that produced Pitkin’s *Life begins at Forty*,” Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and Fosdick’s, *On Being a Real Person*, wrote Geoffrey Nathan, “each one seemed more important than the other in the order of their progression, and now comes your spellbinder, which puts them all in total eclipse.” Booksellers hoping to replicate the success of these earlier bestsellers expressed concerns about Liebman’s work before publication. Editors were worried that the slant towards a “positive Judaism” might prevent *Peace of Mind* from approaching sales “one tenth of Dale Carnegie.” Others argued that Liebman’s extensive allusions to literature, philosophy, and history should be excised, making the book more accessible to “non-intellectuals.” But Liebman’s book managed to overcome these “liabilities” to garner a mass readership.<sup>70</sup>

After the publication of *Peace of Mind*, a strong contingency emerged within the Reformed tradition that heralded Liebman as a spokesman. After the release of *Peace of Mind*, Liebman was considered for the presidency of Hebrew Union College and for the inaugural Presidency of Brandeis University. He ended up serving as the principle speaker when Nelson Gleuk was inaugurated at HUC. In 1947, Liebman was invited to become the rabbi at the prestigious Temple Emanuel in New York City, but instead choose to accept life tenure at Temple Israel. The Boston synagogue had become the center of Liebman’s personal Jewish community, and he continued to

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<sup>69</sup> Ruth Haulleuk to Liebman, April 18, 1946; Hilda Orleans to Liebman, May 23, 1946; Elsie Stokes to Liebman, February 15, 1946 (all from the Liebman Collection, Temple Israel).

<sup>70</sup> Richard Simon of Simon and Schuster forwarded remarks from Brentano’s Bookstore in Chicago, February 13, 1946; Geoffrey Nathan to Liebman, March 23, 1946 (all from the Liebman Collection, Temple Israel).

devote time and attention to his duties there. He put his enthusiasm for psychoanalysis into action at the synagogue, making arrangements to open a counseling clinic for the congregation and inviting prominent psychiatrists and clergymen to Temple Israel for an interfaith symposium on religion and psychiatry. The proceedings of this event were published in 1948 as a collection of essays, *Religion and Psychiatry*.<sup>71</sup>

Liebman also kept up with his popular weekly radio program. It was in this context that Liebman was continually constructing his interpretations of the shifting political conditions around him. The Cold War, Nuclear weapons, immigration restrictions, and Palestine comprised topics for sermons. Liebman wove psychoanalysis, Judaism, and American patriotism into each of these discussions.

#### ***“No Peace of Mind for the Author of Peace of Mind”?***

Liebman’s post-war efforts to read political situations through the lenses of the world-view he had developed in *Peace of Mind* highlight the contradictions and limitations that were becoming increasingly evident in Liebman’s work. The future-mindedness that Liebman hailed as a central virtue in Judaism, America, and psychoanalysis began to degenerate into a sort of unrelenting optimism in his post-war sermons. Liebman might begin a speech by outlining a problem, but his rhetoric inevitably hit a conjunction – a “but” or a “yet” – that transformed the narrative into a story of triumph and inspiration. The danger of nuclear war, for example, was frightening, but really a wonderful blessing for humanity because it forced people to unite against the universal threat of destruction. This insistence on happy endings led Liebman to repress truly problematic issues. Liebman’s ideas were also beginning to crystallize into the very dogmatism that he so vigorously fought to counter. Busy urging his audiences to be adaptable and open-minded, Liebman neglected to revise

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<sup>71</sup> Abrams correspondence; Joshua Liebman, ed., *Religion and Psychiatry* (Boston: 1948).

his own views so that his opinions and ideals settled into entrenched formulas and patterns.<sup>72</sup>

Liebman confronted the burgeoning Cold War with more tolerance than some of his Protestant counterparts who viewed the communists in Russia as the “forces of Satan” in a Manichean global drama. Although he did not agree with the communists, Liebman did not put them on par with the evil fascists. He argued that the red scare mentality in America was a product of repression. “Men project virtues into the world that are not there or are terrified by ghosts and bogies that exist only in the fevered imagination of the observer,” he asserted. While “poets and artists,” disillusioned by capitalism, saw a “distant paradise” in Russia, “conservatives” looked through “lenses of apprehension and anxiety to see the soviet Union threatening their way of life, like an octopus sending forth its tentacles all over the earth.”<sup>73</sup>

Rather than construing the Soviets as conspirators against democracy, Liebman casts them into a psychoanalytic family drama. Drawing on his theories that the European mother nations had been warped by their early experiences with feudalism and tyranny, while the United States enjoyed a healthy childhood of freedom, Liebman asserted that Russians had suffered through a childhood devoid of opportunities to learn “the meaning of civil liberty and political democracy and religious progress as we have been privileged to know.” Growing up in “a Slavic country oppressed and exploited, poverty stricken and illiterate,” Russians were deprived a proper role models with which to identify, stuck with “Peter the Great, Catherine and the Czars” rather than “Washington, Jefferson or Madison.” This childhood had left them immature and riddled by a “paranoiac, persecution complex.”

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<sup>72</sup> “How Shall we Face the Atomic Age?” *Message of Israel*, November 4, 1945, Liebman Collection, (Boston University).

<sup>73</sup> “Russia and America, What Hope for Lasting Peace Now?” *Message of Israel*, November 18, 1945, Liebman Collection, Boston University.

Because Americans had developed their knowledge of psychology, of what “makes us tick and makes others tick,” they had the responsibility of acting patiently and cordially towards the younger nation that, after all, had helped them defeat Hitler. Liebman called for Americans to assume the role of “older brother,” and to “recognize the psychological insecurities, the social awkwardness, and the difficult brashness and rudeness of this adolescent Asiatic power whose growing pains are quite difficult upon the human family at times as the growing pains of every adolescent are difficult.” For inspiration, Americans could look to Judaism, where Jews demonstrated this kind of maturity, as the “mother religion of the western world,” keeping faith in democracy, understanding that the golden age was in the future, and learning patience in the face of “spiritual battle-fatigue.”

In an era when Billy Graham was warning that “Communism has declared war against God, against Christ, against the Bible and against all religion,” Liebman’s vision of capitalists helping communists to “evolve” in a harmonious global community seems more broad-minded. But Liebman’s interpretation of the relationships between Americans and Russians nevertheless contributed to the Cold War mentality that was settling over American popular culture. Liebman did not treat Communism as a genuine participant in his idealized pluralistic community, but judged it and pushed it aside, never allowing socialist notions to interact with his own views. As the political world was reconstituted after the World War, Liebman participated in painting a global map in Black and white tones that divided it between good capitalists and everybody else.

In his discussions of Palestine, Liebman repeated this process. He aligned the Jews in Israel with “the colonists in America under Washington,” insisting that they were “quite justified in safeguarding themselves and their future against tyranny and danger.” In Liebman’s view, Israel merited Americans support because it was on the

right side, the side of democracy and western progress. The Arabs, on the other hand, “who have contributed so little to the Allied war effort and to democracy in general,” will, “under the firm insistence of democratic and Christian public opinion, permit justice to be done to the homeless Jews of the world.” Liebman wanted Americans to support Jews in Palestine, but encouraged them to do so by presenting a dualistic interpretation of global politics.<sup>74</sup>

Liebman’s eagerness to help was again contradicted by a tendency towards repression in his sermon, “America’s Great Moral Opportunity Now.” Asking Americans to follow the great commandment of Judaism, “love thy neighbor as thyself,” Liebman urged listeners to write to their congressmen in favor of legislation to admit displaced persons to the United States. Liebman sympathetically described the horrible predicament of Europeans -- Jews and Gentiles -- who had lost their homes and families in the war. Their most urgent psychological need after the war, according to Liebman, was the opportunity to contribute to society and live successful lives. Displaced persons “want only a small share of American freedom and American opportunity.” Liebman explained to Americans that they would be enriching themselves as well as helping war victims because the displaced persons would become “but the last link in the chain of immigration which has made America great, creative, adventurous – the unfinished story of mankind’s pioneering achievement.” Liebman assured listeners that the immigrant would “of course” be investigated to be “believers in the democratic way of life,” so as to become contributory, successful citizens.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Graham quoted in Whitefield; “The Jewish Future in America and the World: What is the Outlook Now,” *Message of Israel*, May 19, 1946, Liebman Collection, Boston University.

<sup>75</sup> “America’s Great Moral Opportunity Now,” *Message of Israel*, May 18, 1947, Liebman Collection, Boston University.



This discussion of post-war immigration points to significant limitations in Liebman's vision. Holocaust survivors walking out of Auschwitz had psychological needs far greater than a stifled urge to contribute to democratic communities. Survivors learning that they had lost their homes and families might not have been able to fathom the meaning of "the democratic way of life," let alone articulate it for investigators. Although Liebman spoke of love towards one's neighbors, his suggestion that Hitler's victims would conveniently line up as links in the chain of creative, adventurous American pioneers seems very callous.

Probably assuming that he was doing something "nice" by keeping his sermons upbeat, Liebman was actually helping to foster an American attitude that allowed survivors and spectators alike to repress the most horrific events of their era. Encountering a cheery popular culture that lauded enthusiasm, optimism, and general happiness as the highest virtues, immigrant survivors came to feel that Americans would not want to hear their stories. In contrast to his own psychoanalytic advice, Liebman's program of optimism in the face of tragedy failed to establish a psychological realm where Americans, including recent immigrants, could work through the horror of the Holocaust.

While Liebman's popular presentation of his political views was beginning to foster the entrenched cold war mentality, the repressive optimism, and the therapeutic culture that came to burden popularized notions of religion after World War II, his personal pursuit of peace of mind was also faltering. Interviewers noted that there was "no peace of mind for the author of *Peace of Mind*." Delivering over three hundred speeches in the two years following the publication of *Peace of Mind*, Liebman was working at a frantic pace. Even after he required an operation to repair damaged vocal chords, Liebman prepared and delivered an average of 10-16 sermons per week. Publishers were clamoring for him to finish a second book. He also worried.

Communism, the atomic bomb, conflict in Palestine, and ever-present concerns over the state of Judaism in America consumed his attention. In addresses to the Jewish Welfare Board, Liebman campaigned for Reconstruction and support for Zionism with increasing urgency.<sup>76</sup>

Desperation and anxiety seemed to linger beneath the warm and cheerful demeanor that Liebman perpetually presented. Just as he repressed troubling issues in his political speeches, Liebman seemed to be repressing worries in his own life. He was a perceptive man who must have noticed that the signs of religious, cultural, and political life in America were not necessarily pointing towards the messianic age of justice he had hoped would emerge from the pursuit of democratic politics and psychoanalytic health. Perhaps Liebman also worried about what popularization was doing to his book, as readers wrote to compare it with Dale Carnegie's work on how to win friends rather than to explain how it motivated them to build a better world. Then again, perhaps he was himself a victim of popularization, succumbing to the constant pressures of eager audiences who always wanted more – more speeches, more books, more Liebman. By all accounts he was a genuinely generous person who passionately wanted to help others and would have been distressed if he could not find ways to do so. For any number of reasons, Liebman's health was failing. If Liebman was repressing concerns, they must have burdened his heart until it could no longer pulse against their weight. On June 9, 1948, Liebman went into cardiac arrest and died before his forty-second birthday.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Address to the Jewish Welfare Board Convention, reprinted in the *JWB Circle*, June 1948.

<sup>77</sup> Abrams history, articles in *Ladies Home Journal* and *Magazine Digest*.

### *Critics and Conclusions*

Members of Temple Israel and Liebman's other fans in the Boston community mourned their loss. On the day of his funeral, thousands of people stood outside the overflowing synagogue to hear a broadcast of the service. In a gesture that they would not repeat until John F. Kennedy's death, Boston public schools closed on the day of Liebman's funeral in tribute to him. In 1957, Temple Israel dedicated a new Religious School Wing to Liebman's memory. As synagogue members were planning this tribute, however, critics of American religious life were beginning to question the value of Liebman's contributions to popular culture. Liebman's critics faulted him for contributing to a degeneration of religion. Will Herberg, who implicated Liebman in almost everything that he found going wrong in American religion, became the rabbi's most prominent critic.

Herberg considered the absence of a judging God in Liebman's world-view to be a serious problem. In *Judaism and Modern Man* (1951), Herberg argued that Liebman's "new God idea for America" in *Peace of Mind* was highly detrimental. Herberg considered the recognition of God's absolute sovereignty over humans to be a fundamental tenet of Jewish belief. The "fatal Prometheanism" of the modern era was responsible for the devastation Herberg saw in the world. Herberg called Jews to accept God as absolute. But he suspected that the "exaltation of the absolute sovereignty of God and the unrelieved emphasis on man's utter subjection and dependence," would "come as a shock to the modern mind, which finds such notions 'archaic,' not to say offensive to democracy."

Pointing to *Peace of Mind* as a product of this type of "modern mind," Herberg invoked Liebman's argument that "a religion that will emphasize man's nothingness and God's omnipotence may have fitted the needs of many Europeans but it will not satisfy the growing self-confident character of America" as an example of "brash and

superficial chauvinism.” Herberg rigorously impugned Liebman’s ideas, arguing that they reflected “utter confusion as to the nature of religion and the nature of man.” Herberg feared that Liebman’s ideas would undermine rather than bolster democracy, asserting that “the democratic idea makes sense only in a society of equals and not even the most zealous liberal would venture to assert such a relation between man and God.” Herberg argued that “the very concept of human equality has no meaning and democracy no validity except in terms of the common subjection of all men to the sovereignty of god.” Herberg believed individuals found “true freedom and personal dignity,” only “through loyal and devoted acknowledgement of this sovereignty.”<sup>78</sup>

Implicit in this critique is an assertion that some aspects of life should not be open for debate in a democratic forum – God’s will, for example. In Herberg’s view, divine sovereignty was not a fluid notion that could be manipulated to court a popular audience. There is a fine line between a pluralistic community of ideas and an alienating society of individuals following their own inclinations without any unified beliefs to bond them together. The idea of partnership would not only divest God of his authority, it would fragment the Jewish community as individuals felt entitled to imagine new God ideas for themselves rather than submitting to divine authority.

In *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955) Herberg again faulted Liebman for contributing to the “devitalization” of historic faiths. This time, Herberg focused on Liebman’s efforts to blend psychology and religion. Placing Liebman’s synthesis of psychoanalysis and Judaism alongside of New Thought, Christian Science, and Norman Vincent Peale’s Positive Thinking, Herberg accused Liebman of promoting a “faith in faith” mentality. Herberg defined this view as the belief that “faith,” or “religiosity” was “a kind of miracle drug that can cure all the ailments of the spirit.” He emphasized that “it was not faith in *anything* that is so powerful, just faith, the

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<sup>78</sup> Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), pp.64-66.

magic of believing.” Herberg argued that this “cult” was a “product of the inner disintegration and enfeeblement of the historic religions,” a redefinition of “faith” that replaced an injunction to trust God and submit to his will with an appeal to maintain a positive attitude towards life and not to lose confidence in oneself and one’s activities. In Herberg’s view, this brand of personal spirituality was just one more symptom of the ailing condition of religion in the United States, which he saw degenerating into a generalized set of platitudes that mainly served to bolster Americans’ faith in the American way of life and in their own abilities rather than faith in a judging God who placed moral demands upon them.<sup>79</sup>

Herberg was not alone in his criticism of “faith in faith.” In his vitriolic interpretation of “The New Look in American Piety,” A. Roy Eckardt characterized the popular religious enthusiasm of the Post War era as morally deficient, socially complacent and theologically dangerous. Characterizing the goals of the new piety as “peace of mind” and “personal adjustment,” Eckardt argued that “the peace of mind cult” readily turns into “religious narcissism” when “the individual and his psycho-spiritual state occupy the center of the religious stage.” Harry Messerve shared these concerns about “The New Piety,” warning that the quest for “peace of mind and soul,” while useful for personal adjustment, must also “come to terms with that aspect of religion which is concerned with man’s efforts to transform himself and the world in the direction of what ought to be.” Herberg, Eckardt and Messerve were uniformly troubled by the alignment of religion and patriotism as well, fearing that such an alliance would “reduce our ideas of God to the level of a fierce tribal deity,” who “fights on the side of his chosen people, supporting their racial, economic or national interests.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), pp.86-91.

<sup>80</sup> A. Roy Eckardt, “The New Look in American Piety,” *The Christian Century*, November 17, 1954, p. 1396; Harry Messerve, “The New Piety,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 1945, p. 34-37.

Herberg and his fellow critics had a point when they criticized peace of mind and positive thinking as goals for religion. Readers of Peale's work come away with an image of a self-absorbed businessman focused inward as his mental repetitions of the mantra "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" blind him to the plight of the sick or poor along the wayside, while he strides with forced confidence on the way to make the crucial sale or business deal that consumes his positive energy. Working at its best, religion might serve to counter rather than reinforce such a mentality. Herberg and other critics had their own agenda, striving to re-infuse religious life in America with the social conscience that seemed to be drowning in the flood of personal inspiration and self-help literature during the post World War II era. These thinkers endeavored to define the enemies of their position, and Liebman, who alluded to personal, and universalized, understandings of religion, had his place in that category.

If Liebman had lived to confront this criticism, however, he could have levied a fairly substantial defense. He might have begun by working to distance his own work from the "positive thinking" category. Liebman did not agree with Norman Peale's approach to religion and refused to endorse his early books. There are significant distinctions between the two authors. While Peale suggested that positive thinking could help believers make more money, have more friends, and advance in their careers, Liebman emphasized that peace of mind would enable readers to contribute to a better society. While Peale relished in making money for himself -- publishing the same ideas packaged as new commodities in book after book -- Liebman gave the profits from his only book to Jewish charities. Liebman struggled to avoid the oversimplification of psychoanalysis that Peale happily popularized.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Alpert points out that Liebman refused to endorse Peale's books.

Liebman's better intentions, however, could not save him from sharing much with Peale. Both men treated religion as a cultural tool that they could harness to human desires. Whether those desires were for money or democracy, religion lost its transcendent, eternal nature when it became a malleable human construct.

I have not tried to draw distinctions between Liebman and Peale in an effort to rescue the rabbi from criticism. In my view, however, Liebman did take religion more seriously than many of his counterparts in popular culture. He did not set out to sacrifice religion's social activism to the pursuit of personal comfort. In response to Harry Messerve, Liebman might have insisted that he had "man's efforts to transform himself and the world in the direction of what ought to be" in mind all along. Liebman's ideas about personal religion emerged from his social and political concerns, rather than from a desire to give a popular audience something that they would like. This gives his story some irony. It also means that Liebman was genuinely engaged in some of the more serious debates that have defined the history of religion in America. Liebman did not explicitly set out to popularize or commodify religion, but to redefine its position in light of his political adherence to democracy and his hopes for strengthening Jewish community life. When he looked for connections between religion, politics, and personal experience, Liebman confronted challenges with deep roots in the story of American politics and religion.

In Liebman's conception of the American way of life, three ideals prevailed: a reverence for the individual's liberty, pluralism, and progress. In a political culture that enshrines the individual, Liebman was hardly a pioneer in suggesting that one way for religion to contribute to a better society was to help believers become better individuals. From early republicans who realized that when individuals are endowed with political power, their virtue becomes a concern, to transcendentalists and evangelicals who posited the transformation of individual hearts ahead of changes in

political structures on the route to improved social conditions, personal religious experience has been infused with political significance. Liebman's whole world view was premised on the straightforward assumption that if individuals would just be responsible, tolerant, and good, the world would become better. He believed that psychoanalysis would make the individual better able to contribute to society, and even more liberated. Freed from repression, individuals would have even fewer restrictions over their conscious, autonomous choices. The new language of psychoanalysis gave his ideas a novel gloss, but Liebman was really echoing an old American tradition.

Pluralism and progress, in Liebman's view meant that everything was always open to debate and always in a state of flux. The fluidity and constant change embedded in American understandings of modern life lead them to view religion as a system that was constantly under construction. Religion, contingent on its surroundings, came under human control. From Christian Science to Scientology, American approaches to religion have often been defined as much by human efforts to create truth as by their desire to seek it. Humanists have argued that this sort of attitude invests human beings with responsibility. After World War II, Louis Kraft of the Jewish Welfare Board believed that Liebman's "New God Idea" was a step in the right direction because it forced individuals to take responsibility for the catastrophic events around them by removing the possibility that such disasters were "God's will." In Liebman's view, the individual becomes responsible, not only for interpreting religion for himself, but for creating God.<sup>82</sup>

Liebman was aware that this approach to religion places tremendous demands upon the individual, who becomes responsible for changing himself, and also for continually constructing his religion. But in an effort to counter this complete

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<sup>82</sup> Letter from Louis Kraft to Liebman, April 18, 1946, Liebman Collection, Temple Israel.



autonomy, Liebman imposed even more responsibilities by encouraging individuals to fulfill obligations to their communities, and form opinions to contribute to debates. This is hard. Strip away the cheery optimism of Liebman's prose and readers are left with a message that sets very high expectations for them. The individual must constantly engage in active processes that require undivided attention – patrol the inner life to ward off repression, reconstruct religious beliefs to meet changing conditions, remain aware of the emotional implications of one's actions towards others, help God create the world – all conducted with the conviction that the individual is responsible for initiating a messianic era of peace and justice. The underlying assumption here is that when individuals have liberties to define their own religion, among others, they will feel some continual compulsion to put that freedom to good use.

Liebman could not live up to these expectations, and his readers certainly could not. But an approach to religion that allowed individuals to construct it for themselves and then put it to personal use offered easier alternatives. Trained to view religion as the product of human invention, readers felt few qualms about taking what they liked from *Peace of Mind* and leaving the vague injunctions to improve society behind. Psychoanalysis could help them feel better now. Self-acceptance could alleviate guilt. Future-mindedness could foster an optimistic attitude that felt good. A new God could be envisioned as a good friend, always available to bolster the spirits or confirm an opinion. Liebman himself fell into patterns of easy complacency in his opinions, bolstered by his religious beliefs, and cheerful optimism in the face of problems that might challenge a positive attitude.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> See Alpert, Martin, and Meyer for positive remarks about Liebman's approach to religion and psychology.

These tendencies are an innate potential in the condition of religion in America. Although Herberg, Eckardt, Messerve, and Liebman himself, worried about them, they are not really “problems” that can be “solved” but the ever-present challenges for religion in America. When historians evaluate Liebman’s role in the development of popular religious culture, they like to point out that he presented a smarter, more sensitive approach to religion and psychology than that of his peers. But he nonetheless contributed to the type of spirituality in America that turned religion into a human construct that could be used to reinforce ways of life that seemed easy and appealing to a popular audience. In his optimism, Liebman contributed to an American popular culture that repressed troubling issues such as the Holocaust. By aligning religion with American democracy, Liebman encouraged Americans to use religion to justify their Cold War mentality. By uniting religion and psychology, Liebman prompted Americans to focus on themselves, viewing religion as a formula for personal happiness. Preaching through bestsellers and radio programs, Liebman ensured that religious issues would be played out on the field of popular culture.

In the end, Liebman’s vision of religion says more about his identity as an American than as a Jew. He wrote Judaism into the American story of religion in a democratic, pluralistic culture. Liebman’s commitment to democracy defined his visions of both Judaism and psychoanalysis rather than vice versa. When Liebman conflated the three – Judaism, psychoanalysis, and “Americanism” -- he put the religion and the psychological theory through the rigors of popularization and personalization that have shaped much of popular spirituality in America. He showed Judaism to be a very American faith, a part of the challenges, tensions, and trends that have molded American religious life.

In our next chapters, we will expand upon the ways in which Jews and Judaism figured prominently in discussions of American identity after World War II. When we turn to discussions of Jewish analysts and the psychiatric profession, we will explore the ways that many of Liebman's ideas ended up entering into discourses that encompassed science and politics as well as psychology and religion. At this point, however, I would like to turn to a different query. How did members of another marginalized American faith, Catholicism, respond not only to Liebman specifically, but to the union of faith and psychiatry that he proposed?

## CHAPTER 3

### THERAPEUTIC HERESY?: AMERICAN CATHOLIC INTERPRETATIONS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

#### *Opening: Exorcism, Analysis, and Catholic Dilemmas*

In 1949, while attending Georgetown University, novelist William Peter Blatty read about the exorcism of a fourteen-year-old boy in nearby Mount Ranier. Born to deeply religious Lebanese immigrants in New York City and having attended Jesuit schools, Blatty was immersed in Catholic culture throughout his life and fascinated by the story of this religious ritual. Just over twenty years later, in 1970, he began to research the incident further as background for his bestselling horror novel, *The Exorcist* (1973). As Blatty uncovered the psychoanalytic explanations for split personalities, hysteria, and other disorders that caused sufferers to appear possessed, he began to center his story on the tension between psychoanalytic and theological representations of the inner lives of individuals that pervaded both psychology and religion in the post-war years.<sup>84</sup>

As the protagonist of *The Exorcist*, Father Damien Karras, a trained psychiatrist as well as a priest, embodies many of these conflicts. When readers first encounter Karras, he is writhing in a vise of existential angst. Fraught with doubt about the existence of God, he is apprehensive about entertaining Chris MacNeil's plea that he perform a formal Catholic exorcism on her troubled daughter, Reagan. Explaining that the church hadn't engaged in exorcisms "since we learned about mental illness; about paranoia; split personality; all those things that they taught me at Harvard," Karras initially attempts to explain Reagan's bizarre behavior in terms of

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<sup>84</sup> "William Peter Blatty," in Douglas Winter, *Faces of Fear: Encounters with the Creators of Modern Horror* (California: Berkeley Publishing Group, 1985).

“conversion hysteria,” “dissociation,” and “repressed guilt.” Karras is deeply disturbed by the specter of human consciousness somehow overwhelmed by unconscious forces within. His deepest fears revolve around Reagan’s apparent loss of free will and rationality. Attempting to explain her psychological predicament, Karras employs an analogy of mutiny within:

Now imagine that the human body is a massive ocean liner, all right? And that all of your brain cells are the crew. Now one of these cells is up on the bridge. He’s the captain. But he never knows precisely what the rest of the crew below decks is doing. All he knows is that the ship keeps running smoothly, that the job’s getting done. Now the captain is you, it’s your waking consciousness. And what happens in dual personality – maybe – is that one of those crew cells down below decks comes up on the bridge and takes over command. In other words, mutiny. Now – does that help you understand it?

The mother’s response, “Father, that’s so far out of sight that I think it’s almost easier to believe in the devil!” destabilizes Karras’ conviction that a psychoanalytic explanation would bolster a purely rational worldview, and offers him a tantalizing alternative.<sup>85</sup>

Imagining that Reagan’s apparent possession by the devil might be a metaphysical reality, Karras finds new hope that the forces of Good and Evil – God and demons – truly exist and live. As the character of Karras evolves, he functions in a continual state of desperate ambivalence, fueled on the one hand by a desire to believe in the otherworldly, supernatural realities that underlay Catholic theology; on the other, by a logical empiricism that insists on physical, scientific explanations.

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<sup>85</sup> William Peter Blatty, *The Exorcist* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 99, 213.

While he understands that some find psychoanalytic theories to be almost as otherworldly as theological ones, Karras himself operates under the assumption that if the apparent devil that lives inside the little girl can be explained away by almost any scientific or para-scientific means, then it does not exist in reality, therefore negating the existence of God as well. Doctor Karras can not escape the spiritual doubts that his medical training had embedded in his outlook, but Father Karras deeply longs to discover that science cannot explain away the devil. Psychoanalysis, in the novel, functions as a foil to religion.

As he begins, increasingly, to seek metaphysical roots to Reagan's problems, Karras remains focused, as in his psychoanalytic interpretations, on the way that Reagan's individual consciousness – her soul – is being subjugated to irrational, non-human forces. As Blatty sought to describe the nature of this evil that resided in Reagan, he reached for an example of terror familiar to post-war Americans. Three simple words -- Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald – scroll along the bottom of the opening inscription page, and the “demon” in Reagan communicates regularly with Himmler. In these instrumental evocations of the holocaust, Blatty alluded to the kind of routinized and banalized genocide that seemed, to “real life” religious thinkers as well, to be the ultimate assault on the dignity of individual human souls, the supreme act of dehumanization.<sup>86</sup>

Karras confronts this type of evil in the manner of a Catholic who believes that each soul is a battleground between God and Satan. He enacts the entire eschatological drama within himself. Ironically, this confrontation with a palpable devil returns Karras to his faith in God. Karras commits suicide in order to destroy the demon. But as he lies dying, the priest who gives him last rites believes that he sees the “eyes filled with peace” and with “something mysteriously like joy at the end

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<sup>86</sup> Blatty, *Opening Inscription*.

of heart's longing." In a final ironic twist to the novel, we find religious passion succumbing to the forces of secularization. Blatty depicted the place of authentic, metaphysical belief in American culture as tenuous and declining. A police investigator explains Karras' suicide: "...emotional conflicts, his guilt about his mother; her death; his problem of faith...the continuous lack of sleep." He concludes that Karras' "mind had snapped, had been shattered by the burdens of guilt he could no longer endure."<sup>87</sup>

The blockbuster status of both Blatty's novel and the movie made from it demonstrate that the engagement of Catholicism with psychoanalysis was dynamic enough to percolate into commercial culture and capture the popular imagination. A number of themes in Karras' story echo the concerns that consumed "real-life" Catholics who worked with psychoanalysis and psychology in the 1940's and 1950's as well. Psychoanalysis appeared, to these Catholics, as a potentially serious challenge to their belief and authority structures. By World War II, this challenge had assumed urgency, when psychoanalysts gained popularity and authority as healers to war-torn veterans and Americans vicariously traumatized by global events in the early forties. In what one historian has called the "romance" of Americans with psychology, the discipline gained institutional footholds throughout World War II as the government turned to these doctors for help in dealing with issues from combat fatigue to strategic planning. As part of this ascension, psychoanalysis gained particular popularity – in the form of flocking clients and extensive media coverage – during what Nathan Hale calls the "golden age of popularization."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Blatty, pp. 331, 336.

<sup>88</sup> Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in America* (England: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Like Damien Karras, many post-war Catholic intellectuals were fascinated by psychoanalysis, as it addressed many of the same concerns as their theology – the nature of free will, the origins and effects of sin and guilt, and the powers of evil and of love. They experienced the theory, however, as a potential danger to their faith as well. Sincere Catholic believers who undertook a rigorous study of psychoanalysis in the post-war years faced an almost constant onslaught of intellectual challenges to their theology. Freud’s assertions that religion was simply one form of obsession-neurosis, that God was a projection of the father figure image, or that Christ symbolized the return of the repressed were significant hurdles to any Christian who hoped to engage his theories. As a self-proclaimed universal religion, Catholicism does not readily accommodate itself to a peaceful coexistence with alternative philosophies, particularly those that seem to champion atheism.<sup>89</sup>

Like Jews, Catholics have tended to remain strikingly absent from historical accounts of the relationship that developed after World War II between psychoanalysis and religion. This lack of attention is particularly perplexing in light of the dramatic shifts that were taking place in the ways that Catholics understood their identity in the national community during this period. By World War II, American Catholic identity patterns had shifted. Large numbers of Catholics had made a generational transition from immigrants to entrenched members of the middle classes. Catholics were assuming more influential positions in academia and were less hesitant about articulating religious concerns. A number of Catholics achieved celebrity status on the wave of self-help and inspirational bestsellers and television programs that swept the nation in the forties and fifties. Discussions about psychoanalysis and therapeutic

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<sup>89</sup> See Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism*, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” among other critiques of religion.



culture were important venues where Catholics articulated and shaped these new identity constructions.<sup>90</sup>

These discourses were also indicative of the ways in which Catholics positioned themselves vis-à-vis other religious cultures. As an “outsider” faith, slowly melting into the mainstream, Catholics often voiced their views in terms that critiqued mainstream Protestant approaches to self-help and psychology. Meanwhile, the strong identification between Judaism and psychoanalysis – Freud’s Jewish background and the disproportionate number of Jewish analysts in America – means that Catholic approaches to one are tied to attitudes towards the other. While American Catholics had a record of overt anti-Semitism, marked, for example, by prejudiced spokesmen like Charles Coughlin and Arthur Terminiello during the preceding decades, the Catholics who discussed psychoanalysis in the forties and fifties rarely emphasized Freud’s Jewish background. They chose instead to construe him as a product of nineteenth century empiricism and atheism. The rising perception that intellectuals of Jewish background stood at the vanguard of secularization in American institutions, means that Catholics’ critiques of Freud’s atheism may well be connected to their feelings about his Jewishness. Historian Andrew Heinze has called the discussions among Jews and Catholics about psychology a modern day “disputation.” The “sides” in this dispute, however, were not clear-cut. While historians have pointed to critical

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<sup>90</sup> For a brief overview of Catholic responses to psychoanalysis, see James Gilbert, “Biodivinity: The Encounter of Religion and Medicine,” in M. L. Bradbury and James Gilbert, eds., *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and Secular in Modern American History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989). For his discussion of Catholic and Jewish interpretations of psychoanalysis see Andrew Heinze, “Jews and American Popular Psychology: Reconsidering the Protestant Paradigm of Popular Thought,” *Journal of American History*, December 2001; For examples of Protestant dominated works on religion and psychology, see E. Brooks Holifield, *History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Abingdon Press: 1983); Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: Religion as Pop Psychology from Mary Baker Eddy to Oral Roberts* (New York: Pantheon, 1980). Thomas Merton, Fulton Sheen, and James Keller, for example, achieved fame and popular influence by presenting their ideas about Catholicism to Americans.

remarks towards psychoanalysis as instances of Catholic anti-Semitism, they have been less attentive to the many Catholics that championed Freud.<sup>91</sup>

Developments in Catholic theology also intersected with the evolution of American psychology in interesting ways. Psychoanalysis was not the only European philosophy to ignite debate among American psychologists and psychologists. Humanism and existentialism also became important concepts in both popular and professional work. Prominent Protestant psychologists – most notably Rollo May – championed humanistic values and insisted that free will and individualism were compatible with religious faith. May, along with Erich Fromm, argued, too, that existentialism did not necessarily lead to nihilism, and that a modern psychology could be inspired by existential philosophy. For many Catholics, humanism and existentialism appeared alongside psychoanalysis as anathema to the dogma of their church. Interest in humanism and existentialism among their psychoanalytic peers was a further challenge to Catholics in psychiatry. They would not, of course, be the first Catholics to embrace humanism. But, like Erasmus, they could not do so without controversy. The intermingling of humanism and existentialism in psychoanalytic discussion further complicated the Catholics' engagement.

For this among other reasons, I would argue that, by overlooking much of the Catholic dialogue about psychoanalysis, we are failing to understand important factors

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<sup>91</sup> On Psychoanalysis as “Jewish Science,” See Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Edward Shorter, *A history of psychiatry : from the era of the asylum to the age of Prozac* (New York : John Wiley & Sons, 1997); and Sandor Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1993), and *The Case of Sigmund Freud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1993). On Jews and academic life in America see, for example, Dan Oren, *Joining the club : a history of Jews and Yale* (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1985). Andrew Hienze (2001) has called for more serious investigation into what he refers to as a modern “disputation” between Catholics and Jews in their approaches to psychology, and pointed to the empty spaces that seem to lay where Catholic voices might exist in recent scholarship. Heinze construes their debates about psychoanalysis as part of a larger “culture clash” between Catholics and Jews that had been developing in America since the 1920’s. He argues that historians have overlooked this facet of religious life because they have been evaluating tensions between Catholics and Jews in terms of ethnicity and in the context of social rather than intellectual or cultural history.

in the ways that Catholics came to understand and represent themselves in post-war culture, and also the ways that Catholics influenced the realms of medicine, psychology, and popular “spiritual” culture. Close analysis of American Catholics’ responses to psychoanalysis might reshape some of the larger patterns that define religious historiography as well, by lending support to scholars who challenge the model of secularization. Ultimately, these scholars reject those who depict the psychological view as part of the secularizing forces that overwhelm the vital presence of religion in the inner lives of individuals.<sup>92</sup>

I am proposing that in their efforts to seize upon the popular audiences and academic interest that psychoanalysis evoked in the forties and fifties, religious thinkers exerted far greater influence upon the ways that Americans conceptualized both their inner and communal lives than they would have had they not engaged in these discussions of religion and psychology. Ultimately, American Catholics, among other religious thinkers, found in psychoanalysis an opening through which to “sacralize” the fields of medicine and psychiatry that seemed to them, in the post-war years, to be growing increasingly routinized and dehumanizing. As psychoanalysis could, itself, be construed as a more philosophical, “person-centered” counterpoint to the theories of behaviorism and biodeterminism that seemed poised to dominate medical psychiatry, discussions about it provided opportunities for Catholics to address ideas about the nature of individuals and their souls that might otherwise have been excluded from both scholarly and public arenas.

Like Blatty’s Damien Karras, these Catholic psychiatrists were deeply concerned with understanding mental illnesses and spiritual crisis that seemed to strip

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<sup>92</sup> Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: Warner, 1979); Philip Reiff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

human beings of their free will and rational decision-making abilities. In his ship metaphor, Karris expressed his fear of internal mutiny from below. This revolution against the conscious “captain” is posited at the root of neurosis in psychoanalytic theory. Freud construes the return of these repressed elements as the origins of both neurosis and religion. Efforts to rethink the politics of this internal “community” of thoughts and to find ways to ameliorate the tensions between captain and crew are central to the work of post-war thinkers on the topics of religion and psychology. Spurred by newfound fears of tyranny and mass rebellion in the political world, they sought to address these concerns in their reconstruction of individuals’ inner worlds. These endeavors took on heightened importance after World War II. While historians and economists sought political, social, and economic explanations for the rise of fascism and the onslaught of war, psychologists and theologians were just as eager to uncover the emotional and spiritual crises that led to catastrophe.<sup>93</sup>

I have structured this narrative primarily around the lives and ideas of Catholic clergy and Catholic psychiatrists. There are a number of other Catholic doctors whose stories could function to enhance or augment my argument— Francis Braceland, Frank Curran, or Annette Walters, for example. I have selected, however, the stories of specific individuals that seem to capture many of the major themes running through broader popular and academic discussions on religion and psychology. While probing the ways that Catholics confronted the dilemmas raised by the rising popularity of psychoanalysis by analyzing the lived experiences of these individuals in depth, I also use their stories as lenses through which to gauge larger tensions and themes in American religious life. After a brief overview of popular critics, Fulton Sheen and Clare Booth Luce, I turn my attention to an immigrant psychoanalyst who built his career around critiquing and re-envisioning Freud’s ideas through Catholic lenses.

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<sup>93</sup> See for example, Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, Hannah Arendt, *The Banality of Evil*.

Rudolf Allers, a former student of Freud's, criticized orthodox Freudianism as running counter to Catholic beliefs. He also, however, selected aspects of Freud's teachings to incorporate into his vision of "Catholic psychoanalysis."

Our analysis of Catholicism and psychoanalysis will extend into the next chapter when I move to a discussion of Catholic doctors who were convinced that Orthodox Freudianism already affirmed Catholic values as it was. Leo Bartemeier, the first Catholic to assume leadership of the International Psychoanalytic Association, and Karl Stern and Gregory Zilboorg, both converts from Judaism and immigrants to America, championed the rapprochement of Catholicism and psychoanalysis. Ultimately, both the Catholic critics and the fans of Freud ended up encouraging the use of psychoanalysis in Catholic institutions. They also employed discussions of psychoanalysis to promote the values that they associated with both Catholicism and American liberalism – free will, reverence for the individual, empathy, and the potential for salvation – in the worlds of both medical psychiatry and popular psychology.

### ***Therapeutic Heresy: Freud's Catholic Critics***

Newspaper reports did not utilize terms of warfare, such as "attack" and "truce" to describe the relationship between psychoanalysis and Catholics during the 1940's and 1950's without reason. Many prominent and vocal Catholic leaders were indeed up in arms over what they perceived to be the encroachment of psychoanalytic theories and practice onto their own theological and pastoral turf. In this section, I will explore the critical stance that many Catholics assumed towards psychoanalysis, including the framework of heresy that many employed to discredit it. Criticism from Fulton Sheen

and Clare Booth Luce was widely covered by the popular press. Each equated psychoanalysis with other Cold War crusades and assailed the determinism and materialism that they perceived within its theories.<sup>94</sup>

Less widely covered by the contemporary press or historical analysis was the work of immigrant psychoanalyst, Rudolf Allers. While holding respected positions in academia, he authored scholarly works as well as reasonably popular advice books for the public. At both of these levels, Allers extended the rather superficial critiques of Freud that Sheen and Booth presented. He continued to work, however, as a psychoanalyst and developed distinctively Catholic revisions of Freudian theories and practices. While critical, the interest that all three of these Catholics paid to psychoanalysis in their work urged their audiences to see a relationships between psychology and religion and ponder the ways in which each influenced the other.

### ***Popular Critics: Fulton Sheen and Clare Booth Luce***

The most prominent Catholic to speak against the growing interest in psychoanalysis after World War II was Msgr. Fulton Sheen. Sheen was not trained in psychology, nor did he ever undergo psychoanalysis. He was, however, highly educated in theology and philosophy and widely read in the areas of psychology and psychoanalysis that he discussed. Sheen has been aptly identified as a pivotal figure in the development of modern Catholic identity in America. This priest hosted *The Catholic Hour*, a popular radio show, throughout the 1930's and 40's, then created a

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<sup>94</sup> See for example "Is Freud Sinful?" *Time*, April 21, 1952, p. 71, and "Church and Psyche," *Newsweek*, September 20, 1954, p. 84. Cited in James Gilbert, "Biodivinity," in M. L. Bradbury and James Gilbert, eds., *Transforming Faith: The Sacred and Secular in Modern American History* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989) p. 171-173.

weekly television program, *Life is Worth Living*, in 1952. Sheen also wrote dozens of books for popular audiences between 1930 and 1970. In this role, Sheen emerged as a leader to Catholics, but also as an emissary who inspired non-Catholics with his spiritual messages, and taught them about Catholicism along the way.<sup>95</sup>

Sheen used this national pulpit to comment on a wide range of issues, but certain themes dominated his discussions: the rise of therapeutic culture in America, the Cold War threat of totalitarianism, and the connection between the two. In his discussions of these topics, Sheen spoke to Catholics trying to understand where they fit into American society at mid-century, and assured them that they could be squarely behind the Cold War crusade. He also represented Catholics to outsiders and demonstrated that Catholics were deeply concerned with upholding the ideals of free will, individual responsibility, and democracy that were so central to discussions of American identity during this era. These roles were significant in a time in which second generation Catholic immigrants were merging into the middle classes and Catholics were assuming stronger leadership roles in academic and other professions. Commentators have pointed to this era as a time when Catholics came into their own as “insiders” in American cultural life. Sheen focused on these issues in his ongoing attacks against Freud, which reached their apex in the late forties.<sup>96</sup>

In all likelihood, Sheen’s growing annoyance with psychoanalysis was exacerbated by the continual presence of Rabbi Joshua Liebman’s argument in favor of the compatibility between psychoanalysis and religion, *Peace of Mind*, on the New York Times bestseller list. On Sunday March 9, 1947, Fulton Sheen announced from his pulpit in St. Patrick’s Cathedral of New York City, that “Freudianism” is “based on

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<sup>95</sup> Mark Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York: Crossroad, 1999). p. 92.

