SIGMUND FREUD'S JEWISH IDENTITY: EVIDENCE FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE

The biographical question of the nature of Freud's Jewish identity has been a controversial one in part because of attempts by Freud's psychoanalytic biographers, from Fritz Wittels (in the 1920s and 1930s) to Ernest Jones (in the 1950s), to downplay the significance of Freud's Jewishness for the origins, nature, and practice of psychoanalysis. This effort continues today, most recently in Peter Gay's, A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis,\(^1\) as though Freud's Jewish origins and identity were a threat to the validity or universal applicability of psychoanalysis. Freud himself thought this strategy was good politics and chose Carl Jung to head the movement and give it a Gentile face, supposedly smoothing the way for its universalistic advance. This conflict between the particular and the universal seems misconstrued to me, especially if access to the universal is given \textit{through} the particular, but in any event, I want to sidestep the question of the relationship of Freud's Jewishness to psychoanalysis, in order to focus on Freud as a person. My interest is in Freud's Jewish identity as a form of \textit{modern} human identity, by which I mean one that holds dual allegiance, to both particular and universal frames of reference, as necessary to its authenticity.

The key to understanding Freud's Jewish identity is recognizing its periodicity.\(^2\) That is, it developed, or matured, in three stages: early (to 1907), middle (1907–1923), and late (1923–1939). The early period in fact includes a periodicity of its own, covering as it does Freud's childhood, adolescence, and early manhood. Robert Wistrich observes that Freud's personality was formed

in an East European Jewish home and then nurtured in the semi-proletarian Leopoldstadt district of Vienna to which Freud's parents had moved in 1859 from his birthplace in Pribor (Freiberg), Moravia.\(^3\)

Freud's mother, furthermore, who "had never been fully acculturated" and had "retained the language, manners, and beliefs of her native [i.e., Galician] environment,"\(^4\) was the center of this family, and given Freud's closeness to her, was probably the root of both his ethnic

Jewish pride and the “dark emotional powers” [dunkele Gefuehlsmaechte] that Freud confessed to his B’nai B’rith brethren were at the heart of his irresistible attraction to Jews and Judaism. Martin Freud described Amalia as “emotional and untamed, full of life and vitality.” Franz Kobler suggests that this Gefuehlsleben represented the remainder of Freud’s mother’s religious inheritance, for there is little other evidence of any religious practice. Amalia did invoke the blessing of “der liebe Gott” in a letter to her son on the occasion of his wedding in 1886, but that may have been only conventional. Though Jakob Freud came from a Chassidic background, he and Amalia were married by a well-known Reform Rabbi (I. N. Mannheimer), and their home was an “enlightened” one from which religious practice was largely absent. Thus Freud was well prepared to assimilate into German society without the encumbrance of religious difference and its rituals, but accompanied by a healthy pride in his ethnic heritage as a source of life.

As a result, under the enlightened Hapsburg monarchy, e.g., in the 1860s, Freud could expect to enter Austrian society confident of acceptance and success, with a positive sense of himself as Jewish by “race,” if not by religion. That is, Freud could be Jewish as long as he would assimilate and become “truly German.” His hopes of becoming a Cabinet Minister are indicative of this optimism and harmony between his Jewish and German identities. But in the 1870s, under the contradictory pressures of assimilation to German culture, his social radicalism, and rising antisemitism, Freud’s Jewish identity became more of a question to him, for being Jewish seemed now to mean giving up equal participation in society. Freud’s vigorous self-defenses against antisemitism in the 1880s were in part an attempt to resolve this question. He would defend his Jewishness against any implication that it made him inferior. Freud even went beyond his father’s passive assimilationist position by espousing German nationalism during his university student days in the Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Weins. The death of his father (in 1896) and his self-analysis pushed Freud toward the resolution of his ambivalence. His subsequent joining of the Vienna B’nai B’rith (in 1897) enabled Freud to clarify the question for himself and find coherent security in his Jewish identity. As Dennis Klein argues, Freud found that his particular Jewish identity could be the vehicle for the expression of his liberal, humanist ideals. Thus, the early period of Freud’s Jewish development moves from naive identification, through ambivalent questioning and distance, to a proud commitment to a Jewishness that expresses humanitarian ideals through a particular Jewish allegiance, defined in both ethnic and intellectual terms. The periodicity of
Freud's Jewish development over the course of his lifetime recapitulates this pattern.

