

**On Becoming Freud: Signorelli's *Last Judgment*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*,  
Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, and Michelangelo's *Moses***

Robert L. Lippman

As for the biographers, let them worry, we have no desire to make it too easy for them. Each one of them, will be right in his opinion of "The Development of the Hero," and I am already looking forward to seeing them go astray.

--Sigmund Freud to Martha Bernays, letter dated April 28, 1885; Freud, 1960, 61)

...works of art...exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting... [W]ith music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me. ---"The Moses of Michelangelo," (Freud, 1914b, 211); originally published anonymously.

In this paper I offer a look at the father of psychoanalysis, one radically different from the various portrayals you may have heard or read—and which despite my efforts you may not find credible.

Like Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), Freud (1856-1939) since before the turn of the century was bent on delivering his besieged nation from anti-Semitism. But unlike the Zionist leader, he did not broadcast his Messianic ambition. Whereas Herzl's Promised Land was a sovereign Jewish State, Freud's was an enlightened secular world grounded in reason-- and which, in 1927, he will allude to in *The Future of an Illusion*:

. . . New generations, who have been brought up in kindness and taught to have a high opinion of reason, and who have experienced the benefits of civilization at an early age . . . . will feel it as a possession of their very own and will be ready for its sake to make the sacrifices as regards work and instinctual satisfaction that are necessary for its preservation. They will be able to do without coercion from their leaders. If no culture has so far produced human masses of such a quality, it is because no culture has yet devised regulations which will influence men in this way, and in particular from childhood onwards. ( 8) . . . .

. . . As honest smallholders on this earth they will know how to cultivate their plot in such a way that it supports them. By withdrawing their expectations from the other world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth, they will probably succeed in achieving a state of civilization no longer oppressive to anyone. Then, with one

of our fellow-unbelievers [Heine], they will be able to say

without regret:

["We leave Heaven to the angels and the sparrows." (Translation, James Strachey)] ( 50).

On December 3, 1897, the close of the year in which he had secretly resolved to institute his secular Promised Land, Freud penned the following to Wilhelm Fliess, then his best friend and confidant:

I dreamt I was in Rome . . . Incidentally my longing for Rome is deeply neurotic. It is connected with my schoolboy hero-worship of the Semitic Hannibal, and this year in fact I did not reach Rome any more than he did from Lake Trasimeno. Since I have been studying the unconscious, I have become so interesting to myself. It is a pity that one always keeps one's mouth shut about the most intimate things.

The best that you know you may not tell to the boys.

(Mephistopheles, Goethe's *Faust*; Freud, 1985,285)

Three years later, one month before satisfying "his longing for Rome," Freud, on August 7, 1901, writes Fliess, "tomorrow we are going to Salzburg for a performance of *Don Giovanni*..." (Freud, 1985, 445), failing to disclose that by experiencing anew his favorite opera (Gay, 1988, 169 n), he would steel himself for his impending, self-imposed trials or ordeals in Rome before both Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (1536-41) and his

*Moses* (1513-15).

In 1898, three years earlier, Freud subjected himself to the immediate precursor of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (1536-41): Luca Signorelli's *Last Judgment* (1499-1502) in the Orvieto Cathedral or Duomo.. In this paper, I intend to show that these four successive stops--Signorelli's *Last Judgment*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Michelangelo's *Moses*--were actually stations on the way to Sigmund Freud's becoming FREUD. Here it is worthwhile to provide relevant background.

Freud was born on May 6, 1856, in the small Catholic town of Freiberg in Moravia (now Příbor, in the Czech Republic), where only two percent were Jews. His father, Jakob, a struggling textile merchant, was 40 and his mother, Amalie, was 21. It was Jakob's third marriage. In the family bible, Jakob recorded in both Hebrew and German Freud's birth ("The first day of the month of Iyar") and also his circumcision ("He entered the Jewish community on the eighth day of the month of Iyar"). Because Freud was born in a caul, a Czech peasant woman had prophesied to his proud mother, Amalie, that "with her first-born child she had brought a great man into the world" (Freud, 1900, 192)—and wouldn't let him forget: "It was strange to a young visitor to hear her refer to the great master as "*mein goldener Sigi*."(Jones, 1953, p. 3 )