<sup>96</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. Mark Massa, *Catholics and American Culture* (New York: Crossroad, 1999).

four assumptions, materialism, hedonism, infantilism and eroticism.” He emphasized that “this brand of psychoanalysis denies sin and would supplant confession” and declared “there are no more disintegrated people in the world than the victims of psychoanalysis.” Sheen continued this attack in his own best-seller, *Peace of Soul* (1949). Though never as popular as Leibman’s book, *Peace of Soul* garnered a healthy readership, selling over 200,000 copies in the late forties and early fifties. Sheen’s polemics from the pulpit were also widely covered in venues like the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*.<sup>97</sup>

In Sheen’s view, the problems with psychoanalysis were both theological and political. Sheen argued that psychoanalysis was based on many of the same assumptions as “totalitarian” world views, and was, therefore, detrimental to democratic communities.

Sheen believed that the “pop” version of Freudian theory discouraged individuals from taking personal responsibility or exhibiting initiative. Psychoanalysis, in Sheen’s opinion, turned individuals inward upon themselves, shutting them off to other people, the larger community, and God. Sheen proposed that spiritual health can only be achieved when individuals stop looking for answers within themselves and accept the reality of a higher power – not a “co-creator,” the role Joshua Leibman cast for God, but a Lord with the power to save them. Only the experience of conversion and genuine commitment to a life devoted to loving God will save a person from the moral relativism and self-absorption that psychoanalysis encourages, in Sheen’s view.

Sheen overtly compared Freudian theory with Marxist materialism:

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<sup>97</sup> Quote from Kevin Gellespie, S.J., *Psychology and American Catholicism: From Confession to Therapy?* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), p. 16; Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1949). Sales figures from Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch, *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).



In both conceptions, the chaotic and unhappy state of man's affairs is said to spring from the tension between the surface appearance, on the one hand, and, on the other, from the hidden, dark, irrational forces which, though unknown are the true determinants of all that happens. As in Marxism the manifest social, political, cultural status is but a superstructure, erected upon the underlying economic forces, so in Freud's system conscious conduct is only a product of forces located in the unconscious...when the conflict between the unconscious forces and the conscious ego reaches a certain intensity, according to Freud, the effect is upheaval, with a disruption of life and conduct. For Marx, social peace is disrupted when the proletariat arises and that occurs when economic forces from below are strong enough to overthrow the existing social, political and economic order.

Sheen emphasized that for both Freud and Marx all events are strictly determined – “for the Marxist, history is driven by economic forces, for the Freudian, personal fate depends on instinctual forces...spiritual freedom is denied by both.”<sup>98</sup>

In Sheen's view, everything about psychoanalysis – as opposed to traditional Christian, Catholic belief -- seemed to be aimed at abolishing individual responsibility. Sheen contrasted the Catholic practices of the examination of conscience and the sacrament of reconciliation with analysis and therapy. The examination of conscience, in his view, does not treat guilt as some sort of mental problem, but as a real sign that one has done something wrong and should repent. Sheen pointed out that Catholic practices focus on areas of life about which we are aware -- our conscious actions and feelings -- while analysts seek to unearth buried memories and unconscious conflicts. Sheen asserted that conflicts and troubling memories are natural parts of the human

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<sup>98</sup> Sheen, get pp.

experience that can not be overcome by the individual thinking about him or her self. The analyst who “objectively” acknowledges these issues does not fill the same role as a confessor who judges sin and brings the sinner closer to God. In Sheen’s opinion, repression is overcome when individuals confess their sins, rather than unearth their memories, and establish communion with God rather than discuss problems in therapy.

Conservative journalist and politician, Clare Booth Luce, whose conversion to Catholicism was facilitated by Sheen in 1946, was equally contemptuous of psychoanalysis in the autobiography of her conversion that she published in McCall’s Magazine from February to April of 1947. According to Luce, her interest in Catholicism stemmed in part from the inability of her experiences with psychoanalysis to answer “the Big Question, the meaning of life and death, the real goal of human life.” Luce complained that her esteemed analyst, Dorian Feigenbaum of Columbia University, defined her life solely in terms of sexuality, stripping it of the higher meaning she sought:

I think I first began to experience serious doubts about my analyst's dogmas as it became clear to me that Freudianism was a system of thought intended to explain everything about me, including my devotion to the 'higher' things of life, in terms of disguised sexuality . . . .My world had seemed crass enough when I had come into his office. But I have believed passionately that there had been born, in the world, and were living in it now, men and women of high, pure and noble purpose . . . motivated, I felt sure, by a richer and sweeter, a more *ineffable* purpose than a sublimated infantile sexuality. The thought that they were not suddenly turned the world into a pageant of monstrous obscenity. During my analysis it began increasingly to seem that I was being

'adjusted' to a world so shorn of beauty and goodness that a sane person might do better to leave it than try to live in it.<sup>99</sup>

In his insightful interpretation of Luce's descriptions, Historian Andrew Heinze notes that she did not evaluate her therapy in terms of its efficacy, but according to the world-view under which it seemed to operate.

Heinze further points out that Luce construed psychoanalysis as a sort of Catholic heresy, a vision of original sin gone run amuck:

Indeed, Freud claims that a child is born with the mark of Cain not only upon his brow, but on every other part of his wee anatomy. The Freudian child springs from its mother's womb a brat, harboring aggressive and lustful intentions toward Pappa, Mamma, sister, nurse, and, as his little world expands, odd relations and playmates. If these intentions are clumsily or violently suppressed they boil and bubble and fester within him and become 'complexes.' If in maturity he fails to sublimate them successfully, they break out into anti-social actions which cause him and everybody else endless troubles and heartache. He then yearns 'to return to the womb' which is fancy Freudian language meaning he wishes he had never been born. If this is not the doctrine of Original Sin, then I don't know a Catholic doctrine gone wrong, that is, turned into a heresy, when I see one.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Clare Boothe Luce, "The 'Real' Reason," *McCall's* (February 1947), 153. (The complete citation for this series is: (February 1947), pp.16, 117-118, 120-135; (March 1947), pp. 16, 153-154, 156, 160-161, 167-168, 171-173, 175-176; (April 1947), pp. 26-27, 76, 78, 80, 85, 88, 90.)

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* p. 156, 160.

In Luce's view, theories become heretical when they attempt to address the needs and themes of religious life – whether these are answers to big questions of meaning, or explanations for the existence of sin – without acknowledging the metaphysical realities of the existence of God and the teleology of history towards salvation. Of her analyst, Luce concluded, "It was our joint misfortune that we happened for a number of months to get lost together," she recalled, "in the godless and atavistic underbrush of Freudianism." Freud's secularizing agenda was ultimately perceived by Luce as a heresy against her new-found Catholic faith.<sup>101</sup>

### ***A Catholic Psychoanalyst's Critique of Freud:***

Rudolf Allers shared Luce's sense that Freud represented a heretical diversion from Catholic theology and also agreed with many of Sheen's criticisms. Unlike Luce and Sheen, however, Allers was a trained analyst who had studied with Freud in 1906 as a member of his last class at the University of Vienna. Allers went on to work in Vienna's psychoanalytic community from 1918-1938 when he was a part of Alfred Adler's circle and worked closely with Victor Frankl. With the rise of the Nazis, Allers immigrated to America in 1938 where he worked for one decade as Professor of Psychology at Catholic University before becoming Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown. Allers articulated his scholarly critique of Freud in *The Successful Error* (1940) which he later re-named *What's Wrong with Freud? A Critical Study of Freudian Analysis*. Through a series of popular advice books, as well as his continued

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 16. Also quoted in Heinze, Andrew R, "Clare Boothe Luce and the Jews: A Chapter from the Catholic-Jewish Disputation of Postwar America" *American Jewish History* - Volume 88, Number 3, September 2000, pp. 361-376. As Andrew Heinze points out, the line between Luce's enthusiasm for Catholicism and her prejudicial view of Judaism was slender. Contemporaries and historians alike have been tempted to group both Sheen and Luce's critiques in with larger currents of anti-Semitic vitriol directed towards Freud and Marx during the Cold War. Heinze ultimately argues, however, that the enthusiasm that Luce demonstrated for Catholicism was indicative of her conversion and not symptomatic of anti-Semitism.

academic work in America, Allers promoted his own ideas about how psychoanalysis could be practiced in ways that reinforced rather than challenged Catholic beliefs and ideals.<sup>102</sup>

In *The Successful Error* Allers levied a two-pronged attack towards Freud's ideas. Directing himself, on the one hand, to a broad scholarly audience, Allers argued that, while Freud insisted upon identifying himself as a scientist, his theories were actually fraught with logical inconsistencies and lacked empirical justification. Asserting that Freud's theories constituted a philosophy more than a science, Allers removed the possibility that Catholics could incorporate them into a theology, based upon Thomas Aquinas, that used empirical science to seek knowledge about the world without questioning the existence of God. In this way, Allers represented psychoanalysis as a sort of heresy against both science and religion.

To achieve this, Allers relied upon Hilaire Belloc's definition of heresy as "the dislocation of some complete and self-supporting scheme by the introduction of the novel denial of some essential part therein." Because this kind of heresy leaves standing a great part of the structure that it attacked, Belloc argued that "it can appeal to believers and continues to affect their lives." In the case of science, Allers accused Freud of using scientific language – maintaining the form and structure of empiricism -- to denote non-scientific suppositions. He argued that Freud had never found empirical evidence for repression or uncovered the causes of his patients' neurosis. The recoveries that Freud celebrated were the result of correlation rather than causation; they emerged during therapy, but without a controlled experiment, could not be empirically tested or demonstrated to operate in the way that Freud supposed. Allers further criticized Freud's choice of sources for his anthropological and

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<sup>102</sup> Biographical information provided by the description of the Rudolf Allers Collection, in Special Collections at Georgetown University.

historical projects, arguing that they were not representative of their disciplines. Much of Allers' critique of Freud's science, however, seemed perfunctory compared to his concerns about the implications of Freud's philosophy for Catholics.<sup>103</sup>

Allers believed that Freud's ideas were particularly appealing, therefore dangerous, to Catholics because, as heresies in Belloc's sense of the word, they actually echoed many truths that Allers associated with Christianity. Like Luce, Allers was most troubled by the ways that Freud seemed to reiterate Christian views – on original sin or the unity of human nature – in a desacralized context. Opposing Freud's view of himself as a product of nineteenth century empirical science, Allers supposed that he had absorbed Catholic ideas from the renaissance of scholasticism in the 1870's under Pope Leo XIII and from his interactions with Catholic thinkers like Franz Brentano in Vienna.

Allers was not alone in supposing that Freud's early experiences left him with a lifelong fixation on Catholicism. Historians have since pointed to Freud's nanny -- a devout Catholic who took her young charge to Mass – as a seductive influence upon the child Freud, offering both feminine and spiritual appeals. As a charismatic philosophy professor and former Catholic Priest, Franz Brentano exerted a powerful intellectual influence over the older Freud, tempting the student to contemplate a theistic, yet rationally explained, worldview. While Freud proclaimed himself a staunch materialist before graduation, he continued to posit Rome at the center of his geographic anxieties and paid particular attention to Catholic views in his critiques of religion. Freud certainly had opportunities to absorb the Christianity that Allers seemed to find permeating his theories.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940) p. 239.

<sup>104</sup> Peter Gay, *Godless Jew*.

Allers believed that the “great and true” conception underlying Freud’s system was that of “the unity of human nature.” He asserted that:

Psychoanalysis rests on the conception of man, his bodily constitution, his personal history, his character and his mental troubles....as being essentially of a whole as being manifestations or sides of man seen as an indissoluble unit. One will have to count among the real merits of Freud his having grasped this truth however vaguely. Even though he was not aware of this idea, even though it became in his hands disfigured and distorted, it nevertheless was brought to the consciousness of subsequent decades by psychoanalysis. This idea of unity had been lost, mainly owing to the influence of elementarism and dualism as they had been born of the spirit of Cartesian dualism...Freud’s philosophy is indeed a materialistic monism.<sup>105</sup>

In this view, Allers turned Freud’s conception of himself, as a scientist expunging remnants of outdated supernaturalism from the modern intellect, around to argue that Freud was actually returning to an earlier, Catholic, worldview. Committed to Thomas Aquinas’ vision of the unity of human nature, Allers was convinced that “outside of a Christian philosophy no possibility can be found of demonstrating and of safeguarding the human person.” He insisted that no other philosophical system had successfully conceived the true idea of person until “Christianity had taught mankind the dignity and free will of man and its bearing on his eternal fate, by making every individual responsible for his fate in the next life, by proclaiming the infinite superiority of the spiritual, immortal soul over all creatures of this sublunar world.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error*, p. 242.

<sup>106</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error*, p.

It was precisely in this point of contention with Freud that Allers defined his own agenda as a psychoanalyst. His identity as a Catholic shaped his approaches to writing about and practicing psychotherapy in ways that clarified the dispute he had with Freud's overt atheism as well as the respect he held for the "hidden" remnants of Catholic philosophy that existed in psychoanalysis. This stance produced an awkward quality to Allers' scholarly work, as he alternated between vehement denunciations of Freud and tentative explanations of the ways that psychotherapy could still be used to promote and explore Catholic values.

In *The Successful Error*, for example, Allers articulated a "warning directed to all Catholics" because "the Catholic mind has been accused of being backward...so that Catholics have become a little uncertain" and they fear being "left behind," making them vulnerable to the modern appeal of Freud. "But Catholics know also," Allers asserted, "that whatever contradicts their faith can not be true." He held that psychoanalysis fails to uphold Christian ideals on several levels. It carried, for Allers, no stance on morality, positing pleasure and "normality" as goals for living. Attributing causation to instinct and emotion, Freud's ideas denied free will, in Allers' view. Without free will, sin disappeared. "Nobody who penetrates the spirit of psychoanalysis and, at the same time is fully cognizant of the essentials of supernatural faith can believe that these two are compatible," Allers declared. "One either believes in Christ or in psychoanalysis," Allers concluded, and explained that in Freud's view, religion means "nothing more than a peculiar manifestation of the human mind, of the same rank as magical practice, totemism or witchcraft."<sup>107</sup>

While he found Freud's *theories* to be anathema to Catholicism, Allers managed to use his very critique of these ideas to explain why the *practice* of analysis could present opportunities for spiritual growth. Beginning in *The Successful Error*,

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<sup>107</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error*, p. 199, 93, 197.



and continuing through later work on Existentialism and Psychology, Allers described a therapeutic situation that, while inspired by Freud's views of the unity of human nature and the importance of experience, would maintain a philosophical respect for free will and initiative in both the therapist and client. Ironically, Allers borrowed concepts from Jewish existentialist, Martin Buber, to advance his arguments. The main goal in Allers' therapeutic vision was for clients to establish "I-thou" relationships, not only with their therapists, but with the world around them. This type of relationship he distinguished from an "I-it" or objectifying interaction, and posited as authentic, meaningful engagement with another. Allers equated this type of interaction with Christian love and considered it to be an essential component that bonds Catholic communities. While Allers denied that psychoanalytic theory fostered this type of love, he did envision analysis as a place where "I-thou" relationships could be nurtured amidst the increasingly medicalized and routinized world of professional psychiatry.<sup>108</sup>

To initiate this discussion, Allers identified problems with the way that Freud envisioned the connections among individuals.

Freud believes that every interest in objects, a fortiori every interest implying anything like love for persons, is necessarily libidinous, that is, sexual. He cannot understand a loving inclination other than by the influence of sexual desire, be it already fully developed or still latent, unmistakable in its manifestations or so much veiled that it becomes recognizable only to the

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<sup>108</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychiatry: Four Lectures* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas, 1961), p. 186. Allers expanded upon some of his original criticisms of Freud and Psychoanalysis in his later work. These lectures were presented at the Institute of Living in Hartford Conn., in March 1959. Martin Buber described the "I-thou" relationship in *I and thou*, translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

initiate and by particular methods. Hence he cannot conceive of the relationship of a child and parent except in terms of sexuality.<sup>109</sup>

Allers was particularly troubled by what he saw as the corruption of the child-parent bond in Freud's vision, not only by sexualization but by self-interest, and extended this criticism to encompass the ways that Freud views all types of love. Assailing Freud's emphasis on self-preservation in all relationships, Allers insisted that a mother nursing a sick child would not think of the pain she would suffer if the child were to die, but thinks only of the child and his needs. "True love," he insisted, does not seek its own satisfaction." This is true, Allers argued for "all kinds of love, be it the love of a child, of a mate, of a friend, of one's neighbor, or goodness, of one's country, of God." Allers accused Freud of being "blind to these facts," because "he conceives of love only as a particular way of achieving instinctual satisfaction."<sup>110</sup>

Allers voiced similar concerns about the relationship between therapist and client. He worried that the real concern of the psychoanalyst is "not with a person but with his symptoms," and that the analyst treats patients, dreams, and symptoms as objects of study. The notion of transference, in which the patient's feelings towards his therapist are reflections of his relationships with other people rather than expressions of genuine engagement, further objectifies the therapeutic situation in Allers' view. Allers believed, however, that psychoanalysis carries within itself certain fundamental practices and ideas that enabled him to reconceptualize the relationship between doctor and patient.<sup>111</sup>

Allers lauded the way that psychoanalysis treats human life as a unity with a particular form of history. "With psychoanalysis," he declared, "begins the

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<sup>109</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error*, p. 119.

<sup>110</sup> Allers, *The Successful Error*, p. 102.

<sup>111</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychiatry*, p. 81.

introduction of historical categories into psychiatric, and consequently, into medical, psychological, anthropological studies.” He applauded Freud’s emphasis on storytelling and recounting personal histories:

Each experience receives its significance not only through its proper nature, but also in consequence of the point within an individual history at which it happens. Its significance is determined by the total situation and the total history – the whole past – of the person...this, the historical viewpoint, is, I believe, that which is truly a novelty in psychoanalysis.<sup>112</sup>

Through this historical viewpoint, Allers hoped to provide a new role for the psychoanalyst. In Allers’ view, the analyst moves beyond extrapolating the ways that the past has shaped the client’s narrative, and points out the potential directions that the patient’s narrative could take in the future. Believing, along with his early colleague, Alfred Adler, that personality is constituted not only by early experiences, but by concurrent motivations, subject to modification by virtue of shifting goals, Allers urged therapists to discuss goals and future plans as well as past influences. He ultimately construed the successful therapeutic exchange to be a sort of conversion experience, in which the patient gains awareness of the options that are open to him and his freedom to choose among them:

No one, of course, will or can deny the role that the past plays in determining a person’s attitudes, outlook and conduct. But the past determines only a framework within which several lines of behavior stand open...Man’s freedom may be limited in many ways, but it is, on the whole, greater than most people are willing to admit. One...achievement of mental therapy is precisely that man is rendered aware of his capacity to overcome these

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<sup>112</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychiatry*, pp. 27, 24.

limitations and to realize the extent of his freedom. Human conduct is largely dependent on the picture that the individual has of himself. If he is enabled to see himself in a different light, to “be himself,” to realize that he is under no absolute compulsion to act as he does...the result may well amount to a change which deserves to be called “conversion,” in the literal sense of the word, that is, a turning into another direction.<sup>113</sup>

Allers noted that this sort of conversion “entails that a new line of life be envisaged,” and argued that it is often necessary that such a line, or several such lines, be pointed out to the client by the therapist.

Allers extended this vision of therapy in his work on existential psychiatry in the late 1950’s and 1960s. Like his non-Catholic colleagues in the early humanistic psychology movement, Allers turned to existential philosophers for ways to address and discuss the problems facing post-war Americans. He believed that existentialism, along with psychoanalysis, could be conceived as “reactions against the de-personalizing spirit of scientism” and the “disregard for the individual” that pervaded nineteenth century philosophy. Allers alluded to Heidegger’s and Sartre’s focuses on anguish, loneliness, and encounter with nothingness as starting points for the recognition that “to exist is to project oneself, as Heidegger says, on the horizon of temporality,” or the conviction, as in Sartre, that one’s self is its own project. These notions reinforce Allers’ humanistic conception of the rational, freely choosing individual. He further integrated Gabriel Marcel’s and Martin Buber’s understandings of authenticity as an I-thou relationship with the other; an ability to open up, commune, love. Allers argued that, like psychoanalysis, existentialism encourages

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<sup>113</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychology*, p. 87.

therapists to focus on individuals' "being in the world" and a close analysis of the world as it is experienced by that individual.<sup>114</sup>

Within this philosophy, Allers diagnosed the primary neurosis of modern Americans as a failure to affix meaning or value to their relationships – with other people, and with the world around them. Conformity becomes one way that individuals lose this sense of authentic engagement. Allers cited David Reisman's famous description of the "outer directed man" as an example of the flight – either from authenticity or into disease. This type of neurotic is unable, or unwilling, to develop the "self-actualizing personality" heralded by Allers' colleague Abraham Maslow, and depends in his self-evaluation completely on the opinions of others. "He thinks, he does, he says what 'one' thinks, does, says," Allers described, "then moves in an atmosphere of mere empty talk...and is absorbed by the crowd, its victim."

Allers employed a phenomenological approach – describing the lived experience of sufferers – to explain the ways that other types of neurosis have, at their core, this inability to find meaning and engagement. "To exist," he insisted, "is to be endowed with value." The meaningless world, Allers equated with an empty existence. For example, in the life of a depressed person: "All goodness has disappeared from the world, all differentiation vanishes likewise...to this world that has become empty and stripped of all goodness corresponds an equally empty and valueless existence." There is no "I-thou" relationship to those around the depressed individual, no "being in the world." All relationships become "I-it," objectified, anathema to Allers' vision of mental health. Similarly, Allers described the "pothocentric" (a term of his own invention) world as that of the obsessive, centered around one dominating desire, the fulfillment of which is the indispensable condition, as the individual sees it, for his existence. For the drug addict, passionate gambler,

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<sup>114</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychology*, pp. 30, 49.

obsessed lover, or workaholic, nothing can matter until the one main wish is fulfilled. Everything else loses all meaning, and without their one thing, the “world is empty and a place of torment.”<sup>115</sup>

In these descriptions of psychic despair, Allers implied that it is the obligation of both psychiatry and religion to restore some sense of meaning to individuals who have lost the ability to endow significance in their own lives. The hallmark of both mental illness and spiritual depravity, in Allers’ definitions, is this sense of weightlessness, a vision of the world that lacks meaning. Sharing this concern with American jeremiads from Henry Adams to Upton Sinclair and T.S. Eliot, Allers posited this recovery of meaning at the core of both religious and psychological endeavors. Ultimately, Allers’ engagement with Freud was part of his larger efforts to build and sustain a philosophically based theory of psychology amidst the increasingly medicalized models of psychiatry that emerged during the 1940s and 1950s. While he may have disagreed with Freud’s belief system, Allers stood with other psychoanalysts and humanistic psychologists who insisted that psychiatric investigations should begin with an exploration of an individual’s experiences and emotions, rather than in chemistry or behavior patterns.

The views of these widely read writers and therapists – Sheen, Luce, and Allers – had a significant impact on the way that Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, learned about the relationship between religion and psychology. On the most obvious level, of course, readers of Sheen and Luce, and patients of Allers, learned of the tension between Freud and the Catholic Church. There is a certain irony, however, in the other lessons that Americans may have taken from their message. While their intent was to defend traditional Catholic values and beliefs from the encroachment of popular psychology, these thinkers ended up representing

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<sup>115</sup> Allers, *Existentialism and Psychiatry*, pp. 74, 78.

Catholicism and therapy as deeply intertwined. In construing religion and psychoanalysis as competing philosophies, these authors imagined that they shared the same inherent cultural roles. Demanding that psychoanalysis be re-constructed to help patients pursue goals that had formerly been in the realm of religion – meaning-making, developing empathy, understanding guilt – these writers did more to blur the boundary between faith and science than they may have intended. In any case, they shifted the focus of both theology and psychology towards ordering the inner lives of individuals. Arguing that this connection between internal and external conditions made mental health a social imperative, Fulton Sheen argued that “there can be no world peace unless there is soul peace...World wars are only projections of the conflicts waged inside the soul of modern men.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Sheen, p. 1.

## CHAPTER 4

### EMOTIONAL SALVATION: PSYCHOANALYSIS' CATHOLIC CAHAMPOINS

While Freud's Catholic critics demonstrated ambivalence towards his theories – both passionate interest in, and engagement with, psychoanalysis, coupled with a desire to reject or alter it – other Catholics sidestepped this struggle. In the views of Leo Bartemeier, Karl Stern and Gregory Zilboorg, psychoanalysis existed as a science rather than a competing worldview, one that could uphold the Catholic ideals of free will, empathy, and salvation, that seemed to be challenged by modern life. Leo Bartemeier, as the first Catholic President of the International Psychoanalytic Association, emerged as a leader among the group of Catholic psychologists who challenged the vociferous criticism that Sheen and Luce raised in the popular press. In Bartemeier's view, psychoanalysis was an objective science that could potentially be used – like chemistry or biology – to pursue humanistic goals. Karl Stern and Gregory Zilboorg, both immigrants and converts to Catholicism, shared the characteristic converts' zeal for their adopted nation and faith. They also shared a passionate conviction that psychoanalysis, beyond being a “neutral” science, actually provided a degree of scientific “evidence” to support their theology. In liberating modern human beings from emotional shackles, psychoanalysis, in Stern and Zilboorg's views, would allow individuals to become fully functioning participants in both democracy and Catholicism.<sup>117</sup>

While Sheen, Luce, and Allers were among the most popular Catholic spokesman in America during the late forties, theirs were by no means the only voices to weigh in on public discussions of psychoanalysis. Following Sheen's sermon

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<sup>117</sup> On converts' zeal, see Patrick Allitt, *Catholic Converts: British and American Intellectuals turn to Rome* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997).



critiquing Freud in 1947, a number of prominent Catholic psychologists aired their opposing views to the New York City press. Outraged by Sheen's comments, Dr. Frank Curran resigned his position as the chief psychiatrist at St. Vincent's Hospital on May 27<sup>th</sup> when the Archdiocese of New York failed to publicly address and refute Sheen's views. In July, four Catholic psychiatrists attending the national conference of the group of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry in Minneapolis publicly denounced Sheen's reported charge that "the practice of psychiatry is irreligious."<sup>118</sup>

One of the only women to challenge Sheen, Sister Annette Walters, was still concerned by the rift between psychoanalysis and religion when she wrote an essay for *Catholic World* in 1955. She railed against the "narrow, parochial, and in the last analysis, un-Catholic prejudices" that prevented many Catholics "from learning what is true and valuable in modern psychology." As a trained psychologist and professor of psychology at St. Catherine University, as well as a nun, Walters was in a strong position to comment. While she criticized aspects of psychoanalysis in her published work, she did much to forge a degree of harmony between religion and psychology. Opening her text book, *Persons and Personality*, with the goal of presenting the "data of scientific psychology in such a way that the person rather than isolated mental functions is at the center of interest," Walters shared Allers' respect for the unity of the individual. In her second goal, "To relate scientific psychology wherever feasible to relevant theological and philosophical considerations," Walters mirrored the aspirations of the Catholic thinkers to whom we now turn.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Gilbert, p. 170; Guissepe, pp. 16-17.

<sup>119</sup> Gilbert, 172; Guissepe, p. 75.

***Leo Bartemeier:***

Dr. Leo Bartemeier emerged as a particular leader in the efforts of Catholic psychiatrists to clarify the disagreements over psychoanalysis. On June 17, 1947, Bartemeier's response to Sheen appeared in the New York publication, *PM*:

It is most unfortunate that one who enjoys Msgr. Sheen's prestige would allow himself to give voice to such grievous errors. Tolerance and charity are fundamental tenets of both Catholicism and psychoanalysis. There is no contradiction between Catholicism and psychoanalysis, which is aimed at the understanding of people in trouble in order to bring about more wholesome personal, family and community relations.<sup>120</sup>

Where Sheen saw two world-views based upon incompatible premises – materialism and determinism vs. free will and reason – Bartemeier viewed psychoanalysis and Catholicism as two completely different types of disciplines – one a medical approach, the other a faith – with common goals. While Sheen's opinions proliferated throughout American conduits of mass culture – radio, television and best-sellers, Bartemeier's ideas influenced the professional tiers of academic psychology and medicine. Bartemeier became one of the first practicing Catholics to assume leadership roles in the American psychoanalytic movement. He did so by carefully negotiating the boundaries between his faith and his profession. Bartemeier did not conflate Catholicism and psychoanalysis, but he did strive to pursue the values and beliefs that he held as a Catholic in his work as an analyst.

Born in 1895 and raised in a small, predominantly German Catholic, farming community in Iowa, Bartemeier grew up in a devoutly religious family and attended parochial schools. At the Catholic University of America in Washington DC he

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<sup>120</sup> Guissepe, p. 17.

worked with Thomas Verner Moore, a Benedictine monk who pioneered interactions between psychiatry and religion in American Catholic universities. After completing medical school at Georgetown, Bartemeier was accepted at Phipps Psychiatric clinic in Baltimore where he studied psychiatry and neurology with Adolf Meyer. Upon graduation, he set up his medical practice in Detroit, but became “unhappy about our meager knowledge of the causes and treatment of mental disorders.” To address these concerns, he trained at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis with Franz Alexander and, by 1938, became the first Catholic training analyst.<sup>121</sup>

Psychoanalysis became a central component of Bartemeier’s professional identity as he assumed professorships at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Medical Schools and helped to found the Detroit Psychoanalytic Institute. Catholicism provided another aspect of his identity and professional interactions. In the brief spiritual autobiography that Bartemeier constructed when he was seventy-seven, he emphasized that his “spiritual feelings were threaded through my thinking and all I had to say.” He recollected that one of his oldest psychiatric colleagues always greeted him as “Padre” and jokingly described Bartemeier as the “only married Jesuit in the Order.”

Bartemeier tended to pursue activities that reflected the humanistic values – charity, tolerance, “wholesome” relationships – that he associated with both psychoanalysis and Catholicism. He actively participated in international outreach activities, from working with the World Health Organization to establish a child guidance clinic in Ireland to consulting with psychiatrists in Cuba. Bartemeier was also eager to ameliorate the devastating psychological effects of World War II. In 1945, he participated in a commission of experts sent to Europe by the Army to study

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<sup>121</sup> Francis J. Braceland and Peter A. Martin, “In Memoriam: Leo H. Bartemeier, M.D., 1895-1982,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 140, no. 5, May 1983, p. 630.

the reasons for the large number of psychiatric casualties turning up in various area commands. Working with notable psychiatrists Karl Menninger, Lawrence Kubie, John Romano and John Whitehorn, Bartemeier reported on the committee's findings. After the war, Bartemeier participated in training seminars for Army Chaplains of various faiths, and helped to conduct workshops for Clergy at St. John's University in Minnesota.<sup>122</sup>

In 1951, Bartemeier spoke to the American Psychiatric Association on the topic of "Psychiatry and International Understanding," emphasizing the ways that the psychiatric profession fostered healthy interactions among nations. He pointed to the operation of the discipline itself as an important model for international collaboration, lauding the lines of communication between psychiatrists working in different countries, particularly those forged by meetings like the first International Committee on Mental Hygiene that met in 1930. The interdisciplinary or multi-professional method that Bartemeier saw as originating in American venues, such as child guidance clinics where psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers might collaborate, was another important model that he believed would further international sharing. Bartemeier also saw the psychiatric method as an important source of information on the emotional and psychological factors that influence relationships among nations.<sup>123</sup>

In 1952, Bartemeier was inaugurated as President of the American Psychiatric Association. His presidential address captured the relationship that he saw between his interest in psychoanalysis and his humanistic values. Much of the address centered on Bartemeier's desire to bring psychotherapy generally, and psychoanalysis

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<sup>122</sup>Leo Bartemeier, "An Autobiography of my Religion," in Paul F. Johnson, Ed., *Healer of the Mind* (Abingdon Press, New York, 1972), pp. 73-74.

<sup>123</sup>Leo Bartemeier, "Psychiatry and International Understanding," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 107: 641, 1951.

specifically, into more prominent positions within the psychiatric profession. World War II, in Bartemeier's view was a pivotal moment in the development of the relationship between psychoanalysts and other psychiatrists. "The psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst met together under fire and they worked together; they met the clinical problems together and had to solve them in common; they exchanged their views." Bartemeier also attributed the growing relationship between psychoanalysis and psychiatry to the transposition of the major psychoanalytic centers from Europe to America during the thirties and forties. While Bartemeier saw psychoanalysis as developing in isolation from psychiatry in Europe, he noted intense collaboration in America. Bartemeier further noted that the vitality of both disciplines was energized by the very experience of war – the demand for screening and mental health services for the armed forces and the opportunity to learn about human nature through military work.<sup>124</sup>

While Bartemeier saw post-war America as a nurturing environment for psychoanalysis, he also saw psychotherapy as a positive influence on the larger psychiatric discipline. In Bartemeier's view, psychotherapy, specifically psychoanalysis, brought the individual back to the center of a psychiatric approach that threatened to become impersonal. "What greater scourge could befall psychiatry than becoming impersonal – which means losing sight of the person of the patient?" Bartemeier wondered. "The great technological advances that have taken place in medicine within the last three quarter century," he warned, "raise this threat – the loss of the personal relationship with the patient." He emphasized that "the whole tradition of medicine is based on healing and caring for the sick as persons, through constant personal contact between the doctor and the patient." Bartemeier saw this humanistic

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<sup>124</sup> Leo Bartemeier, "Presidential Address," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 109: 1-7, 1952. p. 3.

aspect of psychoanalysis as an extension of older therapeutic practices that were often linked with religion – “spiritual dietetics,” or “moral treatment.”<sup>125</sup>

Bartemeier’s concern with the future of psychoanalysis was in fostering personalized therapeutic interactions while maintaining a serious, disciplined approach to healing techniques. Employing a parental metaphor that presented modern psychotherapy as a child born of psychoanalysis and psychiatry, he argued that it was the responsibility of those parents to “prevent it from becoming an amateurish, free-for-all psychological indulgence.” He saw this as primarily the obligation of psychiatrists who should refrain from adopting superficial aspects of psychoanalysis without complete training. Psychoanalysts, Bartemeier urged, should share their knowledge and train new analysts. In these remarks, Bartemeier echoed concerns voiced by both psychoanalysts and psychiatrists of the era who were concerned with protecting the integrity of their disciplines from the negative influences of popularization and faddishness. Bartemeier also presented a vision in which psychoanalysis should not be open to re-interpretation and adaptation – by medicine or religion.

Despite Bartemeier’s enthusiasm for psychoanalysis, Sheen’s criticism troubled him. In 1949, Ernest Jones, the president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, asked Bartemeier to succeed him as the new leader. He told Jones that, although he believed that Sheen and other critics spoke in ignorance of psychoanalysis, Bartemeier still needed to reach some sense of resolution in that controversy before he could accept the presidency. He held a private meeting with Pope Pius XII to discuss his concerns:

When I met him and acquainted him with my problem I told him that my religion was far more important to me than the possible high honor to which I

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<sup>125</sup> Leo Bartemeier, “Presidential Address,” pp. 1, 2

might be elected, so I had to ask him his views on psychoanalysis. Quite immediately he said that Freud had discovered more about human nature than anyone preceding him for thousands of years.

Bartemeier was impressed by the Pope's knowledge and "felt like he was speaking to an analytic colleague." When he asked the Pope how he felt about psychoanalytic therapy, the Pope responded that "this depended upon the character of the physician." Their meeting concluded with the Pope assuring Bartemeier that, should he be elected to the presidency, he should "accept it and do honor to the church."<sup>126</sup>

The shifting tenor of later remarks by Pope Pius, regarding psychoanalysis in the 1950's, reflects the influx of the discipline into the institutional structures of the Church, as well as into the medical field through doctors like Bartemeier. In his Discourse to Doctors of Neurology, 1952, the Pope rejected "the pansexualist theory of a certain psychoanalytic school." The next year, however, he suggested that psychoanalytic techniques could be used empirically – in almost a reductionist fashion – to explore the psychological operations of religion. "Psychology of the depths," he asserted in his Discourse at the Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology in 1953, "must not be condemned if it discovers the contents of the religious psychism and strives to analyze it and reduce it to a scientific system, even if this research is new and the terminology can not be found in the past." By 1958, he advised the International Congress of Applied Psychology that "spiritual values be taken into consideration by both the psychologist and his patients."<sup>127</sup>

With the Pope's blessing, Bartemeier was able to move into the presidency of the International Psychoanalytic Association and continue pursuing his career and his

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<sup>126</sup> "In Memoriam: Leo H. Bartemeier, M.D. 1895-1982," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 140:5, May 1983, p. 630.

<sup>127</sup> Benjamin Wolman, *Psychoanalysis and Catholicism* (New York, Gardner Press: 1976), pp. vii-viii.

spiritual aims. He did so, however, by understanding the difference between the two. In “An Autobiography of my Religion,” (1972) Bartemeier expressed how difficult it was for him to overcome the professional reticence of an analyst unaccustomed to revealing his personal beliefs in order to declare his “religious faith and how it had carried him through life.” He clarified, however, that religion was not therapy. “This autobiography of my religion,” he stated, “is intended to signify that its purpose is the worship of God.” Bartemeier asserted that “the function of religion is neither the generating or relieving of anxiety nor the care of our temporal ills.” For him, “its function is worship.”<sup>128</sup>

Bartemeier had earlier emphasized that Catholicism and analysis need not exist in philosophical opposition in “Psychoanalysis and Religion,” an essay he wrote in 1965 for the Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. Bartemeier tried to pry Freud’s personal atheism away from his psychological theories. Bartemeier pointed out that while teaching that religion is an illusion, Freud was careful to point out that an illusion is not the same thing as an error; that the determining factor in defining an illusion is not its truth or fallacy, but the motivation behind its belief – wish fulfillment. Bartemeier argued that Freud’s essays on religion were not meant to disprove the existence of God, but were intended to analyze the psychological influence of religious belief. Like Allers, he suggested that many of Freud’s theories harmonized easily with psychoanalysis because of the subtle influence of Catholics in his childhood – his nanny and teachers. As a result of his immersion in a philosophical environment that was influenced by Catholicism, Freud’s theories actually ended up corroborating church teachings, in Bartemeier’s view. He pointed to the parallel between Thomas Aquinas’ assertion that “all hatred arises from love”

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<sup>128</sup> Francis Braceland and Peter Martin, “In Memoriam” and Leo Bartemeier, “An Autobiography of My Religion,” in P. Johnson, *Healer of the Mind: A Psychiatrist’s Search for Faith* (Nashville, Abington Press: 1972).



and Freud's doctrine of ambivalence. Like Allers, he also saw Aquinas' vision of the unity of the human being – in opposition to the Platonic or Cartesian separation between body and soul – affirmed by the connections that Freud drew between conscious and unconscious experiences.<sup>129</sup>

Bartemeier further believed that psychoanalysis could be used as a tool to demonstrate that many Catholic teachings found expression in the psychological processes of individuals. In his spiritual autobiography, for example, Bartemeier quoted extensively from his friend Lawrence Kubie's response to Sheen's criticism of psychoanalysis. He was particularly interested in Kubie's assertion that psychoanalytic techniques correlated with Catholic beliefs in the human struggle with original sin:

Like the church, psychoanalysis recognizes the fact that both child and man struggle against powerful primitive drives. It was St. Augustine who said that the so-called innocence of childhood is due more to the weakness of their limbs than to the purity of their hearts. Where the Church speaks of 'original sin' the psychoanalyst speaks of primitive drives. Thus the first recognition that the primitive components of human nature are a major source of difficulty in our ethical and emotional development is to be attributed not to Freudian psychoanalysis but to the Church itself. To this fundamental truth, however, analysis added a discovery of vast importance, namely that these primitive drives operate not only consciously, but also deep below the level of consciousness and that in man's battle with his own primitive impulses both of these levels must be dealt with. Psychoanalysis thus is, in fact, an important complement to the efforts of religion in that it provides a tool by which man

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<sup>129</sup> Leo Bartemeier, "Psychoanalysis and Religion," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic*, 29:5, Sept. 1965, pp. 237-244.

can deal more effectively with the more deeply buried and unconscious drives which hamper his struggle toward the good life.<sup>130</sup>

Ultimately, Bartemeier employed psychoanalytic insights to reflect upon his own spiritual development. Pointing to Freud's assertion that people can only tolerate the world for two-thirds of their lives, forced to turn away from it nightly in sleep to recuperate, Bartemeier explained that his spiritual development seemed to follow a similar pattern of shifting engagement and detachment. Chronicling moments of intense religious awe, such as his audiences with the Pope, alongside incidents of distraction and doubt, Bartemeier believed that his spiritual life paralleled the struggle between conscious and unconscious mental processes that accounts for daydreams, memory lapses and mistakes, in Freud's theories. Along with Freud, Bartemeier argued that "we are less in control of ourselves than we think we are."<sup>131</sup>

From this simple recognition of the limitations upon his ego, to his interest in exploring the ways that psychoanalysis might provide "scientific" proof for Catholic doctrine, Bartemeier began to engage issues and questions that doctors like Karl Stern and Gregory Zilboorg would explore in much greater depth. In his dedication to viewing psychoanalysis and Catholicism as distinct and complementary systems, Bartemeier maintained a bridge between both disciplines at a time when that connection seemed tenuous. Stern and Zilboorg, with the energy that often accompanies intellectual or spiritual conversions, celebrated that link and sought to strengthen it.

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<sup>130</sup> New York Herald Tribune (April 20, 1947), quoted in Johnson, p. 67.

<sup>131</sup> Johnson, pp. 76, 62-67.