So, the late period, triggered by Freud's discovery in 1923 that he was dying from cancer, in fact recapitulates the attachments and identifications of the early period, after a middle "recessive" period in which Freud's Jewish identity "incubates" behind the "gentile facade" he sought for psychoanalysis. The late period can therefore be seen as "the return of the suppressed," but its contents are more mature, a result of Freud's hidden struggles in the middle period.

For example, Freud writes his essay "The Moses of Michelangelo" in 1914, in our middle period, and publishes it anonymously, reflecting his desire to keep his deepest, most private Jewish identification—that is, his identification with Moses—hidden from the public at that time. He acknowledges his authorship of the piece in 1924, at the beginning of our late period. Freud's identification with the lawgiving leader of the Jewish people is present beneath the surface even in the early period, however, adumbrated for example in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess on August 26, 1898, in Freud's analysis of his own forgetting of the name Julius Mosen. In 1914, Freud sees in Michelangelo's Moses "the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man," namely, "that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself."16 In the late period, this same "Mosaic" achievement becomes in Moses and Monotheism a character trait of the Jewish people imprinted on them by Moses himself. Freud goes on in that book to identify this capacity for drive-renunciation as the basis for all progress in civilization, so it is no wonder that he often expresses great pride in his Jewish identity in the late period, as we shall see.

To understand further the "incubation" of the middle period that made Freud's development in the late period possible, we can turn to his correspondence. In 1909, Freud wrote to Jung identifying the latter explicitly as the "Joshua" to Freud's "Moses":

We are certainly getting ahead; if I am Moses, then you are Joshua and will take possession of the promised land of psychiatry, which I shall only be able to glimpse from afar.17

Freud thus tries in private to cast Jung in the role of a Jewish leader—one of "the family"—while in public, it is Jung's non-Jewish identity that he values.19 This letter makes it clear that on a personal level, the inward passions Freud himself was struggling against while he was writing "The Moses of Michelangelo" relate to his anger at Jung's "defection" from psychoanalysis and the role Freud would have him play. Freud's "son" has rejected him, reminding Freud of his own
rejection of his father's example of self-restraint when an antisemite knocked Jakob's fur Streimel into the gutter. It is as though Freud's own hat were in the mud now. As a child, Freud found his father's passivity towards "the enemies of our people" humiliating, and he replaced it in his mind with a martial ideal (Hannibal's father's adjuration of his son to take vengeance on the Romans); but now, though angry at Jung's "betrayal," Freud describes the dignity of self-transcendence and self-control that he sees in Michelangelo's statue as a "Mosaic" virtue. Martin Bergmann suggests that this work resulted in "an intrasystemic change within Freud's own superego," reconciling Freud with his father, and enabling him, I suggest, to understand his Jewish identity more deeply and express it more openly in the late period.

We can observe this pattern of recapitulation from the early to the late period, with an attendant maturation of the identification, often in Freud's correspondence. For example, in the early period, at age 16, Freud will ridicule provincial Jews from Moravia, his own province of origin in Galicia, probably because of his own aspirations to liberal German-humanist Kultur. But in the late period, at age 79, when the Nuremberg Laws are being promulgated in Hitler's Germany in November 1935, he will identify his provincial Jewish origins proudly:

I hope it is not unknown to you that I have always held faithfully to our people, and never pretended to be anything but what I am: a Jew from Moravia whose parents come from Austrian Galicia.

In the late period, Freud is secure in his Jewish identity and is no longer anxious about his humanist credentials. Therefore he can value his early provincial roots as a source of Jewish authenticity.