When Sigi was 23 months old, his brother Julius died on April 15, 1858, at either 6 or 8 months of age ; four weeks earlier Amalie had lost her younger brother, who was also named Julius. With Amalie, then pregnant with Anna (b. Dec 31, 1858), and suffering from a double grief, Sigi's devout Czech nanny—"an ugly, elderly but clever

woman who told [him] a great deal about God and hell”—became in all but name his mother, taking him regularly to Mass, after which to Amalie and Jakob he "preached all about how God conducted His affairs." (Freud, 1954, 219). Overly burdened and struggling to make a living, 42-year-old Jakob, in all likelihood, did not give much thought to Sigi's church-going, even though Jakob had named him Schlomo after his deceased father, a pious Chasid. When Sigi was 2 and one-half years old, his Catholic mother was dismissed for stealing, including his toys. His grown half-brother, Philipp, from Jakob's first marriage, reported her to the police, and she was imprisoned for ten months.

When Freud was 7, Jakob began instructing him in the Torah with the family bible, the Illustrated German-Hebrew Philipppson Bible, whose frontispiece was a lithograph depicting Moses with rays shooting upward from both sides of his forehead, signifying the awful divine power or *mana* which has been transferred from Yahweh on to him at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 34: 20).

When Freud was about age "ten or twelve," while taking their customary Sunday stroll around the Prater popular amusement park, Jakob decided to tell him "a story to show me how much better things were now than they had been in his day" :

--One Saturday [*Shabbos*] when I was a young man, a Christian came up to me as I was walking and with a single blow he knocked my new fur cap from my head in the mud and shouted, "Jew! get off the sidewalk!"

-- And [, Papa,] what did you do?

-- I went into the roadway and picked up my cap," was his quiet reply.

This struck me as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father . . . made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies. (Freud, 1900, 197)

In school, Freud was a top student and a favorite of Samuel Hammerschlag, his beloved Hebrew and Scriptures instructor at the Sperl gymnasium-- religious instruction was then required in Austria. (Freud will name his daughter Anna after Hammerschlag's daughter). An avid reader, he especially enjoyed the classics; as a schoolboy he read for pleasure, Virgil's The Aeneid in Latin, and from which he will appropriate the motto for his masterpiece, The Interpretation of Dreams, (1900), "If I can not bend the heavens, I'll move hell," ostensibly signifying one way or another, that repressions will break through, as in dreams, etc.

In 1886, five years after graduating from the University of Vienna Medical School, Freud married Martha Bernays, whose paternal grandfather, Isaac Bernays, had been the Chief Rabbi of Hamburg, Germany. Because civil marriages were not recognized in Austria, they, despite Freud's professed atheism, had a Jewish wedding

(September 13, 1886). According to Dr. Max Schur, Freud had gotten engaged to Martha on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the month (June, 1882) because in Hebrew the letters of the word “good” add up to 17. Their first home was an apartment in a building constructed on the site of the ill-fated Ringtheatre, where, on December 8, 1881, over six hundred persons burned to death (Jones, 1953, 103). Commonly known as the House of Atonement (*Sühnhaus*), it was commissioned by Emperor Franz Josef. The rent was used to provide for the orphaned children.

Ten years later, Jakob passed away at age 81 on October 23, 1896. Feeling uprooted, Freud began to study himself in depth, mainly by interpreting his dreams. The following year (1897), several months into his detailed self-analysis, Freud, to his horror discovered that he is a Cain, a brother killer:

. I welcomed my one-year-younger brother (who died within a few months) with ill wishes and real infantile jealousy, and . . . his death left the germ of guilt in me. (Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, 3 October 1897; Freud, 1954, 219.)

As brilliant as he is, and against his better judgment, he cannot shake his belief that with his hateful wishes he had killed baby Julius. To atone he secretly resolved to make the world a better place for future Juliuses (and Sarahs), an enlightened secular, socially just world grounded in reason, one in which anti-Semitism is unknown.

And that same year, 1897, he comes up with not only the Oedipus complex but also with a dazzling derivative: the God-idea stems from the Father complex. That is to say, God the Father is a mere projection out on to the universe of the young or Oedipal boy’s idealized perception of his own father. With this godsend—or God-send—Freud

would cut the ground out from under religion, and thereby deliver, for once and for all, the seed of Abraham: no God, no Christianity, no miserable anti-Semitism. True, there would be no Judaism, but at long last the seed of Abraham would be delivered from that perpetual scourge, anti-Semitism. In *Moses and Monotheism*--completed in self-exile in London—Freud, at long last, reveals his explanation for anti-Semitism.