***Karl Stern:***

In his assessment of Freud's analysis of religious conversion, Sandor Gilman notes that, for nineteenth century Jews, conversion seemed to offer a tantalizing escape from Jewishness, an imagined passport into the broader European culture. Freud himself reflected upon the seductive appeal of conversion, embodied in the Catholic nursemaid who appeared in his recollections as a woman seeking to seduce him sexually and to lure him into the Catholic faith. This alluring vision of assimilation, of course, was more attuned to fantasy than to the realities of fin-de-siecle Europe, where Jewishness was defined as a racial category; "Jew" contrasted to "Aryan" more often than to "Christian." Gilman points out that, within this worldview, conversion appeared as pathology, an attempt to rail against the natural order.<sup>132</sup>

Karl Stern, converting from Judaism to Catholicism in 1943, was painfully aware that such ideas had circulated and feared that his actions could be perceived as neurotic, at best, and as acts of betrayal, at worst. While Stern studied the Gospels, admired the Catholics who fought against the Nazis and slowly, tentatively allowed himself to "try on" belief in Jesus Christ as the true messiah, he also agonized over the disloyal implications of his possible conversion:

Here I was, one of my people in the middle of the most dreadful persecution we had ever suffered and, like a faint shadow, the possibility arose of leaving this community of destiny. This seemed madness. It seemed madness the more since it was my natural urge to stay with those with whom I was born to suffer. Was the swastika not a modification of the crucifix under whose sign

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<sup>132</sup> Sandor Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: medicine and Identity at the Fin De Seicle* (Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1993), pp. 69-89.

we had been tortured before? This is what it seemed to be if one took history on the natural plane. Perhaps all this was a “build-up,” carefully framed by my subconscious to camouflage an escape from Jewry.<sup>133</sup>

Stern determined, however, that by embracing Catholicism, he would validate the aspects of Judaism that he most valued, while abandoning the nationalism that he believed was a dangerous and inherent part of Zionism and Jewish belief. Stern embraced a career in psychoanalysis and a life in Catholicism that he believed would serve his moral and ethical ideals. The fundamental values that formed the core of Stern’s religious and intellectual belief system were reverence for all individuals, respect for their unique souls and psyches, and loathing for any political or social structure that seemed to dehumanize or routinize human lives. In Stern’s view, good battled evil within each individual with stakes as high as the wars on global planes. The road to social good wound through the hearts and souls of the individuals who comprised the community. The experiences, suffering, and stories of each mattered.

In the autobiography of his conversion, Stern gracefully articulated the arduous and far reaching intellectual and emotional processes through which he determined that Catholicism offered the best way for him to live in the world. Stern explained why Catholicism provided him with a belief system that not only structured his inner life, but also gave him with an approach to the world that he believed would foster peaceful and democratic communities. The autobiography also narrated Stern’s flight from the Nazis and his immigration to Montreal -- a move that, in his view, made him an “American,” although a relatively displaced and uncomfortable one who felt relegated to the fringes of his new community by the forces of anti-Semitism and provincialism that he encountered among his Canadian neighbors. From his academic

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<sup>133</sup> Karl Stern, *Pillar of Fire* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).

post in the psychiatry department of McGill University, Stern published both his widely read autobiography and, two years later, his treatise on religion and psychology, *The Third Revolution* (1953).

Like his decision to convert, Stern also faced choices that appeared contradictory in his professional life. As a trained psychoanalyst and neurologist, Stern operated in a medical community whose leaders tended to stand in opposition to religion and metaphysics, heralding science as the best hope for salvation in this world. Indeed, Stern himself harbored serious fears that psychoanalysis and other social sciences could eventually play a very destructive role if they became instruments of “scientism.” Mocking the allure of “rationalist pragmatism,” Stern urged:

Let us investigate objectively the roots of racial and of class hatred, with all the tools of present-day science, with methods of economic investigation, of sociology, of behaviorism, of psychoanalysis...let us be as scientific and systematic in the establishment of inter-human relationships as we have been in technology. Let us have some sort of international board of social psychologists to study and control the relationships of groups of people. In order to be able to do this successfully we may find that we have to abolish metaphysical concepts of human existence because it is possible that those are the concepts contributing to tension. If we find this necessary let us be courageous and do it, let us sterilize the air and remove all germs of faith so that we may live more rationally and more peacefully in an aseptic scientific atmosphere. Human affairs have long enough been governed by Belief, let them now be governed by Science and Usefulness.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 292.

Such a belief system, in Stern's view, could lead only to a "hell on earth," nihilism, a life without God. The greatest dangers in such a worldview were the same threats that Stern saw in Fascism and Communism: dehumanization, the inability to value the individual and recognize the uniqueness of each person.

In *The Third Revolution*, Stern argued that psychoanalysis came dangerously close to becoming a part of the Comptean revolution, the fulfillment of Auguste Comte's vision of a world in which revelation and metaphysics would be entirely supplanted by science. Stern pointed to earlier intellectual revolutions that he blamed for stripping human beings of spiritual significance. In racist cosmologies, exemplified by the Nazis, Stern saw human beings as genetically and biologically determined. In Marxist theory, Stern found individuals controlled by economic, material forces. By the mid-twentieth century, Stern believed that the greatest challenge to free will and individual freedom lay in unbridled faith in the sciences, particularly social sciences, to order human affairs.

While Freud might have gladly placed psychoanalysis at the vanguard of a movement that displaced religion with science, Stern was convinced that psychoanalysis could actually provide an important key to the revitalization of religious influence instead. Concerned that religious leaders were responding to the challenges of psychoanalysis with defensiveness and pessimism, Stern urged religious believers to see instead the possibility that psychoanalysis could reintroduce free will and personalism into social sciences that had been growing mechanistic and deterministic.<sup>135</sup> He saw, for example, evidence that the salvation of the world began with the inner experience of an individual in both the Gospels and Freud. "The gospel

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<sup>135</sup> Karl Stern, *The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), p. 13.

teaches that if I am concerned with making the world a less cruel place to live in I do not need that Board of Social Scientists,” Stern asserted, “there is inside myself evil enough to work on, enough to last me a lifetime.” In this belief he found proof that “psychoanalysis has reaffirmed that which the Church has taught all the time”:

Potentially there is inside every man a den of murderers and thieves. Why these potentialities become manifest in your neighbor and remain latent in you, this is not for you to judge. The view which separates the potential evil in you from the manifest evil of the man about whom you are going to read in tomorrow’s headlines is thinner and more mysterious than you think – this is the catharsis which emanates from the great Russian writers of the nineteenth century and from psychoanalysis, this is the true purification of which modern man is so desperately in need. But it is only an elaboration of an old truth. Every act contains an element by which I am endangered. For centuries every Catholic child, man and woman has prayed: “I have Crucified my loving savior Jesus Christ.”<sup>136</sup>

Just as he believed Freud had affirmed the existence of the universal struggle between good and evil within each person, Stern argued that Freud asserted, from the materialist platform of a nineteenth century scientist, the “primary position of love in Man’s world.” Stern saw “an embryology of love” in psychoanalysis that “reaffirms and enriches the Christian idea of man.” Stern explained that psychoanalysis depicts an infant as more of a passive recipient of love than an active lover, and as one who cannot bear hostility. As human beings mature they are more able to “love actively” and to withstand rejection. Stern points out that Christianity teaches that the “climax

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<sup>136</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 297.

of human perfection is to love infinitely and to be able to be hated infinitely” – the very definition of human maturity in Freud’s model. Psychoanalysis and Christianity, in Stern’s view, teach that *amore* can be transformed into *caritas* – selfish lust into selfless caring. Stern predicted that “later generations will see that in the rediscovery of the crude archaic traces of love in Man’s physical nature there occurs a decisive turning away from that Manichaeism of which Western Man has been so dangerously ill.”<sup>137</sup> Stern saw psychoanalysis rescuing the human individual from bureaucratic anonymity or mechanistic quantification. “Psychoanalysis with its detailed care for the history of each individual and its emphasis on psychic injuries, reaffirms, more than any other discipline in psychiatry or psychology,” Stern argued, “the dignity of the human person.”

Fleeing the holocaust, listening to stories from relatives who spoke of murdered babies and ruthless torture in death camps, Stern was particularly attuned to the unique ways that suffering afflicted individuals. While recognizing the potential usefulness of psychological science to provide insight into the “intrinsic mechanisms” of suffering, to “analyze, disentangle, classify and name” the things that hurt people, Stern was convinced that there remained in each case “a secret element which cannot be reproduced nor re-experienced” as “it belongs entirely to that one soul.” In the life of Jesus Christ, Stern believed that he had found a “universality and infinite multiplicity” of suffering that “anticipates and contains your and my life in a singular way.” He saw in his medical work “countless human mirrors” in which patients suffered something “which is incommunicable, something which in this form does not seem to occur in anyone else’s life.” At this point, Stern posited the metaphysical

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<sup>137</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 279.



union with Jesus Christ. “With that one aspect of his life he seems to be alone,” Stern said of his patients, “But he is not.”<sup>138</sup>

It was within the individual, as well as in the single person of Jesus Christ, that Stern situated his hopes for the future of civilization:

There is only one way: Jesus Christ. If we are concerned with the suffering of those innocent ones, we have first to look at him. If we are concerned with the Evil which has brought it about, we have first to look at ourselves. Everything else is deception. If I want to renew the world I have to begin right in the depth of my own soul. This is the only true and permanent revolution which I am to achieve. Class warfare leads to another set of oppressors and oppressed; national revenge leads to another set of persecutors and persecuted; and the Board of Social Scientists for the Prevention of Inter-group Hostilities is the most dangerous mirage of them all because it makes us believe even more that the decisive battle is fought far away from us, outside ourselves; it turns good and evil into two pale abstracts; it seeks to de-humanize the issue.<sup>139</sup>

Stern saw social justice as a goal that had to be achieved through changes in the hearts of individuals rather than through structural, political change. The most dangerous ideas of all seemed, for Stern, to be those that enabled individuals to think in terms of abstractions, to view humans as objects of study or cogs in a social structure rather than as unique souls.

One of the most important ways that Stern believed psychoanalysis could actually promote Catholic ideals in the larger disciplines of the social sciences was by

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<sup>138</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 295.

<sup>139</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 294.

focusing on the role of empathy in human relationships. In Stern's view, empathy, the capacity of genuine participation in the thoughts or feelings of another, was a central tenet of Christianity. He saw the psychoanalytic mechanism of identification, the ego's desire to be like another, and its ultimate internalization of the characteristics of the object of identification, as a useful way to explain empathic processes from the Bible. When Christ declares that whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done unto me, Stern argues that he actually points to himself as one object of identification and the least of our brethren as another. Believers are asked to emulate and internalize the qualities of Jesus, to identify with him. Stern points to numerous scriptural passages in which readers are urged to see relationships in terms of overlapping meaning – for example, to see Jesus Christ within hungry or suffering individuals – just as Freud saw layers of meaning when transference colored interactions so that an exchange with a physician could be an actual expression of emotional attachments to the father.<sup>140</sup>

Stern pointed to the empathic nature of Thomas Aquinas' reliance of knowledge by connaturality, or revelation, as a way of knowing that could augment the Christian's reliance on the empirical. In psychoanalysis, he found a similar use of intuition and insight in the evolution of Freud's theories. Stern used transference as an example of a phenomenon that was discovered, not through empirical research, but through the intuition, or empathic recognition of the therapist. He also used Freud's exploration of the uncanny to show how the analyst used poetry (that of E.T.A. Hoffman) rather than scientific experiments as evidence. Stern argued that much of Freud's work was supported by "poetic" methods – the ways that hypothesis and assumptions harmonized with other aspects of his theory, and the ways that they "worked" to explain psychological operations. Stern would elaborate on intuitive and

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<sup>140</sup> Stern, *The Third Revolution*, p. 239.

poetic ways of knowing in his later work *Flight from Women*. Controversial in the way that it essentialized “feminine” ways of knowing such as intuition, this book nonetheless called for a renewed interest in metaphysics and a softening of the social sciences’ reliance on strictly rational, empirical heuristics.<sup>141</sup>

The most significant opportunity that Stern saw for psychoanalysis to foster more authentic, empathic relationships among individuals was in the therapy session. Like Allers and Bartemeier, Stern feared a therapeutic approach that simply objectified the patient or treated him or her like a list of symptoms rather than a unified individual. In psychoanalysis, Stern saw a social science characterized by the “absence of an object.” Instead, Stern portrayed analysis as a meeting of two subjects in a relationship that was alive with change and possibility. The meeting of two individuals in a therapeutic relationship transcended, in Stern’s vision, Freud’s atheistic worldview and philosophic belief. Stern argued that, as a therapeutic method, “psychoanalysis is philosophically neutral,” and “it helps to free the patient from his neurotic shackles and enables him to re-discover his basic set of beliefs, whatever they may be.” Stern lauded the mechanisms of transference and counter-transference as the strength of therapeutic relationships: “The unique encounter, the meeting of two human beings, with all the re-enactment of a forgotten drama, the re-presentation of that which is ‘familiar’ (of the family) – this is the true principle of healing.” Stern argued that this encounter could be rendered philosophically neutral by the therapist who desires to do so. The anti-Christian bias that others identified in psychoanalysis was, for Stern, a result of therapists introducing their own biases into the therapeutic process.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Karl Stern, *The Flight from Women*, (London: Paragon House, 1964).

<sup>142</sup> Karl Stern, *The Third Revolution*, p. 146.

Of Freud's avowed atheism, Stern determined that it was a "tragic historical accident," to be expected from "a genius who is a product of the nineteenth century." But, like mathematics or geology, the method could be used to learn.<sup>143</sup> Stern argued that Freud was merely a product of his time and circumstances. In Freud's rejection of religion, Stern saw the reductionism that had shaped scientific debate since the Copernican revolution: the earth is just a rock, human beings are just animals, religion is just neurosis. In Freud's "debunking" of religion, Stern saw more engagement with myth, philosophy and speculation than with empirical evidence or rational logic.

Psychoanalysis introduced terms that had traditionally been the vocabulary of theologians and philosophers, such as "Love and Hatred, Fear and Hope, Guilt and Freedom," into the discussions of medicine and psychiatry. Stern noted that Freud's writings on faith did not fit into either of the two big schools of anti-Christian philosophy – dialectical materialism and scientific positivism. "They are odd," Stern said of Freud's religious theories, "they emphasize too much an element of tragedy...they have created nothing in the popular mind like the wave following the post-Darwinian evolutionist literature; there is nothing in these writings to catch on." Freud's critique of religion, however, was not without value to believers, in Stern's view. Had Freud simply told patients that "What you call religion is actually your neurosis," rather than "religion is neurosis," he may well have been correct. Stern argued that from this perspective, Freud could serve to "stir us out of our complacency" and recognize the times when "religion" is "unconsciously used as a channel of aggressiveness."<sup>144</sup>

While others, Freud included, saw psychoanalysis as an explanatory tool that would disenchant the world, revealing the fallacies of superstition and dispensing with

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<sup>143</sup>Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 278.

<sup>144</sup> Stern, *The Third Revolution*, pp. 11, 123, 174.

the need for metaphysics, Stern was convinced that psychoanalysis was actually a method that could be used to uphold the major tenets of Catholicism. He saw, as well, an opportunity to posit the values that he associated with Catholicism – Love, empathy, reverence for the individual, at the heart of the social sciences. For Stern, psychoanalysis and Catholicism provided two avenues towards the same ends.

***Gregory Zilboorg:***

Like Karl Stern, Gregory Zilboorg was born into a Jewish family, studied medicine and psychiatry in Europe, immigrated to America, converted to Catholicism, and became a vigorous proponent of the rapprochement between religion and psychoanalysis. He felt, however, less compunction about abandoning the faith of his youth. Fleeing Russia shortly after the Bolsheviks took control, Zilboorg considered his Judaism to be less a part of his political identity. By the time he converted to Catholicism in 1953, he had already undergone a number of intellectual and spiritual conversions, making these transformations a regular part of his life. Having taken part in the first (Social Democratic Party) Revolution before leaving Russia, Zilboorg abandoned his early Marxism and quickly embraced the liberalism of his adopted country. This was followed in short order by a conversion to the English language. Knowing only “yes,” “no,” and “Bolshevik” upon his arrival, within three months, Zilboorg was able to give his first lecture in English.<sup>145</sup>

In the audience, Zilboorg met a Professor of Philosophy from Swarthmore and member of the Society of Friends who invited him to join the Chautauqua Circuit. Before long, Zilboorg had become a Quaker, but maintained a sense of religious exploration. Having married an Episcopalian, Zilboorg became fascinated by her

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<sup>145</sup> Gregory Zilboorg, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, edited with an introduction by Margaret Stone Zilboorg (Great Britain: John Dickens, 1967) pp. vii-xi.

religion, engaging in lengthy and frequent theological discussions. During the 1930's and 1940's Zilboorg's intellectual interest extended to Catholicism and he began to write frequently on the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis, paying particular attention to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and other components of Catholic theology. He attracted the attention of prominent theologians, including the Dominican Father Noel Mailloux, himself a psychologist. Zilboorg became intellectually consumed by his engagement with these Catholic thinkers, intrigued, according to his wife, by "their humanism, their devotion to man as an individual."<sup>146</sup>

In 1953, Zilboorg officially converted to the Catholic Church. While he continued to write extensively about the relationship between Catholicism and psychoanalysis, he said and wrote very little, even to his close friends, about his personal conversion. He worried that his writing on religion and psychoanalysis would be deemed "merely the prejudiced thinking of a convert to the Church, despite the fact that he had been thinking and writing about the subject for more than fifteen years." His arguments on these topics did remain consistent, markedly unchanged by his personal conversion. Despite these precautions, Zilboorg did come to be known, in the words of one historian, as a "catholic culture hero," one of the numerous Catholics who emerged as relative celebrities in the years after World War II. Like fellow Catholics Thomas Merton and Fulton Sheen, Zilboorg achieved popular success and represented Catholicism as a way of life that carried lessons and inspiration for Catholics and non-Catholics alike.<sup>147</sup>

Zilboorg achieved this exalted status, not only through his writing and speaking engagements, but also through his association with other celebrities. From his private practice in New York City, Zilboorg treated Earnest Hemingway, Marshall

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<sup>146</sup> Zilboorg, p. ix.

<sup>147</sup> Zilboorg, p. x; Massa.

Field, George Gershwin, Lillian Hellman and Moss Hart, among others. His fees, when others were charging four dollars an hour, reached \$75 per session. Moss Hart, who was treated by both Zilboorg and Lawrence Kubie, penned *Lady in the Dark* (1943), a musical about psychoanalysis. Starring Ginger Rogers, the movie centered on the analysis of a young woman, repressed by her copywriting career, whose true energy emerged in colorful song and dance sequences set in her therapist's office. While rumored to be patterned after either Kubie or Zilboorg, the analyst in *Lady in the Dark* matched Zilboorg's public image – coolly detached and vaguely intimidating.<sup>148</sup>

This persona – high powered and self-assured analyst to the elite – emerged in Zilboorg's well-documented encounter with fellow Catholic culture hero, Thomas Merton. Zilboorg's interactions with Merton demonstrate the extent to which psychoanalysis was infiltrating the realms of monastic life in America, as well as in the popular mind. Merton, whose spiritual conversion and emotional struggles had captivated American readers in *Seven Storey Mountain*, continued to fight anxiety and depression. Interested in psychoanalysis, Merton suggested that his monastery in Kentucky employ personality tests to assess new initiates, and offer therapy to the contemplative monks. When his supervisors noticed that Merton seemed to be exhibiting increasing emotional fragility, they arranged for him to meet with Zilboorg at a workshop on psychiatry and religion, held at St. John's University in 1956.<sup>149</sup>

After a private conference with Zilboorg, Merton recorded in his journal that “it turns out ...that I am in somewhat bad shape, and that I *am* neurotic.” He wrote down a number of Zilboorg's direct observations including: “you are a gadfly to your

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<sup>148</sup> Leonard Lehrman, Review of *The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya: Revelations, Discoveries and Mysteries* in *The Opera Journal*, 30:2 June 1997, pp. 36-39; Axel Madsen, “The Marshall Fields,” in *Northshore Magazine*, August 2002.

<sup>149</sup> Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mills, 1984).

superiors,” and “you like to be famous, you want to be a big shot, you keep pushing your way out – into publicity – megalomania and narcissism are your big trends.” Zilboorg condemned Merton’s plan to become a hermit as “pathological.” Merton seemed to take this assessment in stride and indeed to appreciate the analytic insights. He wrote the next day that “As for my own personal problems – clearly Zilboorg is the first one who has really shown conclusively that he knows exactly what is cooking.” Merton looked forward to working further with Zilboorg.<sup>150</sup>

Merton’s second meeting with Zilboorg, in the presence of his abbot, Dom James, was much more traumatic. Unprepared for his demons to be exposed and dissected in the presence of his supervisor, Merton “flew into a fury and cried tears of rage,” when Zilboorg began to address his problems. In the face of Merton’s emotional breakdown, Zilboorg kept repeating in a level voice what he had said before about the hermitage idea being pathological: “You want a hermitage in Times Square with a large sign over it saying ‘HERMIT.’” Facing his Russian analyst with the walrus mustache, Merton sat with tears streaming down his face and muttered “Stalin! Stalin!” Merton’s biographer, Michael Mott, notes that the episode haunted Merton for years and that Merton worried that the incident had permanently tainted the ways that his supervisors perceived him.<sup>151</sup>

This incident is telling in that it shows how very seriously the clergy involved took psychoanalysis. Although Merton abandoned his plans to undergo analysis with Zilboorg in New York, he did meet with the doctor when he was invited – by Merton’s superiors -- to the monastery in Louisville. A Zilboorg recommended psychologist began treating novices, and Dom James decided that the monastery needed a psychiatrist in residence. Merton himself continued to express admiration for the

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<sup>150</sup> Mott, p. 295, 296.

<sup>151</sup> Mott, p. 297.



insight that he received from Zilboorg, despite their traumatic encounter. Clearly, the Catholics at Gethsemane were enthralled by psychoanalysis, and eager to make it part of their institutional life.

They found, in this endeavor, a great ally in Zilboorg. Throughout the forties and fifties, he wrote articles that encouraged Catholics to recognize the potential of psychoanalysis to affirm aspects of their faith. Publishing in a wide range of venues – from *Atlantic Monthly* and *America*, to *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and *La Vie Spirituelle* – Zilboorg engaged a popular and scholarly audience in the United States and abroad. Threaded through these essays were themes and arguments similar to those put forth by Karl Stern. Zilboorg, too, worried about the dehumanizing tendencies of “scientism” and construed psychoanalysis to be the sort of science that, in the wrong hands, could become part of that problem, but, in his own interpretation, became an antidote. Zilboorg was also eager to demonstrate that psychoanalysis maintained individual free will and fostered Christian love in human relationships. Of the psychiatrists that we have discussed, however, Zilboorg was the most orthodox Freudian. He railed against the ways that Freud’s ideas were often re-interpreted and transformed as they gained popularity in America. Zilboorg did not strive to augment or re-shape psychoanalysis to conform to Catholicism. He was, instead, focused on demonstrating that the strictest interpretations of Freud were actually the most attuned to Catholic concerns.

Like Bartemeier’s, Zilboorg’s reconciliation of psychoanalysis and religion was founded upon the conviction that psychoanalysis was an empirical science rather than a philosophy or world-view. Zilboorg believed that he could use information gathered through psychoanalytic methods to construct a philosophy, just as he could draw from zoology or geography, but that the methods themselves were empirical. Zilboorg distinguished between “science,” which could be used to investigate religious

issues, and “scientism” – the faith that science is the only way to truth or knowledge, and that science provides the only hope for salvation – which became a religion unto itself. Zilboorg warned that when science is made into a religion, becoming an object of worship and a system of ultimate truth, it “invariably becomes a bad religion, teaching men to worship the achievement of the human mind.” By the same token, Zilboorg perceived this as “bad science” as well, that hardens into “dogma.” In the case of psychoanalysis, Zilboorg was dismayed that Christian thought has “failed to accept” a “scientific finding” that lends support to its own “ethico-religious teaching” and brings a “biological, observational, scientific proof of the revelatory intuition which has inspired religious teachers since the time of St. Augustine.”<sup>152</sup>

By representing psychoanalysis as an empirical science, rather than a belief system, Zilboorg was able to construe it as a liberating tool that would remove physical and biological impediments to the freedom of individual egos and, ultimately, souls. Zilboorg operated under a framework in which the chemical and material realities of the brain, as an organ, could be biologically determined without diminishing the free will and the human soul. He explained:

If one looks upon the psychic apparatus as an organ and not as a psychoanalytic substitute for the soul, the misconceived controversy about psychoanalysis and free will will easily recede. Man’s free will cannot come to expression without free reason; reason cannot be free unless the organic or biological system within which the human personality is destined to function does function without the impediments which we, for want of any other term call neurosis, or illness. Freud’s psychological determinism never went and never could go beyond the limited frame, the closed system, of the psychic

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<sup>152</sup> Gregory Zilboorg, “Psyche, Soul, and Religion,” originally published in *Mind, Medicine, and Man*. (USA: Harcourt, Brace, and World Inc., 1943) Reprinted in Zilboorg, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 38. p. 107.

apparatus. The deficiencies or malfunctions of the latter vitiate the free exercise of the will as much as do deficiencies and pathological changes of the brain.<sup>153</sup>

Zilboorg perceived psychoanalysis as a method that would ensure the freedom from restraint that Isaiah Berlin classified as “negative freedom.” While Berlin himself would classify Freud as a proponent of “positive freedom” whose ideas threatened to promote nationalism and friction rather than peaceful cohabitation, Zilboorg contended that Freud was actually simply releasing individuals from physical constraints. The striving for the opportunity of free choice was inherent in psychoanalysis, he argued. “If psychoanalysis does not explicitly accept the postulate of free will, it does not deny it,” Zilboorg asserted, “if anything, it supports it by its striving to liberate man’s reason and will from the frailties which his biological, and therefore psychological, imperfections impose on him in his daily life.”<sup>154</sup>

Like Stern, Bartemeier, and even Allers, Zilboorg focused on the types of relationships between individuals that psychoanalysis seemed to foster. Even more explicitly than his colleagues, Zilboorg was convinced that the development of love was the driving force behind Freud’s theories, and the key to the liberation that they provided. “Freud, unconcerned with ethics or religion, arrived at the conclusion that the life of man is based on creative love,” Zilboorg argued, “on constant domestication of his aggression, on constant harmonization of the animal within him with his humanness, on the constant living of his life on the basis of love and reason instead of hate and aggression.” Developing these ideas through his empirical, clinical observations, “Freud, unbeknown to himself, thus established an empirical basis of life

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<sup>153</sup> Zilboorg, 1943, reprinted, 1967, p. 52.

<sup>154</sup> For analysis of Berlin and Freud, see Jose Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Zilboorg, 1943, reprinted, 1967, p. 53.

which is in total conformity with the Christian ideal,” according to Zilboorg. Citing Freud’s assertion that “Love alone acts as the civilizing factor in the sense that it brings a change from egoism to altruism,” Zilboorg would continually return to this evolution towards altruism as the process that would liberate individuals and bring their psychological experiences into harmony with Catholic spiritual teachings.<sup>155</sup>

At several points throughout his career, Zilboorg discussed, at length, the connections that he saw operating among sexual maturity, libido development, and altruistic love. He explained that Freud’s conception of a normal person was one who had reached genital adulthood. Zilboorg described this as “that state of psychological development in which the various infantile, partial, hedonistic (sexual, in the Freudian sense) drives become synthesized in such a way that the sensual-egocentric (infantile-sexual) drives become adult-altruistic and the infantile, exclusive love for the object outside oneself (father and/or mother, and or sister or brother) becomes adult love for other people.” The object-libidinous relationship, in Zilboorg’s view, was an important step towards adult altruism, because it was a move away from egocentrism. The more that an individual was able to focus libido energy towards multiple objects beyond one’s self or those that one views in a possessive, territorial capacity; the more that the individual felt comfortable channeling desire towards “higher,” selfless goals, the more altruistic they became. The centering of desire upon an object beyond one’s self was the first move away from egocentrism.<sup>156</sup>

Zilboorg argued that “the ideal of human psychological health was...the ever-increasing libidinization of the higher human activities such as parental, filial and friendly love in general, at the expense of the purely sensual-erotic and aggressive-

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<sup>155</sup> Zilboorg 1943, reprinted 1967, p. 38; Gregory Zilboorg, “Love in Freudian Psychoanalysis,” *La Vie Spirituelle*, 1953, reprinted, 1967, p. 125; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London, the International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1921) p. 38.

<sup>156</sup> Gregory Zilboorg, speech before a conference of representatives of French monastic orders, *Ascense Chretienne et L’homme contemporain*, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1950, reprinted, 1967, p. 69.

destructive drives.” He insisted that this transformation is the goal of psychoanalytic therapy, and that “the chief measure of this transformation is the degree to which the libido is directed toward objects and integrated in the totality of human functioning among and with other fellow human beings.” Zilboorg insisted that these transformations wrought the “ultimate liberation of man from the slavery in which his own instinctual impulses, his unconscious, non-domesticated drives always hold him unless he achieves the highest degree of object-libidinous relationship to people and the world as a whole.”<sup>157</sup>

Zilboorg further employed Freud’s model of maturity (the move from egocentrism to altruism) to construct an ethical critique of contemporary social conditions. He decried the emphasis on utilitarianism, the potential for hatred, and the prejudice that he saw operating in modern America as well as abroad:

The earlier infantile impulses are all characterized not only by an egocentric, narcissistic sensuality, but by a sort of utilitarian, mercenary love bestowed on others only if and when one gets something for it. This utilitarian love is also an unsteady love which becomes hate rather easily at the first experience of frustration; it is a mixed, ambivalent love in which anxiety and anger, aggressiveness, fear and cowering passivity are all combined in unequal proportions and in a state of considerable lability.”<sup>158</sup>

Zilboorg criticized the utilitarian approach to another in American’s relationships with ideas as well as with each other. In 1951, reflecting on World War II, Zilboorg pointed out that Freud defined civilization as an entity that restricts the outward

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<sup>157</sup> Zilboorg, 1953, reprinted, 1967, p. 128.

<sup>158</sup> Zilboorg, 1950, reprinted, 1967, p. 69.

expression of aggressive, destructive drives and internalizes them. Zilboorg construes this to mean that, “civilized man, by virtue of his being civilized, has learned not to kill and learned inwardly to prefer his own death to murdering his neighbor.” In these ideals, Zilboorg reflects the influence of Catholics’ espoused commitment to “turning the other cheek,” and perhaps also the Quakers’ dedication to pacifism, absorbed from his earlier days in the Society of Friends.<sup>159</sup>

The way that modern military psychopathology would utilize Freud to avoid “combat fatigue” so that “man should learn not to be afraid to kill and to die,” was deeply troubling to Zilboorg. Arguing that this goal would serve neither Freud nor humanity very well, he asserted that “this is how the ‘practical’ among us seek to draw ‘material’ from whatever science they may find, in order to fulfill a goal which is just the opposite of the goals of reason, morality, civilization and science.” The “practical man,” in Zilboorg’s view, is always “on the lookout for something to use”:

The atomic bomb can be fissioned? Let us make an atomic bomb. The superego is powerful? Let us ‘make it’ and use it for a Communist revolution, or for an intensification of the acquisitive instinct...Being practical seldom involves Eros in its integrated functioning, for loving thy neighbor as thyself is very ‘impractical.’ Being practical most frequently involves the destructive drives and a host of their minor aides in our intellectual life, from infantile sexuality (partial erotic drives) to narcissistic impulses.<sup>160</sup>

Zilboorg also found explanation for Love’s inverse, hate, in Freud’s findings. He argued that only the “incomplete synthesis of Eros in the adult makes prejudice (hate) possible.” This made possible the contingent projections of the “pseudo-

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<sup>159</sup> Gregory Zilboorg, “Sigmund Freud,” *Sigmund Freud: His Exploration of the Mind of Man*, 1951, reprinted, 1967, p. 88-89.

<sup>160</sup> Zilboorg, 1951, reprinted, p. 89.

socialized, pseudo-sublimated erotic drives,” such as drives for “power (in its form of extreme sadism), drives for worldly possessions (in its form of extreme lecherous avarice) and orgiastic restlessness which becomes sensual depravity.” Zilboorg believed that all three of these drives “came to their tragic and catastrophic expression in the Nazi philosophy and practice, which was acquisitive, sadistic and sensual to the point of reducing male and female humans to machines for the mass production of future German guardians of Nazi-exclusivism.”<sup>161</sup>

The psychological drives behind this Nazi debacle were far from unique, in Zilboorg’s view. “That the ceaseless drives of man are usually projected into others by the aberrations of prejudice is more or less a normal phenomenon.” In his research, Zilboorg observed that the prejudiced – whether anti-Semite, racist, anti-catholic or anti-communist – all said the same things about the subject of their hate: that they were driven by an unnatural drive for sexuality, riches, and power – the very drives that Zilboorg found fueling the prejudiced themselves.<sup>162</sup>

Like Allers and Stern, Zilboorg saw the relationship between patient and analyst as a pivotal opportunity for the cultivation of human connectedness and the expression of Christian “love,” or *caritas*:

Freud’s demand of tolerance and of an object-libidinous attitude towards the patient is the most important. By object-libidinous attitude, Freud means an attitude devoid of severe condemnatory judgment of the patient, as well as of that purely personal prejudice or bias which is commonly called love, or rather being in love – which is to Freud but an overestimation of one’s object of sexual interest. In other words, Freud demands a rather high quality of love for the patient; it is something akin to paternal or maternal protectiveness,

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<sup>161</sup> Zilboorg, 1950, reprinted, 1967, p. 74.

<sup>162</sup> Zilboorg, 1950, reprinted, 1967, p. 73

tolerance and reserve, which is combined with forgiveness and sympathy. It is a form of charity, the nature and role of which in psychoanalysis still remains obscured by contentious argumentativeness and suspiciousness.<sup>163</sup>

This type of relationship was very different from that between priest and penitent. The detached analyst provided a different type of love, and the therapy session functioned differently from confession. While the latter was infused with ritual and symbolic value, the former was an act of service. Like Allers, Bartemeier, and Stern, Zilboorg saw the interaction between therapist and patient as a crucial opening through which Catholic values of empathy and love could enter into medical practice.

### ***Conclusions: Exorcizing Modern Demons from the Inside Out***

Ironically, in 1935, when Zilboorg's interest in Catholicism was just beginning to develop, he confronted some of the very dilemmas that Blatty chose to throw at Damien Karras in *The Exorcist*. In one of his first works on the history of psychiatry, Zilboorg analyzed the phenomena of witchcraft and demon possession in the Renaissance. He argued that the women persecuted for witchcraft were actually suffering from acute mental illness – not hysteria, as had been previously proposed, but compulsion neuroses and schizophrenic psychoses. He pointed out that a typical sufferer from these maladies tends to exhibit some conscious or unconscious expression of sacrilege, “a series of impulses directed against God, Christ and the Church,” even in the modern era.

Zilboorg's central argument was that this encounter with mental illness in “witches” was a catalyst in the development of modern psychology. The hero in Zilboorg's tale, Johann Weyer, played a role similar to that of Freud in Zilboorg's

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<sup>163</sup> Zilboorg, 1953, reprinted, 1967, p. 124.



interpretations of modern psychiatry. Weyer was convinced that the Devil was devoid of power, unable to transform “blood into water, or dust into lice.” Thus he perceived priests and monks who resorted to exorcisms or accusations of witchcraft as “abusers of the name of the Lord,” and “ecclesiastic magicians.” Weyer believed that his job as a doctor was to remove the physical impediments to spiritual liberation. He purged “black bile” from patients thought to be possessed, and aimed to build their physical stamina. This would enable the church to then save their spirit. Zilboorg lauded the way that Weyer not only conceived of neurosis as a medical rather than spiritual condition, but also approached the sufferers as individuals with specific case histories. Like the descriptive nature of psychoanalysis, the approach advocated by Weyer represented, for Zilboorg, a humanizing influence.<sup>164</sup>

The other Catholic analysts that we have examined, both critics and celebrants of psychoanalysis, were also quick to recognize Freud’s role in centering the individual and his or her life history within the practice of psychiatry. Allers, Stern, and Bartemeier joined Zilboorg in heralding the humanizing effects of Freudian analysis. Most Catholic commentators were also relatively willing to perceive psychoanalysis as a medical practice that could remove physical and biological impediments to sound thinking; thereby liberating the suffering from their neuroses and leaving them receptive to the ministrations of the Church. Even Fulton Sheen, Freud’s most vociferous Catholic critic, came to believe that “psychoanalysis does a world of good when it skims off the superficial justification for actions and discovers the real reason beneath,” particularly in the cases of acute mental illness.<sup>165</sup>

The doctors that we have discussed were eager to find spaces where their beliefs about the soul and Freud’s theories about the mind intersected, and to bring

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<sup>164</sup> Gregory Zilboorg, *The Medical Man and the Witch During the Renaissance* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1935) pp. 63, 141, 174.

<sup>165</sup> Fulton Sheen, *Guide to Contentment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967) p. 103.

spiritual values into both the theory and practice of psychotherapy. Each posited the interaction between analyst and patient as a crucial point at which the Catholic therapist could act with the love and service that each understood to be Christian qualities. These doctors lauded the introduction of philosophical questions about love, guilt and ultimate meaning that Freud brought to psychiatric discourse. Like Freud, they longed to strip away neurosis and bring unconscious drives into the full light of consciousness, removing any impediments to free-will and rational decision making, so central to the Catholic humanist's fundamental choice of good over evil, Jesus Christ over Satan. They also sought ways to integrate psychoanalysis into Thomas Aquinas' scholasticism – defining it as an empirical method with which to probe the mysteries of the universe. Under this definition, Bartemeier, Stern, and Zilboorg were quick to find scientific affirmation for original sin, the metaphysical union with Christ, or spiritual revelation. Much of their attention, however, revolved around the ways that psychoanalysis could help them understand how human beings were connected to each other in meaningful communities through empathy, love, and shared commitments to democratic thinking. In these concerns, Catholic doctors echoed preoccupations of Freud himself and his worries about the behavior of groups – their vulnerability to charismatic leadership, their inclination to panic in the face of freedom.

In these areas of overlap, we can perhaps find reasons why writers like Blatty and Zilboorg were so interested in how the themes of psychoanalysis and supernatural possession were related. At mid-century, Catholics, like Damien Karras, were terrified of a world in which people operated unconsciously, influenced by drives beyond their comprehension – whether economic, social, emotional, or demonic. Our Catholic doctors dreaded Communism, Fascism, and conformity – any system that seemed to treat humans as mechanized cogs. Such systems, to them, appeared, in

Stern's words, as "hell on earth," the ultimate work of the devil. They feared a weightless world, where individuals were unable to affix meaning to the components of their lives and allowed the world to be defined for them. But these doctors also shuddered in the face of obsessive ideologies in which one drive might mean too much – overwhelming the processes of conscious intentional analysis and decision making.

Freud's entire body of work was devoted to liberating individuals from the neurosis that he saw clouding these very processes of conscious intention and rational decision making. We do not have records to indicate that Freud treated any patients whose symptoms mirrored Blatty's fictional victim, Reagan, in their likeness to the conditions that religious believers might diagnose as demonic possession. He did, however critique a historical case of alleged possession and exorcism in the seventeenth century. In 1922, Freud examined the clerical records and diary fragments of Christoph Haizmann, a seventeenth century painter who believed himself to be possessed by the devil, then cured by a Catholic exorcism in 1677. While he did not propose the diagnoses of hysteria, obsessive compulsion, and split personality that Damien Karras originally suggested in *The Exorcist*, Freud did construe Haizmann's evident loss of free will and conscious intention to be the result of neurosis.

Haizmann's illness – or consort with the devil, depending upon interpretation – began shortly after his father's death in 1668. Depressed and unable to produce, Haizmann believed himself to be tempted by the devil. Freud pointed out that "in return for an immortal soul, the Devil has many things to offer which are highly prized by men: wealth, security from danger, power over mankind and the forces of nature, even magical arts, and, above all else, enjoyment – the enjoyment of beautiful women." Haizmann, however, sought only the ability to paint and some relief from his melancholy. "I sign a bond with this Satan," he declared, "to be his bounden son and in the ninth year to belong to him body and soul." After nine years of reasonably

successful painting, including a number of portraits of the devil, Haizmann presented himself to the priests at Pottenbrunn for an exorcism. Suffering from seizures and hallucinations, Haizmann knew that his nine years were up and hoped that the priests might save his immortal soul. Through an intervention by the Virgin Mary, Haizmann came to believe that he had been saved, the devil effectively exorcised from his soul.<sup>166</sup>

Freud was, of course, convinced that Satan was no more a reality than God was and began his analysis of Haizmann's case by defining the devil as a product of "bad and reprehensible wishes, derivatives of instinctual impulses that have been repudiated and repressed." Freud further supposed that, in the Devil, Haizmann had found a father-substitute. Freud reconstructed Haizmann's train of thought as: "his father's death had made him lose his spirits and his capacity for work; if he could only obtain a father-substitute he might hope to regain what he had lost."<sup>167</sup>

Pointing to the most puzzling aspect of this scenario – that a beloved father would be replaced by a hideous demon – Freud used the example as an opportunity to explain that the Devil emanates from the very same emotional impulses that create God as an external projection of internal needs:

We know that God is a father-substitute... We also know, from the secret life of the individual which analysis uncovers, that his relation to this father was perhaps ambivalent from the outset, or, at any rate, soon became so. That is to say, it contained two sets of emotional impulses that were opposed to each other: it contained not only impulses of an affectionate and submissive nature, but also hostile and defiant ones. It is our view that the same ambivalence governs the relations of mankind to its Deity. The unresolved conflict

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<sup>166</sup> Sigmund Freud, "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis," 1923, SE p. 79.

<sup>167</sup> Freud, 1923, p. 82.

between, on the one hand, a longing for the father and, on the other, a fear of him and a son's defiance of him, has furnished us with an explanation of important characteristics of religion and decisive vicissitudes in it.<sup>168</sup>

The Devil, in this view, comes to embody the darker aspects of this longing for the father. Freud explained that ambivalence soon gave way to the projection of two distinct characters – God and Satan. “If the benevolent and righteous God is a substitute for his father,” Freud suggested, “it is not to be wondered at that his hostile attitude to his father, too which is one of hating and fearing him and of making complaints against him, should have come to expression in the creation of Satan.” Freud concluded that “the father...is the individual prototype of both God and the Devil.”