Similarly, in March 1880, at age 23, Freud writes in Spanish to his Jewish friend, Eduard Silberstein, consoling him over what seems some lack of success in love, by ironically citing "el sabio Rabbi Don Akiba," from Karl Gutzkow's play, Uriel Acosta (1846), with these words: "'Everything has happened before,' as the sage Rabbi Don Akiba used to say. He was a very wise man and he saw into the depth of the matter."

In the context of Gutzkow's play, these words from "Rabbi Ben Akiba" convey a slightly foolish impression, as the 90-year-old Rabbi assures his fellow rabbinical judges in the trial overseeing the recantation of the excommunicated "heretic," Uriel Acosta, that

"All hath already been!"—believe me Rabbis,
Epicureans, Doubters, Skeptics,—though
Our youth may think: "See these are novel things!"
"All hath already been!"—believe me Rabbis,
Of everything our Talmud gives account—
“All hath already been,—already been!”28

Yet when Uriel Acosta turns the Rabbi’s example of Elisha ben Abuya—Acher—on its head, to say that doubt—“the Other”—is the basis of true faith (“For pious faith from doubt alone proceeds”), Rabbi Ben Akiba is bewildered, and cannot understand the young man’s meaning. So it seems that indeed here is something new that the old tradition cannot understand or cope with, and must reject with blind force. The scene probably reflects Freud’s view as a young man of his own “enlightened” view over against the Judaism of his forebears.

In the play, the Rabbi is a figure not to be taken seriously or respected by the young, who know new things. Freud seems to be telling Silberstein not to take his disappointment too seriously, while poking fun at Jewish tradition. In the early period, Freud mocks the Rabbis of Jewish tradition, using Enlightenment and humanist perspectives. In the late period, he will by contrast identify with the only rabbinic figure mentioned in his correspondence or published psychoanalytic writings, namely, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. It is significant that these references appear in correspondence in 1938 and in Moses and Monotheism. Let us examine these later references to see the change in Freud’s viewpoint and the development of his Jewish identification.

On March 13, 1938, at a board meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society convened just after Hitler invaded and annexed Austria, “it was decided that everyone should flee the country if possible, and that the seat of the society should be wherever Freud would settle.”29 At the meeting Freud said,

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus, Rabbi Jochanan ben Sakkai asked for permission to open a school at Jabneh for the study of the Torah. We are going to do the same. We are, after all, used to persecution by our history, tradition, and some of us by personal experience . . .

Note Freud’s personal identification with Rabbi Yochanan, with Jewish history, and with the “tradition” of antisemitic persecution. The Rabbi’s example of tenacious persistence in pursuit of a cause is Freud’s own Jewish ideal. His metaphor of the Jerusalem Temple for the edifice of psychoanalysis appears also in the middle period, when he writes to Oscar Pfister:

Building the Temple with one hand and with the other wielding weapons against those who would disturb the building—I believe it is a reminiscence from Jewish history.30
It actually reflects Nehemiah 4:11 precisely. In the middle period the metaphor is a reminiscence; in the late period it is lived experience. In the early period, on the other hand, Freud expresses indifference to the destruction of the Temple, as we shall see. He gets closer to and more personally identified with this Jewish symbol as he matures. Finally, the analogy of Torah study for psychoanalytic research links Freud’s own work as an adult with the traditional Jewish learning of the Bible that he shared with his father as a boy. It is another indication of reconciliation and identification in the late period based on Jewish experience in the early period.

Seven months later, in November 1938, Freud writes a letter of recommendation for Jacob Meitlis in support of the latter’s efforts on behalf of YIVO, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (of whose praesidium Freud was an honorary member):

We, Jews, have always known how to respect spiritual values. We preserved our unity through ideas, and because of them we have survived to this day. The fact that Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakka immediately after the destruction of the Temple obtained from the conqueror permission to establish the first academy for Jewish knowledge in Jabneh was for me always one of the most significant manifestations in our history.31

Late in his life, Freud identifies so deeply with Jewish tradition and the history of his people, that he sees his own life and work as its extension. It is through the spiritual values contained in ideas that the Jews have survived, and psychoanalysis will survive in the same way. Freud continues:

Once again our people is faced with dark times requiring us to gather all our strength in order to preserve unharmed all culture and science during the present harsh storms.