To understand the phenomenon of demon possession, Freud urged readers to “merely eliminate the projection of these mental entities into the external world which the middle ages carried out; instead we regard them as having arisen in the patient's internal life, where they have their abode.” Just as neurosis took on the form of organic illness in the modern era of scientific medicine, medieval neurosis assumed a demonological character, its external expression conforming to internalized expectations. In Freud's view, the devil was a production of internal dysfunction, projected onto the external world.<sup>169</sup>

This interpretation would have resonated with Sheen's sense that World Wars are simply “projections” of the “conflicts waged within the soul of modern man,” or Stern's assertion that “if I want to renew the world I have to begin right in the depth of my own soul.” Although his theology, atheism, differed drastically from that of

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<sup>168</sup> Freud, 1923, p. 83.

<sup>169</sup> Freud, 1923, p. 72

Catholics who believed in the metaphysical realities of God and Satan, Freud's methods were quite similar. By seeking the origins of social ills – from war and genocide to complacency and conformity – in the thought processes of individuals, both Freud and the Catholic doctors who studied him prescribed a political role for psychoanalysis. These doctors hoped to help individuals organize their internal communities of thoughts in ways that bolstered their outward commitment to reason, free-will, conscious decision making, compassion, and engagement with others. In their view, psychoanalysis -- like the pastoral aspects of Catholicism itself -- was not a form of escapism in the face of crisis, but a vital political imperative – a way to liberate individuals from the inside out.<sup>170</sup>

While Freud's view of metaphysical reality was quite distinct from that of any Catholic, the *way* that he hoped to temper the potency of the devil – by unearthing repression within so that individuals would not project visions of evil without – mirrored the strategies of many of the Catholics who embraced his theories after World War II. They too sought to counter the potential evil around them by re-ordering the inner lives of believers. In discussions of Freud -- the self-proclaimed atheist -- Catholic doctors perceived a deeper engagement with the humanistic values and reverence for the individual that they associated with Catholicism than in most other psychological discourses-- both popular and scholarly. Catholic psychoanalysts eagerly embraced this opportunity to articulate powerful roles for both Catholicism and analysis in the personal lives of Americans desperately searching for meaning, and in the joining of these individuals into meaningful, democratic communities.

The next two chapters will continue to analyze American authors who looked to both psychoanalysis and religion in the hopes of combating perceived demons by organizing the inner lives of individuals in ways that tempered repression and

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<sup>170</sup> Stern, *Pillar of Fire*, p. 294. Sheen, *Peace of Soul*, p. 1.

encouraged engagement in democratic communities. They take, however, a different tack. We now turn to two thematic case studies that further complicate understandings of the relationships among psychology, religion, and democratic values in the World War II and post-war era. Again, we look to religious outsiders. In the next cases, however, the sense of marginalization that shapes identity is compounded by extreme experiences that serve as further markers of difference. In Chapter 5, we explore the ways that efforts to understand the psychological impact of the Holocaust shaped the political and cultural identity of both Jews and “victims” of all stripes. This section illustrates the way that international politics shaped the types of psychological and spiritual discourses that proved to be culturally compelling. In Chapter 6, we adopt the perspective of the intended subjects of psychoanalysis and salvation oriented religion – the mentally and spiritually ill; those who seek psychiatric help in the hopes of curing neurosis, delusion, malaise, and disorientation. We will see that those who sought intensive psychoanalytic treatment were often spiritual seekers as well, twining their quests for mental health with religious awakenings. These outsiders vividly illustrate the ways that religion, psychology, and politics overlapped and shaped inner experience. They further reveal that efforts to reform that inner life were driven by desires to reshape social and communal life as well.

## CHAPTER 5

### “LIGHT MUST ENDURE BURNING”: THE HOLOCAUST IN VIKTOR FRANKL’S INTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

In 1946, Rabbi Joshua Liebman exhorted Americans to follow “the great commandment of Judaism” and “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Speaking on his popular radio program, *Message of Israel*, he urged listeners to support legislation that would admit displaced persons to the United States. These persons, many of whom had endured internment in Hitler’s concentration camps as well as losing their homes and families, provided a “great moral opportunity now.” Liebman explained that they bore psychological as well as physical needs, the most urgent of which was the opportunity to contribute to society and live successful lives. Displaced persons, according to Liebman, “want only a small share of American freedom and American opportunity.” He explained to his audience that they would be enriching themselves as well as helping war victims because the displaced persons would become “but the last great link in the chain of immigration which has made America great, creative, adventurous – the unfinished story of mankind’s pioneering achievement.” Liebman assured listeners that the immigrants would, “of course,” be investigated to be “believers in the democratic way of life,” so as to be contributory, successful citizens.”<sup>171</sup>

Liebman had put his own advice into action, adopting his thirteen-year-old daughter Liela, after she had been liberated from Auschwitz and faced the loss of her original family. Liebman watched with enthusiasm as his child embraced the life of an American high school student. Although he and his wife were both interested in psychoanalytic theory, to their public they expressed little concern that Liela would

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<sup>171</sup> “America’s Great Moral Opportunity Now,” *Message of Israel*, May 18, 1947.



suffer from repressed memories or trauma. She was, to them, the embodiment of the therapeutic value of American life and freedom itself.<sup>172</sup>

Describing the psychological conditions of Europe's displaced persons shortly after the death camps had been liberated, Liebman spoke before words like "genocide" or "holocaust" had acquired the profound significance that they would soon assume in American life. Camp veterans were held in no greater esteem than any victim of wartime violence. Indeed, Peter Novick suggests that, during the immediate post-war years, those who emerged from Auschwitz or Buchenwald while others perished were often viewed with suspicion. Why did they live while others died? Were they simply the most cunning, devious, or strongly self-preserving? While Liebman sounds as if he might have been aiming to counter these accusatory questions, he does little to suggest that Holocaust victims bore unique lessons about the human soul or psyche. Unlike the Nazi perpetrators who, in Liebman's vision, appeared as products of a historically repressive culture, prone to cataclysmic violence, Jews were psychologically oriented towards liberty. They were eager to embrace American life. They belonged with the children of light, the people of good. "Concentration camp survivor," however, was not synonymous with "Jew" in Liebman's day.<sup>173</sup>

Liebman died before he was able to watch his daughter, as a member of the larger group of Holocaust victims, come to represent a unique phenomenon in American culture. By the 1980's, Novick points out, those who had passed through the Nazi death camps came to be known as "Survivors" with a capital "S". He explains that they also came to be represented, primarily, as Jewish. As the largest single group of victims and an overt target of the Nazis, Jews became the representative victims of Hitler's genocide.

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<sup>172</sup> "Meet an American Rabbi and his Family," *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1948.

<sup>173</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

They also emerged, in the context of a growing fascination among Americans with “victims” of all sorts, as bearers of important lessons about remorse and societal guilt. How did this happen?

The rise of Nazism and the Holocaust posed a baffling challenge to those Americans who chose to ponder it; a conundrum that only served to generate more quandaries: how do we explain the depth of evil and the magnitude of suffering? How does someone “survive” torture, the constant threat of death, the loss of loved ones, the dehumanization -- all at once? What does it mean to be persecuted and threatened with extermination? If there is a God, how can He sanction such suffering? How does either faith or sanity survive in the face of genocide? Never before, in the so-called “modern” experience had so many people, who had been so firmly entrenched in the academic and professional structures that usually aimed to address such philosophical inquiries, been so profoundly immersed in atrocity.

In this project, we have begun already to assess the ways that close observers attempted to interpret Nazism and the Holocaust in psychoanalytic and spiritual terms. Joshua Liebman and Erich Fromm each focused upon the notion that modern, post-enlightenment, individuals found themselves pressed by the responsibilities and strength of will that the range of free choices in modern societies begat. They attributed efforts to escape this freedom to the ease with which Nazism gained power. Liebman, in particular, pointed, too, to a spiritual crisis and proposed greater attention to the beliefs and structures of Judaism as a way to bolster democratic societies. Catholic converts, like Zilboorg and Stern, argued vociferously that repression on individual and social levels had produced neurotic individuals and materialistic, oppressive societies. The entire group of Catholics who studied psychoanalysis was eager to interpret World War II and the rise of Nazism as not only a psychological failure, but a spiritual crisis as well. None of our previous authors, however,

addressed these concerns from the standpoint of the victims. None focused upon the ways that religion and psychoanalysis might help the survivors, nor did they attend to the insights that these sufferers might bring to larger spiritual and psychological theories. This chapter augments this lack.

Much historical work has been done to explore the process by which Americans sought to confront the Holocaust. It has generally shown that Americans were ill prepared to accept or incorporate the horrors of genocide into their world-views. Robert Abzug emphasized disbelief throughout his brief but pointed account of American's early encounters with the Holocaust and the liberation of concentration camps, *Inside the Vicious Heart*. According to Abzug, even American soldiers were hard pressed to believe Europeans' accounts of genocide until they actually entered the liberated concentration camps and encountered the horror for themselves. Americans at home found it even more difficult to confront the realities of genocide. Abzug presents accounts of Americans who continually distanced themselves from the Holocaust – avoiding it, down-playing it, repressing it. He points to a Nebraska governor who purposefully subdued the horrific reports of camp liberators to avoid irritating his German-American voters. In Abzug's view, the entire notion of genocide in Germany made Americans acutely uncomfortable. In no way did most Americans adequately confront or internalize the realities of the Holocaust in the years immediately following World War II.<sup>174</sup>

Other scholars have argued that the fifties brought an extension to this era of repression and avoidance as far as the horrors of genocide were concerned. The *Diary of Anne Frank*, America's most widely read and beloved artifact of the Holocaust has been posited by some scholars at the heart of a sugarcoating process

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<sup>174</sup> Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

during this era. Lawrence Langer and Alvin Rosenfeld have insisted that there is little horror in the published book, movie, or stage production of Frank's diary. The authors propose that "They permit the imagination to cope with the Holocaust without forcing a confrontation with the grim details." Lawrence Graver argues in a similar vein that Frank's diary was marketed as a story of hope and the triumph of the human spirit, flecked with universal lessons about optimism and faith in the goodness of humanity. The Jewish identity of its heroine is downplayed just as much as the horrific aftermath to the stories of life in the annex. Hilene Flanzbaum employs these interpretations to further her own contentions that the Holocaust has been Americanized, appropriated by Americans for their own political and cultural purposes. Her view is sustained by the contributions of cultural historians who analyze the myriad books, movies, museums, and institutes that aim to define the significance of the Holocaust for Americans.<sup>175</sup>

Two scholars whose work pertains closely to my own interests in this study, Novick and Dominic LaCapra, emphasize the psychological implications of the Holocaust in America. Novick employs Maurice Halbwach's notion that memory is what relates the past to current concerns in order to discuss the construction of Holocaust victims in American culture. Halbwach's theory stands somewhat in opposition to the Freudian sense that "memories" and the way that they are maintained – repressed vs. acknowledged – shape the present. Freud sees memory as imposed; Halbwach construes it as constructed. Both views distinguish memory from history, which requires some sense of detachment and an understanding of the complexities

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<sup>175</sup> Hilene Flanzbaum, ed., *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press: 1999); Alan Minz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (University of Washington Press: 2001). Langer and Rosenfeld quoted in Flanzbaum, pp. 2-3. See also Alvin Rosenfeld, ed., *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century* (Indiana University Press: 1997); Lawrence Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 1977); Lawrence Graver, *An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

and specifics of a different time. Novick uses Halbwach's view to propose that the ways memories of the Holocaust have been represented in American life reveal the variety of contemporary issues and concerns that occupied Jews and other Americans as time progressed. It furthermore became a defining memory for Jews in a way that raises concerns for Novick. Nonetheless, Novick provides a sort of template, or timeline for the ways that the Holocaust came to sculpt not only Jewish identity, but the modern "consciousness" or collective memory of "mainstream" America.

Novick's understanding of when and why Americans came to "confront the Holocaust" in the sixties, seventies and eighties, takes into account two of the central concerns of my study – psychology and religion. By the sixties, psychoanalysis, along with other cultural tendencies, had led Americans to presume that they should plumb the depths of their psyches for past hurts and traumas. As Novick points out, "victimization" became a key to the social order, as groups and individuals began to bring past injustices into discussions of contemporary issues. Victims gained a newfound prominence and reverence in American culture. Novick notes that "typical 'confrontations' with the Holocaust for visitors to American Holocaust museums, and in burgeoning curricula, does not incline us toward thinking of ourselves as potential victimizers – rather the opposite. It is an article of faith in these encounters that one should 'identify with the victims,' thus acquiring the warm glow of virtue that such a vicarious identification brings."<sup>176</sup>

With his religious language of "faith" and "virtue" and his psychological allusion to processes of "identification," Novick highlights the potent role that the Holocaust has come to play in modern Americans' understanding of their spiritual and mental conditions. Novick's views relate most directly to this study in the way that he perceives Americans as imposing a sort of therapeutic function onto their discussions

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<sup>176</sup> Novick, p. 13.

of the Holocaust: “And it is accepted as a matter of faith, beyond discussion, that the mere act of walking through a Holocaust museum, or viewing a Holocaust movie, is going to be morally therapeutic, that multiplying such encounters will make one a better person.” While Novick alludes to this therapeutic function throughout his work, its centrality is somewhat displaced by his interests in politics and identity.<sup>177</sup>

Unlike Novick, LaCapra does not strive to present a chronological narrative of the cultural construction of the Holocaust. He chooses instead to closely analyze particular texts and incidents – from both Europe and America -- as part of larger investigations into the functions of trauma and memory. LaCapra is concerned with the implications of the various ways that memories are constructed and represented. The memory of trauma, in particular, can function either as a mere repetition or as a therapeutic process. A representation of the Holocaust, for example, that downplays the horror will not prompt a psychologically fruitful recognition of, and confrontation with, that awful past. Meanwhile, a construction of genocide that revels in the atrocity will also stifle emotional progress as it will result in “acting out,” repetition, a re-performance of past trauma without resolution. Useful engagements with the past lead to “working through” trauma, enabling victims and witnesses to confront memories of the past rather than repressing them, while developing ways to recognize how they relate to, and are being shaped by, the present. Within this view, the creator of memory assumes an active subject position within that memory, just as the recollection shapes the psychoanalytic progress of the individual or society that

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<sup>177</sup> While Novick is dubious about these assertions, I will take a softer attitude towards the value of common moral touchstones. While in full agreement that, when the Holocaust eclipses the study or recognition of all other tragic events or becomes the primary means of Jewish identity in America, it creates problems, I see value in the notion that schoolchildren all over America share a familiarity with Elie Wiesel’s narratives, or the stacks of shoes in the Holocaust museum. With a brief reference – “this is like the Holocaust” – Americans raised since the sixties will instantly recognize the horror of Cambodian killing fields or Rwandan genocide with a sense of immediacy and familiarity that may have otherwise eluded them in our “postmodern” culture that tends to overwhelm with conflicting value judgments, and provide few examples to define good or evil.

recognizes it. LaCapra inserts psychoanalytic categories into studies of the Holocaust and, by introducing the notion of “negative transcendence” into his discussion of the psychoanalytic function of Nazism and the Holocaust, alludes to spiritual concerns as well.<sup>178</sup>

Work like Novick’s and LaCapra’s invites further investigation into the ways that the Holocaust has interacted with American constructions of religion and psychology. While other talented historians have reconstructed many of the political and social developments that contributed to the representation of the Holocaust in American culture, most have neglected some of the psychological turns that shaped the construction of genocide victims and their import to the American community. Meanwhile, historians of both psychology and religion have tended to eschew focused study of the ways in which the Holocaust shaped either. Scholars, particularly of psychiatry, have been quick to address the ways that theories about the brain were eagerly applied to problems of both the perpetrators and the soldiers in American’s fight to stop Nazi atrocities. They often brushed aside, however, what psychoanalytic theories emerged regarding the victims of Nazism. They have, in particular, tended to push to the side the work of Viktor Frankl in this context.<sup>179</sup>

An analysis of Viktor Frankl and the reception of his work in America sheds some light into an otherwise dimly illuminated realm of historiography. After its English publication in 1959, Frankl’s discussion of the psychological implications of his concentration camp experiences, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, became the second

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<sup>178</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>179</sup> Work on the Holocaust and America includes that by Robert Abzug and Dominic La Capra. Despite the popularity of Frankl’s memoir, his name does not appear in the table of contents of most books about the Holocaust, or about religion and psychology after World War II. For a variety of reasons to be discussed below, Frankl has been widely overlooked, or intentionally dismissed as uninteresting, by most historians. Though not featured widely in Andrew Heinze’ work on *Jews and the Soul of American Culture*, Frankl does make periodic appearances. Heinze suggests that he merits further investigation.

most widely read holocaust memoir in American – surpassed only by the diary of Anne Frank. While the public mainly encountered Frankl’s ideas after this publication, scholars and psychologists had been engaging his ideas for years, and a “preview” of *Man’s Search for Meaning* appeared in *The Saturday Review* in 1958. Gordon Allport, of Harvard, eagerly facilitated Frankl’s English publications, lecture tours, and visiting professorships. Allport clearly recognized, in Frankl’s work, a response to some of the spiritual and psychological needs that he encountered among Americans.<sup>180</sup>

Many existing discussions about the relationship between religion and psychology in America were ill prepared to respond to Genocide. The hallmarks that connected scientists to theologians – a faith in reason, a teleology of progress, a belief in the interconnectedness of individuals – did not seem applicable to analysis of the gas chambers. The depths of the depravity in the perpetrators and the suffering of the victims seemed to blow apart the American traditions of “positive thinking.” How could any aspects of what Harold Bloom terms “The American Religion” – a transcendent blend of revivalism, Emerson, and James; based upon a Gnostic creed stressing knowledge of an inner self that leads to freedom and a presumption that God loves each individual uniquely and intimately – be maintained without turning genocide into a trite parable?<sup>181</sup>

Americans, historically, had not generated an approach to either religion or psychology that easily accommodated tragedy or suffering. The stricken victim

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<sup>180</sup> Frankl, “The Search for Meaning,” *Saturday Review* (Sept. 13, 1958). Frankl had been consistently publishing in prominent American professional journals such as *Pastoral Psychology*, *The American Journal of Psychotherapy*, and *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* throughout the 1950’s. Matthew Scully points out that interest in Frankl’s work has been exceeded, amongst other holocaust literature, by that shown to Anne Frank’s diary in “Victor Frankl at Ninety: An Interview,” *First Things* (April 1995) 39-43.

<sup>181</sup> Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).



appeared most typically as a “before” example in stories of psychological or spiritual transformation – the consumptive before discovering Christian Science, the hopeless alcoholic before temperance, the impoverished and oppressed before reading Dale Carnegie. Affliction and hardship had meaning mainly as conditions from which one aspired to escape through right thinking or prayer. While martyrdom, proffered especially to women, presented one socially viable mental orientation in the face of suffering, it did not fit easily into the “mind-cure” movement that historians usually posit near the roots of American efforts to combine religion and psychology.<sup>182</sup>

This makes Victor Frankl’s presence in the cultural milieu that included Peale, Rogers, Maslow, and other proponents of “positive thinking” and “self-actualization” significant. Along with several of his peers, Frankl was drawn to existentialism as an ingredient that, when added to the American mix of religion and psychology, would counter the bland optimism of the entire blend. As a psychoanalyst himself, whose pointed critiques of Freud and Adler came to be known as the “third school” of Viennese psychoanalysis, Frankl was also interested in maintaining aspects of his Jewish faith and culture. By bringing recollections from the Holocaust into his analysis of the way existentialism could be applied to discussions of psychology and religion, Frankl prompted readers to confront the tragic aspects of their own existence while sustaining some sense of faith and meaning. His efforts and their reception demonstrate the tensions that developed between an American popular culture of positive thinking and deeper emotional needs. In the controversy that he invoked among Jewish and political groups by working to universalize aspects of religion and memories of the Holocaust, Frankl also draws our attention to struggles over identity and boundaries in the years following World War II.

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<sup>182</sup> On the role of martyr as acceptable for women, particularly Catholics, see for example Robert Orsi, *Thank You Saint Jude* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). See Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers* for a widely respected narrative of the evolution and significance of mind cure in America.

***“The Concentration Camp was his Laboratory”***

Victor Frankl composed the now famous narrative of his Holocaust experiences, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, in a nine-day period of intense dictation conducted in 1945, shortly after his return to Vienna after the War. His story has since been criticized for its lack of specificity and Frankl’s continual referral only to Auschwitz rather than to the various camps in which he spent time. Thus, as a testimony or witness to the Holocaust, it has been perceived as problematic. Clearly, experiences in Nazi camps are extremely difficult to verify through typical historical methods, so Frankl’s memoirs have been understandably questioned in terms of their accuracy. When viewed, however, as recollection rather than history, Frankl’s story serves as an exquisite example of his own theories on the construction, not only of memory, but also of the human experience generally. Written so shortly after events of extreme trauma, Frankl’s report is marked by his clear intention to ascribe meaning and order to his chaotic experiences.

This very impulse forms the root of Frankl’s psychotherapeutic vision. After earning his medical degree from the University of Vienna and joining Freud’s, then Adler’s, psychoanalytic circles in pre-war Vienna, Frankl assembled the elements of what would become the “third school of Viennese psychotherapy” or “logotherapy and existential analysis.” In Frankl’s view, the “first school,” Freud’s theories, was founded on understanding the “will to pleasure,” through sexual and instinctual drives. Alfred Adler’s “second school” was predicated on a “will to Power” and the striving to overcome feelings of inferiority in human relations. Calling his ideas “height psychology,” in contrast to Freud’s “depth psychology,” Frankl argued that meaning is found beyond and not within oneself. His “third school” was based on the “will to

meaning.” By the 1930’s Frankl was asserting that the ultimate human drive was to discover meaning in existence – to find someone or something for which to live.<sup>183</sup>

These theories were to be viciously tested in 1942 when Frankl, his parents, brother, and new wife were deported to Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in Bohemia, where Victor was separated from his family members. While he did not discover that all were to perish until after the war, Frankl was painfully aware that his life’s work, a manuscript on logotherapy that he had sewn into the lining of his coat, was lost on a transport to Auschwitz. While we can never know Frankl’s immediate responses to these catastrophes, along with the daily privations and tortures that he suffered along with other prisoners, we can see the ways that he perceived his memories of them throughout his later work.<sup>184</sup>

Frankl’s friend and biographer, Haddon Klingberg, has pointed out that some who speak and write about the Holocaust assume that “the only credible stance among Holocaust survivors is atheism and nihilism.” While this is certainly one way to respond to events that seem to shatter modern precepts of reason, or push towards the limits of human depravity, Frankl insisted that there are others. While his own view was necessarily limited and limiting, reflecting only his own internal experience as a target, observer, and victim of genocidal forces, Frankl proposed that it offered certain unique insights, a privileged way of knowing, that could be of use to others in the post-holocaust world. “What is to give light,” he asserted in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, “must endure burning.”<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Haddon Klingberg, Jr., *When Life Calls Out to Us: The Love and Lifework of Viktor and Elly Frankl* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) p. 3.

<sup>184</sup> Frankl reconstructed his lost book from memory after the war. It became *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (New York: Knopf, 1955) originally published in German in 1946.

<sup>185</sup> Klingberg, p. 232; Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

Reviewing *Man's Search for Meaning*, one American journalist declared, "the Concentration Camp was his laboratory." Frankl himself was eager to employ metaphors of "laboratory" or "experiment" to characterize the concentration camp experience. In his view, such extreme experiences served to bring to light and test psychotherapeutic theories. In a memorial address to honor Viennese doctors who died during the Nazi occupation, given shortly after the War, Frankl asserted that "in a sense, living through the concentration camp was one big experiment – a crucial experiment." In the same speech he asked "what then is man?" Frankl determined that "we have learned to know him, as possibly no generation before us" because "We have learned to know him in camps, where everything unessential had been stripped from man, where everything which a person had – money, fame, luck – disappeared." Frankl argued that camp inmates could no longer define themselves by what they had, or did, but only by what they might "be." "What remained was man himself," Frankl declared, "who in the white heat of suffering and pain was melted down to the essentials, to the human in himself."<sup>186</sup>

These essentials, Frankl determined, included the notion of human beings as meaning makers. Individuals, in Frankl's view, always retained the freedom to determine their own internal responses to external situations, no matter how extreme. Those who stood the best chance of survival – not only in concentration camps, but in the face of any seemingly overwhelming challenge – were those who believed their lives held meaning; those who had someone, some work, or some ideal to live for. Frankl worked extremely hard, however, to avoid portraying the concentration camp experience as one that could be survived by virtue of a "positive attitude." In fact, he

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<sup>186</sup> Vincent Ruggiero, "Concentration Camps were his Laboratory." *The Sign* (Dec. 1967) p 13-15; Memorial speech delivered at the request of the Society of Physicians in Vienna, March 25, 1949, for the members who died in the years 1938-1945, reprinted in Viktor Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy* (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1967) p. 110.

insisted that this was not at all the case; that, indeed, some of the most spiritually gifted individuals went to their deaths with honor and grace while the merely lucky survived. Nonetheless, he continually represented the camps as a sort of opportunity or spiritual crucible:

Naturally only a few people were capable of reaching great spiritual heights. But a few were given the chance to attain human greatness even through their apparent worldly failure and death, an accomplishment which in ordinary circumstances they would never have achieved. To the others of us, the mediocre and the half-hearted, the words of Bismarck could be applied: 'life is like being at the dentist. You always think that the worst is still to come and yet it is over already.' Varying this, we could say that most men in a concentration camp believed that the real opportunities of life had passed. Yet, in reality, there was an opportunity and a challenge. One could make a victory of those experiences, turning life into an inner triumph, or one could ignore the challenge and simply vegetate, as did a majority of the prisoners.<sup>187</sup>

In addition to representing the individuals who endured concentration camps in heroic terms, Frankl also depicted psychotherapy, in his narrative, as a valiant endeavor. Frankl found meaning in his own existence through random and clandestine opportunities to offer his professional services. He improvised psychotherapy "during mustering, during marching, in the ditches, and in the barracks." His friend Karl Fleischmann, who died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, "cherished" the idea of "administering mental succor to the newly arriving prisoners." Working together, the doctors devised a system of "mental hygiene" which had to be concealed from the Nazis and carried out clandestinely. Frankl called his attempts at individual

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<sup>187</sup> Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984) p. 80.

psychotherapy “life-saving efforts” and provided examples, in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, of suicidal inmates who sought his aid.<sup>188</sup>

Frankl highlighted one incidence of “collective psychotherapy” in *Man’s Search for Meaning*. He described a low-point in prisoners’ morale. Going to bed even hungrier than usual, having been denied their daily food rations as part of a group punishment, and reflecting upon the recent spike in deaths by illness and suicide, prisoners were further dismayed when the lights went out in their barracks. The block warden called upon Frankl to offer words of solace. In his book, Frankl used this setting to frame his presentation of the central tenet of his psychotherapeutic theories: existence, no matter how seemingly trivial, desolate, hopeless, or atrocious, has meaning. “I told my comrades,” Frankl recalled, “...that human life, under any circumstances, never ceases to have a meaning, and that this infinite meaning of life includes suffering and dying, privation and death.”

While Frankl frequently tried to bolster his fellow prisoners by urging them to hope for the future, to identify someone or something to strive towards, in this discussion he pressed listeners to seek meaning in the past and present as well. The past, Frankl argued, is, in effect, a creation that can never be taken from the individuals who participated in it. “Not only our experiences,” he counseled, “but all we have done, whatever great thoughts we may have had, and all we have suffered, all this is not lost, though it is passed; we have brought it into being.” Frankl determined that “having been is also a kind of being, and perhaps the surest kind.”

To conclude, Frankl posited sacrifice as a kind of eternal value. It “had meaning in every case,” he argued. “It was in the nature of this sacrifice that it should appear to be pointless in the normal world,” Frankl asserted, “the world of material

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<sup>188</sup> Viktor Frankl, “Group Psychotherapeutic Experiences in a Concentration Camp,” Paper read before the Second International Congress of Psychotherapy, Leiden, The Netherlands, September 8, 1951, reprinted in Frankl, 1967, p. 100; Frankl, 1984, p. 87

success.” Here Frankl turned to the reliance upon religion within his psychological system that distinguished his theories from those of his Viennese contemporaries. In the style almost of a parable, Frankl related the story of a “comrade,” who had, upon his arrival at camp, tried to “make a pact with Heaven that his suffering and death should save the human being he loved from a painful end.” Frankl insisted that, for this man, suffering and death were not fruitless, but deeply meaningful. Does the efficacy of this pact matter or is it relevant only in the way that it shapes the pact-maker’s experience of the moment? Frankl leaves that question unanswered to emphasize that “he did not want to die for nothing,” and that “none of us wanted that.”<sup>189</sup>

In the narrative of *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl declared that his efforts “to find a full meaning in our life, then and there, in that hut and in that practically hopeless situation,” had been successful. When the blackened light flared back to life, Frankl “saw the miserable figures of my friends limping toward me to thank me with tears in their eyes.” When Gordon Allport introduced Frankl’s work to Americans in 1959, he too found that passage to be “moving” and applauded the author’s effort to “awaken in a patient the feeling that he is responsible to life for something, however grim his circumstances might be.”<sup>190</sup>

Post-war Americans, weaned on best-sellers from Norman Vincent Peale, Dale Carnegie, and Henry Fosdick, might have been tempted to slide Frankl’s work into the shelf alongside those others, and cavalierly classify it as another “motivational” self-help book. Frankl distinguished his work from this group by maintaining that his theories are not instrumental – they do not change outcomes, only inner experience. He insisted that, even when individuals are stripped of all agency, they remain, at their

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<sup>189</sup> Frankl, 1984, pp. 90-91.

<sup>190</sup> Frankl, 1984, pp. 91, 10.

core, free – free to compose their own responses to an unjust world. Robbed of all the typical choices that define liberty, Frankl found that the only choices left to himself and his fellow prisoners came in their inner responses to external agonies. He did not shy away from reconstructing these miseries for readers, and included gruesome details.

Suffering, thus, became a central theme in Frankl's work. He constructed the agonies of concentration camp life as a kind of "work," imparting meaning to otherwise senseless suffering. "When a man finds that it is his destiny to suffer," Frankl argued, "he will have to accept his suffering as his task; his single and unique task." Frankl supposed that intense suffering will push an individual to recognize the distinctive, unique nature of his specific experience. "No one can relieve him of his suffering or suffer in his place," Frankl pointed out, "his unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden." Because the suffering individual is the only one who can face the particular pains of his existence, that very misery becomes his or her responsibility. In the context of his larger theories about the drive towards meaning, Frankl posited his views on suffering as a way to fulfill that desire:

For us, as prisoners, these thoughts were not speculations far removed from reality. They were the only thoughts that could be of help to us. They kept us from despair, even when there seemed to be no chance of coming out of it alive. Long ago we had passed the stage of asking what was the meaning of life, a naïve query which understands life as the attaining of some aim through the active creation of something of value. For us, the meaning of life embraced the wider cycles of life and death, of suffering and of dying....Once the meaning of suffering had been revealed to use, we refused to minimize or



alleviate the camps tortures by ignoring them or harboring false optimism.

Suffering had become a task on which we did not want to turn our backs.<sup>191</sup>

Ironically, Frankl did not treat the prisoners' release at the end of the war as a time of necessary triumph or redemption. While it marked the end of terrible atrocities and grave injustices, release, in Frankl's view, also introduced new psychological dangers to the prisoners. In the context of his theory, a sudden removal of great strain or pressure could induce confusion or moral degradation. Comparing the alleviation of stress with the loss of water pressure over a deep-sea diver as he or she ascends to the water surface, Frankl warned against cases of the mental "bends." In his view, tension and pressure, like suffering, are actually useful. They push individuals towards the construction of meaning.

In a paper about "Group Psychotherapeutic Experiences in a Concentration Camp," presented to the Second International Congress of Psychotherapy in 1951, Frankl argued that mental health is based on a "certain degree of tension." He posited this tension in the gap between what an individual has already achieved and what he or she might still accomplish. He declared that "we should not...be hesitant about challenging man with a potential meaning for him to fulfill." In Frankl's view, it was beneficial for even the weakest prisoner in the midst of great torment to be pushed or challenged to find meaning in his or her suffering. Paradoxically, that pressure to find meaning will better equip the sufferer to endure. Pressure, tension and suffering, for Frankl, evoke the "will to meaning from its state of latency." Frankl continued his discussion by arguing that the very aim of certain types of "mental hygiene" – the alleviation of "stress" – might be detrimental to the patient:

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<sup>191</sup> Frankl, 1984, p. 86

I consider it a dangerous misconception of mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or, as it is called in biology, 'homeostasis,' i.e. a tensionless state. What man actually needs is not a tensionless state but rather the striving and struggling for a worthwhile goal, a freely chosen task. What he needs is not the discharge of tension at any cost, but the call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled by him.<sup>192</sup>

Because he viewed tension and suffering as potentially constructive to the pursuit of an individual's search for meaning, Frankl ended up representing concentration camp victims as, in some ways, having been uniquely challenged and, therefore, particularly fortified and strengthened:

...many prisoners came forth from prison with the feeling of having learned to fear nothing except God. For them prison experience was a gain. As it was, many a neurotic person, precisely through the camp life, experienced a kind of consolidation which is understandable only by analogy to a fact that is well known to master builders: A decrepit vaulting can be strengthened if one simply weights it down.<sup>193</sup>

Frankl's arguments regarding his concentration camp experiences and the meaning of suffering contribute to an emerging pattern put forth by other Americans in discussions about the significance of extreme suffering. The contours of these discourses seem to slowly reshape the larger trends in American popular religion and psychology, which was, as discussed earlier, etched by "positive thinking" and triumphalism. W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, has proposed that African American

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<sup>192</sup> Frankl, 1967, p. 110.

<sup>193</sup> Frankl, 1967, p. 100

spirituals -- “sorrow songs,” as he called them -- carried the wisdom and sensitivity granted only to those who had suffered, as well as the valuable perspective of “outsiders,” victims to injustices that were ignored by the majority of Americans. Modern doctors, Bernard Siegel, and Deepak Chopra have composed best-selling tracts on the ways that terminal cancer, or other profoundly life-threatening illnesses, can bring enlightenment. Such challenges, in their narratives, serve as “wake-up calls” that prompt the afflicted to value their lives and look upon the world with new perspective. Even bipolar disorder, as portrayed in the work of Kay Redfield Jamison, can push sufferers towards new insights.<sup>194</sup>

While I have no desire to engage in complex debates over the relative atrocity of these various experiences, or, at this moment, in broader discussions about “victim” identity and its political uses, I do want to point to a long and continuing tradition that imparts meaning and value to profound suffering. From ancient religions whose heroes descended into the underworld to bring back knowledge, to eighteenth-century Romantic poets who sought enlightenment through extreme experience, Western cultures have produced a number of mythologies that tend to valorize individuals who have visited the extremes of human existence. Eastern thinkers too, such as the current Dali Lama, have developed philosophies in which suffering has meaning. Reality has not often been as kind as mythology to the suffering, as victims of disease, mental illness, discrimination, or warfare have more often been feared or denigrated rather than cherished for their insight.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: 1903); Bernie Siegel, *Love, Medicine and Miracles* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986); Deepak Chopra, *Quantum Healing* (New York: Bantam, 1989); Kay Redfield Jamison, *Touched with Fire: Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

<sup>195</sup> Dalai Lama, *The Art of Happiness* (New York: Putnam, 1998); For a Catholic perspective on the lessons learned through illness and impending death, see Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997).

Frankl, in his reconstruction of his and others' Holocaust experiences, contributed to a burgeoning movement in the United States that sanctified victims. His early work, however, differed from the later trends emphasized by Novick, in that it did not posit Jews as specific bearers of Holocaust suffering and the lessons drawn from it. While acknowledging Jews as the majority victims, Frankl did little to push the Holocaust to the forefront of Jewish identity formation. Instead, he constructed a narrative in which concentration camp experiences carried universal meanings. Frankl struggled, throughout his narrative, to fully confront and represent the horror that he witnessed while maintaining his sense that life held meaning – a daunting, often contradictory task. His work, in the end, did not satisfy all critics, but did garner a steadfastly loyal audience of grateful readers who found comfort in Frankl's ability to survive what was rapidly coming to be recognized as the exemplar of atrocity in the modern world.

***“Collective Guilt is a Concept that has No Meaning”***

While Frankl's psychological and spiritual constructions of genocide victims were somewhat controversial, they were never as contentious as his conceptions of the perpetrators. Some Americans were naturally eager to dissect the psychological orientation of their ideological enemies in warfare. Both government sponsorship and private initiative engendered a flood of opinions about the mental and emotional forces that contributed to the rise of Nazis and the ease with which they seemed to draw people in to a genocidal project. Debates about “collective guilt” and “national personalities” flared. In this context, Frankl's argument, that collective guilt did not exist, became controversial. To illustrate the background against which Frankl's ideas

were viewed, I want to introduce a brief example that demonstrates the presence of opposing ideas in the public mind.

In 1943, The Office of Strategic Services commissioned Henry Murray and Walter Langer to construct a psychological profile of Hitler. Peppering their work with Freudian notions, Murray and Langer theorized that Hitler was a megalomaniac, or possible schizophrenic. They blamed his adult pathologies on ambivalent feelings towards his parents – hate and respect for his father; love and disparagement for his mother. They pondered the effects of Hitler’s rumored impotence, and wrote of the way he projected his insecurities on to the Jews. Such ideas eventually wound their way into popular best-sellers, like Robert Waite’s *The Psychopathic God*, in the 1970s. American readers were fascinated by the conjecture that Hitler might have possessed only one testicle; that he was obsessed with his mother and suspected that a Jewish doctor’s ministrations killed her; that the repression of his artistic talents drove him towards dictatorship.<sup>196</sup>

But long before these notions entertained readers, the government and hired analysts took their work very seriously. They utilized their psychoanalytic assessments to devise a procedure for neutralizing Hitler’s charisma, should the Allies have captured him. Rather than providing a martyr’s ending to the Hitler myth, Langer and Murray proposed locking the dictator in a mental hospital and parading his psychosis before the public eye. The Doctors hoped their work would help American forces to both predict and influence Hitler’s future behavior.

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<sup>196</sup> Henry Murray, “Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler with Predictions of his Future Behavior and Suggestions for Dealing with him Now and after Germany’s Surrender,” Memorandum compiled for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, October 1943, Cornell University Law School Archives; Walter Langer, “A Psychological Profile of Adolph Hitler, His Life and Legend,” compiled for the OSS, The Nizkor Project Electronic Archives, <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/documents/osstitle.htm> (accessed January, 2005); Robert Waite, *The Psychopathic God* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

Hitler, in their view, was more than just a madman himself, he was a key to understanding the way “typical” Germans thought:

The proper interpretation of Hitler’s personality is important as a step in understanding the psychology of the typical Nazi, and – since the typical Nazi exhibits a strain that has, for a long time, been prevalent among Germans – is a step in understanding the psychology of the German people. Hitler’s unprecedented appeal, the elevation of this man to the status of a demi-god, can be explained only on the hypothesis that he and his ideology have almost exactly met the needs, longings and sentiments of the majority of Germans... The attainment of a clear impression of the psychology of the German people is essential if, after surrender, they are to be converted into a peace-loving nation that is willing to take its proper place in a world society.

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Implicit in these views is the Freudian assumption that individual brains are “hardwired” in the same way, so that, just as all sons will experience oedipal issues, all Germans will have internalized the experiences of their history in similar ways that will be expressed as a standardized pathology.

Frankl subtly countered this viewpoint. In his opinion, “human nature” was never predetermined, not even by past experiences. Therefore, an individual could not provide a “step” to understanding an entire culture. While Frankl certainly applauded the study and use of psychoanalytic tools, he never tried to characterize “Germans,” or even “Nazis,” as groups. He frowned, even, upon the presumption that individual perpetrators could not change – a stand that would push him into controversy.

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<sup>197</sup> Murray, pp. 1-2.

Based on his dedication to a vision of human beings as ultimately free and undetermined, Frankl believed that “every human being has the freedom to change at any instant.” This is why he refused to judge individuals according to statistical probabilities based on biology, sociology, or psychological conditions. This also affirmed his persistent stance against revenge. Frankl saw each individual as “a being who continuously decides what he is.” In the “living laboratory,” as Frankl called the concentration camp, “we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints.” He saw man as “a being who equally harbors the potential to descend to the level of an animal or to ascend to the life of a saint.” He insisted that, while “man is that being, after all who invented the gas chambers,” he was also “that being who entered into those same gas chambers with his head held high and with the ‘Our Father’ or the Jewish prayer of the dying on his lips.”<sup>198</sup>

Believing that individuals were works in continual progress, determined by their own choices, rather than products of potentially sick cultures or social conditions, Frankl dismissed any notions of collective guilt. “There is only personal guilt,” he attested, “collective guilt is a concept which has no meaning.” In *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl delighted in the story of “Dr. J,” who appeared to him, during the Nazi era, to be a “truly Mephistophelean being, a satanic figure,” who sent the mentally ill to gas chambers with chilling fanaticism. But after the war, Frankl learned that the same Dr. J, imprisoned in the Soviet Union, worked to console and comfort his fellow prisoners, befriending and aiding them before his early death. This

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<sup>198</sup> Frankl, 1984, pp. 133, 135; Frankl, 1967, p. 110. Like Dominic LaCapra, who, in his discussion of *Maus*, in *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, (p. 160) points to the injustice that is done to pigs when they are compared to collaborators, I too find the use of the term “animal” and “swine” to describe Nazi barbarism to be problematic. Pigs are peaceful, vegetarian beings. No community of pigs has ever been known to devise or execute a plan to murder mass numbers of their fellow creatures. In Frankl’s case, I attribute the word choice to his cultural context. Specism was then, as now, such an embedded prejudice that few people even noticed the ways in which it permeated their language. Ultimately, in addition to contributing to deeply ingrained prejudice towards, and stereotyping of, animals, Frankl’s metaphor does not accurately convey the brutality of the Nazi perpetrators to whom he refers.

insistence upon the ambiguity of human nature, and a refusal to classify certain people or groups as categorically “evil” brought Frankl into conflict with a number of groups who felt that being kind to fellow prisoners in Russia could never excuse or dismiss participation in genocide – that nobody has the capacity to change so drastically as to shirk blame for participation in such atrocity.<sup>199</sup>

In 1978, Frankl faced an enraged and hostile audience when, lecturing at the Institute for Adult Jewish Studies at Congregation B’nai Jeshurun in New York City he declared his, by then well-known, stance against collective guilt for Germans and bystanders. Booing and shouting, the crowd became particularly incensed when Frankl described the kindness and sympathy – the presence of “some good” -- in some Viennese who ended up joining the Nazi party. His mention of Bruno Kreisky, socialist chancellor of Austria in 1970, sparked more anger. This was not an isolated incident. Frankl’s friendship with National Socialist Party members Otto Potzl and Martin Heidegger suggested, not only to Jews but to assorted scholars as well, that while Frankl was himself a victim of the Nazis, he nonetheless harbored sympathy for them.<sup>200</sup>

While Timothy Pytell is working on a biography of Frankl that is highly critical of his stance towards the perpetrators, observers have not reached a definitive consensus on Frankl’s alleged sympathy for, and potential complicity with, various National Socialist leaders. His insistence upon “forgiveness” however, can seem uncomfortably ambivalent. Even in 1948, during his speech to memorialize the Viennese doctors who perished during the occupation, Frankl urged that “we do not only want to remember the dead, but also to forgive the living.” His insistence that “as we extend our hand to the dead, across the graves, so we also extend our hand to

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<sup>199</sup> Frankl, 1984, p. 133.

<sup>200</sup> Klingberg, p.228-230.



the living, across all hatred” was perhaps too tolerant for listeners who believed that some crimes could simply not be forgiven.<sup>201</sup>

### ***The Unconscious God:***

For this, among other reasons, Frankl’s position within the American -- and international -- Jewish communities was ambiguous. British Rabbi, Leo Baeck, who survived Theresienstadt with Frankl, called logotherapy “the Jewish psychotherapy.” On the other hand, American Rabbi Reuven Bulka, himself deeply interested in mysticism, psychology and logotherapy, remarked upon the irony that Frankl’s speaking invitations were weighted heavily towards non-Jewish organizations, but that his ideas had formed the “basis for untold sermons” by rabbis in their synagogues. Frankl’s representation of Holocaust survivors as carrying a set of universal psychological lessons, rather than specific implications for Jews, was controversial. It did not go un-noticed that he never used the word “Jew” in *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Frankl was intentional in this decision. While he remained deeply committed to his Jewish faith – saying daily prayers throughout his life and participating in a second Bar Mitzvah late in life – Frankl did not want his professional theories on religion to be associated specifically with Judaism.<sup>202</sup>

In 1948, Frankl articulated his attitude towards religion in his dissertation in Philosophy, *The Unconscious God*. He was wary of religion as dogma and of denominational hubris. Frankl did not encourage the dominance of any specific denomination, nor of a “universal religion.” If religion is to survive, he contended, “it will have to be profoundly personal; individualized.” This type of personal faith, for Frankl, was not endangered by challenges of modern -- or post-modern, or post-

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<sup>201</sup> Timothy Pytell, “The Missing Pieces of the Puzzle: A Reflection on the Odd Career of Viktor Frankl,” *Journal of Contemporary history* 35 (April 2000).

<sup>202</sup> Klingberg

Holocaust -- life. "To all appearances, religion is not dying," he insisted, "and insofar as this is true, God is not dead either, not even 'after Auschwitz,' to quote the title of a book."<sup>203</sup>

In Frankl's view, belief in God had to be unconditional or it was not belief at all. "If it is unconditional it will stand and face the fact that six million died in the Nazi holocaust; if it is not unconditional it will fall away if only a single innocent child has to die – to resort to an argument once advanced by Dostoevski," Frankl argued. He believed that "there is no point in bargaining with God, say, by arguing: 'up to six thousand or even one million victims of the holocaust I maintain my belief in Thee; but from one million upward nothing can be done any longer, and I am sorry but I must renounce my belief in Thee.'" Even among those who actually went through the experience of Auschwitz, Frankl believed that "the number whose religious life was deepened – in spite, not to say because, of this experience – by far exceeds the number of those who gave up their belief."<sup>204</sup>

Enthusiastic that religion would continue to be a vital force, Frankl turned his attention to providing a philosophical model that would accommodate faith. He essentially argued that God and religion could not simply be inserted into biological models of the human psyche – they transcended such models. In *The Unconscious God*, Frankl harbored deep reservations about applying the scientific method to certain aspects of human existence. Generalizations and rules cannot be applied, he argued, to questions of ethics, love, or religion. To articulate the role of non-rational, non-scientific impulses in human existence, Frankl described what he referred to as the "spiritual unconscious." This realm is the font of true human freedom, the seat of spontaneity and the reason why, in Frankl's view, human beings are not products of

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<sup>203</sup> Viktor Frankl, *The Unconscious God* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975) p. 15. Original Austrian edition published in 1948.

<sup>204</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 15.

any sort of determinism. To illustrate his conception of the spiritual unconscious, Frankl relied, in part, on negative definitions – explaining what it is not.<sup>205</sup>

Frankl sharply contrasted his own belief in a spiritual unconscious with Freud's and Jung's models of the unconscious and argued that his perceptions are the only ones that provide theoretical support for authentic human liberty. He noted that religious patients are wary of revealing their beliefs to analysts for fear that, like Freud, the therapist might “try to ‘unmask’ their religiousness as ‘nothing but’ the manifestation of unconscious psychodynamics, of conflicts or complexes”; or that, like Jung, the analyst may interpret their religion as “something impersonal – be it in the sense of unconscious ‘archetypes’ or of the ‘collective unconscious’” True religion, in Frankl's view, is utterly personal and inexplicable. Frankl argued that, for both Freud, and Jung, the unconscious is something that determines the person. Frankl contended that the religious unconscious is a deciding being unconscious rather than a being driven by the unconscious. The transcendent unconscious is an “existential agent” rather than an “instinctual factor.” It therefore belongs to “spiritual existence” rather than “psychophysical facticity.”<sup>206</sup>

Frankl argued that this was neglected by Jung when he wrote that archetypes should be understood as a “structural property or condition characteristic of the psyche which is in some way connected with the brain.” In this context, Frankl believed, “religiousness becomes entirely a matter of the somatic and psychic conditions of human existence – while it is really a matter of the spiritual person who builds on these conditions.” Frankl observed that, for Jung, unconscious religiousness was bound up with religious archetypes belonging to the collective unconscious.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 36.

<sup>206</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 65.

<sup>207</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 64.

In Jung's theory, Frankl saw that "unconscious religiousness has scarcely anything to do with a personal decision, but becomes an essentially impersonal, collective, 'typical' (ie. arche-typical) process occurring in man." He argued instead that "religiousness could emerge least of all from a collective unconscious, precisely because religion involves the most personal decisions a man makes, even if only on an unconscious level." Religion can not, in Frankl's assessment, emerge from individual passivity, from collective processes that merely happen to take place within:

As Jung saw it, the religious archetypes are impersonal forms of the collective unconscious which can be unearthed as more or less preformed psychological facts and as such pertain to psychophysical facticity. From this region they operate as autonomous powers –autonomous in the sense that they are independent of personal decisions. Our point of view, however, is that unconscious religiousness stems from the personal center of the individual man rather than an impersonal pool of images shared by mankind.<sup>208</sup>

As a confirmed believer in a spiritual dimension, Frankl was obviously as dissatisfied with Freud's understanding of religious impulses as he was with Jung's. Frankl observed the same type of impersonal passivity in the ways that religion emerged from Freud's model of the unconscious. Frankl argued that religion is not, as Freud proposes, neurosis. Instead, neurosis results from diseased religiousness. Frankl pointed to clinical evidence that suggests that atrophy of the religious sense in man results in a distortion of his religious concepts. "To put it in a less clinical vein," he opined, "once the angel in us is repressed he turns into a demon." Frankl felt that this tendency in individuals was paralleled on the "socio-cultural level" in the twentieth century. "A deified reason and a megalomaniac technology" he proclaimed,

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<sup>208</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 64.

“are the repressive structures to which the religious feeling is sacrificed.” For Frankl that concept explained “much of the present condition of man, which indeed resembles a ‘universal compulsive neurosis of mankind’ to quote Freud.”<sup>209</sup>

As in his interpretation of religion and neurosis generally, Frankl flipped Freud’s reasoning regarding religion and the specific effects of projection. He reversed Freud’s understanding of God as a projection of the father to propose that the father-child relationship is but the first biological representation of the prior relationship between God and the created. Theologically, God came before the father.<sup>210</sup>

These ideas about religion fit easily into Frankl’s larger critique of Freud and of the twentieth century theories of psychoanalysis that he instigated. Frankl critiqued Freud’s view of the psyche as divided into competing drives and mechanisms. “In this way psychoanalysis destroys the unified whole that the person is, and then has the task of reconstructing the whole person out of the pieces.” Frankl argued that Freud’s is a system of materialism and atomization that forms the foundation for most forms of modern psychoanalysis. “For too long a time,” he emphasized, “psychiatry tried to interpret the human mind merely as a mechanism, and consequently the therapy of mental disease merely in terms of a technique” Frankl insisted that a human being could never be analyzed as a mechanism, a thing – “a human being is not one thing among others; things determine each other, but man is ultimately self-determining.”<sup>211</sup>

Ironically, Frankl’s insistence that individuals are ultimately self-determining and free did not lead him to enshrine the power of the will. Frankl viewed the will with suspicion. Faith, love, and hope cannot be willed, in his opinion; they cannot be summoned by command. He employed laughter as the metaphor to illustrate this

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<sup>209</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 69.

<sup>210</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 58.

<sup>211</sup> Frankl, 1984, p. 135.

contention: “you can not order anyone to laugh – if you want him to laugh, you must tell a joke.” Frankl saw love, morality, aesthetics, and religion, like laughter, as emerging from the “spiritual unconscious,” the emotional and intuitive, non-rational depths. “The non-rational intuition of conscience,” he argued, “is paralleled by the inspiration of the artist.” Artistic creation emerges out of recesses in a realm that can never be fully illuminated. Frankl claimed, “we clinicians observe time and time again that excessive reflection on the creative process proves to be harmful.” He argued that such forced self-observation can be a severe handicap to the creativity of the artist.<sup>212</sup>

“An attempt to produce on a conscious level what must grow in unconscious depths, the attempt to manipulate the primal creative process by reflecting on it,” Frankl determined, “is doomed to failure.” Reflection, in his view, comes in only later. In this aspect of his theories, Frankl posited reliance on the will or the application of systematic, rationalized plans of action, as deterministic mechanisms, on par with Freud’s biological forces, or Jung’s collective drives.<sup>213</sup>

These ideas shaped the therapeutic techniques that Frankl practiced, taught, and described in both Vienna and America. One of the techniques most central to Frankl’s practice emerged from his desire to temper the “hyper-reflection” that he described as interfering with the creative processes. This same kind of obsessive attention to, or thinking about, one’s self and one’s goals could result in untold neurosis. To alleviate such problems, Frankl recommended that his patients practice de-reflection. This technique urges patients to transfer attention away from themselves:

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<sup>212</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 14.

<sup>213</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 37.

The true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic ‘the self-transcendence of human existence.’ It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself – be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself – by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love – the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side effect of self-transcendence.<sup>214</sup>

Like his insistence that hyper-reflection can be treated by redirecting attention away from one’s self, Frankl’s strategies for alleviating frustration and anxiety also relied on efforts to transcend the will rather than apply it. He called this technique “paradoxical intention.” When confronted with a patient who, for example, could not sleep, Frankl told him to get out of bed and try his hardest to stay awake. By relaxing the exertion of the will and of rational intention, sleep would come naturally.

Ultimately, Frankl construed these types of individual neurosis to be exacerbated by cultural conditions. Like his peers, Frankl was drawn towards existentialism as both an explanatory model and a potentially therapeutic approach to life. While he titled his book of essays, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*, as a testament to his interest in immediate experience, Frankl was careful to distinguish his enthusiasm for certain existentialists’ focus on “being” from the trend of “nihilism” that pervaded other types of existential philosophy. In his preface to the volume

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<sup>214</sup> Frankl, 1975, p. 115.

containing speeches and essays from the sixties, Frankl supposed that there were as many forms of “existentialisms as there are existentialists.” Frankl insisted that a study of existence entailed a search for meaning as well as being. He argued that existentialists had served an important purpose in articulating that very lack of meaning in the lives of individuals.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl referred to the “existential vacuum” as “the mass neurosis of the present time” and a “private and personal form of nihilism,” the “contention that being has no meaning.” He warned psychotherapists to keep their practice free from the “influence of the contemporary trends of a nihilistic philosophy” to prevent their work from becoming a “symptom of the mass neurosis rather than its possible cure.” Bringing his critique of determinism into his diagnosis of collective neurosis, Frankl sounded very much like his colleagues (whom we have met earlier in the dissertation) who participated in American discussions of religion and existential psychology. Like Karl Stern, he saw reductionism as a root to neurosis and nihilism:

...there is a danger inherent in the teaching of man's ‘nothingbutness,’ the theory that man is nothing but the result of biological, psychological and sociological conditions, or the product of heredity and environment (blood and soil, Frankl refers to this elsewhere). Such a view of man makes a neurotic believe what he is prone to believe already, namely that he is the pawn and victim of outer influences or inner circumstances. This neurotic fatalism is fostered and strengthened by a psychotherapy which denies that man is free.

In 1961, Frankl alluded to some of the historical precipitants to the spread of the existential vacuum in a speech before the Conference of Existential Psychiatry in Toronto. He explained that the existential vacuum seemed to issue from a twofold loss in societal development: “the loss of that instinctual security which surrounds an



animal's life, and the further, more recent loss of those traditions which governed men's life in former times." Frankl pointed out that "at present, instincts do not tell man what he has to do, nor do traditions direct him toward what he ought to do" and cautioned that "soon he will not even know what he really wants to do and will be lead by what other people want him to do, thus completely succumbing to conformism." Noting that 40% of his European students, versus 81% of his American students, professed to having experienced an "existential vacuum," or inability to find meaning in life, Frankl proposed that the vacuum might be concomitant with industrialization.<sup>215</sup>

These ideas sounded in close harmony to those of the other participants in the existential psychology movement. Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm, and Rollo May, leaders in the movement which they referred to as "existential psychology," or, later, "existential humanistic psychology," became close associates and colleagues for Frankl and helped to facilitate his frequent lecture tours and visiting professorships in America. Frankl's views are particularly similar to those of Erich Fromm, who in 1943 wrote:

It is the thesis of this book that modern man, freed from the bonds of preindividualistic society, which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self; that is, the expression of his intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities. Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless. This isolation is unbearable and the alternatives he is confronted with are either to escape from the burden of this freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon

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<sup>215</sup> Frankl, 1967, p. 19-20.

the uniqueness and individuality of man. Although this book is a diagnosis rather than a prognosis – an analysis rather than a solution – its results have a bearing on our course of action. For the understanding of the reasons for the totalitarian flight from freedom is a premise for any action which aims at the victory over the totalitarian forces.<sup>216</sup>

Fromm had rushed publication of *Escape from Freedom* because he believed strongly that the psychological insights therein would be not only motivational, but instrumental in resolving the “cultural and social crisis of our day.” The “meaning of freedom for modern man” drove Fromm’s work in much the same way that it did Frankl’s. Like Frankl, Fromm viewed modern individuals as loosed from the moorings of instinct and tradition, and dangerously vulnerable to the allures of conformity, or political movements that engender homogeny. Like Fromm, Frankl believed it to be his political imperative to intervene in the lives of individuals through psychotherapeutic advice and encourage them to see meaning and face their lives with awareness rather than drift into malaise or conformity.

### ***Conclusions: Frankl and America***

As we have seen, Frankl twined his religious and psychological beliefs together. The key to each was his steadfast resistance to any sort of determinism – dogmatic religion or psychology that is dictated by biology, material conditions, or memories of the past. “Logotherapy is not a closed, but rather an open system and theory,” he insisted. He believed that it was “prepared for the evolution of itself as well as for the cooperation and coexistence with other schools of psychotherapy.” In

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<sup>216</sup> Fromm, p. viii.

this sense, Frankl found a welcoming home among American philosophers, schooled in Pragmatism, who also disdained fixed precepts and argued that truth was continually in the making. This readiness for adaptation and willingness to live in a perpetual state of construction were cornerstones to both Frankl's philosophy and his approach to individual psychotherapy.<sup>217</sup>

Tolerance, both religious and intellectual, was another foundational theme. "The more weakly one stands on the ground of his beliefs the more he clings with both hands to the dogma which separates it from other beliefs," Frankl argued, "on the other hand, the more firmly one stands on the ground of his faith, the more he has both hands free to reach out to those of his fellow man who cannot share his belief." Frankl understood the first attitude to produce "fanaticism," the second, "tolerance." He emphasized that tolerance did not mean that "one accepts the belief of the other; but it does mean that one respects him as a human being, with the right and freedom of choosing his own way of believing and living."

This very point pushed Frankl into a quandary that confronted all of his peers in the Existential Humanistic Psychology movement: at what point does an insistence upon tolerance become dogma in itself? Obviously, in the face of prejudice and hatred so pronounced that it led to genocide, tolerance seemed to be *the* paramount value for kind-hearted and reasonably minded people at mid-century. Some religions, however, are simply logically incompatible with tolerance – their very belief systems might insist that their God has chosen them above others to make the rules. What can be done with such groups in a truly tolerant society? Clearly, their beliefs are incompatible with democracy and freedom. Yet the containment of such views through coercion is incompatible with the very premises of tolerance. An insistence

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<sup>217</sup> Preface to Donald Tweedie, *Logotherapy and the Christian Faith: An Evaluation of Frankl's Existential Approach to Psychotherapy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965).

that everyone develop a liberated, tolerant mind -- accommodating of pluralism -- immediately limits pluralism and encourages a degree of homogeneity. But can a democracy, or any sort of healthy community, endure the presence of blatantly intolerant groups?

This irreconcilable dilemma plagued Frankl and his peers as they sought to define an approach to religion that maintained democracy and pluralism. They faced criticism from those who accused them of denying the authority of God, and destroying the steadfast traditions and beliefs that underpin historical religions. As we have seen, Frankl presented some particular problems for Jews. While he considered himself to be a believer in the Jewish faith, he was not an active member of a synagogue or in any way a conventional Jew. His insistence on the universality of human experience, extreme individualism, and hesitancy to even acknowledge himself as Jewish made Frankl an extremely unlikely candidate for leadership in the construction of Jewish identity in America. Even when he was drawing attention to the event that would come to dominate discussions of Jewish self-identity in late-twentieth century America – the Holocaust – he was doing it in a manner that downplayed Jewish involvement.<sup>218</sup>

This meant that while liberal and reform Jews were enthusiastic about using Frankl's inspiring quotes in their sermons, the majority of his support from the organized religious community actually came from Christians. Liberal Protestants – the types that read and contributed to publications like *Pastoral Psychology* – applauded Frankl's rapprochement between religion and psychology. Robert Leslie, ordained Methodist minister, professor of pastoral psychology and counseling at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley California, who studied with Frankl for a year

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<sup>218</sup> See section on "Critics" at the end of Chapter 1. For some discussion of Jewish response, see Klingberg.

in Vienna, insisted that “logotherapy offers a philosophy of life and a method of counseling which is more consistent with a basically Christian view of life than any other existing system in the current therapeutic world.” Leslie hailed Frankl and the other existential psychologists for recognizing Christianity’s insistence that “man is free to make his decisions consciously” and considered him a hero in the fight to bring humanistic values into professional psychology and psychiatry:

Indeed, it is the need for a personalized approach to life that instigated the existentialist movement in philosophy. Disillusioned by scientific objectivity that reduced man to a cog in a machine, a mere cell in the organism, and dissatisfied with the speculative philosophy that lost sight of the individual in its consideration of the cosmos, existentialism has insisted on viewing life through the eyes of individual man, unprejudiced by preconceived notions. Man, in the existentialist view, is seen as free, free from the control of the past and free to work out his own future.<sup>219</sup>

Leslie affirmed Frankl’s assertion that “logotherapy is not a religious therapy but that it is, rather, a therapy that opens the door to religion.”

Another professor, Donald Tweedie, who also studied with Frankl in Vienna and taught religious psychology and counseling at Gordon College, shared Leslie’s sense that Frankl’s influence on psychology and psychiatry was good for religion. The rapprochement of religion and psychology, which he called “one of the more popular topics of discussion” in America, “both by the workers in either of the two fields and by the general public:

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<sup>219</sup> Robert Leslie, *Jesus and Logotherapy: The Ministry of Jesus as Interpreted through the Psychotherapy of Viktor Frankl* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965) p. 122.

...was generally considered, during the first decade of this century, an impossible syncretism, a fellowship of light and darkness. This was due, to a large extent, to the overwhelming influence of behaviorism, psychoanalysis, and philosophic positivism, which reduced man to a mechanism of reflex arcs, or instinctive drives, and excluded by why of presupposition any possible transcendence to a realm of spiritual values. This realm was considered the ghost of a superstitious era, and no proper source for scientific data...The pressing problem of mental health seems to have precipitated the present attempt to bridge this gap.

Tweedie believed that Frankl made his most significant contribution to this milieu because his “existential psychology” was based “not upon a view of man as an exclusively materialistic bundle of drives and reflexes, but rather, recognizes a truly spiritual dimension in human personality.” Tweedie argued that Frankl challenged “those in the field of psychotherapy to treat the emotionally ill as persons, not mechanisms of instinctive drives, and to appeal to inner spiritual resources of the patients in dealing with them.”<sup>220</sup>

Thus, Frankl was embraced by leaders in the fields of pastoral psychology and counseling. Frankl’s place in American culture, however, is more complicated than that of many of his colleagues. Frankl was known to the general public, primarily, not as an existentialist, or a psychoanalyst, or a Jew, but as a Survivor. Frankl both contributed to, and rode upon, the swell of interest in and reverence for Holocaust survivors in the sixties.

While he completed his major books in the decade following the War, and forged his American contacts during that period as well, Frankl did not achieve public

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<sup>220</sup> Tweedie, p. 22.

acclaim in the U.S. until the early 1960's. With the phenomenal success of his Holocaust memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl's identity became permanently and deeply connected to his experiences. This influenced not only his public image, but his professional one as well. The tone with which Frankl's ideas were discussed by his colleagues clearly demonstrates the emerging American reverence for victims and survivors.

When Gordon Allport wrote the preface to the first English edition of *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1959, he insisted that "a psychiatrist who personally has faced such extremity is a psychiatrist worth listening to." Allport felt that "he, if anyone, should be able to view our human condition wisely and with compassion," and that "Dr. Frankl's words have a profoundly honest ring, for they rest on experiences too deep for deception." Leslie opened his book on logotherapy with the assertion that its tenets had been "tested in the rigors of concentration camp living." Tweedie, too, emphasized that Frankl's experiences gave him unique insight:

Here was seen on every hand the 'borderline situations' ...of human experience. Here the height and depth of human existence was brought to light in the observation of fellow prisoners who continually existed under the Damoclean swords of disease, starvation, and the gas chamber. Here human nature, with all its high potentiality, as well as its crippling limitations, was revealed in crystal clear perspective. Here was the acid test for psychotherapy, carried out under threat of punishment, and in the midst of conditions which contraindicated almost every textbook requirement for successful therapy.<sup>221</sup>

While their respect was likely heartfelt, Frankl's colleagues were probably also manifesting the more generalized American trend towards the sanctification of

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<sup>221</sup> Tweedie, p. 22

Holocaust victims to which Novick alludes, a certain sense that they stand apart as special, their ideas rendered sacrosanct after their crucible of experience. Even today, decades later, Dr. C. George Boerree, Psychology Professor at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania, feels compelled to qualify his critique of Frankl: “It is difficult to argue with someone who has been through what Frankl has been through, and seen what he has seen.” Nonetheless, Boerree recognizes that “suffering is no guarantee of truth.”

Frankl himself, as we have seen, was not averse to emphasizing his experience, entrenching it in his self-representation. During an educational film he defended his stand for free will and against determinism by pointing out that “as a professor in two fields, neurology and psychiatry, I am fully aware of the extent to which man is subject to biological, psychological and sociological conditions.” He then emphasized that “in addition to being a professor in two fields I am a survivor of four camps – concentration camps that is – and as such I also bear witness to the unexpected extent to which man is capable of defying and braving even the worst conditions conceivable.” That his time in the camps had spiritual significance for Frankl is unquestionable. His opening to *Man’s Search for Meaning* can potentially be read as a suggestion that the Survivors hold Christ-like significance in their cultures, having born the “sacrifices, the crucifixion and the deaths...”<sup>222</sup>

As both a Holocaust survivor and an insightful writer of the ever-popular self-improvement genre, Frankl achieved a unique prominence in American culture. As Novick points out, simply by reading his Holocaust memoir, Americans could feel better about themselves, as if they were doing something good and useful. Frankl, however, also did much to connect his audience to broader themes in psychology and

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<sup>222</sup> “Value Dimensions in Teaching,” a color television film produced by Hollywood Animators, Inc. for the California Junior College Association.



psychiatry. His critiques of Freud, his evaluations of existentialism, and his therapeutic suggestions were all driven by Frankl's political dedication to liberalism and democracy – dedication that resonated with his American audiences. Frankl lived until 1997, passing away at the age of ninety-two. He was still writing and lecturing during the 1990's, continuing his trans-Atlantic career. The controversies and the successes that he met throughout his professional life illustrate the complexities and dilemmas faced by individuals striving to construct visions of their inner lives based in faith and reason in an era that seemed to challenge both.

In the next chapter, we analyze the ways that individuals in a different type of extremis grappled with these efforts to bring order to both inner and outer experiences of disorientation and rupture. Chapter Six is about sufferers of mental illness who turn to psychoanalysis for help. Their popularity and the influence that their narratives had during the post-war years further supports the assertions, made in this chapter, that Americans were looking to outsiders for advice and insight. These illustrations further complicate a historiography that portrays the rise of psychology as a secularizing and isolating force. In this next chapter, two narratives of recovery and psychoanalysis end, not with the adoption of a secular world-view, but with patients embracing traditional Judaism. Although each narrative is about efforts to re-order internal experiences, each also describes patients who are deeply concerned with communal bounds and social welfare. The process of psychoanalysis, in these examples, is not a descent into narcissism, but an awakening to social bonds.



## CHAPTER 6

### ASCENT FROM THE PIT: PSYCHOANALYSIS, RELIGION, AND POLITICS IN POST WORLD WAR II AMERICAN NARRATIVES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

In 1948, while many of the authors discussed earlier in this project hoped that psychoanalysis and a healthy-minded approach to religion might salvage the democratic ideals that they saw threatened by authoritarian political and social developments, a 16-year-old girl found psychoanalytic-religious solutions to the oppression of her own mental illness. Joanne Greenberg, diagnosed with schizophrenia, left her home in Brooklyn to seek treatment at the famous inpatient facility, Chestnut Lodge, in Baltimore. She found her personal liberties stifled on a number of fundamental levels. Held on a locked ward, Greenberg was monitored and regulated behind barred windows. In times of mental breakdown, her limbs were bound, wrapped in “therapeutic” cold sheets that prevented even the movement required to scratch her nose or remove a hair from her eye.

But the oppression that most constrained Greenberg was exerted from within her own mind. Her personal gods and “the collect” – inner voices *en masse* -- crowded Greenberg’s thoughts, silencing and frightening her; convincing her that she was a cursed blight upon the world. These voices occasionally overwhelmed Greenberg’s very consciousness, so that she could neither remember nor reconstruct her experiences in later narratives. In the semi-autobiographical account of her struggles, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, Greenberg – speaking through her fictionalized self, Deborah -- characterized these times as being in a “pit,” oblivious to all reason and meaning:

Gods and Collect moaned and shouted, but even they were unintelligible.

Human sounds came, too, but they came without meaning. The world

intruded, but it was a shattered world and unrecognizable...Once in the past, while in the pit, she had been scalded, because although she had seen the stove and boiling water, its purpose and form had had no meaning. Meaning itself became irrelevant. And, of course, there was not fear in the pit because fear had no meaning either. Sometimes she even forgot the English language.<sup>223</sup>

While the pit and its accompanying loss of free will and coherence represented the terror that landed her at Chestnut Lodge in the first place, the pit also was an expression of even more daunting fears—the “real” world and her role in it, with responsibilities and choices. “The horror of the pit lay in the emergence from it, with the return of her will, her caring, and her feeling of the need for meaning before the return of meaning itself,” she explained.<sup>224</sup>

Another young woman employed the pit as metaphor in her own semi-autobiographical account of being treated in an institution during the 1940’s. In *The Snake Pit* (1946), Mary Jane Ward attributed the recovery of her heroine, Virginia Cunningham, to the shock of being cast into the “worst” ward – the ward for the most insane and the least rational. The insulin and electro-shock treatments ordered by her therapist, Dr. Kik, paled in comparison to the jolt of finding herself surrounded by delusion and confusion:

Shock treatments. Why bother with insulin, metrazol, or electricity? Long ago they lowered insane persons into snake pits; they thought that an experience that might drive a sane person out of his wits might send an insane person back into sanity. By design or by accident, she couldn’t know, a more modern ‘they’ had given V. Cunningham a far more drastic shock treatment now than

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<sup>223</sup> Joanne Greenberg, *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden* (New York: New American Library, 1964) p. 30.

<sup>224</sup> Greenberg, p. 30.

Dr. Kik had been able to manage with his clamps and wedges and assistants. They had thrown her into a snake pit and she had been shocked into knowing that she could get well.<sup>225</sup>

Throughout both narratives, the pit – unreason localized either within the mind or the institution – is represented both as a hell and a refuge. Just as Deborah recognized that the worst part of arising from the pit was the return of reason and the resumption of her struggle to engage meaning, Virginia, too, felt that the “snake pit” of the asylum – a place she characterized as irrational and tyrannical – was nonetheless a haven. The use of this metaphor mirrors the “flight from freedom” that Joshua Liebman and Erich Fromm posited as a dangerous temptation in modern life. They had argued that, overwhelmed by the responsibilities and choices that confronted individuals in a liberal democratic society and baffled by a world that increasingly ceased to contain clear meaning, modern people fled from free will, embracing authoritarianism, conformity, and mass movements.<sup>226</sup>

The heroines of Greenberg and Ward’s accounts seemed implicitly to understand this double meaning of the pit. Their reflections upon their own loss of reason and free will captured the tensions that our other authors found in the larger political world – a desire to abnegate free thought and its attendant responsibility combined with awareness that the ability to operate with free will and shoulder responsibility formed the core of their definitions of sanity and humane living. Greenberg and Ward provide an important new perspective on our discussion as they describe a form of consciousness in extremis. They both crossed the culturally

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<sup>225</sup> Mary Jane Ward, *The Snake Pit* (New York : Random House, 1946) P. 216-217.

<sup>226</sup> Ward states, on p. 274, “The shelter patients devoted their sane moment to hating was indeed a shelter.” See also Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, inc., 1941); Joshua Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York : Simon and Schuster, 1946).

recognized border between sanity and insanity, ending up spending years in mental institutions. I will analyze their viewpoints alongside that of a third author, Lucy Freeman, who narrated her own recovery from psychosomatic illness. While Freeman was not hospitalized, she spent years in the care of physicians and psychoanalysts. All three authors were subjected to both biological (physical and medical restraints and interventions) and psychoanalytic treatments and all concluded that medical solutions led them deeper into the pit and psychoanalysis helped free them from its oppression and allure. For Freeman and Greenberg, religious ideas and Jewish identity complemented what they saw as the promise of psychoanalysis.

Their stories elucidate a dialectic relationship between the “democracy of the mind” and the democratic society that we have been assessing. All three write from the extremis of personal madness as well as the madhouse, but also from the extremis of the cultural marginal. These authors, like the Jewish and Catholic writers from earlier chapters, identified themselves, and were construed by others, to be outsiders due to their mental illnesses and, in addition, Freeman and Greenberg layered Judaism upon this identity of marginalization. Each emphasize that sanity can be restored only with the democratization and humanization of the individual’s inner experience, the space of medical treatment, and the larger body politic. All emphasize that only with democratization at these three levels can the mentally ill – like the disenfranchised – be raised to full participation in civil society.

A central thesis of this project has been that religious believers turned to psychoanalysis in an effort to combat the rigidity and materialism that they felt underpinned the biological and behavioral theories that shaped much of modern psychiatric medicine. An analysis of the narratives of the mentally ill captures this battle in practice. The narratives address the question: How did patients understand the role of psychoanalysis and bio-behavioral treatments in their recovery? All three

insist on a continuity between the “biological treatments” – from shock therapy and restraints, to medication and surgery – and the traditional, anti-democratic, custodial treatment of the mad. In their narratives, democratization meant the humanization of the mental institution and the practice of medicine while “sanity” entailed the ability to assume the responsibility of participating in a democracy. This ability stemmed not just from objective external behavior, but also from the restoration of an internal condition of free thought. The goal of the therapeutic process, thus, requires integration into positive relationships and an escape from narcissism.

These narratives finally reveal ways that the authors’ encounters with madness and cures interacted with their developing religious selfhood in their treatments. Freeman, for example, though Jewish, read passages from the New Testament with her therapist. Greenberg, on the other hand, worked closely with her own Jewish therapist to come to terms with the way her religion both ostracized and sustained her. Religion complemented the liberating process of psychoanalysis. While historians have understood attempts to reconcile psychoanalysis and religion as trivializing, parochializing, or homogenizing, the texts studied here show how psychoanalysis and religious faith worked together and promoted free thought.

By situating these three stories in the larger context of psychiatric treatment in modern America, I will explore the ways that “experts” defined sanity and health as well as how these definitions shaped patients’ self-understanding. I will begin with an overview of the conditions under which the mentally ill were treated during the early twentieth century – particularly the development of therapeutic “spaces” like the mental institution and the private practice room. I will then move to close readings of these three highly publicized narratives of mental illness and how they both reflected and influenced the culture around them.

These tales of madness introduce a new element to the dialectic between the democracy of the mind and that of society. The madhouse and treatment room become still another setting where democratic ideals might or might not be fostered. These authors hail psychoanalysis – often in tandem with religion -- as the path to free thought and free participation in society, beacons leading them from narcissism and towards community.

### ***Civil Rights for the Mentally Ill***

Discussions about the rights of the mentally ill (particularly the institutionalized) were reaching a new pitch in the 1940's, as was the battle between biological treatments and cognitive or personalized approaches. Several waves of reform had transformed mental hospitals since the pre-nineteenth century era when Bedlam, London's infamous asylum, held chained and confused inmates and entertained gawkers. The Moral Reform movement aimed to give mental hospitals a therapeutic rather than maintenance role. Early leaders include Francis Willis who, in 1788, treated King George III with discipline, routine, and personal domination and the Quaker William Tukes who, in 1796, recreated the environment of a bourgeois upbringing in the hopes of retraining his patients at the Tukes retreat.<sup>227</sup>

The “moral” therapies aimed to shape patients’ minds to think in orderly, “sane,” ways. While they differed from psychoanalysis in that they made no effort to investigate the causes or underlying issues that might prompt mental illness, they did shape the world in which Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) and his student Freud, operated. Philip Pinel (1745-1826) had molded The *Salpetriere*, the Paris women’s asylum, into an orderly, humane hospital, where patients were not held in restraints

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<sup>227</sup> Roy Porter, *Madness, A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 103-104.



but were instead pressed to orderly behavior and routine by attentive staff. The symptoms of insanity in this context were viewed simply as errors in thinking to be eradicated by the example and imposition of discipline and reason. It was in this environment, however, that Charcot later began probing the symptoms for deeper meanings, steering his young protégé towards the development of psychoanalysis. The young Freud worked in a hospital already renowned for nurturing interest not only in the mind, but in fostering a democratic and humane setting for the creation of “free” and liberated minds.<sup>228</sup>

Inspired by the models of moral treatment, institutions emerged in the United States, like the Frankford Asylum in Pennsylvania (1817), The Friends Asylum in Philadelphia (1817), the Hartford Retreat in Connecticut (1824) and the McLean Hospital in Boston (1821). The last, in 1895, was redesigned by Frederick Law Olmstead with the intent of exerting the same calming influence as his Central Park in New York City. Such pastoral and expensive asylums, however, could not fill the growing need in America to care for the mentally ill. The nineteenth century – an era of “American Nervousness” and Neurasthenia – and the Civil War propelled admissions to mental institutions upward. The twentieth saw an increase in the number of Americans suffering “nervous breakdown” the illness with which Virginia Cunningham was diagnosed in Ward’s novel. These patients, mixed with those suffering from brain damage, congenital defects, or other disabilities, contributed to overcrowding in public asylums. Their symptoms of nervous breakdown, however, conformed with modern understandings of mental illness – rooted in cognitive dysfunction rather than purely biological disorder.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Porter, p. 105-6.

<sup>229</sup> Porter, p. 110. See also Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America: cultural and medical perceptions of mental illness before 1914* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1995); Gerald N. Grob, *The Mad among us : a history of the care of America's mentally ill* (New York : Free Press, 1994); Barbara Sicherman, *The quest for mental health in America, 1880-1917* (New York : Arno

The first modern American effort to reform conditions was sparked by Clifford Beers' (1876-1943) account of his hospitalization in numerous institutions during the first years of the twentieth century. Historian Andrew Heinze claims that Beers' narrative of his illness and confinement, *A Mind that Found Itself* (1907), "did for public feeling about mental health what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for abolition."<sup>230</sup> Beers himself drew the same comparison and introduced political rhetoric about rights and justice into his account of mental illness:

"Uncle Tom's Cabin," I continued, had a very decided effect on the question of slavery of the negro race. Why cannot a book be written which will free the helpless slaves of all creeds and colors confined to-day in the asylums and sanitariums throughout the world? That is, free them from unnecessary abuses to which they are now subjected. Such a book, I believe, can be written and I trust that I may be permitted to live till I am wise enough to write it. Such a book might change the attitude of the public towards those who are unfortunate enough to have the stigma of mental incompetency put upon them.<sup>231</sup>

Like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *A Mind that Found Itself* depicted horrific abuses and inhumane attitudes. Beers recounted the overcrowded conditions that allowed inmates to fight amongst themselves and described physical violence and malicious treatment from the staff. One of the most horrifying accounts in Beers' narrative was that of his encasement in a straight jacket for over sixteen hours. Doing little to help, the staff simply lost track of him for long periods as well.

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Press, 1980); Charles Beard, *American nervousness : its causes and consequences, a supplement to Nervous exhaustion (neurasthenia)*(New York : G. P. Putnam's sons, 1881).

<sup>230</sup> Andrew Heinze, *Jews and the American soul : human nature in the twentieth century* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2004)

<sup>231</sup> Clifford Beers, *A Mind that Found Itself: An Autobiography* (University of Pittsburgh Press, Pennsylvania: 1907). P. 177.

Yet, again echoing Stowe, Beers did not aim simply to arouse ire at injustice and cruelty on the abstract level. He worked as well to evoke a change in heart and generate genuine empathy for the mentally ill by emphasizing their essential humanity and sensitivities. “More fundamental,” he argued, “than any technical reform, cure, or prevention—indeed, a condition precedent to all these—is a changed *spiritual* [my emphasis] attitude toward the insane.” Beers attested that: “They are still human: they love and hate, and have a sense of humor. The worst are usually responsive to kindness. In not a few cases their gratitude is livelier than that of normal men and women.”<sup>232</sup>

Beers had yet another goal that foreshadows the trends that we have been investigating – an effort to free the “insane” from the tyranny of their own minds:

The biographical part of my autobiography might be called the history of a mental civil war, which I fought single-handed on a battlefield that lay within the compass of my skull. An Army of Unreason, composed of the cunning and treacherous thoughts of an unfair foe, attacked my bewildered consciousness with cruel persistency, and would have destroyed me, had not a triumphant Reason finally interposed a superior strategy that saved me from my unnatural self.<sup>233</sup>

Like the authors that we discussed in earlier chapters, Beers portrays reason as the beacon of sanity, and “unreason” as “unfair,” “cunning,” “treacherous,” and “cruel” – all negative attributes in a democratic environment and the bogeymen lurking behind republican minded suspicions of corruption. His work spawned the “Mental Hygiene Movement,” a mass public endeavor to *prevent* madness as well as to reform its

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<sup>232</sup> Beers, p. 202-3.

<sup>233</sup> Beers, p. 1.

treatment propelled by his vigorous letter writing campaign to contemporary leaders in psychology – William James and Adolf Meyer, for example. While Beers suggested a number of practical endeavors, his efforts had spiritual overtones.

His core beliefs emphasized the importance of social interaction and human relatedness. He was appalled that “the treatment often meted out to insane persons” – isolation from the rational world and malice from those around them – “is the very treatment which would deprive some sane persons of their reason.” Beers argued that “contact with sane people, if not too long postponed, means an almost immediate restoration to normality.” He called this an “illuminating fact,” and noted that “inasmuch as patients cannot usually be set free to absorb, as it were, sanity in the community, it is the duty of those entrusted with their care to treat them with the utmost tenderness and consideration.” Ultimately, Beers posited the personal connection among individuals as the key to the restoration of sanity in the ill.

Psychoanalysis was not widely practiced in American mental institutions in Beers’ day, and overcrowding meant that individualized talk therapy was rare. It was just this type of one-to-one connection, however, that Beers believed would assuage the traumas of the mentally ill. While he rarely mentions religion throughout his narrative, Beers concludes his book by drawing a powerful analogy between the friendship of an understanding therapist and the message of spiritual love in Christianity.<sup>234</sup> In Beers view, the resumption of reason was as much a spiritual, almost miraculous, epiphany as it was a medical recovery.

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<sup>234</sup> Beers, on p. 204-5, states: “These words, spoken to me, came with a certain startling freshness. And yet it was the sublime and healing power of this same love which received its most signal demonstration two thousand years ago at the hands of one who restored to reason and his home that man of Scripture "who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces; neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the

While Beers' narrative and the ensuing Mental Hygiene Movement drew the plight of the mentally ill to the public eye, the conditions in asylums continued to invite reform well into the 1940's. The authors to which we now turn picked up upon the themes that Beers introduced and shaped them to reflect the culture of World War II and the Cold War.