Jews are to be the guardians of enlightened civilization while the Nazis plunge Europe back into the Dark Ages. No wonder Freud is proud to be a Jew.

Thus, in the early period, Freud mocks a Rabbi and his tradition; but in the late period, Freud becomes the Rabbi,92 and identifies his own underlying purpose and ultimate survival with that of the Jewish tradition. Indeed, he almost is the tradition. But now the tradition includes “all culture and science,” that is, humanistic civilization. Freud is a humanist Jew.

Further attention to Freud’s references to the Jerusalem Temple will give insight into this “compromise-formation.” The fast of Tisha B’Av commemorating and mourning for the destruction of the Temp-
ple interferes with Freud’s courtship of his fiancée shortly after they have gotten engaged in 1882. Therefore, we can understand Freud’s impatience with the observance as he tries to woo Martha from it in the “Nathan” letter of July 23, 1882: “What’s Hecuba to me?” Jerusalem is destroyed and Marty and I are alive and happy.” The second sentence sounds very much like one from Abraham Geiger, a leading historian in the Wissenschaft des Judentums and Reform movements whom we know Freud read: “Jerusalem is a tomb; you must draw from the living present and labor in it.” This similarity will lead us further into the influence of the teaching of Reform Judaism on Freud, but first let us turn our attention to Freud’s quote from Shakespeare’s Hamlet (II.2.559) in order to illustrate Freud’s attachment to and use of humanist texts.

In the context of the play, Hamlet asks the question Freud quotes in relation to an actor who has just wept for Hecuba’s grief at the slaying of her husband, Priam, in the piece the actor has just played: “What’s Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba that he should weep for her?” Hamlet is upset at his own inability to act in relation to his uncle’s fratricide, and he is puzzled by the emotional response of the actor who is not related to those for whom he can nonetheless weep. How apt is Freud’s allusion: the fall of Troy/the fall of Jerusalem. Both contexts, Shakespeare’s and Freud’s, speak of the denial of relation that would make one weep for the fallen and their loss; both speak of the denial of familial roots and filial obligation. Freud uses a humanist text to uproot the personal relevance of a Jewish observance and tradition that is being pressed upon him by a father-figure (“Nathan”), a technique that reflects his own allegiance. Freud is a Jewish humanist.

He goes on to offer two more defenses of his attitude (perhaps sensing its callousness), drawing from the historical scholarship of the Reform Judaism of his time: “And the historians say that if Jerusalem had not been destroyed, we Jews would have perished like so many peoples before us and after us.” I have not been able to locate the exact source of Freud’s statement or the identity of “the historians” he is thinking of, but his idea is clearly influenced by Geiger’s work, as we shall see. A copy of Geiger’s Judaism and Its History was found in Freud’s library.

Geiger writes that “Israel’s mission was not accomplished by the establishment of its nationality.” If it had been, Israel would have vanished with the loss of its commonwealth, like other “Nations which the World’s History commissions only to establish and preserve commonwealths for a time, in order that they may do their allotted share in the world’s work.” But, he continues,
... a nationality which is only a means for a higher object, an external form for a great Idea intended to comprise all mankind must, for a time gather all its forces, until a serried host is prepared, among whom the Idea may obtain its full manifestation, so that it may, fully strengthened, spread all over the world.38

Note that Judaism's role is to preserve a great "Idea," intended to include all humanity in its compass. It is this universal relevance that ensures Judaism's (and the Jews') survival, for "only that religion which is reconciled with free thought has . . . the guarantee of its continuance."39 Furthermore, it is the destruction of the Temple that makes this universalization possible and so legitimates the survival of the Jews.