***Mary Jane Ward (1905-1981), The Snake Pit (1946)***

Mary Jane Ward's *The Snake Pit* is a landmark expose, revealing the stark conditions of modern mental institutions. Upon closer examination, however, we find that both the book and the subsequent movie also portray the tensions developing between cognitive and biological treatments of mental illness, and the role of psychoanalysis in representing a more humanistic approach. Of the three narratives that follow, *The Snake Pit* is the least attentive to religious aspects. It is the only work in which the narrator herself is not a practicing Jew, and it goes the farthest in presenting psychoanalysis as a detached science. I begin with this narrative because it so forcefully interrogates the biological treatments of its day and aggressively links them to concomitant anti-democratic forces

*The Snake Pit* made at least as strong an impact on the screen in 1948 as it did in the publishing world two years earlier, capturing numerous academy award nominations and critical acclaim. The success of the movie version may be due, in part, to the subtle changes that the filmmakers made to Ward's tale, coloring her experiences with psychoanalysis in rosier tones, with a clearer outline of meaning. While Ward's semi-autobiographical novel shows the harrowing experiences of inner confusion and forgetfulness as well as the horrific conditions of the mental institution,

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mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not."

her assessment of psychoanalysis is ambivalent. The movie, perhaps reflecting a changing public mood, takes a clear stand in favor of psychoanalysis, consistently representing it as the humanizing, liberating force in an otherwise mechanized and uncaring hospital environment. Both explicate our broader thesis challenging the tyranny of institutions and the tyrannical nature of insanity by the freely thinking individual.

The novel itself is an ambiguous construct – while alleged to be autobiographical, Ward and her contemporary fans and critics consistently refer to it as a “novel” or an “autobiographical novel.” Ward gives her heroine a different name – Virginia Cunningham – and invents a fictitious hospital, Juniper Hill. This character, however, shares much in common with her creator, hailing from the Midwest, relocating to Manhattan with her husband, falling in with an intellectual, creative crowd during the 1930’s, and suffering from a “nervous breakdown” that requires hospitalization. Towards the end of the novel, Virginia refers to “her” book, *A Little Night Music*, which Ward published herself in 1951. Ward, in “real life” was hospitalized in Rockland State Hospital during 1941.

Without the pretense of writing pure autobiography, or any type of non-fiction, Ward uses her fictitious approach creatively to evoke the confusion and disorder that, in her view, characterize the experiences of mental illness. She uses a standard past tense narrative, but occasionally inserts present tense observations, such as “this is awkward.” Generally telling the story in the third person, Ward shifts into the first and second person as well, utilizing “you” particularly whenever Virginia is confused or frightened, as in “you don’t know what crime you committed” before electroshock. While this draws the reader in with a sense of immediacy, the technique, more significantly, captures the sense of fractured identity and confused purpose that Ward held to be symptomatic of mental impairment. The amnesia and forgetfulness, central

symptoms in Virginia's illness, are incorporated into the novel through frequent narrative lapses. Information "forgotten" by Virginia, is never filled in by an omniscient narrator. Readers never learn the complete story of how or why Virginia became ill and was admitted. Their ultimate understanding remains at the same level as Virginia's – rather confused and unsatisfied.<sup>235</sup>

While the novel was published in 1946, Virginia ostensibly suffered her breakdown and entered the hospital around the start of World War II. She was very much aware of the anxieties that occupied the liberal and politically aware crowd of Manhattan Jews that formed her community in the 1930's. The very delusions that confuse Virginia are colored by the interests of her political friends. Upon "finding" herself locked in the hospital, Virginia supposes that she might be there undercover to study the conditions of the underprivileged. "I must be doing a novel with Social Significance," she declares, even though she soon realizes that she is actually a prisoner in the hospital. Through it all, her own political position as a "fellow traveler" is clear. In that pre Cold War environment, she shared with her peers an interest in Marxism as an expression of her opposition to both authoritarianism in Europe and social inequities in America.<sup>236</sup>

Virginia's reflections upon her prior life and her friendships outside of the asylum capture the confusion that Marxist sympathizers faced during the Stalin era, and her preoccupation with these themes while ill shows that Virginia looked to such ideologies to provide meaning amidst confusion. At one point, she concludes that "her True Trotskyite friend must have got her into this" (in reference to the communist sect that opposed Stalin and the official Communist Party and was viewed by Party members as disruptive).<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Ward, p. 47, 42.

<sup>236</sup> Ward, p. 25.

<sup>237</sup> Ward, p. 20.

Virginia clearly saw herself as a rather sheltered product of the Midwest, struggling with exhortations to “open” her mind to new ideas. She had recently moved into a co-op in New York City and found herself surrounded by energetic young men and women eager to party and socialize, and optimistic about social change. They urged her to write something “socially significant” and they all planned to write surveys and essays, “documents which would bring the world into cooperation – when they had time.” Virginia’s mother, representing her traditional Midwestern upbringing, was concerned that the co-op was “almost entirely Jewish” and there were “negroes” in the house as well. Her move to the city opened Virginia to new ideas about social justice and diversity.<sup>238</sup>

The “insane” Virginia, incarcerated in the hospital, applied her political enthusiasms to her predicament in ways both novel and deluded. After equating another patient’s outbursts with the dramatic speeches and gestures of Mussolini, Virginia herself adopted the rhetoric of worker’s rights and communal organization to address the unfairness around her: “For the first time in history we are alone. Now my speech. Ladies! Now is our chance to organize. Unless we organize, we are lost. Are we going to continue to accept this oppression? United we have great strength.”<sup>239</sup> Employing the language of contemporary labor activists, Virginia railed against unfair treatment by the staff. Her anger was hardly delusional for her keepers not only damaged patients’ property, they stifled Virginia before she even had a chance to exercise her right to free speech.

Virginia consistently equated her confinement, and the staff’s efforts to “treat” her, with infringement on her inherent rights as an American citizen – rights that she had so internalized that they remained clear even in the midst of her delusions. The

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<sup>238</sup> Ward, p. 57.

<sup>239</sup> Ward, p. 48.



electroshock treatments posed the starkest affront. As she was being prepped for the procedure, Virginia longed for a lawyer, could not understand why she had not been given a fair trial, and worried that the nation had succumbed to dictatorship:

They were going to electrocute her, not operate on her....What had you done? You wouldn't have killed anyone and what other crime is there which exacts so severe a penalty?...Many people had said the country was going to come to that sort of dictatorship but you hadn't believed it would ever reach this extreme. Dare they kill me without a trial? I demand to see a lawyer...if I say I demand a lawyer they have to do something. It has to do with habeas corpus, something in the constitution. But they and their smooth talk, they intend to make a corpus of me....Three against one and one entangled in machinery.<sup>240</sup>

She refused to accept the authority of the staff, she saw them as civil servants accountable to citizens like herself. Fearful of the nurses restraining her, Virginia noted to herself that "This woman [the nurse] is a hired person. I pay her. If Robert did not pay my way here we would still be paying her through taxes. As a public servant she has no right to treat me this way and I am foolish to be afraid." For Virginia, the confinement, and the mechanical application of medical technology, represented a severe threat to her dignity as an individual. She felt trapped in a mechanized, cold system and struggled to articulate resistance in the political languages of socialism and citizenship.<sup>241</sup>

Public awareness of mental illness had certainly changed since Clifford Beer's impassioned pleas for reform, but Ward's narrative demonstrates that the problems

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<sup>240</sup> Ward, p. 43-44

<sup>241</sup> Ward, p. 111.

against which he railed remained in the 1940's. She painted a grim picture of overcrowding and limited resources that placed inherent limits on the quality of care:

There wasn't enough of anything at Juniper Hill. Not enough doctors, not enough nurses, not enough toilet paper, not enough food, not enough covers for cold nights. ... There wasn't enough of anything but patients... The public acts as if mental illness did not exist. They leave it entirely to the politicians. Here's a lot of whoopla for tuberculosis and cancer and infantile paralysis, but to hell with the increasing number of mental cases...<sup>242</sup>

Like Beers, Ward also expressed concern over the way that the mentally ill were stigmatized and ostracized by others. She worried that those deemed insane were cordoned off from society, alleged to be happier "among their own kind," though facing discrimination and negligence and denied the basic rights of citizenship.<sup>243</sup>

At one point, Virginia expressed dismay at the presence of children at the asylum. She recalled an acquaintance, Mrs. White, who had her child placed in permanent hospitalization when he was deemed "not quite normal." While this acquaintance assured Virginia that the illness was "nothing hereditary," she insisted that it had been very "sensible" and "fair" to institutionalize him before the family had a second child. "Anyhow," the Mrs. White declared, "he's much happier than he would ever have been at home." He was, in Mrs. White's view, "with his own kind." This woman concluded that:

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<sup>242</sup> Ward, p. 253.

<sup>243</sup> The following illustrations of the objectifying and apathetic attitudes that Ward observed would have been particularly troubling to her in the wake of the Eugenics efforts that had underpinned Nazis' purge of the disabled as well as American plans to sterilize and discourage the reproduction of the mentally ill. See Daniel Kevles, *In the name of eugenics : genetics and the uses of human heredity* (New York : Knopf, 1985) and Robert Proctor, *Racial hygiene : medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1988).

Well, after so many years he really doesn't seem like part of our family. We did everything we could for him. Spent hundreds and hundreds...we used to go see him but it wasn't advisable. It upset him so. You see, he always knew us and that made it hard. We keep sending him money so he can have little extras...<sup>244</sup>

Virginia was chilled by the thought that a child deemed mentally ill could seem like he was not even part of his own family and that his ability to recognize his kin was construed as a vaguely disturbing inconvenience. Looking upon the children at Juniper Hill Virginia hoped, dubiously, that "the nurses love them and don't mind being recognized by them."<sup>245</sup>

This objectifying and startlingly dehumanizing attitude towards mentally ill children seemed, in Ward's view, to be yet another way that the mentally ill were patronized and "managed" rather than engaged as viable community members. Ward worried that modern views of insanity threatened the loss of human relatedness and respect for the individual. She was disturbed by the specter of a public and professional psychiatric discipline that segregated individuals and labeled them according to symptoms and disabilities. Ward was distressed by the ease with which "normal" Americans convinced themselves that the mentally ill received appropriate treatment and were happy in their lot. "They," in Ward's view, were quite happy to suppose that the mentally ill appreciate their segregation and limited access to citizenship.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Ward, p. 261.

<sup>245</sup> Ward, p. 261.

<sup>246</sup> Ward, on p. 104, reflects: "Well, I shall try to remember Juniper Hill for a book and then they will say what an imagination you have, my dear. Don't you know that modern mental hospitals aren't at all like your trumped up Juniper Hill? Why, the patients are all so happy and, my dear, they do the darnedest things. Of course it's pathetic in a way but it really is a scream, what they say and do, thinking themselves Napoleon and all. They have a good roof over their heads and they don't have to

Ward championed an individualized approach to the treatment of illness. Her feelings about the particular uses of psychoanalysis, however, were more ambiguous. Ward was hospitalized during the years when psychoanalysis was first being introduced into the treatment protocols of institutions. Her depiction of psychoanalysis and the way that portrayal was completely reconstructed for the more widely acclaimed and publicized film version, reveal the shifting attitudes towards Freud's ideas in the 1940's.

Ward herself was treated by analyst, Dr. Gerard Chrzanowski. His colleagues lauded Chrzanowski's "integrative approach" to the various schools of psychoanalysis and he had worked at the famed at the William Alanson White Institute and published work on Henry Stack Sullivan. His was, as his *New York Times* obituary observed, a fine model "for the caring psychiatrist in the best-selling 1946 novel, 'The Snake Pit.'" <sup>247</sup>

As we will see, the movie portrayed the psychiatrist "Kik" as a beacon of kindness and humanity in an otherwise grim environment. Ward, however, was less enthusiastic. Her heroine, Virginia, seemed to find herself involved in an abortive transference relationship with her therapist. At first, when he had her released from biological treatments, Virginia saw him as a "savior," a hero and a friend. She developed an ambivalent attachment to her doctor – resenting his authority while seeking his solace and fearing his desertion. Upon hearing that he might be ill she

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worry about where the next meal is coming from or who's going to pay the gas bill. I'd say it is an ideal existence and here you've gone and made it sound perfectly icky. Why I've always said if anything ever happened to one of my family (it is interesting that they always have it happening to one of the family or to a friend, never to themselves) I would have them put in an institution right off the bat and my heavens if I believed your book I'd hesitate. Everyone knows we don't treat our insane like cattle. They are just so much happier with their own kind and they just play around like happy little children all day long."

<sup>247</sup> Raymond Battegay, "Encounter with Gerald Chrzanowski," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 11, Number 4 / December 01, 2002, p. 305-307; Chrzanowski, Gerard. *Interpersonal Approach to Psychoanalysis: Contemporary View of Harry Stack Sullivan* (Gardner Press, New York: 1977); Carmel McCoubrey, "Dr. Gerald Chrzanowski, Innovative Psychoanalyst, Dies at 87," *New York Times*, Section 1, Page 46.

panicked: “Kik, the executioner, the Young Jailor – if he dies I am lost. He’s a queer man who hides behind you and asks impertinent and impossible questions, but he came running when I needed him to come running and when he said, ‘it’s all right now, Jeannie,’ I knew I was safe.”<sup>248</sup>

While these attitudes could be attributed to transference as part of analytic progress, Virginia later felt that her entire analysis was diminished by the overcrowding and deprivation that Ward blames for many of the hospital’s problems. When she transferred wards and Kik ceased to be her official doctor, Virginia became utterly disillusioned by him: “She understood that he was no longer her doctor and that he did not wish to be bothered by her.... He was no longer interested in her as a case or as a person.... The mentally ill woman reads the mind of the doctor. He does not like to be told he is mistaken.”<sup>249</sup> Virginia was intimidated and felt let down by the elegant and smooth doctor, appalled by the wretched state of her torn and worn clothing and inability to practice good hygiene. By the end of the novel, she was very cynical about the entire process of psychoanalysis as well.

Kik had determined that Virginia’s problems stemmed largely from guilt associated with the death of her former fiancé, Gordon, and her subsequent marriage to that fiancé’s friend, her current husband, Robert. Neither she nor her husband bought this analysis. Robert opined to Virginia: “Maybe he’s right according to a book of theories, but he still doesn’t know you.” Robert had heard about “psychoanalysis lasting over a period of years and he just had a few months of it with you.” Virginia herself was even more incredulous. She hadn’t even realized that when her doctor was “asking those silly questions about did I hear voices” he had been practicing psychoanalysis.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Ward, p. 224.

<sup>249</sup> Ward, p. 231.

<sup>250</sup> Ward, p. 255-57.

“It’s part of a theory...they want to know what your subconscious has been up to...” Robert explained, “but I can’t see this business about Gordon....He went all through your life and he decided you had a subconscious feeling of guilt on account of marrying me and that’s what gave you a breakdown.” Virginia agreed: Psychoanalytic theory, in her view, becomes the stuff of novels and romance. “Well, the hell with my subconscious,” she declared. “What I’m interested in is getting the old conscious to working again.”<sup>251</sup>

Despite Virginia’s dismissive view of the therapy she received, Ward chose to conclude the semi-autobiographical account with her heroine’s recovery. She, however, proposes some alternative explanations for Virginia’s return to health. We have already discussed her allusion to the simple “shock value” of being surrounded by those who seem “crazier” than herself. Virginia, however, also offers a telling insight that reveals much about the way that Ward defined sanity and reason:

It was hard but she felt it was important to learn again how to think. It seemed queer to her that the hospital had no interest in teaching its patients to think. Juniper Hill’s goal was to keep them quiet, perhaps a group of thinking patients would have disturbed the peace. Let people think and at once they are drawing up petitions and demanding Rights. There simply were not enough nurses to handle thinkers.<sup>252</sup>

Virginia put herself on a regimen of “thinking” that she hoped would retrain her sense of rationality and reconnect her to the larger world outside of the hospital. She worked to recapture her memories – books she had read, lectures she had attended, concerts she had heard. In her view, this ability to think with reason and to recognize

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<sup>251</sup> Ward, p. 255-57.

<sup>252</sup> Ward, p. 238.

her relationship to the larger world was a core tenet of sanity. This type of sanity stood in opposition to the anti-democratic world of the institution and correlated with a reassertion of rights.

Ultimately, Ward's novel was a scathing criticism of contemporary mental health treatment, particularly the biological approaches. Her quest to regain sanity and rational thought were essentially subversive acts in a world that seemed bent upon keeping her insane, docile, and locked-up. Both the "outsiders," who comforted themselves with the notion that the mentally ill were "better off" segregated and ignored, and the overworked staff, who sought regimentation and control rather than spontaneity and participation, aligned against those deemed to be "insane." Insanity itself, in Ward's account, was a mystery. Ward never really explained how or why she "broke down." Recovery, on the other hand, was very much an effort to embrace democratic ideals and assert rights.

The movie, on the other hand, told the story in a way that much more aggressively aligned psychoanalysis with the forces of democracy and liberation. Released just two years after the book, the film may well have reflected the exponentially growing interest in psychoanalysis among post-war Americans. Its depiction of Dr. Kik as a mystery solver and saver of women may, as well, have simply been the typical Hollywood treatment of leading men during the era. Virginia, Kik, and Robert were all glamorized and as was psychoanalysis itself in the silver screen telling.

As in the book, Virginia's experiences in the institution are harrowing. The film captures her confusion and misguided perception that she is imprisoned. Water treatments, regimentation, callous staff, senseless rules, and intrusive patients are all depicted as irrational and invasive. The film dramatizes electro-shock treatments as particularly jarring and traumatic. Each jolt that passes through Virginia's restrained

body is followed by screaming instrumental cacophony and the process is repeated relentlessly.

Throughout the film, Dr. Kik is portrayed in opposition to the ludicrous and disturbing world of the overcrowded institution and its biological treatments. He explains that he only authorized the shock treatments in an attempt to “open” Virginia’s mind to his analytic administrations. While nurses and attendants carp orders and speak to the patients with disdain, Kik approaches Virginia with sensitivity and respect, almost resembling a potential suitor as he offers her a cigarette. Virginia, played by Olivia DeHaveland, is depicted as very beautiful and alluringly vulnerable. Unlike in the novel, when Virginia feels that Kik abandons her when she changes wards, the film has Kik remain devoted to her even when she ceases to be Virginia’s formal physician. By the end of the film, Kik and Virginia chat at a Christmas “party” within the institution as if they were regular friends or acquaintances. The psychoanalytic relationship, in this case, evolves through stages from anger to dependence, idealization, awe, and, ultimately, detached friendliness.

While Kik as analyst is portrayed heroically, the process of psychoanalysis is championed even more aggressively. Like a detective, Kik uncovers layers of repression. Beginning with Virginia’s feelings of guilt over the death of her paternalistic former boyfriend, Kik discovers his patients’ earlier childhood memories that prove to be far more important. Catharsis is achieved when Virginia relives the experiences that preceded her father’s early death. Expressing standard elements of Freud’s Electra complex, Virginia always supposed that her father loved her more than her mother did, and deeply resented it when he “took mother’s side” against her. The adoring daughter had purchased a small soldier doll that became emblematic of her real life military father. After a family dispute in which her father had supported her mother’s decision to punish Virginia by sending her to her room, the little girl threw



the doll to the ground declaring that she hated him and wished him dead. The doll shattered. Shortly thereafter, viewers see the child lurking outside of her very sick father's bedroom, and then watch his funeral. Kik supposes that, as Virginia matures and begins to seek a mate, she is driven not only by a quest to reclaim that lost security, but also by repressed guilt – the misplaced belief that she “caused” her father's death by smashing her doll.

Once Kik unearths these repressed emotions, the pacing and atmosphere of the film gain momentum and energy. Virginia enthuses over her new feelings of freedom in Kik's office, smiling against the backdrop of a prominent photograph of Freud himself. Unlike the book, wherein Virginia leaves the hospital when her husband offers to move her to another state – thus removing her from the over-crowded New York system – the cinematic Virginia triumphantly “passes” an interview with the staff psychiatrists. Once she realizes that she is going home Virginia happily dispenses advice to the other patients. “Just keep talking!” she insists. Talking, participating in Freud's “talk therapy, is the clear route to recovery.”<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Ironically, after her death, Ward's cousin, Larry Lockridge, son of author Ross Lockridge, author of critically acclaimed *Raintree County* (1948), employed her story in efforts to support a biological, genetic construction of mental illness. Ross Lockridge committed suicide shortly after his novel was published. In a speech to the American Association of Psychologists in 2002, Larry Lockridge alluded to the autobiographical nature of *The Snake Pit*, and suggested that both his father and Ward may have been genetically predisposed to illness. Lockridge indicates that Ward was diagnosed at the time with schizophrenia but suggests that she was actually probably suffering from misdiagnosed bipolar illness. Though she became, in Lockridge's view, a “national spokesperson for openness about mental health issues” and penned eight novels over her lifetime, Ward seemed never to fully recover and was hospitalized repeatedly for mental disorders. McCoubrey corroborates that Ward suffered a second breakdown in 1957, and a third in 1969. Her work, nonetheless, stands as a call for reform and an indictment of the biological approach to treating illness, as well as a political statement on free will. Lucy Freeman takes up these themes and extends them in her own writing on mental illness. Larry Lockridge, “Least Likely Suicide: The Search for My Father, Ross Lockridge, Jr., Author of *Raintree County*,” (The keynote address at the 28th annual convention of the American Association of Suicidologists, May 1995, Arizona Biltmore, Phoenix, AZ.) *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, Vol. 25(4), Winter 1995.

***Lucy Freeman (1916-2004), Fight against Fears (1951)***

While *The Snake Pit* introduced readers to the institutional battles between biological and psychoanalytical treatments, Lucy Freeman's *Flight from Fear* demonstrates that the struggle between these two approaches also took place in physician's offices. Freeman struggled with medical problems throughout her life and only found relief when she entered intensive psychoanalysis. To Freeman, even physical symptoms – stomachaches, sinus troubles, and acne – were better treated by analysis than by medical means. Writing in the midst of the Cold War, Freeman saw analysis not only as a viable medical treatment, but also as a weapon against myriad “fears” and a key to fostering democracy of the mind.

Like Ward, Freeman viewed her book as a contribution to efforts to reform treatment of the mentally ill and urged that they maintain full rights of citizenship. Openly using her real name and declaring her work autobiographical, Freeman, already a well-known journalist at the *New York Times*, hoped that her openness would help to combat the stigma of mental illness. Her style, like Ward's, incorporated sarcasm and wit. Freeman, however, was much more direct. While she, too, aimed to articulate the experience of one who has lost free will to inner demons, her story moves forward with clear progress. Freeman refers to herself as “Lucy,” her real name, and maintains a consistent tense and sense of control. In contrast to Ward's ambivalence, Freeman argues strongly that psychoanalysis is a potent weapon in the modern struggle to maintain freedom and democratic ideals. Psychoanalysis could, in her view, enable individuals to become better able to contribute to social improvements and redefine modern understandings of love, among other values. Freeman pitted psychoanalysis squarely against the anti-democratic and self-destructive forces that she observed in the world. “I believe psychoanalysis is part of today's struggle for survival,” she argued, “that unless man concentrates more on what

John [her analyst] called the atom bombs exploding in his mind, he may be blown off the earth.” Psychoanalysis, as practiced by John, was neither narcissistic nor antithetical to religion.<sup>254</sup>

Freeman’s narrative adds to our argument in three major ways. First, she captures the battle between biological and psychoanalytic treatments in the office setting. Secondly, she shows how the political issues of World War II and the Cold War were mirrored in rhetoric about the inner life. “Fear” and “Fight” – two terms from her title – were central in the burgeoning Cold War mentality and reveal her view of analysis as a battle to overcome dark forces lurking beneath the surface. Finally, Freeman’s narrative casts psychoanalysis in spiritual terms. Far from viewing her analytic experience and her religion as antithetical, Freeman saw them as bolstering each other. She shared the conviction of the authors in our previous chapters, who highlighted the ways that analysis and religion worked in tandem to nurture healthy individuals able to contribute to democratic communities.

Freeman opens her book with a critique of the biological treatments that she endured in her efforts to ease what she later determined to be psychosomatic – or “hysterical” as Freud would have proposed – symptoms. Towards the beginning of her narrative, Freeman inserts a chapter (II) called “My Life with Doctors.” In it she describes a long series of painful and debilitating, though not life-threatening illnesses from scarlet fever, chicken pox and jaundice to grippe, acne and sinus problems. These conditions propelled her into the offices of many doctors whom she visited for many years. Lucy portrayed these visits as exercises in futility and frustration and submitted a grocery list of failed prescriptions and proscriptions – from physicians

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<sup>254</sup> Lucy Freeman, *Fight Against Fears* (Crown Publishers, New York: 1951) p. 316.

who told her not to eat fried food to those who administered creams and salves.

“Doctors and I drifted apart as failure dogged our efforts,” she asserted.<sup>255</sup>

Lucy described one particularly intrusive regimen for acne – ultraviolet light therapy – as “similar in spirit to a medieval inquisition” that was “inflicted” by a technician who seemed made of “granite.” Lucy “shrieked in agony as “long needles” probed open sores, while “molten” and “torturing” towels “muffled my moans.”<sup>256</sup> She described her visits to the doctor as vaguely sinister and overtly objectifying. Upon her arrival to a new specialists office, Lucy explained that “we were admitted to the doctor’s den, one by one” referring to the examination room as a kind of lair. Once inside the doctor went to work as if she were “a ditch to be dug,” with a “machine of fire-fighting proportions.” After “draining” Lucy’s nose for a sinus problem, the doctor declared that she “needed” an operation. She returned to that doctor three times before she “gained courage to break away.” Like a sort of prisoner, Lucy felt that she needed to gather her strength before an escape.<sup>257</sup>

Ultimately, Lucy found a doctor who “gave up.” He simply could not explain why Lucy’s sinuses never recovered. Lucy noted that “his face lit up in excitement as he asked Lucy if she’d like to be a guinea pig. “Whom do I murder,” she joked. He replied, “your own psyche” and proposed that she enter psychoanalysis in an effort to alleviate her physical ailments. With this recollection, Freeman introduced themes that would resonate through the narrative: psychoanalysis was a “renegade” approach, a rebellious way to think outside the box. It also led to a fight against the fears and inner demons that constrained her free will.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Freeman, p. 19.

<sup>256</sup> Freeman, pp. 20, 23.

<sup>257</sup> Freeman, p. 25.

<sup>258</sup> Freeman, p. 25-6.

Lucy's decision to enter analysis in the late 1940's evoked skepticism, jeers, and outright disapproval from her friends and acquaintances. While this era brought a wave of popular books and movies about psychoanalysis (for example, *Spellbound* that treated analysis as a kind of mystery solving technique) and widespread discussion in the academic and psychiatric community of Freud's theories, Freeman still felt that Freudianism was perceived as exotic and misunderstood by the general public.<sup>259</sup>

Freeman's book narrates not only her story of psychological liberation, but also introduces the fundamentals of Freud's theories. As Freud would have anticipated, her "recovery" stemmed clearly from the unearthing of repressed feelings, memories, and fears. Freeman, however, goes beyond the standard Freudian emphasis upon personal mental recovery to underscore the importance of the liberation of the mind for coping with the dilemmas of modernity. She argued that the lack of love and the development of repressed anger in many people were social as well as psychological dangers that analysis could help overcome. Like Fromm's and Liebman's analysis of the larger world situation, Freeman's narrative emphasized that early experiences produced anger that, when repressed, threatened to explode in murderous rage. Freeman framed much of her analysis in terms of this scenario – the fears that overwhelmed her during childhood, the defensive anger that resulted from these fears, and the effort to defuse these dangerous forces by recognizing and articulating them. A *New York Times* article notes that "this emphasis on fear had great currency during the cold war, leading former mental patients to start "Fight Against Fear" clubs across the nation."<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Freeman, p. 29.

<sup>260</sup> These theories on repressed emotion producing murderous rage were further reinforced by ideas of her contemporary, Theodor Adorno, in *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950). Baron Lerner, "Exploring Mental Illness and Battling her own," *New York Times*, January 31, 2006 (commentary).

Freeman highlighted the dangerous nature of repression with the rhetoric of war, battle and murder. Echoing Cold War pundits, she warned that murderers were afoot while dangerous forces were lurking in the shadows and must be routed out. These forces, however, operated not just within the body politic, but within the individual's psyche. Meanwhile—like McCarthyism that terrorized Americans in the name of routing out communism (which Freeman herself opposed)—the very strategies devised to shield an individual from inner demons – in her case, defense mechanisms – could become enemies themselves.<sup>261</sup>

In addition to underscoring the elements of struggle and deception that she saw permeating individual and political experience, Freeman unabashedly linked her psychological recovery to her spiritual development. Freeman felt that analysis enabled her to “breathe.” Not “just physically,” she determined, but in a “spiritual sense through the soul or psyche or whatever you choose to call it.” This freedom to breathe, to live, ultimately enabled Freeman to contribute to the cultivation of a democratic, free, and caring community. Liberty, in this view, arose from the ability to see and expunge inner demons, thus abandoning the self-absorption of the immature child and the religious sinner.<sup>262</sup>

While ending on a religiously uplifting note, Freeman began with a tone of urgency and danger. She argued that the problems within individuals stem from a lack of love that borders upon murderous hatred. In a two-pronged analogy, she believed that repression can spark murderous rage, while analysis is a type of murder itself – a “positive” murder in the sense of expunging the dangerous forces within. In her preface, Freeman asserted that, during analysis, “I felt like the intended victim in a murder, with the analyst as hero-detective trying to rescue me from a life of inner

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<sup>261</sup> On Cold War paranoia, see, for example, Stephan Whitefield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, c1991).

<sup>262</sup> Freeman, p. 287.

terror.” Clearly, the inner battle employed violence to fight violence. The mind, mismanaged, could produce rage and hatred. It was sometimes necessary to literally “murder” a part of oneself – the part that generated these demons – in order to find oneself.<sup>263</sup>

Lucy began to trace a pattern in which she had found no recourse against fear, only ways to evade it. “We fight fear with anger,” John explained, and Lucy began to suspect that she possessed murderous rage within herself in proportion to a concomitant terror of death – the fear that drives everyone. “The unhappy person wages a continuous battle against the unconscious fear of death,” John told her, “he wishes to murder, he fears being killed by someone else and he fears he will kill himself.” Lucy determined that she was troubled by “not only the death I fear for myself but the death I fear I will inflict on others if I am not careful.” Here, like Fromm, Freeman insisted that the repressed individual is a danger, not only to themselves, but to the community.

Psychological murder, for example, might be committed in the course of misguided parenting. Mortal hatred thus arose from a childhood “death” of sorts. Freeman recounted a moment from therapy in which she drew this connection:

Death is the real drama of life, I thought. Those who must die, either by suicide or murder, star in the greatest tragedy of all, but long before they die. The original drama took place when they were murdered, in a sense, as children. They received not love, but hate.... “Children know whether parents love them,” John [Lucy’s analyst] said. “it is only as they grow up they learn to hide the knowledge they have been hated.”<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Freeman, p. xiv.

<sup>264</sup> Freeman, p. 102.

As in Freud's own case studies, the roots of Lucy's problems came to be found in her childhood and in her relationships with her parents. Queued into the cultural issues of her day, Freeman and her analyst spent time discussing the influence of gender roles and family structures on the evolution of modern society. Her narrative proposes that the stereotypical parents of the postwar period– the "organization man" and the "happy homemaker," soon to be critiqued by William Whyte and Betty Friedan, were not effective nurturers. Lucy and her analyst went through the standard process of "blaming" early experiences for later neurosis.<sup>265</sup>

Towards the beginning of her analysis John explained that "all children need love to survive psychologically," and "only love can carry a baby through to strong maturity." John was emphatic in blaming Lucy's troubles on a lack of love and understanding from her parents. In John's opinion, Lucy's parents expected Lucy "to bring them the happiness they were not able to get from their parents."<sup>266</sup> While Freud came to emphasize that a *perceived* slight or inappropriate response may lead to the same type of repression as an actual one, John and Lucy tended to blur this distinction. Sometimes they spoke in terms of Lucy's perceptions, others in the context of genuinely negligent parenting. Although Freeman and her analyst embraced the common Freudian supposition that mothers fail to nurture healthy, unrepressed individuals, and thus contribute to a pathological society, Lucy traced her deepest neurosis not to her relationship with her mother, but to that with her father.

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<sup>265</sup> William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, Norton: 1963).

<sup>266</sup> Freeman, p. 105. A contemporary article in *Time Magazine* ("Tears, Sweat, and Sinuses," July 9, 1951) emphasized that Freeman "wrongly" felt herself unloved and "fancied neglect." Freeman, in the book, seems to say that, while she is sure that her parents did indeed love her, they – driven by their own psychological demons – were occasionally misguided in their parenting of her.



Lucy arrived at these conclusions by discussing – and experiencing – transference with her doctor.<sup>267</sup>

Discussions about the bond formed with her doctor underscore Freeman's belief that relationships ought to be of the "I-thou" sort lauded (in earlier sections) by Zilboorg and Frankl. The successful medical relationship, in her view, was one of mutual investment and exchange. "First and foremost," Lucy announced, "I felt that John was a friend." When she informed John that he was more a friend than a doctor he responded that "the doctor who is not a friend is not a very good doctor."<sup>268</sup> Freeman's choice to highlight this exchange demonstrates the significance that she placed upon the therapeutic relationship. In contrast to the mechanized approach of her physicians, John offered a personal relationship as well as professional advice. As intended, however, this friendship evolved into a replication of Lucy's strained relationships with others, particularly her father. She went through phases of feeling confused about how she felt towards John and feared even allowing herself to trust him. She wanted to please him and sometimes found herself challenging him. Most significantly, however, she found herself longing for him: "I had to confess to myself my feelings for him were more personal than any woman has a right to feel for her doctor...I desired him ardently. I wanted to be his slave, mistress, friend – anything to be with him."<sup>269</sup> In response, John showed her that this was all transference and related her feelings back to her father.

Like Virginia in the film version of the "Snake Pit," Lucy adored her father and believed that he loved her more than anyone else. Lucy interpreted her feelings in

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<sup>267</sup> The following exchange between Lucy and John illustrates the point when they pondered on the origin of the problem:

"'Look at the women of the nation and you will know that nation,' said John. 'we speak of 'men' and 'women' but they are 'sons of mothers' and 'daughters of mothers.' It is true, then, I thought. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Women bring hate or love to the world.'" Freeman, p. 107.

<sup>268</sup> Freeman, p. 145.

<sup>269</sup> Freeman, p. 145.

terms of an “Electra complex,” realizing that, when her father was considering re-marriage, her feelings were ambivalent: “unconsciously I wanted to pry him from mother, yet I did not want another woman to have him.” Lucy came to see that the “dangerous feelings” – her anger at her father, her envy of other women, and hatred of herself – “lay stored in the corners of my unconscious.” These memories became for Lucy like the “atom bombs” of the mind that John had referenced. “They hid there,” she believed, “waiting for the day when, unless I faced them, they might grow intense enough to destroy me.” She blamed the memories for causing her to “faint on the job, to lie quivering in fright at the darkness of night.”<sup>270</sup>

John guided his patient towards what he believed to be the truth about her feelings towards her father – feelings that lay at the root of her neurosis. He proposed that the excitement that she felt in the presence of her father was sexual – “although not localized, excessive excitement has sexual overtones.” John felt that her “anger at your father is more deeply buried, and for that reason, more destructive to you.” John pointed out to her that “you cannot have your father. You are not longer a little girl.” This revelation resonated with Lucy as she realized that her life had been a constant turning from one man to another because the one she really wanted was taboo. She never truly understood why she couldn’t have her father and blamed him, becoming angry that he could not and would not be hers. “I had to forsake fantasies of life with Father,” she realized, discovering that, in effect, she had to grow up and abandon her fixations, repressions, and anger.<sup>271</sup>

Through analysis, John and Lucy found that deep understandings of family tensions were at the root of any effort to nurture healthy participation in a community by liberating the individual from the repressed love and fear and resulting anger that

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<sup>270</sup> Freeman, p. 152.

<sup>271</sup> Freeman, p. 156.

stood in the way of successful social engagement. Essential to realizing this social goal were additional psychological transformations: establishing what they construed to be “healthy” understandings of sex and of love; developing a positive sense of “spirituality”; and finding specific ways for the individual to contribute to the community around her. While these processes were vital to Freeman’s personal growth and recovery, they were also implicated -- as part of her larger social agenda for writing the autobiography – in efforts to combat social ills. America, in order to maintain a healthy democracy, had to get over its “hang-ups” about sex, develop a new understanding of love, grow spiritually, and foster a community of healthy-minded, contributing, members.

The first step in this process was to understand the drives and desires that shaped the relationships that individuals formed among each other. By the late forties Alfred Kinsey was beginning his famous studies on sexuality and Americans were becoming increasingly aware of sexual repression in their culture.<sup>272</sup> During her analysis, Lucy noticed that: “John did not talk about sex as most people I knew did, with shame and disgust, tempered with secret glee.” She asked John if sex didn’t “disturb” him. “Why should it?” he answered, “it’s a natural function that thousands of people enjoy daily. It is neither noble nor disgusting. It just is, like the digestive system.”<sup>273</sup>

Lucy got upset and excited when she thought about sex. “Could it be that because I was so afraid of sex, it held importance in my life out of all proportion to reality – the fascination of forbidden fruit?” she wondered. Lucy found herself placing love and sex in opposition – sex was wicked, heading the list of all that was

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<sup>272</sup> For recent interpretations of Kinsey see, James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *Kinsey: Sex the Measure of All Things* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

<sup>273</sup> Freeman, p. 222-3.

'bad'. John tried to explain to her that sex should be a part of love and referred to it as "the greatest manifestation of love." He felt that some clothed sex with an aura of glamour because they feared it so much. He also felt that "some people cannot conceive of sex as being tender and part of love, but think of it, rather, as dirty and violent." Lucy began to work on viewing sex as natural as part of her recovery. She also worked to incorporate her attitudes towards sex into her larger understandings of love.<sup>274</sup>

Freeman's integration of spirituality into her psychoanalytic experience began in earnest with her discussions of love in the modern world. In earlier sections, we have seen that many of the religious believers who engaged Freud were eager to see his quest for maturity as a development of the ability to love. Zilboorg, Stern, and Fromm all believed that the type of relationship that analysis fostered was akin to the spiritual love discussed in the Bible. Freeman's analyst used biblical quotations and stories to describe his own view of healthy love. Freeman emphasized that analysis allowed individuals to recognize and offer authentic love to others that was consistent with religious teachings.

A significant "breakthrough" occurred for Freeman during a discussion of love from her parents. When Freeman insisted that her parents had loved her, John asked: "Was it a love that set you free?" and suggested that Freeman's previous experiences of "love" had been merely "hunger based on emotional need." In John's view of psychoanalytic health "love is a gift." He thought of love as "a noun, rather than verb." He noted that the Bible speaks of "love" as a noun by stating that "God is love" and quoted from first Corinthians: "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh no her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."

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<sup>274</sup> Freeman, p. 222-3.

John argued that love, as defined by both psychoanalysis and religion, was not an objectification of the other, or an effort to alleviate impulses. It was instead an acceptance and recognition of another which could only be expressed by the individual freed from neurotic repressions and desires:

Love flows out of one's fullness...Hunger, which many mistake for love, stems from emptiness. It is more of a demand than a gift...Love is acceptance, understanding, tenderness...It does not strangle, grab or possess. It sees the other person not as a god or idol but as a human being, possessing the strengths and weaknesses of all human beings...Quiet, gentle, trusting, it is composed of affection and desire without anxiety.<sup>275</sup>

Freeman's own ideas of love assumed it was a "sweeping, passionate feeling, full of mystery and wonder – haunting, dramatic, consuming." When she wondered why she had never been capable of John's "kind of love," he replied that the "anxiety" in her life had prevented it and further defined anxiety as the physiological reaction to fear. John insisted that the only thing that could destroy fear was "the displacement of it by love." He again quoted the Bible, "Perfect love casteth out fear."<sup>276</sup>

Freeman believed that, in addition to allowing her to love freely, psychoanalysis, also enabled her to fully experience her spirituality. In Freeman's view this meant both an ability to see meaning in Bible passages and internalize its teachings, and also a desire to embrace Judaism as a part of her cultural and psychological identity. This issue of "being able" to be Jewish without guilt or fear was a vital one for postwar American Jews. Freeman was not the advocate for

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<sup>275</sup> Freeman, p. 75.

<sup>276</sup> Freeman, pp. 75, 83.

Judaism that Liebman was. She did, however, believe that psychoanalysis allowed her to practice her faith in a healthy way.

“The idea that there is conflict between psychoanalysis and religion (at least the psychoanalysis I have know) is fantastic to me,” Lucy declared. She determined that “Analysis gave me what feeling I possess for religion.” She had never read the Bible before entering analysis, but did consistently during and after her treatment. “Spiritual—it’s a lovely word,” she remarked. “Funny, it never meant anything to me before I came here,” Lucy explained to John, “I had been too busy fighting inner devils to give much thought to the reality of spirituality.” Only the individual freed of devils can be spiritual. The spirituality of those beset by demons can be nothing more than demonic and fearful.<sup>277</sup>

As her analysis progressed, Lucy worried that her lack of concern about religion had actually concealed a degree of anti-Semitism, guilt and self-loathing. Lucy felt that she had been born into the group of “favored” Jews – those from northern and western Europe – and felt accepted by the Christians around her. Living in Westchester, Connecticut, she had been oblivious to the strife she later encountered in New York among Jews of different ethnicities. As reform Jews, attending “Sunday school,” Judaism did little to segregate Lucy and her family from the rest of their privileged suburb. Formal religion played little part in their lives. Although they celebrated holidays like Passover, they embraced them as “feasts” rather than religious services. Now I find growing pride in being a Jew, a result of liking myself better as a whole. As long as I disliked almost everything else about myself, probably I also disliked being Jewish.” For Freeman, analysis had allowed her to embrace her identity as a Jew.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Freeman, p. 252-3.

<sup>278</sup> Freeman, p. 253-4.