This view is similar to that articulated by David Einhorn, a more radical member of the Reform movement in Germany, who said, specifically with regard to Tisha B'Av, that

Reform recognizes in the flaming Temple mount not a curtailment but rather a continuation of the divine work of salvation, which had begun on flaming Mount Sinai, marking the real beginning of the priestly mission, the conveyance of the divinity to all the children of this earth, for which Israel had been ordained at the Sinaitic choice.40

Thus the destruction of the Temple becomes an act by God for the reform of the law He had revealed to Moses. As Einhorn put it, "Only after the destruction of Jerusalem was it possible for Israel to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."41

Views like these sound like they influenced Freud's next defense in his letter to his fiancée: "Only after the collapse of the visible Temple, did the invisible edifice of Judaism become possible." What Freud means by "the invisible edifice of Judaism" is made clearer by comparing his words to Geiger's, who writes that "the temple [in this case, one in Egypt] was the visible housing, but far above that was the spirit, the doctrine."42 And "the spiritual, being in mind and heart, is not visible in space."43 That is, the "invisible edifice of Judaism" consists in its ideas, and the visible Temple was only the "external form" for its "great Idea."

Freud's views from the early period re-emerge in the late period, as can be seen both from the letter to Meitlis from 1938 quoted above, and from the letter Freud wrote for the occasion of the opening of Hebrew University in Jerusalem (of which he was a trustee) in 1925:

Historians have told us that our small nation withstood the destruction of its independence as a State only because it began to transfer in its estimation of values and highest rank to its spiritual possessions, to its religion and its literature...
A University is a place in which knowledge [Wissenschaft] is taught above all differences of religions and nations, where investigation is carried on, which is to show mankind how far they understand the world around them and how far they can control it.

Such an undertaking is a noble witness to the development to which our people has forced its way in two thousand years of grievous fortune.44

For all his well-known hostility to “religion,” Freud also respects Judaism as a source of Jewish survival, and he praises it here. The “invisible edifice” from the “Nathan” letter in 1882 appears in 1925 as the Jews’ “spiritual possessions.” In his letter to Meitlis in 1938, Freud will identify these spiritual “goods” further as “ideas.” Jewish survival is made possible only by its devotion to ideas, and the University, as a place dedicated to the teaching of Wissenschaft independently of religious or national differences, is an institution that therefore supports Jewish survival and expresses its life-blood. Note that this transcendence of narcissism bears witness here to the Jewish people’s “development.” In Moses and Monotheism, Freud will root this pattern in a long history that stretches from an Egyptian (i.e., non-Jewish) Moses to the Jewish Freud.

But Freud’s Jewishness is not only rooted in his respect for ideas. Another letter from the early period reveals both Freud’s identification with the Temple and the emotions that defended it. On February 2, 1886, Freud writes to Martha Bernays from Paris: “I have often felt as though I had inherited all the obstinate defiance and all the passions with which our forefathers defended their Temple.” Though Freud rejected Jewish religious observance, he understood that his ancestors were defending their right to be Jewish against those who would have prevented them. This opposition to antisemitism brings out Freud’s fighting spirit. In the early period, this spirit led Freud to valiant (some might say reckless), nearly physical confrontations with antisemites. Martin Freud in fact described his father as a “fighting Jew.”45 In December 1883, Freud wrote to Martha describing a ferocious verbal fight he had had with an antisemite on a train. Freud was defending his humanist right to be treated equally, as a Jew. Instead, the Christians on the train assigned him a lower status because he was a Jew. “I was quite prepared to kill him,” he tells Martha. The Jewish ancestors who defended their Temple would have recognized a brother in Freud.46 Freud feels a similar passion (“Groll und Wut”) in the late period when he reads Arnold Zweig’s book on the destruction of German Jewry,47 and in response, his fighting spirit leads the more mature Freud to write his own cultural defense, Moses and Monotheism.48

In the middle period, Freud will fight against antisemitism in an
indirect, hidden, or sublimated way, trying to use Gentiles to further his psychoanalytic project. But it is the same fighting spirit. We noted above that in 1910 Freud compared defending the construction of psychoanalysis to defending the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. The ideas of psychoanalysis constituted its “invisible edifice,” and Freud defended it with all the shrewdness, defiance and passion he could command. Thus, Freud’s identification with his Jewish heritage, rooted in the early period, served as a source of inspiration and energy for him in the middle and late periods.49

Freud states this energizing function of Jewish identity explicitly in the early period, when his friend, Max Graf, was considering having his son baptized in an attempt to shield him from antisemitism. Freud advised him against it:

If you do not let your son grow up as a Jew, you will deprive him of those sources of energy which cannot be replaced by anything else. He will have to struggle as a Jew, and you ought to develop in him all the energy he will need for that struggle. Do not deprive him of that advantage.50

Here the certainty of being Jewish is an advantage that a father owes his son. Its particularism is a source of energy in the struggle for life, for in an antisemitic environment, feeling fully Jewish can be a source of strength and pride. Despite the struggles that attach to being Jewish, one senses here that Freud would not choose to be anything else.

As noted, Freud’s Jewishness is also rooted in an ethnic identification with his people. Throughout his life, Freud saw this Jewish ethnicity in national terms. Jewishness is not “confessional” for Freud. In the same letter to Martha from Paris in 1886, Freud writes of his response to a French neurologist’s attempt to get a rise out of him at a cocktail party by predicting war with Germany: “I disclosed my identity as a Jew [juif], [one] who is neither German nor Austrian.” Jewish identity is thus analogous to and a substitute for other national groups and their citizenships. In the context of the first part of Freud’s letter, about the Temple, it is clear that his pride and strength in being Jewish are connected to his sense of Jewish history, and that his identification with the ancient patriotism of his people (he had written that part of the letter before this encounter) supported his reply to his French challenger. Though a humanist abroad, Freud is a Jewish humanist.

In the late period (in 1926), Freud links this nationalist Jewish identification with intellectuality, and relates it explicitly to antisemitism. Furthermore, he expresses it for publication (appropriately so, according to my thesis), in an interview with George Viereck:
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My language is German. My culture, my attachments are German. I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of anti-Semitic prejudice in Germany and German-Austria. Since that time, I consider myself no longer German. I prefer to call myself a Jew.51

In 1886, when Freud identified himself as ethnically or nationally Jewish, then too he experienced his self-definition over against a German identification, for he felt “something German” stirring within him. But in the quote above, it is noteworthy that the rise of antisemitism in Germany led Freud in 1926 to describe his rejection of German intellectual life as a self-defining reality, for as Steven Beller observes, to be “truly German” (echt deutsch) for a figure like Freud meant “belief in progress and liberty,”52 a belief that German antisemitism had shattered.53 Yet Freud’s German identification had ethnic overtones too, for he describes himself in a letter in 1885 to Martha’s sister, Minna Bernays, as “German provincial”54—hardly a reference to intellectual beliefs—and his initial patriotic reaction to Austria’s declaration of war on Serbia in 1914 also seems more related to group national feeling than to ideas.55

Thus when Freud says in the early period that he is neither German nor Austrian, but Jewish, he seems to indicate a shift of national or ethnic allegiance. But when he describes the same event looking back from the late period, in 1926, he refers to a shift in intellectual allegiance. In fact, both allegiances are linked in Freud’s understanding of himself as a Jew, and both are discovered over against German identifications. Therefore Freud’s attachment to Hebrew University, as an institution of Jewish and humanist intellect (the combination being an important fact), may be particularly significant as an alternative to German intellectual life, especially that centered on the University of Vienna. For Freud does not identify with (nor seem to know of) the intellectuality of the Talmud, and as we have seen, he views the intellectual endeavors of the university as an expression of Jewishness, precisely by virtue of its humanist ideals. As noted above, Dennis Klein has argued persuasively that this very pattern of Jewishness expressed through liberal humanist ideals describes Freud’s membership in B’nai B’rith.56 However German his “attachments,” Freud seeks to express his humanism in the early period linked to Jewish attachments. He will repeat that strategy in the late period, with Moses and Monotheism.