Freeman's efforts to eradicate her inner demons and attain spiritual equanimity were not simple exercises in narcissism. Though her narrative certainly contained a good deal of "navel-gazing" the goal remained clear: contribute, advance democracy and the social good. Freeman's subsequent professional life was shaped by psychoanalysis as she wrote extensively about mental health and advocated reforms. She shifted from reporting general news to welfare and psychiatry. When other reporters scoffed at her for giving up the excitement of "real" news – murders and trials – she declared, "I'd rather understand why men need to murder." She explained that, while victims of flood or fire certainly suffer, their pain is easy to recognize and feel. "What about those who live in terror of their own thoughts or feelings? They are just as unhappy as those who have lost homes in a fire, but who does much for their eternal burning fire?"<sup>279</sup>

Freeman saw a clear connection between her inner battles and the efforts that she put forth to improve the society around her. Certainly, her choice to advocate mental health reform stemmed from a degree of identification with other sufferers. She supposed that her own illness was different only in degree, not in kind, from those that required hospitalization. She further believed that all people have same potential for feeling – so that the "insane" in hospitals are the same as everyone else, just with stronger feelings. Freeman felt "safe enough to know my interest in writing about the mental health field was partial identification with the emotionally sick, as though, by saving them, in some way I also saved myself."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Freeman, p. 224. Freeman went on to write, in addition to her articles, a wide array of books on mental health and psychoanalysis. For example: *Better Human Relations*, *The Challenge of Social Work* (New York : Public Affairs Committee, 1956); *Emotional Maturity in Love and Marriage* (New York : Harper, 1961); *What Happens in Psychoanalysis* (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1964); *Exploring the Mind of Man: Sigmund Freud and the Age of Psychology* (New York : Grosset & Dunlap, 1969); *I Hate my Parents!: The Real (and Unreal) reasons why Youth are Angry* (New York : Cowles Book Co., 1970); and *Your Mind Can Cure the Common Cold* (New York : P. H. Wyden, 1973) among many others. She never lost her enthusiasm for psychoanalysis.

<sup>280</sup> Freeman, p. 260.

Freeman understood her passion to be the result of sublimation – the funneling of her instinctual drives into higher purposes. She argued that “sublimation is nature’s way of protecting the human body from too much pain,” and concluded that “work was a fortunate outlet.” Freeman’s writing was political, “pleas for social reform and praise of books and plays that I felt stood for a humane approach to life and the platform of the Democratic party, northern variety.” She believed that she had begun to “fight my inner battles with a typewriter, pounding away injustice...”<sup>281</sup>

In Freeman’s view, psychoanalysis was important, but not a “magic bullet.” It was not mere “mind-cure” or “positive thinking,” but was very hard work. “Analysis is not witchcraft which destroys the spirit, neither does it clear up unhappiness like magic, saving lives in a twinkling of the psychic eye...” she declared.<sup>282</sup> She understood that modern society was not necessarily hospitable to the “opening” process that psychoanalysis entailed and recognized that it was a frightening prospect to many. “I know some are more terrified of analysis than I was,” she acknowledged, “I respect their terror.” In their apprehension towards analysis, however, Freeman sensed a resistance as well – an unhealthy opposition to treatment:

For some, the psychological wounds may drive deep. The surgical knife is less terrifying than opening up other wounds. The scar (the defense) may be very thick, covering up for layers the depth of the wound (the fear). Some would rather not risk reopening a deep wound but prefers to live with the scab even though poisons in the wound may slowly destroy them.

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<sup>281</sup> Freeman, pp. 225, 196. Baron Lerner, “Exploring Mental Illness and Battling her own,” New York Times, January 31, 2006 (commentary).

<sup>282</sup> Freeman, p. 316.



Freeman concluded that, due to their fear, some individuals would stagger through life with “poison” coursing through them rather than face the challenge of analysis.<sup>283</sup>

She lauded John for believing that analysis was a process that involved active engagement and struggle on the part of the patient: “God helps those who help themselves. The emotionally weak need extra help but not the kind that ends their struggle, depriving them of the right to fight.”<sup>284</sup>

The concluding lines of her book emphasize Freeman’s understanding of analysis as a spiritual and loving process: “real happiness stems from a facing of self that allow you to give love. We all want to love and be loved. But some cannot love until they are set free by love.”<sup>285</sup> For the future, Freeman hoped that analysis could reach even the very sick among the mentally ill. Freeman determined that the very ill will “need much patience.” Efforts to put these goals into practice are revealed by Joanne Greenberg in our next narrative.<sup>286</sup>

***Joanne Greenberg (b. 1932), I Never Promised you a Rose Garden (1964)***

By the end of World War II, Joanne Greenberg’s symptoms had become problematic enough that her parents consulted psychoanalyst, Richard Frank. In assessing treatment options for his thirteen year old patient, he urged her parents to resist hospitalization until their daughter turned 16 and could be treated with psychoanalysis at the adult centered Chestnut Lodge under the care of then renowned analyst Frieda Fromm-Reichmann. Having immigrated to the United States with her former husband, Erich Fromm, Fromm-Reichmann was the primary leader in efforts to

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<sup>283</sup> Freeman, p. 316.

<sup>284</sup> Freeman, p. 260.

<sup>285</sup> Freeman, p. 332.

<sup>286</sup> Freeman, p. 260.

treat the severely ill with psychoanalysis. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, Greenberg qualified as severely ill.<sup>287</sup>

The question of schizophrenia figured prominently in debates between analytic and biological psychiatrists during the forties. Thorazine, known as the drug that emptied asylums due to its anti-psychotic effects on schizophrenics, would not be introduced until 1952. During the years of Greenberg's hospitalization, 1948-1952, many schizophrenics were simply "warehoused" if electroshock therapy did not stimulate improvement. Fromm-Reichmann's willingness to treat these patients actively was a strong statement about her dedication to the cognitive interpretation of mental illness and her belief in the efficacy of Freud's theories.<sup>288</sup>

As explained in the introduction to this chapter, Greenberg thinly disguised herself and her characters in pseudonyms. She also used a *nom de plume*, Hannah Green, to publish in 1964. Fifteen years later, however, Greenberg decided to reveal herself as the author of a semi-autographical novel. By this point, readers who identified with her situation had been flooding the publisher – and any real life "Hannah Green" that they could find – with letters and pleas for help. Like Freeman, Greenberg came to see public admission of her mental problems as a way to fight stigma. Though she wrote in the third person, past tense, the descriptive and intimate detail that Greenberg provided created a sense of vulnerability and immediacy for readers. These readers so identified with Deborah that Greenberg viewed her disclosure of her identity as a way to help them see that recovery was possible.<sup>289</sup>

Joanne Greenberg's narrative captures significant developments in the way that Americans construed the intersections between psychoanalysis, religious identity, and

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<sup>287</sup> Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry from the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac*. P. 187.

<sup>288</sup> Though some psychiatrists have disputed Greenberg's diagnosis, their claims – in this context – have been potentially political rather than objective Roy Porter, *A Brief History of Madness*.

<sup>289</sup> Gail Hornstein, *To Redeem one Person is to Redeem the World: The Life of Frieda Fromm Reichmann* (New York: The Free Press, 2000) pp. 345-380.

political democracy. Greenberg went through her analysis in the immediate postwar years, 1948-1951, and her interpretations of her illness and treatment are clearly marked by the war and Cold War mentalities. One of the things that makes her story different, however, is that it was published as a novel in 1964 so that its reception was more strongly shaped by the anti-psychiatry movement and cultural rebellion of the sixties. Like the critics of the sixties, her story shows how a dysfunctional society reifies and perpetuates mental illness and she criticizes the scientific/medical mindset. But instead of questioning cultural definitions of sanity as did the sixties radicals, she reaffirms the traditional Freudian view that mental illness is the failure of individual reason and rationality. Moreover, she indicts not all culture, but the culture of the 1940's for failing to support sanity, particularly that of those deemed to be outsiders, such as Jews and the physically impaired.

The cure, as embodied by the efforts of "Dr. Freid," a thinly veiled Fromm-Reichmann, is portrayed as a heroic effort to uncover buried truths, restore free will and enable the individual to rejoin the communal fight against tyranny and concomitant social insanity. In addition to affirming the restoration of a democracy within, Greenberg's narrative emphasizes the spiritual aspects of the therapeutic relationship. Like Lucy's analyst, Freid introduces ideas about the meaning of life as well as unearthing repressed traumas. But, even more than Lucy Freeman, Greenberg emphasizes the impact of her Jewish background and the postwar immigrant experience in marginalizing her and, through conversations with the Fromm-Reichmann character, shaping her perspective.

Deborah – Greenberg's pseudonym – struggles with symptoms of disassociation and hallucinations. Her most striking symptom is the experience of a highly detailed and vivid inner world, termed Yri. Deborah's immersion in this world is often so complete that it bars her conscious access to the physical world around her.

Throughout the novel, readers learn that Yri was unconsciously constructed as a defense against external trauma. As Freeman argued, however, these defenses often turned on their creator as they did on Deborah. By the time we meet Deborah, Yri has become a threatening and restricting place as well as a shelter. The “collect” and the “censors” demand that Deborah keep Yri secret from all others. Gods, censor, and the collect are the products of illness and appear to be personifications of repression and resistance. They do not allow Deborah to recognize or express her feelings and take away her ability to think rationally or analyze her memories.

The processes that led to this extreme repression, according to the author’s analysis, were both external and internal. Deborah’s analysis unearths buried traumas that originate on several external planes: historical and ancestral, within her family, and in the broader medical and religious culture. The roots of Deborah’s dysfunction stretch back through her grandfather’s experience as an American Jewish immigrant from Latvia. The prominence of his story in Deborah’s analysis demonstrates the way that psychological responses to tyranny and repression in the past can be passed down through generations, while highlighting the particular experience of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the early twentieth century.

This grandfather was oppressed by the gentry class at home, yet sought to become them in new world. Continually positioning himself in the midst of the prejudiced, anti-Semitic American elite, he was convinced that his fair granddaughter would somehow bring redemption by being fully accepted by those he envied. “Pops” was raised in a highly repressive, authoritarian and hierarchical culture. He experienced this culture from the bottom tier and internalized much of the tyranny and oppression that were visited upon him. Though he left the “mud village” and life as a peasant, Pops had retained an ambivalent connection to the past:

Though the peasant's mud village past was already a generation removed, there was still in that peasant a peasant's dream: not simply to be free, but to be free to be titled. The New World was required to do more than obliterate the bitterness of the old. Like the atheist saying to God, "you don't exist and I hate You!" Pop kept sounding his loud shouts of denial into the deaf ear of the past.<sup>290</sup>

Much as he wanted to deny the bitter oppression, Pops ended up replicating the very culture that humiliated him in America through his family:

With his fortune and his anger he had bought a great home in an old neighborhood of the inbred and anciently rich. His neighbors had every manner he admired, and in turn they despised his religion, his accent, and his style.... The true conquest, he saw, would not be for him, but for his seed, educated and accentless and gently conditioned. The Latvian and Yiddish curses that they had learned at his knee he tried to temper with tutoring in genteel French...<sup>291</sup>

His American children had grown up, according to Greenberg, "knowing that all their worth and gentility and culture and success was only a surface." As in Freeman's analysis, children in this family bore the psychological burdens and expectations of their parents (passed down from the grandfather) before they even entered the world. Thus, in Greenberg's narrative, dysfunction was already present in her family before her mother and father even met.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Greenberg, p. 35.

<sup>291</sup> Greenberg, p. 33.

<sup>292</sup> Greenberg, pp. 33-4. Frantz Fanon articulates the notion that oppressed peoples replicate – in their interactions with each other – the oppressive culture of the elite. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the*

Their new little family did not escape. Living with Pops as a child, Deborah internalized his expectations. Repression and efforts to keep up surface experiences despite anti-Semitic realities pressed her. Deborah also experienced the standard psychoanalytic “issues” with her parents. Dr. Freid determined that, when Deborah’s mother had to be extensively hospitalized for miscarriages, it caused feelings of abandonment in her daughter. More significantly, Freid urged Deborah to acknowledge an Electra Complex in her relationship with her father. She listened as Deborah recalled that her father was “always frightened of the men – the men lurking to grab me from dark streets; sex maniacs and fiends.” When Freid proposed that he may have projected this fear onto others because of his own hidden passions for his daughter Deborah sought to deny it. Gradually, however, Deborah determines that repressed lust had colored her relationship with her father; just as it did in all families, according to Freud.<sup>293</sup>

Like a good detective, Freid uncovered and assessed each facet of Deborah’s family experience in search of repressed trauma. The core of her illness, however, seemed to stem from two particular types of engagement with her larger culture and make her narrative uniquely relevant to the postwar era. Deborah’s central traumas were sparked and reinforced by scarring encounters with brutality in the medical community and anti-Semitism in her social world.

As a young girl, Deborah’s life was threatened by tumors in her bladder. The remembered pain was searing to her, yet the more painful scars were left by the way that she had been conditioned to view her body, and the way that the medical community treated her. Deborah recalled that her doctors persistently lied to about the procedures that she was to endure. Assured that an operation “wouldn’t hurt,”

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*Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York : Grove Press, 1968, c1963) and *Black Skin, White Mask*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York : Grove Press, 1967).

<sup>293</sup> Greenberg, p. 108.

Deborah would find herself in agony. As will be further discussed, Freud was appalled by the cold and dishonest approach the physicians took with their young patient.

Deborah was further traumatized however, by the location of her tumors. Even as a baby, Deborah understood her private parts to be somehow shameful. Her inability to control her bladder led to scolding and punishment. Her mother explained this draconian treatment in terms of the tyranny of childrearing doctrine imposed by the medical establishment,<sup>294</sup> “in those days the schedules and the governess and the rules were god! It was the ‘scientific’ approach then, with everything sterile and such a fear of germs and variation.” As in Ward and Freeman’s assessments, the standard medical approach to illness is demonized.<sup>295</sup>

Deborah believed herself to be inherently cursed, dirty, evil and associated these beliefs with her operation. These feelings were strenuously reinforced, however, by the way that she perceived herself against the larger community. In this way, Greenberg’s book is as much an indictment of the anti-Semitic culture in the 1940s as a private memoir. Beyond simply noting prejudice, however, Greenberg incorporates it into her diagnosis and experience of mental illness. Anti-Semitism reinforces her schizophrenia and, in the eyes of her doctor, is part of a world that is, itself, essentially insane.

Deborah’s internal notion that she was “cursed” – ostensibly incited by traumatic childhood experiences within her family – was bolstered by her reception in the outside world. Within her neighborhood of old wealth Deborah was taunted: “...the little-girl ‘dirty Jew,’ who already accepted that she was dirty, made a good target for the bullies of the block.” One such bully lived next door. “When he met

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<sup>294</sup> The most common childrearing manual of the day was Luther Emmett Holt’s *Care and Feeding of Children* (New York: Appleton, 1894-1943 eds.) that set rigorous schedules and insisted that mothers not play with their children.

<sup>295</sup> Greenberg, \*\* p. 40.

her, he would curse her with the deep rooted, hierarchical curse he loved: ‘Jew, Jew, dirty Jew; my grandmother hated your grandmother, my mother hates your mother and *I hate you!*’” She emphasized the three generations of hatred and recalled that “it had a ring to it; even she could feel that.”<sup>296</sup>

Her summer camp experience pressed Deborah’s feelings of guilt and damage deeper into her psyche. Her family, driven by Pops to mingle with the elite, chose a “non-sectarian” camp that “might have been so for the niceties which differentiated various sorts of middle class Protestants.” Deborah, however, was the only Jew. Other children scrawled hate-words on walls and in the privy—the place, Deborah recalled “where the evil girl with the tumor had screamed once at the release of burning urine.” The children’s outbursts were so potent because they mirrored larger events. Greenberg wrote that:

The instincts of these hating children was shared, for Deborah heard sometimes that a man named Hitler was in Germany and was killing Jews with the same kind of evil joy. One spring day before she left for camp she had seen her father put his head on the kitchen table and cry terrible, wrenching men’s tears about the ‘checks-and-the-poles.’ In the camp a riding instructor mentioned acidly that Hitler was doing one good thing at least, and that was getting rid of the ‘garbage people.’ She wondered idly if they all had tumors.<sup>297</sup>

Any kind of psychotherapy typically involves a careful disentangling of delusion and reality. In Deborah’s case, however, the curses and hatred were not imaged but real in her external world. Deborah’s inner struggles with insanity were

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<sup>296</sup> Greenberg, p. 48.

<sup>297</sup> Greenberg, p. 48.



entwined with those of the traumas of the Jews in a world gone mad: “The understanding of the mysteries was tears; the reality behind the lies was death; and the changes were a secret combat in which the Jews, or Deborah, always lost.”<sup>298</sup>

Throughout the narrative, Deborah’s therapist, Dr. Freid, faces a dilemma – to encourage health and reason despite her suspicions that the world around her possessed neither. Greenberg described her doctor’s thoughts: “sometimes, she thought ruefully, the world is so much sicker than the inmates of its institutions. She remembered Tilda, in the hospital in Germany, at a time when Hitler was on the other side of its walls and not even she could say which side was sane.”<sup>299</sup>

Recovery at Chestnut Lodge meant the revitalization of free will and the ability to make rational decisions. It was not a “surface” adjustment in behavior, but a transformation of self. When Deborah, for example, suspected that her doctor just wanted to make her “friendly and sweet and agreeable and happy in the lies I tell...to stop the complaints,” Freid assured her that the complaints would only end when the upheaval of feelings ended as well.

Recovery was, furthermore, not a solitary pursuit. Relationships with staff, patients, and therapists were all intended to model successful interpersonal arrangements in a larger democracy. Staff empathy was a key virtue, as was engagement and investment in patients. Dr. Freid, like Freeman’s analyst, John, was more than a physician. She was a spiritual counselor of sorts whose interactions with her patients was infused with therapeutic “love” rather than cool objectivity.<sup>300</sup>

Greenberg lauded this type of therapeutic relationship, but she also recognized that not all relationships within the hospital contributed to a healthy community. One staff member in particular represented, for Greenberg, an anti-democratic approach to

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<sup>298</sup> Greenberg, p. 48.

<sup>299</sup> Greenberg, p. 17.

<sup>300</sup> Greenberg, p. 24.

religion as well as to the patients. This staffer, forced to work there because he was a conscientious objector, was referred to, by the patients, as a “nose” because the government used the insane asylum as a way to rub his nose in “craziness” since he would not go to war. Greenberg portrayed his conservative Christianity as a barrier to his ability to effectively relate to the patients in a supportive community. She explained his situation:

His rigid fundamentalist beliefs made him see insanity as a just desert for its victims, as God’s vengeance, or as the devil’s work, and sometimes as all three at once. As the days passed, his fear waned and the time of his righteous wrath was at hand. He saw that he was suffering persecution for his faith.<sup>301</sup>

Greenberg further believed that this staffer struggled to hide a mental illness of his own which impeded his ability to relate productively to the patients around him. Struggling to repress his own tendencies, the staffer distanced himself from the very patients he was hired to aid.<sup>302</sup>

Greenberg contrasted this unhealthy staffer with one named McPherson, who “wanted the patients to be like him, and the closer they got to being like him, the better he felt.” In Greenberg’s view “he kept calling to the similarity between them, never demanding, but subtly, secretly calling” them to rationality. As in the models put forth by Stern and Zilboorg, the process of identification forged healthy psychological connections among individuals and fostered maturity.

By far the most significant relationship for Deborah, however, was that forged with her analyst. Freud’s influence was vitalizing for her patient not only because of her analytic expertise, but because her personal investment and passion. Early in their

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<sup>301</sup> Greenberg, p. 88.

<sup>302</sup> Greenberg, p. 64.

sessions, Deborah recounted the horrible pain of her childhood operations and recalled the doctors' disingenuous reassurances that nothing would hurt:

As she told it, she looked at Dr. Fried, wondering if the dead past could ever wake anything but boredom in the uncaring world, but the doctors face was heavy with anger and her voice full of indignation for the five year old who stood before them both. 'Those damn fools! When will they learn not to lie to children! Pah!' And she began to jab out her cigarette with hard impatience.<sup>303</sup>

Deborah was amazed that her current doctor reacted with real anger and passion. The past that, in Greenberg's view, was at the root of mental illness, was not "dead" or irrelevant to her analyst. "Then you're not going to be indifferent?" Deborah asked "You're damn right I'm not!" the doctor answered. Indifference was the territory of biological medicine, not psychoanalysis.<sup>304</sup>

These attitudes embody some approaches that are not simply psychoanalytic, but are unique to Fromm-Reichmann and reveal why she was considered somewhat of a "renegade" among traditional analytic schools. Her personal investment in her patients, for example, contrasts with the detachment and objectivity that Freud encouraged. Fromm-Reichmann pioneered a number of novel methodologies and ideals that, I would argue, very much reflect her personal experiences as a Jew and, later, and American immigrant.

Before the war, Fromm-Reichmann and her first husband, Erich Fromm (who has already been extensively discussed, and will be discussed further in the next chapter), then both orthodox Jews, had opened in clinic in Germany where they aimed to incorporate Judaism and psychoanalysis. Struggling to reconcile their religious

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<sup>303</sup> Greenberg, p. 44-5.

<sup>304</sup> Greenberg, pp. 44-45, 24.

affiliation with a professional practice that deemed that dedication to be a product of neurosis, the Fromms opened their clinic with a somewhat utopian goal. They aimed to free Jewish religious practice from the same types of repression that they sought to alleviate in individuals. Rituals, for example, could be purged of their neurotic elements with the simple recognition of the repressed compulsions that fostered them. Just as the individual recovered when repressed memories were brought into awareness, religious practice, too, could be rendered “healthy.” This clinic, however, failed to meet these goals and failed, even, to thrive financially. Demoralized, both Fromms departed from Jewish Orthodoxy. This experiment, however, demonstrates Frieda’s willingness to depart from psychoanalytic orthodoxy.<sup>305</sup>

Immigrating to America to flee Nazism, the Fromms divorced and pursued separate careers. The many allusions to authoritarianism that Greenberg attributes to Fried in her book demonstrate that this encounter shaped Fromm-Reichmann’s worldview. Author and Fromm-Reichmann’s biographer, Gail Hornstein, however, argues that Judaism continued, as well, to shape the Fromm-Reichmann’s approach even though she had abandoned Orthodox practice. Hornstein proposes that Fromm-Reichmann’s beliefs enabled her to rethink psychoanalytic practices and points to parallels between Judaism and psychoanalysis. Most prominently, she supposes that Fromm-Reichmann’s willingness to save “one at a time” through close, individualized treatment, reflects a Jewish Mitzvah mentality. In Greenberg’s narrative, Freid, Fromm-Reichmann’s character, consistently argues for a community in which each person is able to join the universal struggle and fight to better the world. This ability comes through an internal liberation, fostered by psychoanalysis.

Freid insisted that her goal for Deborah was not to provide “happiness” or even peace, but the ability to exert free will. She argued that even if Deborah were to

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<sup>305</sup> Hornstein, p. 52-73.

choose to cling to her identity as “crazy” then at least it should be a reasoned choice. “It is only choice that I wish to give you,” Fried stated, “your own true and conscious choice.” In the postwar, post-holocaust setting in which she operated, Freid/ Fromm Reichmann did not feel able to present peace and contentment as therapeutic goals. Instead she sought to “free” her young patient from the unconscious forces that overwhelmed her free will and give her an opportunity to “fight” for a more humane world.<sup>306</sup> In the quote from which the novel took its title, Freid insisted:

I never promised you a rose garden. I never promised you perfect justice... I never promised you peace and happiness. My help is so that you can be free to fight for all of these things. The only reality I offer is challenged, and being well is being free to accept it or not at whatever level you are capable. I never promise lies, and the rose-garden world of perfection is a lie...and a bore, too!<sup>307</sup>

Freedom clearly formed the core of Fromm-Reichmann’s efforts, and became a symbol and goal for Greenberg as well. She never construed “sanity” to mean peace or happiness in her narrative, but instead emphasized her constant efforts to embrace free will.

By the time Greenberg published her book in 1964, the Cold War struggle between proponents of psychoanalysis and those of biological treatments had been displaced by a new player in the debate, the “anti-psychiatry movement.” Challenges to the authority of psychiatry appeared on both popular and academic levels. As historian Edward Shorter notes, “a consensus had formed that the discipline of psychiatry was an illegitimate form of social control and that psychiatrists’ power to

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<sup>306</sup> Greenberg, p. 110.

<sup>307</sup> Greenberg, p. 101.

lock people up must be abolished with the abolition of institutionalized psychiatric care...”<sup>308</sup>

Institutionalized care was indeed being abolished during the sixties, as patients were increasingly treated with drugs that enabled them to live more independently and as economic constraints made long-term residential facilities prohibitive.

There was a deeper shift at play, however, in the way that mental illness itself was construed. A book like Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962), for example, suggested that insanity itself may be a liberating force in a society that he construed to be repressive and emasculating. He, in effect, flipped the notion that psychoanalysis leads to a liberation of the mind to say that it is not the treatment, but the insanity itself, that fosters freedom and offers insight. Academic works such as Ronald Laing’s *The Divided Self* (1960), Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* (Engl trans. 1967), and Thomas Szasz’s *Myth of Mental Illness* (1960) supposed that mental illness was a “cultural construction” or a “myth.” Asylums and psychiatry, in Foucault’s view were part of the repressive and homogenizing forces that had originated during the Enlightenment to squelch free thought and impose order and surveillance upon the populace.<sup>309</sup>

Greenberg was troubled by these theories. This concern became part of her motivation for writing *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden* and she later told interviewers that “I wanted to say there is such a thing as mental illness and it is not romantic.” Greenberg disliked Kesey’s book. She argued that creativity and mental illness are opposites, not complements. She recalled:

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<sup>308</sup> Shorter, p. 277.

<sup>309</sup> Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (New York : Viking Press, 1962); Ronald Laing, *The Divided Self*, (New York : Pantheon books, 1960); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (New York : Pantheon Books, 1965); Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York: Hoeber-Harper, 1961).

Some of the people at the Lodge were people who were too soft on mental illness in that they thought it was creative and lovely or at least until they had seen enough of it. People would tell you what perceptive things a patient had said. The thing is I want to choose my perceptions. I don't want them to come out of some kind of unconscious soup. I want it to be something I choose to say, not something that says me.<sup>310</sup>

In Greenberg's view, sanity and perception each involved the ability to make conscious, unencumbered choices. The attunement to the unconscious that Kesey lauded was, in Greenberg's view, more of a surrender to the oppressive forces of insanity than a connection to ultimate realities. In this position she very much echoed the beliefs of her Chestnut Lodge analyst. Fromm-Reichmann and Greenberg distinguished themselves from the anti-psychiatry movement, however, by holding to the Enlightenment as a beacon of hope. Conscious reason, for them, remained the best way to fight authoritarian tendencies. Greenberg grew up to become, in addition to a novelist, a Hebrew teacher and tutor to the deaf. She embraced both her faith and her sense of "mission" to help the marginalized.

### ***Conclusion***

These three authors looked at the dialectic between a liberated inner life and free societies from the perspective of a "pit". While the thinkers discussed earlier in this project devised theories to link the democratic inner life (both psychological and spiritual) with the maintenance of a liberal society, these women employed psychoanalysis to regain both their internal stability and access to their communities – to ascend from the pit of mental illness. They struggled against anti-democratic

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<sup>310</sup> Shorter

forces, both within themselves and their surroundings, to get back to sanity and freedom. In looking for a way out of the pit, each viewed biological treatments with disdain. Not only did these approaches fail to help, they bolstered oppression. Psychoanalysis, for each, was the only humanizing route available. It was, furthermore, not simply a scientific method, but a process of “meaning-making” -- of finding a meaning for living as a reasoning member of a community as well as a means to do so.

In striving to narrate and attribute meaning to these experiences, each looked to the worldviews available to her and concluded that enlightenment liberalism offered the strongest explanatory device. For them, pursuit of sanity meant becoming a freely choosing rational being – not a pawn or cog to be controlled by other forces in either a mental institution or in the wider world. As case studies, these writers reflect the culture of mental care (in both asylums and psychiatrist’s offices) during the 1940’s and 1950’s. As best-selling authors, they also introduced new ideas into public discourse.

As women, these authors may have presented particularly resonant narratives as well. Each woman cast herself in roles that both challenged and reinforced traditional gender stereotypes of the time – and in so doing made themselves and their stories of mental illness especially appealing to a wide audience. Though writing autobiographically, each also told her story in dramatic tones that cast the heroine as both rebel and “damsel in distress.” In this way, the young women reflected trends in popular films and novels. Each was a professional – writing and working in an era when it was not necessarily customary for women to do so. Each also presented herself as uniquely witty, intelligent, and edgy. Yet, the three women were also vulnerable. They all succumbed to illness at the cusp of adulthood (as a teenager, Greenberg was the youngest while Freeman and Ward wrote about events from their



twenties). They all required help. In recognizing their “issues” with their fathers, and criticizing the restraints of oppressive environments, these women offered critiques of patriarchy and hierarchy. Ironically, at no point however, did any of them critique Freud’s gender constructions (with their oft-observed patriarchal biases). Thus, they worked to change society from within – both literally within their own minds, but also within the general parameters of their given social mores and political structures. These narratives were not seeking upheaval or revolution, but sought instead, to exert subtle transformations.<sup>311</sup>

These works propose definitions of selfhood and community in the context of efforts during and after World War II to shore up both ideas in worlds where totalitarianism, the Holocaust, and even the rising tide of manipulative politics and consumption seemed to threaten psychological freedom and democratic society. These narratives resonated with the larger public that found ready empathy and identification with the displaced and confused women. American readers might sympathize with the “crazy” women’s stories as they, themselves, struggled to maintain sanity in a world that seemed poised on the brink of madness. The oppression of the madhouse and biological treatments paralleled (though with less intensity) the constraints, confusion, and dehumanization of totalitarianism, the post-war displacement camp, and the Holocaust.

At the same time, closer to home, mass consumption and conformity seemed to weaken the individual’s sense of freedom and selfhood. These three writers, for

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<sup>311</sup> See Karen Horney, *Feminine Psychology* (New York : W. W. Norton, 1967) to hear from an analyst who aggressively critiques Freud’s theories on gender. See Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman’s Films of the 1940’s* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987 and Janet Walker, *Couching Resistance: Women, Film, and Psychoanalytic Psychiatry* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1993) on representations of women in film; see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1982). She proposes that masculine narratives tend to focus more upon the individual, while women writers address the role of relationships. These three women writers all emphasize the significance of relationship in functional democracies.

example, shared in the critique of manipulative advertising and marketing advanced by the best-selling journalist/sociologist Vance Packard in his *The Hidden Persuaders*. With Packard, they would have opposed as a travesty the “misuse” of Freud by those who attempted to create positive associations between promoted products and deep, unacknowledged psychological needs as advocated especially by the Hungarian psychologist Ernest Dichter.<sup>312</sup> Freudian insight was supposed to advance self-awareness, not to let elites manipulate desires.

Moreover, these writers who interpreted Freud in a religious context, believed that analysis could enhance a healthy spirituality. It did this by liberating individuals from the “demons” in their subconscious and, through the very process of the interacting therapist and patient in the quest for discovery and liberation, by creating a positive model of human relationship and of the deep truth that humanity is interconnected. Analysis went beyond the goal of freeing the “inner child” as later popular psychologists would propose, but strove for a liberation from fear and anger that in turn made for a long, if sometimes sober (“rose-garden-less”), ascent to maturity and selfless love.

An ideal political community, in their view, is based upon individual relationships as much as on transparency in voting and representation. The pursuit of sanity requires access to healthy, well-meaning helpers. Even more to the point, the therapeutic relationship is only successful when it involves active engagement and investment by the patient. The process of regaining sanity is not about making behavior socially acceptable, but about making individuals free to choose and capable

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<sup>312</sup> Ernest Dichter, *The Psychology of Everyday Living* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1947) and especially *Handbook of Consumer Motivations* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 161, 324, and 324, and 327; Vance Packard, *Hidden Persuaders* (New York, McKay, 1957), pp. 19, 25, 59, and 117; and Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst; University of Massachusetts Press. 2004).

on their own of caring. The sane self is thus a contributing member of the community – ideally learning to lend a hand to others who may need help as they did getting out of the pit.

### *Coda*

I would like to conclude this chapter with a curious incident that strikes a chord of irony in light of our discussion of “pits” and depths in the contexts of mental illness and its treatment. Harry Harlow, student and colleague of one of the founders of humanistic psychology, Abraham Maslow, gained notoriety for his experiments on rhesus monkeys. Operating under the rubric of cognitive psychology, Harlow sought to demonstrate that individuals require interaction and love in order to function socially. During the 1970’s Harlow conducted a series of experiments involving a contraption that he dubbed the “Pit of Despair.”

The Pit of Despair was an isolation chamber in which Harlow imprisoned baby monkeys for extended periods of time. A research assistant described the Pit:

The vertical chamber was little more than a stainless-steel trough with sides that sloped to a rounded bottom. A 3/8 in. wire mesh floor 1 in. above the bottom of the chamber allowed waste material to drop through the drain and out of holes drilled in the stainless-steel. The chamber was equipped with a food box and a water-bottle holder, and was covered with a pyramid top...designed to discourage incarcerated subjects from hanging from the upper part of the chamber.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Suomi, Stephen John. *Experimental Production of Depressive Behavior in Young Rhesus Monkeys: A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) at the University of Wisconsin*. University of Wisconsin, 1971, p. 33.

Three month old babies who had already bonded with their families were locked in the pits where they received no human or monkey interaction for up to six weeks. Researchers observed their mental decline through two-way mirrors. All lost interest in life and could not conduct meaningful interactions with others when they were released. Their peers, unable to recognize the babies as sentient beings, gouged their eyes and pried their mouths open. These experiments had been preceded by projects that called for newborn infants to be confined in cages, again without interaction, for between one month and one year. After 30 days, the "total isolates," as they were called, were found to be "enormously disturbed." After being isolated for a year, they barely moved, didn't explore or play, and were incapable of having sexual relations. Two of them refused to eat and starved themselves to death. In order to find out how the isolates would parent, Harlow devised what he called a "rape rack," to which the female isolates were tied in the position taken by a female monkey in order to be impregnated by a "normal" male. When these deprived mothers gave birth, they had no concept of maternal affection or bonding and abused or neglected their babies. One held her baby's face to the floor and chewed off his fingers and feet. Another crushed her baby's head.<sup>314</sup>

The "results" of these experiments tended to uphold the theories that we have been discussing: in order to develop psychologically, social beings – whether human or monkey – require interactive roles and engagement in their communities. The "pit" -- whether psychological, institutional, or man-made – does not allow individuals to organize their minds in ways that foster harmonious or meaningful social living. Harlow argued that they require love. Just as authors like Stern, Zilboorg, and Fromm posited the development of the ability to give and receive love at core of

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<sup>314</sup> Blum, Deborah. *Love at Goon Park: Harry Harlow and the Science of Affection*. Perseus Publishing, 2002, p. 216-217.

psychoanalytic health, Harlow deemed it to be essential. The “pit” -- whether psychological, institutional, or literal – does not allow individuals to organize their minds in ways that nurture love. The authors who brought their religious sensibilities to bear on their psychological theories equated this harmonious living with transcendent ideals.

While the results of Harlow’s experiments aimed to bring questions of love – detached from those of transcendence – into professional psychiatry, the nature of the projects themselves seemed rather to reveal love’s absence from the laboratory. They, instead, appeared to manifest the dystopian visions that Stern and Zilboorg warned would come to fruition if the materialism and depersonalization that they believed defined modern science were not tempered. One of Harlow’s assistants observed that he “kept this going to the point where it was clear to many people that the work was really violating ordinary sensibilities, that anybody with respect for life or people would find this offensive.”<sup>315</sup>

What is the connection between this paradox and the theories about religion, psychoanalysis, and culture that emerged during and after World War II? Each of our authors sought to extend Freud’s analysis of transference and how to work through it by examining the relationship between the individual and society. To this relationship, however, they added a higher power, or “God.” Observing, often close-hand, the tendencies of mass movements – Nazism, materialism, consumerism, for example – to grind down the individual and his or her freedoms, these authors aimed to imbue individuals with sacred significance. They also, however, sought to prove that successful therapy – as well as individual freedom – depends intimately on forms of social relation, including compassion, empathy, and mutual aid.

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<sup>315</sup> Blum, Deborah. *The Monkey Wars*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) p. 96

Harlow's experiments affirm that their fears about the trajectories of experimental psychiatry were not in vain. A materialistic, dehumanizing approach to experimental protocol pervaded psychiatry's use of animals. Theories about psychoanalysis and religion did not impede these developments. Harlow's interest in the way that the inner life – the thought processes shaped during formative years – relates to harmonious interactions in the social world, however, echoed that of the religious theorists. Their concerns with cognitive psychology and affective bonds remained trenchant, despite those concerns detachment from religion. How did this happen? Was Harlow's experiment simply an aberration? Or, does it reveal something more? We will keep this in mind as we move to an exploration into the ways that our subjects' ideas were received by the Protestant leaders in their fields.

## CHAPTER 7: INSIDERS IN AN OUTSIDERS' PROFESSION?

All of the authors that I have discussed understood themselves to stand at the margins of dominant religious and psychological trends and employed the rhetoric of outsiderhood to levy social critiques and advance their views. The reasons for and degrees to which they understood themselves to be rebels or outsiders have varied widely. While the majority was comprised of religious outsiders, others felt that their status as immigrants, mentally ill, or neo-orthodox in their psychoanalytic views marginalized them in post-war America. In their rhetoric, marginalization was not necessarily a hindrance, and often enabled them to perceive and represent themselves as privileged observers, able to assess conditions from novel positions. One perspective that united all of the thinkers in this project was their identification with a more spiritual view in opposition to the biological and materialistic mind-sets that they associated with dominant tendencies in medicine and politics. Another unifying concept was their understanding of themselves as champions of the individual against the routinizing, conformist, authoritarian, or dehumanizing tendencies that also comprised their understanding of “mainstream” psychiatry and society. All perceived democracy to be an ideal that, to be maintained, had to be evinced in the internal lives of individuals as well as in their political structures.

This leaves us to wonder, however, what the “mainstream” really was? Who, at mid-century, considered themselves to comprise the dominant culture within medicine or politics? Certainly, our authors’ reverence for democracy and individualism was espoused by other Americans. This leaves us to suppose that the authoritarianism, materialism, and routinization that they railed against may have been constructed demons. Certainly, these tendencies were real dangers that could be

identified in a great many specific instances – Nazi sympathizers, sadistic hospital staffers, and some behaviorists within psychology. But were these characterizations truly embedded in a genuine mainstream – an axis around which the rest of culture revolved at varying distances? Modern theorists have convincingly deconstructed this model as a way of defining mainstreams and margins. They posit, instead, a multiplicity of perspectives and ways of understanding relative positions. An assessment of the authors in this project, I argue, supports their mode of thought.<sup>316</sup>

Each of the writers treated in this work made their outsider status a central part of their rhetorical approach. That from which they stood outside, however, has varied widely. Many of the doctors and psychiatrists, for example, saw themselves as contesting orthodox psychoanalysis. Meanwhile, orthodox analysts in America often perceived *themselves* to be operating from the margins. The mentally ill viewed themselves in contrast to the so-called sane and to the professionals who treated them, while the spiritual believers all understood themselves to be working against an increasingly secular society. The Catholics and Jews often found themselves sharing more with their liberally religious Protestant peers than with the orthodox of their own organizations. In this context, it seems as if practically everyone could claim marginal status of some sort. Ironically, this claim has, throughout American history, become one way of building a sense of democratic identity. In announcing their outsiderhood, each of these authors also claimed to be representing values and ideals that they believed were central to American identity and culture.

Thus, I begin this final chapter by looking for some individuals who did not employ the rhetoric of outsiderhood, but instead sought to lay claim to mainstream status. By identifying some specific examples of those who construed themselves to

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<sup>316</sup> See, for example: Jacques Derrida, *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).



be “insiders” and examining the ways that they responded to the “outsiders” in this project, we can add depth to our understanding of the ways psychiatry, religion, and politics were interconnected during this era. I then turn to an analysis of the reasons for why the consensus that the authors in this project strove to build upon the intersections of religion, politics, and psychology, did not cohere within the institutional structures of any of those realms, but still pervaded other aspects of American culture. The development of new theories and movements displaced the debate about psychoanalysis, religion, and politics. The existential humanistic psychology school, the anti-psychiatry impulse, and the growing prevalence of psycho pharmaceuticals all contributed to a culture within psychology in which the connection between Freud and religion no longer seemed so politically relevant.

At the outset of this project, we found one self-prescribed insider, James Putnam, assuming that the best way for psychoanalysis to influence American culture would be in the hands of the liberal Protestants that he believed continued to advance mainstream progress. He ended up withdrawing his support from the ministers involved in the Emmanuel movement because they appeared as renegades against another type of dominance – the professionalizing medical community. While Putnam was holding a leadership position in the neurology department at Harvard, Karl Menninger (1893-1990) was attending the University’s medical school. Like Putnam, Menninger came to see himself as working at the vanguard of mainstream American professional psychiatry, while remaining a committed Protestant – an insider in both realms. Menninger’s responses to some of the authors in this project help us to explore the ways that notions of outsiderhood contributed to the complexities in modern psychiatric and religious discourses.

Menninger’s differing responses to Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish thinkers and his efforts to maintain a distinctively American, yet Freudian, vision of

psychoanalysis demonstrate that Putnam's ideas about the natural relationship between psychoanalysis, America, and liberal Protestantism continued to pervade many realms of professional psychiatry in the World War II and post-war years. Psychology remained a field that identified itself more with liberal protestant models of belief rather than those of Jews or Catholics. "Outsiders" did face a degree of skepticism and doubt, as Menninger illustrates. Menninger's colleague Gordon Allport, however, serves as a good example for why psychoanalysis – at this time -- also offered some useful inroads for Jews and Catholics hoping to substantiate a relationship between their own religious views and the medical, psychiatric professions. The role of "outsiders" in this context was complicated. Some of the prominent leaders in their fields held to a Protestant center, others pointed to tolerance and diversity as increasingly vital components. All sought to incorporate psychoanalysis into distinctively democratic and American methodologies and theories.