Freud’s national definition of his Jewish identity also raises the question of his relationship to Zionism. In the early period, Freud sent Herzl a copy of Interpretation of Dreams for review and asked him in any event to keep the book,
as a token of the high esteem in which I—like so many others—have for many years regarded the poet and the fighter for the human rights of our people.57

Ernst Simon notes that Freud's language carefully avoids making a commitment to Zionism as a national movement. Yet beneath the surface lies a deeper identification, for around the same time Freud dreams that Herzl comes to him to say that "something must be done to save the Jewish people."58 In the middle period, in 1917, after the Balfour Declaration, Freud observes with pleasure "the capture of Jerusalem and the British experiment with the chosen people."59

And in the late period, Freud's attachment to Zionism grows deeper, as his Jewish identity matures. In 1926, the same year as the interview with George Vieruck, Freud tells Enrico Morselli that he can respond to his pamphlet on the Zionist question "wholly without mixed feelings, with unqualified approval," and he even says that he feels obliged to offer Morselli his "personal thanks" for the piece. Despite the fact that, in the same period Freud often expresses reservations about "national exaltation,"60 he was unreserved about Morselli's pamphlet because it presented the issue with such "humanity," Menschfreundlichkeit. That is, Freud saw that Morselli was able to argue for Jewish national life while at the same time retaining his allegiance to the larger human community. Thus Zionism, though a "Jewish national concern," can be a vehicle for Humanitaet, Freud's deepest political commitment, and so it is a fitting vehicle for Freud's Jewish identity. Again, as noted above, Klein sees this same confluence of commitments in Freud's membership in B'nai B'rith, in the early period. We see again the pattern of recapitulation. And so, it is no contradiction to his rationalist reservations about Zionism61 that in 1936 Freud becomes an honorary member of the student Zionist society, "Kadimah," at his own request. As a Jew, Freud is a Zionist; but as a Zionist, he remains a humanist, and it is in this combination that he is most modern as a Jew.

Just how deeply Freud feels himself as a Jew becomes clearer to him as he matures, but he has been aware of this Jewish kinship for a long time. When he wrote to Karl Abraham in the middle period, Freud spoke of "consanguineous Jewish traits" and a kinship of intellectual constitution (Abraham identified this intellectuality positively as "Talmudic").62 In his 1926 address to B'nai B'rith, in the late period, Freud speaks of "the familiarity of the same psychological structure" [die Heimlichkeit der gleichen seelischen Konstruktion]. At the end of his life, in Moses and Monotheism, this feeling of belonging is generated by a phylogenetic inheritance transmitted across the generations, from Moses to Freud.63 In the late period, Freud finds that
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his Jewishness is genetic, almost physical. In fact, it sounds like a “scientific” version of the “Jewish neshamah.”

Therefore we understand Freud’s response in 1931 to the Chief Rabbi of Vienna’s letter to him for his 75th birthday, when Rabbi Feuchtwang tells Freud that “the author of Future of an Illusion is closer to me than he believes”:

Highly Esteemed Doctor,

Your words aroused a special echo in me, which I do not need to explain to you. In some place in my soul, in a very hidden corner, I am a fanatical Jew. I am very much astonished to discover myself as such in spite of all efforts to be unprejudiced and impartial. What can I do against it at my age?

Freud sees a Jewish depth to his personality that astonishes him. Yet he does not repudiate it, nor does he sound regretful; in fact, he sounds pleased, feeling linked to other Jews. Freud’s “fanatical” Jewishness represents an inner element of his personality that cannot (or will not) be assimilated to Enlightenment (i.e., Reasoned) humanism, but will take the Jews’ part in an unabashedly biased and emotional way. So Freud’s “astonishment,” but so too his pride.