***Insiders: Karl Menninger and Gordon Allport***

Menninger's obituary in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* noted that he had been referred to as the "Dean of American Psychiatry." Under his guidance, the Menninger family's clinic in Topeka Kansas became a center for innovative psychiatry. Its website celebrates Menninger as the psychiatrist who "translated Sigmund Freud, the world's first psychoanalyst, into American literature." His *The Human Mind* was published in 1930, became a Literary Guild selection, and sold 200,000 copies. The clinic's literature refers to his "unraveling of Freud" as "the key to Dr. Karl's initial fame" which "popularized his name with a public hungry to learn more about its inner self". Historians of psychiatry have been eager to place Menninger in a central role. "In his work," psychiatrist Robert Coles said of Menninger, "there is an encounter

between American intuitive psychological wisdom and the European spirit of psychoanalysis, which he made part of the training of a whole generation of psychiatrists.”<sup>317</sup>

Karl Menninger was deeply committed to psychoanalysis. He maintained that Freud’s “grasp, his formulations are so infinitely ahead of anything else that has been proposed that I have nailed my banner on his mast, and I’ll defend it against assault for the rest of my life.” Whether Freud would have appreciated the manner in which he pursued this defense is debatable, but Menninger did indeed become a vociferous contributor to the popularization and professionalization of psychoanalysis in America. Karl’s younger brother, William, worked with him to define the role that psychoanalysis should play in America. As president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, William led efforts to blur the distinctions between psychiatry and psychoanalysis. His activities were characterized as attempts to “Americanize” and “medicalize” Freud. Proposing to relegate theoretical discord to the past and focus upon making psychoanalysis a practical part of psychiatric treatment, William and his cohort stood in opposition to many of the orthodox émigrés. Historian, Rebecca Plant suggests that this pressure prompted some émigrés to actually abandon the social implications of Freud’s ideas in order to refute the Americans’ political agenda. Clearly, the Menningers were interested in establishing themselves as authorities over an Americanized psychoanalytic profession.<sup>318</sup>

A lifelong Presbyterian, Karl also perceived himself to be a loyal Christian. He supported efforts to integrate religion and psychiatry and celebrated the work of

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<sup>317</sup> Oedipal wrecks: has a century of Freud bred a country of narcissists? Washington Monthly, Jan-Feb, 1992 by E. Fuller Torrey;  
Rebecca Jo Plant, “William Menninger and American psycho-analysis, 1946–48” The History of Psychiatry, 16(2) 2005. “The Kansas Moralist,” Time Magazine, August 6, 1973.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

Protestant minister Norman Vincent Peale. In his responses to overt outsiders, however, he revealed a marked distaste for alternative views on both religion and psychiatry, particularly in his assessments of Erich Fromm and Gregory Zilboorg. He upbraided Fromm for loose interpretations of Freud and of psychoanalysis' connection to religion, while suggesting that Zilboorg's commitment to Catholicism limited his rational abilities. Karl, in this context, perceived himself to be the ultimate "insider" – a leader in his profession and a spokesperson for liberal Protestantism in America.<sup>319</sup>

During the 1950's, Menninger took it upon himself to patrol the literature on pastoral counseling and expose those who did not adhere to his own understanding of the relationship between religion and psychiatry. In 1950, he wrote to Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature* to defend Norman Vincent Peale and Smiley Blanton against a negative review of their *The Art of Real Happiness*. He railed against the author of the review, Jewish psychiatrist, Frederic Wertham. Peale, in all likelihood, appealed to Menninger as both a liberal Protestant and a minister who supported psychoanalysis without aspiring overtly to reinterpret it for himself.

Menninger explained that:

Dr. Wertham doesn't speak for American psychiatry or represent preponderant psychiatric thinking when he dismisses religion and theology as of no contribution to psychiatric thinking and practice. Faith and the other components of religion are a very real force in the live of most people, and no psychiatry can be considered sound which attempts to ignore any powerful reality. We certainly do not need to be reminded that religious interpretations have at times obstructed science, but it would be equally unfortunate if science,

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<sup>319</sup>Jack L. Ross, "Karl A. Menninger – 1893-1990", *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1991, 60:276-280; "The History of the Menninger Clinic" [www.menningerclinic.org](http://www.menningerclinic.org) . (Accessed April 2007).

including the science of psychiatry, were so presumptuous as to attempt to obstruct religion.<sup>320</sup>

While he defended Peale against a negative review, Menninger opposed positive reviews of those he deemed to be unorthodox in either their Christianity or their Psychoanalysis.

In 1953, he wrote to the editor of information services at the National Council of Churches of Christ in New York to protest as “my Christian and professional duty” some evaluative terms applied to the authors of reviewed books. Menninger viewed his Christian duty to include making clear distinctions between orthodox and neo-Freudians. His staunchest criticism fell upon Erich Fromm:

Dr. Fromm is noted all right, but not altogether in the good sense you infer. Dr. Fromm is a dissident from the psychoanalytic group and at present has gone to Mexico where he is instructing Mexican physicians in his peculiar kind of psychoanalysis which the poor Mexican doctors will assume to be approved in America, which it is not. However proper this may look to you as a layman it has the same effect on psychoanalysts who are earnestly committed to teaching the science as we have mutually agreed to be the best way to do just as you would look upon a dissident in the Presbyterian Church, let us say, being a missionary in Mexico and preaching, for example, that Jesus was not a Jew and really lived in North Africa, and thought that Mohammed was one of his prophets. It may all be in the interest of better behavior and more love for one’s fellow man, but not Christianity as you may view it....<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Letter to Norman Cousins, April 25, 1950 in *The Selected Correspondence of Karl Menninger*, Howard Faulkner, ed. (University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 1995) pp. 96-97.

<sup>321</sup> Karl Menninger, letter to the editor, Nov. 5, 1953, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 123-4.

Menninger expressed similar concerns when he found Fromm lauded in the *Pastoral Psychology*. “I am very disappointed and saddened by the fact that *Pastoral Psychology* should boost, and the book club select, a book by Erich Fromm who is persona non grata to so many psychiatrists and psychoanalysts.”<sup>322</sup>

Menninger’s issues with Fromm were not overtly motivated by aversion to Fromm’s Jewish intellectual background, but rather to his outsider position within the psychoanalytic community. As a neo-orthodox Freudian, Fromm stood beyond Menninger’s perceived realm of comfort. Fromm’s interest in the religious connotations of psychoanalysis served to extend this distance. Menninger expressed apprehension about revealing his own engagement with religious topics because of its association with “renegade” analysts. “I just feel nervous about having to stand up in a meeting of psychoanalysts and admit that I have an interest in the field of religion”, he confided, “when I know that this is going to mean to them Outler, Horney, Fromm and Sullivan.” Fears of embarrassment are not usually central to the rebel or outsider’s approach to public speaking. Menninger’s concerns reveal his commitment to remaining on the “inside” within his professional community. Menninger’s hesitancy to mix with Fromm, when viewed beside his zeal for Peale, highlights his ambivalence towards non-Protestants.<sup>323</sup>

His discussions of Catholicism, however, reveal much more deeply rooted theological and ideological biases. These become evident in his correspondence with the analytically more orthodox, and theologically dogmatic, Zilboorg. While Menninger had no quarrel with Zilboorg’s commitment to Freud, he found the Catholic convert’s religious zeal troubling. In 1947, Menninger invited Zilboorg to

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<sup>322</sup> Karl Menninger, letter to Daniel Blain, DC, sept 26, 1955, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 172.

<sup>323</sup> Menninger, *Selected Correspondence*. 153.

address his students in Topeka. At this point, Zilboorg was in the process of converting to Catholicism. After his presentation, Zilboorg wrote Menninger to complain that the students “were uncomfortable with and hostile to his own religious beliefs.” In his response, Menninger revealed his personal reservations about Zilboorg’s introduction of Catholic ideas into a discussion of psychoanalysis, as well as reasons for why the students seemed inhospitable.<sup>324</sup>

Menninger wondered if Zilboorg “really wanted” to receive an explanation for why some of the “men” concluded that he was “anti-Semitic” and “seemed intolerant towards religious tolerance.” He insisted that the students were not antagonized by Zilboorg’s espousal of religious tolerance – as Zilboorg suggested – because they knew that Menninger himself was religious and were “not only tolerant but to a considerable degree sympathetic.” The problem for Menninger and the students was in understanding Zilboorg’s “enthusiasm for the theory and philosophy of the Church that has condoned Franco, Mussolini, South and Central American ignorance and misery, among other things.” While Menninger tried to assure Zilboorg that he did not harbor any anti-Catholic bias and argued that his opposition was not to Catholic theology but to the Church’s politics, he ended up complaining that his guest “seemed absolutely enthusiastic” about “Catholic philosophy and ideology in general” and chose to defend them on “Thomistic principles *which* for all their appeal to you and some others, continue to sound – even with your generous interpretation of them – like sly and evasive doubletalk.” He criticized Zilboorg for his efforts to “humble” the audience with the impression that “he has read prodigiously and discovered ‘the Truth’!”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Menninger, letter to Zilboorg, Feb 27, 1947, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 51.

<sup>325</sup> Menninger letter to Zilboorg, March 18, 1947, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 52-53.

Menninger's concerns seem to extend beyond Catholic politics to engage what he perceived to be the Catholic methodology of intellectual inquiry. In his criticism of Zilboorg's use of Catholic philosophy, Menninger argued vigorously in favor of the pragmatism that colored American liberal Protestant debate. Menninger's notion of tolerance could not embrace the notion of a single universal church:

There are several million Protestants in the world and several million intelligent Jews, and they are not all fools nor are they all entirely ignorant of Aristotelianism and Thomism. There *are* other tenable views, you know, and the wish to be heard and the wish to be fairly represented exists even on the part of agnostics, Jews and Protestant Christians! The men felt a considerable inconsistency in the fact that you, a Jew and a Friend, seemed to champion the philosophy of a group that regards Jews and Friends as apostates. It seemed like some kind of a gymnastic trick. That is what disturbed the boys Gregory.<sup>326</sup>

Menninger concluded by asserting that Zilboorg's representation of Catholicism as a "final answer for all time and for all people" was simply incompatible with his own, and his students', understandings of intellectual exchange and scientific investigation. Menninger argued that "religious experience is one manifestation of psychological experience and seems...to be properly open to the same kind of scientific investigation that any other kind of psychological experience is." The students, in Menninger's view, felt that Zilboorg tried to posit religious experience above scientific inquiry rather than within it. "Now William James and I and a number of *Protestants* might argue with or against you on this question but I don't think we or anyone else could

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<sup>326</sup> Menninger letter to Zilboorg, March 18, 1947, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 52-53.



discuss it with you if the matter is closed by the inference that Aquinas studied it all out, and found the final answer for all time and for all people.”

Menninger and his students demonstrate the strong bond that continued to exist between professional psychiatry, pragmatic philosophy, and liberal Protestant religion. Zilboorg’s response, however, along with Gordon Allport’s arguments about prejudice and tolerance, demonstrate that the cultural and political climate of World War II opened up a realm of discourse in which the emphasis of outsiderhood became a powerful rhetorical strategy. The very concerns about close-mindedness that Menninger articulated became tools for Zilboorg’s efforts to defend his views. They played an even stronger role in shaping the way that ideas from and about Jews came to be interpreted.

Zilboorg defended his “rhetorical strategies” by equating those who criticize Catholics for their insistence on universality with those who criticize orthodox Freudians for behaving as if they are “in possession of all of the answers” and “as if no one has a right to argue with the analysts” since “the anti-analysts have no access to the unconscious, since their cold, logical, purely external observations of man mean nothing without true knowledge of the language of the unconscious.” While Zilboorg may sound as if he is insulting the Freudians for being stubborn, he intended to criticize the “anti-analysts” and strike a nerve in Menninger. He went on to rail against the rhetorical strategies of all who are “anti” – “the anti-communist, the anti-Catholic, the anti-analysts are all made (psychologically) of the same stuff; their *anti* particle.” He equates those who dismiss St. Thomas from a position of ignorance of his views with those who criticize Freud without fully understanding of his theories. “Take Msr. Sheen’s recent attack on psychoanalysis,” Zilboorg suggested, “it is as stubborn, ignorant, emotional, and therefore as frightfully aggressive, as the Marxists

critique of psychoanalysis and as some psychoanalysts critique of Thomas Aquinas”

Zilboorg concluded:

Surely Protestants and Jews have points of view which have been thought out, worked over, and deserve deep respect. I never showed any disrespect to them. Of course, the Catholic hierarchy has done the bloodiest things in this world, as has the American Democracy in the case of Greece and Turkey, as it did in 1918-1919 toward Russia. Does American Democracy become wrong because of that series of reactionary crimes committed by Truman and Wilson? One should not confuse the essence of things with the stupidity with which human beings in their frailty administer these good things. One should not attack psychoanalysis b/c there are bad analysts, Catholicism b/c there are bad priests, communism, b/c there are bad communists. This is the fundamental issue and this I found to be the substance of Topeka's atmosphere when I lectured on religion.<sup>327</sup>

While his retort is marked by personal defensiveness, Zilboorg employs arguments that, used to far greater effect, would resonate in Gordon Allport's influential work on prejudice. Zilboorg railed against using specific incidents to condemn general groups and against centering arguments upon bifurcated oppositions.

Zilboorg was not, however, able to reconcile his use of Thomism with Menninger's understanding of pragmatic, enlightened discourse. This points, perhaps, to a major reason why, while writers like Stern and Zilboorg were able to effectively equate broad Catholic and religious ideals with psychoanalysis and American democracy, they did not ignite a general enthusiasm for Catholic philosophy among their peers. The political climate did not imbue Catholic outsiderhood with the same

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<sup>327</sup> Zilboorg to Menninger, March 27, 1947, in Menninger, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 53-54.

psychological import as Jewish perspectives. Catholics themselves, meanwhile, were not united in their support of Freud – Fulton Sheen would attest to that. Gordon Allport (1897-1967) provides an illustration of the ways that rhetoric that entwined Jewish, rather than Catholic, outsider status, and insight proved to be better suited to the cultural and political climate of debate.

Allport has already figured prominently in this project. Because of his esteemed professional position as a Harvard psychologist, Allport was frequently called upon to introduce new works in the field. His laudatory remarks endorsed books by both Liebman and Frankl. Allport was a devout Episcopalian, but vigorously supported religious diversity.<sup>328</sup>

Within the professional community, he played a moderating and conciliatory role among the different schools, while also challenging entrenched ideologies. While he embraced Freud's recognition of the unconscious and historic influences on an individual's psychological development, Allport was not an orthodox Freudian. During the 1930's, Allport had already begun to advance some of the ideas proffered by our subjects. Historian Katherine Pandora has demonstrated the Allport challenged the behaviorist status quo in American social science. Influenced by William James' empiricist philosophy and Social Gospel theology, Allport developed critiques of scientific authority and democratic realities. As in the work of the thinkers I have been analyzing, the nexus between the social and the individual lay at the center of his theories. Allport, along with his colleagues Gardner and Lois Murphy, argued for the significance of individuality, context, and diversity as scientific concepts and components of democracy.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> Thomas Pettigrew, "Gordon Willard Allport: A Tribute," *Journal of Social Issues*, Fall 1999.

<sup>329</sup> Katherine Pandora, *Rebels within the Ranks: Psychologists' Critique of Scientific Authority and Democratic Realities in New Deal America*. [Cambridge Studies in the History of Psychology.] (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

These ideals were evidenced in Allport's seminal work, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937). Allport sought an "image of man" that would "allow us to test in full whatever democratic and humane potentialities that he might possess." He was convinced that American psychology gave man less than his due by depicting him as a bundle of unrelated reaction tendencies." Rather than perceiving human beings as collections of drives, traits and reactions, Allport believed that the overarching structure of personality was a motivating force in itself." While he preferred psychoanalysis to the behaviorism that marked much of cognitive psychology in the 1930's, he criticized an "overemphasis" on unconscious processes just as he assailed "learning theory," and "simplified drive theories of motivation." Allport sought to understand behavior as "expressive" rather than depicting it in either the "reactionary" or "projective" frameworks that he believed governed behavioral and psychoanalytic theory. He explained that his opposition to behaviorism was rooted not only in apprehension towards its theoretical constructs, but in the way that it influenced scientific methodology as well:

I am not fond of the label 'behavior sciences' now in vogue...to me it somehow implies that if we were all to embrace the creeds of positivism and behaviorism, all our problems would be solved. I cannot agree. Our methods would be restricted our theories one-sided, and our students would be intimidated by a tyrannical and temporary scientism.<sup>330</sup>

Like many of our thinkers, Allport feared that science driven by positivism and behaviorism would become tyrannical. Like Freud, he saw personality development as a process of growing maturity. But he also drew upon Bergson and James to

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<sup>330</sup> Gordon Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. (New York: Henry Holt, 1937) pp. 394, 404, 406.

emphasize an orientation towards the future and the “course of growth and becoming.” Allport determined that “the irrelevance of much present-day psychology to human life comes from its emphasis on mechanical aspects of reactivity to the neglect of man’s wider experiences, his aspirations, and his incessant endeavor to master and to mold his environment...” He advocated a more pragmatic approach; a search for a “theoretical system” that would “allow for truth wherever found” and would “encompass the totality of human experience and do full justice to the nature of man.” Put simply, Allport wanted to preserve respect for the individual – the person – within personality theory.

How did Allport’s interest in tempering science with pragmatism and democratic ideals come to shape his enthusiasm for Liebman and Frankl’s work? Shared ideals and philosophical approaches played a role. Our subjects joined Allport in his enthusiasm for pragmatism and the enlightenment. I would argue, too, that World War II bent Allport’s attention to prejudice and diversity in ways that prompted him to grant particular significance to authors who claimed outsiderhood. As discussed in Chapter 5, writings from psychologists and psychoanalysts played important roles in the way that Americans responded to World War II and the Holocaust. Like Liebman, Fromm, Zilboorg, Stern, Frankl, and each of the memoirists covered in chapter six, Allport urgently insisted that there was continuity among inner experience, social interactions, religious beliefs, and the greater good. Allport’s “democracy of the mind” centered on the avoidance of prejudice and the maintenance of tolerance.

Like Fromm, Liebman, and Greenberg, Allport emphasized the unique psychological implications of war. He believed that psychology had important obligations during wartime. Encouraging research on topics from analysis of Hitler’s character to studies of wartime rumors, Allport urged active professional contribution

to war efforts. His views converge dramatically, however, with those of our subjects in his investigation of prejudice after the war. Here we find Allport's rhetorical strategies and substantive arguments mirroring those covered throughout this project. Just as Greenberg posited prejudice at the root of her mental illness, Allport suggested that mental illness played a role in the development of prejudice. Just as Liebman, Stern, Zilboorg, and Freeman, for example, believed that successful democracies were supported by individuals with healthy inner lives and that internal health was bolstered by participation in strong, free communities, Allport argued that tolerant societies were born in the minds of their individual members.

In 1948, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith published a "Freedom Pamphlet" based on a course about minority group problems that Allport conducted for Boston and Cambridge police officers in 1947. Allport centers his arguments on the dangers of "scapegoating" which he refers to as a "disease of the social organism," and a "moral cancer." To eradicate this illness, Allport advocates "curative and preventative medicine" in the form of "healthful conditioning of our minds." He looks to the example of Nazi Germany as a dangerous warning and traces its psychological roots. Arguing that the German tragedy was a specific example of an ancient and general psychological tendency, a regression, Allport opens his work with an excerpt from Leviticus that he believes illustrates the primitive mentality of scapegoating: "And the goat shall bear upon him all their inequalities." (Leviticus 16:22).<sup>331</sup>

Allport describes the Biblical rituals that accompanied the ancient Day of Atonement, when guilt was symbolically transferred to a goat who was then released – hence, the origins of the term "scapegoating." Noting that "everywhere we see our human tendency to revert to this primitive level of thinking and to seek a scapegoat –

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<sup>331</sup> Gordon Allport, "ABC's of Scapegoating" (Cambridge, MA: Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1947) pp. 38, 1.

some object or animal, or more oftentimes some luckless human being – who may be saddled with blame for our own misfortunes and misdeeds,” Allport determines that “‘civilized’ people are still primitive in their thinking.” He describes the development of Nazism as an emotional and psychological process:

Nazis were, in reality, trying to shift a burden of intolerable shame, guilt and frustration from the German people to a convenient goat, in this case selected not by lot but by the macabre course of history...irritation, shame, and a sense of failure had been smoldering in German bosoms since 1918. Then, under direction from Hitler, Rosenberg, Streicher, and Goebbels, these fierce emotions became focused upon the Jew, and pent-up savagery overflowed with unspeakable violence.<sup>332</sup>

Mirroring the majority of our subjects, Allport posited a psychological and emotional phenomenon at the roots of Nazism. Like many of them, he too extrapolated, from the Nazi example, spiritual and psychological tendencies that called for urgent attention among Americans. He warned that prejudice is universal and pointed to the race riots in 1943 as evidence that Americans, like the Germans, were prone to it. Citing our mixed population,” “the strains and irritations of the cold war,” and “the confusion of thought that occurs in times like this,” Allport asserts that America provides “fertile soil for prejudice and scapegoating.” He augured that though the “resiliency of democracy” is strong enough to withstand frictions in “ordinary times”, “the picture is blacker in times of postwar disruption.” Prejudice and blame-casting, in Allport’s view, threaten to “break over into irrational, degenerative scapegoating, destructive to the democratic ideal of equality and opportunity for all men.” He concludes that scapegoating and democracy cannot co-

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<sup>332</sup> Allport, *ABC's of Scapegoating*, p. 5-6.

exist. It is for this reason,” Allport insists, “that our battle against scapegoating is an important phase of the battle for democracy within our nation and within the world.”<sup>333</sup>

Because leaders in psychology like Allport insisted that the internal demons that urged Germans towards Hitler were the most potent dangers to American freedoms as well, the views of those who could claim unique insight into the Nazi world-view seemed particularly relevant. Against this backdrop, Jewish identity became a marker of perception. The status of the European immigrant and the oppressed mentally ill, too, gained in significance. The rise of Nazism and the Holocaust were rapidly gaining mythic significance in America, not the least because of their psychological resonance. The ability of our subjects, however, to engage the attention of professionals like Allport stems from more than their standing as “outsiders of significance.” Their efforts to construct world views and theoretical methodologies that accommodated spirituality and psychoanalysis within an Enlightenment approach made sense in the cultural climate that followed World War II.

This discussion of Menninger and Allport serves to illustrate a variety of factors that shaped our subjects’ reception: the two demonstrate that liberal Protestants continued to hold leadership roles in the field of psychology as it engaged psychoanalysis during and after World War II. Menninger’s reservations about Fromm and Zilboorg reveal that he perceived those “outsiders” to be problematic. His doubts were not attached to ethnic prejudice or anti-religious sentiments, but to intellectual disputes with the way that each thinker brought their religious views into their analysis of psychoanalysis. Both Menninger and Allport, however, were extremely interested in the issues that all of our subjects addressed: the links between

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<sup>333</sup> Gordon Allport, “ABC’s of Scapegoating”, p. 38.



internal and external freedom and health. Allport explained why he believed that a diversity of opinions and special attention to marginalized thinkers would enhance the realm of discourse. For our subjects, this meant that their efforts to enter discussions about psychoanalysis, religion, and politics were colored by their disparate identities as “outsiders” -- in ways both positive and negative – but definitive nonetheless.

***Humanistic Psychology, Psychopharmacology, and Anti-Psychiatry:***

Recognizing that our subjects made distinctive contributions to their fields in the years during and after World War II leads us back to one of the questions that opened this dissertation: why have these writers been relatively ignored by a historiography that continues to premise a Protestant and secular adaptation of Freud in America? We may also be led to wonder why our subjects’ enthusiasm for entwining religious and psychoanalytic ideas did not lead to more institutionalized changes in churches and academies. I would argue that the ideas articulated by our subjects were influential in shaping several future developments in psychology: the existential humanistic psychology movement and the anti-psychiatry movement. Our subjects’ themes, however, were also displaced by these very movements as they turned the foci of debate in different directions, abandoning our thinkers’ emphasis on enlightenment, consensus, historic religions, and semi-orthodox analysis. Both humanistic psychology and anti-psychiatry, as world-views, often allied with the American 1960’s counter-cultural movement. As a trend that maligned enlightenment approaches, the counter-culture was less amenable to those seeking to root out the irrational and re-establish commitments to reasoned, ordered thought processes. Ultimately, too, the development of psychopharmacology, and changes in the religious landscape, also recast the rhetorical situation for our subjects’ views.

Though shaped by Freudian ideas about talk therapy and the unconscious, and led by a number of neo-orthodox analysts, humanistic psychology defined itself in opposition to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Thus, efforts to reconcile psychoanalysis with historic religious traditions did not figure prominently in the movement. Ideas inspired by the enlightenment, however, faith in the individual ability to reason and exert free will, a commitment to democracy, and open discourse, did pervade the movement. While embracing our subjects' efforts to bolster external democracy by encouraging an inner life that adhered to democratic principles, the humanistic movement diverted interest away from orthodox versions of both psychoanalysis and religion. Without these defined philosophical structures, some of the psychological theories that it encompassed lost their cohesion. While orthodox psychoanalysts worked hard to define themselves as scientists working with empirical ideas, humanistic psychologists blurred the boundaries between science and philosophy more overtly.

Perhaps for this reason, humanistic psychology began to gain momentum as a cultural phenomenon, while distancing itself from the psychiatric community. The movement faced criticism from theorists of science, who argued that it lacked an empirical methodology. Humanistic psychologists – Abraham Maslow, Eric Ericson, and Rollo May, for example – made sharp distinction between “psychology” and “psychiatry”. Their ideas would be classified by historians of medicine as “cognitive” --centered on thought processes. Ideas about self-actualization, priorities of needs, and personality types figured prominently in their work. Elements of psychoanalysis colored these techniques. Carl Rogers' person-centered therapy, for example, aimed to remove impediments to patients' growth and freedom by providing individuals with non-directive, yet positive, responses. Like psychoanalysts, Rogers aimed to remove

neuroses and problems, leaving a freely-choosing, free-willed individual. He did not, however, delve into what he perceived to be the unconscious to do so.

During the 1960's, humanistic psychologists established organizations like the Esalen Institute in Big Sur California. They became fascinated by Eastern religions and alternative medicine, while growing increasingly alienated from medical psychiatry and traditional religion. Consequently, the type of psychotherapy that evolved came to be a sort of supplement to the psychiatric medications that were becoming increasingly common. While orthodox psychoanalysts had insisted upon operating within established scientific and medical environments – earning M.D.s and maintaining ties to hospitals – the wide array of therapies and ideals that gathered beneath the canopy of humanistic psychology assumed a supplemental role.

The entire face of psychiatry, however, began to change during the years in which the Humanistic movement evolved. Two major forces emerged: psychopharmacology and the anti-psychiatry movement. The first developed within the medical field, the later in external, academic realms.

When Ward, Freeman, and Greenberg created their accounts of mental health treatment, they understood “biological” methods to be intrusive, radical, and crude measures. When they railed against the tyranny of the medical methods, these women had in mind electroshock, physical restraint, and lobotomies. Drug therapy was a nascent approach. Much had changed, however, by the mid 1960's. The antihistamine, Thorazine, was approved for psychiatric use in the United States in 1954. Thorazine became known as the drug that emptied the asylums in the 1950's because its anti-psychotic qualities were so effective, particularly on schizophrenics. By the 1960's, America's mental health system was actively pursuing the goal of deinstitutionalization. Drugs that enabled mental patients to function outside of institutions cast the women's critiques in a different light. Ostensibly, the segregation

and restrictive measures that had plagued those diagnosed with mental illness seemed to be obviated. The increasing successes of drugs that treated not just schizophrenia but also depression and bi-polar disorder seemed to challenge the notion that enlightenment and reason were the keys to obtaining mental health. Chemical manipulation, instead, seemed to offer relief.<sup>334</sup>

Ward, Freeman, and Greenberg, however, were not just critiquing mental health care, or even just hoping to alleviate their own suffering. They were seeking, in their understanding of their illnesses and recovery, meaning. Freeman and Greenberg became practicing Jews after their therapy. Like our other subjects, they did not view mental health as a state that could be obtained by using a medication to alter biological realities or remove symptoms. They argued that the ability to think freely and clearly was part of a much larger project – the maintenance of social, political health and vitality. Like Liebman, Frankl, and Zilboorg, they viewed both psychoanalytic and spiritual health as vital for all members of democracies, not just the sick.

By the late 1960's the struggle between proponents of psychoanalysis and those of biological treatments had been displaced by a new player in the debate, the "anti-psychiatry movement." Challenges to the authority of psychiatry appeared on both popular and academic levels. As historian Edward Shorter notes, "a consensus had formed that the discipline of psychiatry was an illegitimate form of social control and that psychiatrists' power to lock people up must be abolished with the abolition of institutionalized psychiatric care..." Institutionalized care was indeed being abolished during the sixties, as patients were increasingly treated with drugs that enabled them to live more independently and as economic constraints made long-term residential facilities prohibitive.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Peter Kramer, *Listening to Prozac* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

<sup>335</sup> Shorter, p. 277.

There was a deeper shift at play, however, in the way that mental illness itself was construed. Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), for example, suggested that insanity itself may be a liberating force in a society that he understood to be repressive and emasculating. He, in effect, flipped the notion that psychoanalysis leads to a liberation of the mind to say that it is not the treatment, but the insanity itself, that fosters freedom and offers insight. Ronald Liang, in *The Divided Self* (1960) employs this strategy of reversal as well, insisting that madness opens the individual to illumination and perception.

Another philosopher, Thomas Szasz, in *Myth of Mental Illness* (1960) supposed that mental illness was a "cultural construction" or a "myth." Szasz argued that mental illnesses are metaphoric – they are "like" physical ailments, but cannot be detected or quantified by empirical means. "Heart break" in his assessment, is very different from a "heart attack." Arguing that modern psychiatrists address the "problems with living" that have plagued people for centuries, Szasz asserted that these doctors were simply taking up the roles and authority formerly held by priests and clergy. Because of psychiatrists' influence in the legal system, Szasz believed that psychiatry had become a modern state religion; a form of social control.<sup>336</sup>

Szasz's views were embraced by the Church of Scientology and in 1969 that group established the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, an organization dedicated to denouncing psychiatry in all forms. The ways that Scientologists discussed the relationship between psychiatry and religion provide an ironic counterpoint to our subjects' views. Like our subjects, Scientology's leaders advocated practices aimed towards releasing the individual from inner restraints or

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<sup>336</sup> Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York: Hoeber-Harper, 1961), Ronald Liang, *The Divided Self* (New York : Pantheon books, 1960), Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

barriers to free thought. Like psychoanalysts, Scientologists believe that unconscious memories of trauma or pain can lead to crippling neurosis. Unlike our thinkers however, Scientologists did not look to either established churches or to professional psychiatry for enlightenment. They, instead, followed the teachings of science fiction writer, L. Ron Hubbard. In *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (1950) Hubbard outlined the major beliefs that he would expand and expound upon throughout his life. The organization that advanced his techniques, Scientology, was founded in 1954. Hubbard later characterized Scientology as not simply a self-help movement, but a new religion.

Scientologists were not interested in reforming or adapting psychoanalysis or any other aspects of psychiatry. Nor were they eager to embrace historical religions. They adhered to the complete cosmology that Hubbard established. Within their world view, an individual is an immortal soul that has lived many past lives and will continue to live after death. Problems and neurosis are the result of engrams – negative experiences or memories embedded in the unconscious. These barriers to mental health may stem from trauma during the current life, or they may be the result of pain from a past life. Other hindrances to mental health may be caused by implants, disturbances embedded in the unconscious during the reign of extraterrestrial dictators in the distant past. As in psychoanalysis, therapy occurs in an individualized setting. The removal of engrams and implants is a joint effort between the patient and a more experienced practitioner. The goal is to achieve a state of “clear” and to be a fully functioning spiritual being. These basic ideas have begat myriad further guidelines, recommended paraphernalia, and institutional structures.

Above all, however, Scientology has become an insular pursuit – resistant to the advice or censure of outsiders. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why Scientologists have remained vehemently hostile towards psychiatry. Rather than

perceiving psychoanalysis as a technique with goals similar to their own, Scientologists have classified it as just one more facet on the surface of “Psychiatry: an Industry of Death.”

Scientologists have not simply critiqued behaviorism or biological approaches. They have not aimed to reform psychiatry. They have, instead, declared war upon it. Like some other anti-psychiatrists, Scientologists do not believe that there is any biological evidence to support the view that mental illnesses are, in fact, diseases. Because of this, Hubbard asserted that psychiatrists were merely extortionists, demanding payment for the treatment of a non-existent ailment. Hubbard further suspected that psychiatrists, as a group, were likely to take advantage of their authority positions to commit rape and pedophilic assault. Scientologists have come to believe that individual members of the psychiatric community are not simply prone to extortion and perversion, but that they are all aligned in a larger conspiracy to destroy modern society. In 2005, Scientologists established a museum: “Psychiatry: an Industry of Death”. Their displays link psychiatrists to Hitler and the 9-11 terrorists. They blame the deaths of mentally ill celebrities like Kurt Cobain, Del Shannon, and Earnest Hemmingway, on psychiatrists. According to Scientologists, the proliferation of Ritalin and Prozac use stems from an organized effort on the part of psychiatrists to drug and subdue individuals.<sup>337</sup>

Szasz’ and the Scientologists’ construction of psychiatry as an “industry of death” is one rather extreme manifestation of “anti-psychiatry” from a libertarian and sectarian perspective. A different form of the critique began to emerge within academic discussions of “Post-modernism.” From the ranks of philosophers, Michel

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<sup>337</sup> L. Ron Hubbard, *Scientology: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (New York: Hermitage House, 1950), J. Gordon Melton, *Scientology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2000), Kevin Liben, “Torture or just Plain Torque: ‘Psychiatry: and Industry of Death’ Walks a Fine Line” *National Post*. Aug. 9, 2007 (accessed Sept. 1, 2007).

Foucault construed the classical unified subject and the pursuit of objective science to be the hallmarks of modernism. Post-modernism, in his view, addressed the limitations of these constructs. Foucault argued, in *Madness and Civilization*, that asylums and psychiatry were part of the repressive and homogenizing forces that had originated during the Enlightenment to squelch free thought and impose order and surveillance upon the populace. Foucault argued that efforts to medicalize and explain madness trivialized genuine engagement with irrational forces like excess and disorientation. Creativity, in his view, could emerge from a confrontation with madness. Defining such engagements as mental illnesses is a reductionary act on the part of modern societies, in Foucault's view.<sup>338</sup>

Foucault recognized Freud for initiating an epistemological shift in the means and ends of psychiatry by emphasizing the intimate therapeutic engagement of doctor and patient. By urging patients to talk and by assigning logical meaning to their experiences Freud "abolished silence and observation, he eliminated madness's recognition of itself in the mirror of its own spectacle, he silenced the instances of condemnation." In Freud, Foucault recognized a departure from a world-view in which the mad were put on display and their ideas cast as meaningless delusions. Foucault ultimately, however, linked Freud to the asylum directors who insisted upon institutionalized regulation and restraint, and the moral therapists who foisted internal controls upon their patients. Freud, by defining himself as a scientist and representing his methods as therapeutic, embedded himself within the modern mentality. He invested the analyst with the power to judge and assess:

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<sup>338</sup> Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York : Viking Press, 1962); Ronald Laing, *The Divided Self*, (New York : Pantheon books, 1960); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (New York : Pantheon Books, 1965); Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* (New York : Hoeber-Harper, 1961).



...he exploited the structure that enveloped the medical personage; he amplified its thaumaturgical virtues, preparing for its omnipotence a quasi-divine status. He focused upon this single presence--concealed behind the patient and above him, in an absence that is also a total presence--all the powers that had been distributed in the collective existence of the asylum; he transformed this into an absolute observation, a pure and circumspect Silence, a Judge who punishes and rewards in a judgment that does not even condescend to language; he made it the mirror in which madness, in an almost motionless movement, clings to and casts off itself.

Foucault recognized a quasi-religious tendency in psychoanalysis, as the process required faith in itself and in science. Foucault and his colleagues challenged world-views that posited enlightenment ideals, psychoanalytic practices, or supernatural religion as tools that would further liberation.<sup>339</sup>

Each of these developments – the engagement of humanistic psychologists with alternative religious and philosophical beliefs, the apparent success of pharmaceuticals in treating mental illness, and the multi-faceted critiques that formed the anti-psychiatry movement – transformed the parameters of discourse surrounding religion, psychology, and politics. The expansive range of humanistic psychology made the discipline seem less monolithic. When pharmaceuticals displaced shock treatments and long term hospitalizations, biologically based psychiatry seemed less in need of spiritually minded psychoanalysts to reform it. The anti-psychiatrists and the post-modernists challenged the notion that any organized therapeutic efforts based in modern methodologies would serve the common good. As these various ideas became more prominent, the power of psychoanalysis as a useful tool for reforming repressive

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<sup>339</sup> Foucault, *Madness*, pp. 276-278.

institutions lost much of its potency in the eyes of religious believers and spiritual seekers.

The rise of these three divergent ideas, however, also serves to highlight the level of intellectual consensus, among the writers in this project, that had evolved during the war and post war years. These writers were part of an intellectual cohort, not limited to the field of psychoanalysis, in the immediate post-war era, that made freedom and responsibility the central values of western democracy defined against all forms of totalitarian government. Psychoanalysis and religion both seemed to be ways to root out the dark forces of human consciousness that propelled the “escape from freedom.” That this consensus was embraced by Jews and Catholics attests to an ongoing American engagement with modernity and liberal religion that extended beyond the realm of Protestantism, which dominates most of the trenchant historiography.

***Conclusion: “Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo”***

Freud opened his revolutionary *Interpretation of Dreams* with a striking quote from Virgil that declared: “If I cannot bend the higher powers, I will move the infernal regions.” Some translations of the original Virgil report Junas exclaiming that if “I can not change the will of heaven, then I shall release hell.” Both interpretations seem pertinent to Freud, who insisted that, in using the phrase, he referred to his efforts to dredge the irrational contents of dreams up into conscious awareness. Carl Schorske, in an intriguing and controversial analysis, argues that because Freud felt powerless to change the overt power structures of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna – politics and academia – he sought instead to transform the way that internal, private processes were represented. As an outsider in anti-Semitic nineteenth century Vienna, Freud felt powerless to

challenge the higher powers of oppression that were imposing themselves upon his community, so he aimed instead at the depths of human experience.<sup>340</sup>

As a Jew in Anti-Semitic *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, Freud was clearly an outsider. As a liberal adherent to enlightenment ideals and politics, Freud was further marginalized by nationalist and ultimately fascist hegemony in Austria. If we take seriously an interpretation of his work that sees psychoanalysis as a subversive attempt to indirectly counter non-liberal forces, then Freud's efforts to "unleash" the powers of the unconscious seem to be a radical move towards undermining the repressive powers in his political world by orchestrating a confrontation of reason and free-will with hidden demons. Thus, it is not so surprising that his theories were embraced by various outsiders in America who believed that their own peripheral insights could salvage hope in the modern political ideal.

Foucault's analysis suggests that, though Freud would disagree, psychoanalysis retained the same thaumaturgical elements that made religion and science so alluring to modern thinkers. Writers who lived in or came to America found certain intellectual niches in which "faith" – whether in religion, psychology, or politics – still seemed a viable option. The notion of unified subjects seeking to understand and influence the social, physical, and spiritual worlds around them retained power among these thinkers, emboldened by their personal abilities to embrace belief. Thinkers in America, too, encountered ideas about diversity and consensus that were complex and subtle.

Joshua Liebman felt no qualms with the liberal Protestant "mythology" that defined the American story as a quest for freedom that originated with the Puritans. He simply asserted that Jews and Freud provided an even "better" version of that story by virtue of their peripheral standing within it. Catholics, too, supposed that the

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<sup>340</sup> Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

introduction of Catholic ideas to the critiques of Freud would render psychoanalysis more American and liberating. Victor Frankl did not see the Holocaust as the end of modernity and meaning-making, but instead looked to the depths of suffering among the Jewish victims for evidence of universal meaning. The memoirists, Ward, Freeman, and Greenberg, narrated their illnesses as quests for meaning, understanding, and freedom. All sought political relevance for their internal states. These writers whose senses of themselves had been defined by the World War II era understood psychoanalysis and religion to stand in diametric opposition to behaviorism and biological treatments, as well as to political repression and totalitarianism. Like Freud, they held to the enlightenment and modernity as keys to the maintenance of democracy and freedom.

Our thinkers, however, had access to ideas about “heaven” that would not have been available to Freud in 1900 Vienna. Operating in a culture that had historically been “awash in a sea of faith,” Jews and Catholics in World War II and post-war America saw a nation that – for all of its prejudices and conflicts – did have certain historic traditions and texts that took religious freedom, diversity, and relevance seriously. Immigrants like Stern, fleeing death camps in Germany, must have seen America, separated from that hell by an ocean, as an opportunity for heaven. At the very least, they had the freedom to suggest that their supernatural visions of heaven were relevant there. The years following World War II were, of course, colored by emotions more invidious than pride and optimism. The threat of totalitarianism also shaped a cold war mentality of fear and suspicion that centered on the “enemy” within and succumbed to the temptation to shirk or escape from freedom.

For those who hoped to address these anxieties through psychology, psychoanalysis could be seen as a tool with which to probe the hidden realms and root out the darker forces. By using psychoanalysis to purge hell, religious thinkers might

hope to maintain heaven – not only on the supernatural level, but in a free, “God-sanctioned”, earthly community as well. That the Jews and Catholics we have discussed gleaned some of this rhetoric from their Protestant peers seems likely. That they employed their outsider status to lay claim to “special” contributions to the larger discussion is also clear. The loci of psychoanalysis as a center for this discourse is striking. Behavioral psychologists and medical psychiatrists rarely appear in Cold War narratives as primary enemies to freedom. In the narratives of our subjects, however, these doctors were part of the dehumanizing tendencies that represented all that could go wrong in a totalitarian-threatened world.

If we think about Freud’s inscription in terms of our subjects, we find a different meaning in the metaphors of heaven and hell. For Freud, higher powers ostensibly represented oppressive, non-responsive, forces in Vienna. The nether regions were, thus, the unconscious and the subversive. In Freud’s view, however, maneuvers in these deeper realms were capable of bending the higher ones. Our subjects too, saw an intimate link between the unconscious and the conscious, the internal and the external. As religious believers, however, they also saw a genuine relationship between heaven and hell – on earth and beyond. In America, psychoanalysts could find forms of philosophical and political discourse that enabled them to situate psychoanalysis within a spiritually vital world view. As metaphor, hell, for our subjects, was the pit of despair, isolation, and dehumanization.

Karl Stern, who defined hell as a bureaucratized, mechanized system of science run amuck, might have wondered whether Satan had an outpost at the lab where baby monkeys were imprisoned in the name of scientific inquiry. Joanne Greenberg may have pondered whether demons lay behind the voices that she heard in her delusional pit, or motivated the doctors who encased her in straightjackets. The

soft voice of her analyst, the quiet presence and thoughtful reasoning that characterized psychoanalysis might have seemed heaven-sent.

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