In the early period, Freud identified strongly as a Jew with Enlightenment Reason; in the late period, he has discovered a depth of Jewish belonging that transcends Reason, but does not undermine his allegiance to reason. In this “compromise-formation,” Freud is a modern Jew.

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NOTES

2. I am indebted to Professor Samuel Jaffe (University of Chicago) for this idea.
4. Ibid., p. 543.
8. Ibid.
10. Cf. Freud’s “Buerger Ministry” memories in *The Interpretation of
DREAMS*, in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*,
Vol. 4, p. 193.
12. As he describes in his *An Autobiographical Study*, trans. James Strachey
15. Dennis Klein, *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (Chicago,
17. In William McGuire (ed.), *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence
between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*, trans. Ralph Manheim and R. F. C.
Hull (London, 1974).
18. Cf. the letter to Jung, August 13, 1908: “als Germane” Jung can “com-
mand the sympathies of the public more easily” than can Freud.
19. As he tells Karl Abraham, it is only because of Jung’s participation
that psychoanalysis escapes “the danger of becoming a Jewish national con-
cern” (May 3, 1908), that is, directed only at and relevant only to Jews.
21. As Freud says when he describes this scene in his *Psychopathology of
Everyday Life*, in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. Dr. A. A.
22. Martin Bergmann, “Moses and the Evolution of Freud’s Jewish Iden-
123.
23. Letter to Emil Fluss, September 18, 1872; in Ernst L. Freud (ed.),
“Some Early Unpublished Letters of Freud,” *International Journal of Psycho-
25. March 26, 1880, in Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Sigmund Freud, Jugendbriefe
26. Freud’s use of the Spanish, “Don,” a title of lordship, underscores his
irony. He is perhaps influenced by Heine in “The Rabbi of Bacherach,” where
the apostate is named “Don Isaak.”
27. Based on the life of Uriel da Costa (1590–1647), of Amsterdam.
Act IV, scene 1.
1957), p. 221
Freud and Oscar Pfister*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London, 1963); October 16,
1910.
32. In May 1926 Freud will say, “Jews of all types and from many different places have adopted me with enthusiasm, as though I were a famous God-fearing Rabbi. I am not opposed to this, since I have left no doubt about my attitude towards religious faith; Jewishness is still very important to me emotionally.” Henry Schnitzler, “Sigmund Freud. Briefe an Arthur Schnitzler,” Die Neue Rundschau, No. 66 (1955), pp. 95–106.
35. Samuel Jaffe has observed that the motivations and emotions of Freud’s identity come from his Jewish background, but that the tools of his scholarship come from the classical Gymnasium.
38. Ibid., p. 81.
39. Ibid., p. 382.
42. Geiger, p. 93.
43. Ibid., p. 65.
45. Martin Freud, “Who was Freud?” p. 201.
46. Cf. too Martin Freud’s description of his father’s rout of a crowd of antisemites threatening his sons in the summer of 1901; Martin Freud, Sigmund Freud: Man and Father (New York, 1958), pp. 70–71.
47. Arnold Zweig, Bilanz der deutschen Judenheit, 1933, die Wahrheit ueber die deutschen Juden (Amsterdam, 1934).
53. Note too Wistrich’s observation that antisemitism acted as “a catalyst in Freud’s growing inner affirmations of Jewish identity during the mid-1880s”; Wistrich, p. 558.
59. In a letter to Karl Abraham, December 10, 1917.
61. E.g., in his letter to Einstein in 1930, in which Freud suggests that “it would have seemed more comprehensible to me to found a Jewish fatherland on new, historically unencumbered soil,” but he agrees that this “rational” attitude would never enlist “the enthusiasm of the masses and the resources of the rich.”
64. Peter Gay, in his recent biography of Freud, seems to have missed this letter from Freud, for he does not mention it and instead gives his own, condescending response, very different from Freud's; idem, Freud: A Life for Our Time, p. 575.