The [Christians] have not got over a grudge against the new religion which was imposed on them; but they have displaced the grudge on to the source from which Christianity reached them. The fact that the Gospels tell a story which is set among Jews, and in fact deals only with Jews, has made this displacement easy for them. Their hatred of Jews is at bottom hatred of Christians ... (Freud, 1939, pp. 91–2).

In other words, the good Christian, not possessing the moral courage to acknowledge his hatred for his religion which obliges him to renounce his aggressive and illicit sexual impulses, displaces this disavowed hatred on to the people who had made his life miserable by shackling him with his chains, the Jews. Accordingly, because Christianity and anti-Semitism are inextricably bound, Judaism must be sacrificed. To Freud, there is no alternative.

He keeps God's humble beginnings under wraps, biding his time until he receives recognition, until he becomes an authority, if not *the* authority, on so-called civilized man. Were he to unveil his mighty weapon prematurely, then his creation, psychoanalysis, would be seen as a Jewish national affair-- that is, not as an objective discipline, not as a science, but, rather, like Herzl's Zionist movement, a movement **to** deliver this besieged nation from the miserable anti-Semitism. And this haunted Cain could kiss



goodbye his ticket to redemption, his Promised Land. Accordingly, secrecy is essential.

In Europe, the noose around the Jews had been tightening. On December 22, 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an Alsatian Jew on the French General Staff, was found guilty of the fraudulent charge of treason-- selling military secrets to Germany-- and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island off the coast of French Guiana (South America). Two weeks later, Freud read in his newspaper, *The Neue Freie Presse*, Herzl's coverage of Dreyfus's degradation in Paris at the courtyard of the *Ecole Militaire* (Saturday January 5, 1895): As Dreyfus cried out, "I swear and declare that you are dishonoring an innocent man! *Viva la France!*" the bloodthirsty mob gathered outside shouting, "*A la Morte les Juifs!*" And that July, Herzl penned the following to the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Moritz Guedemann:

I have been watching [the anti-Semitic] movement in Austria and elsewhere with the closest attention. These are as yet mere rehearsals. Much worse is to come. (Pawel, 1989, 242)

The militant anti-Jewish violence, especially in the land of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," portends for Freud, as it did for Herzl, the resurfacing of virulent Jew-hatred throughout Christendom. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud (1900) acknowledges that his (undisclosed) thoughts about Dreyfus informed the following dream-image of Cliff in Bocklin style (date unknown):

A man standing on a [steep] cliff in the middle of the sea,  
in the style of [the Swiss symbolist] Bocklin. (166)

The editor, James Strachey, omitted translating the significant adjective, "*steilen*" (steep).

The precipitous fall of that Alsatian Jew wasting away on Devil's Island signifies for Freud the precarious standing of Jews in Christendom. Each and every Jew a potential Dreyfus.

In 1897, two years later, April 8<sup>th</sup>, Good Friday, Emperor Franz Josef reluctantly confirmed "I decide who is a Jew," *Herr Doktor* Karl Lueger, as mayor of Vienna, Europe's most anti-Semitic city. The ever popular Lueger, whom Hitler will praise in *Mein Kampf*, was the first politician ever elected on an anti-Semitic platform, that of the Christian Social Party (Lewis, 1986, 95-6). [According to George E. Berkeley (1988), "once in a parliamentary speech [Lueger] repeated without a hint of disapproval a suggestion by a member Parliament of sending all of [Austria's] Jews out on a ship to drown." (97). Mark Twain (1898), referring to members of Parliament, whom he had seen in action in late 1897, observed: "They are religious men, they are earnest, sincere, devout, and they hate the Jews (223).]

The resurgence of French anti-Semitism vis-a-vis Dreyfus's court-martial in December 1894 was a firecracker compared to the virulent Jew-hatred set off by the publication of "*J'accuse!*" on January 13, 1898. Printed in a special 300,000 edition of the liberal newspaper *L'Aurore*, Emile Zola's open letter to the President of the Republic accused specific members of the French General Staff of covering up "one of the greatest crimes of the century," their railroading Dreyfus.

Unlike Hannibal who never entered Rome, this modern Semitic avenger, not only would Freud enter Rome, but would also eventually crush the Romans, the new Romans, the Roman Catholic Church, the breeding ground for anti-Semites like the Christian thug

who had humiliated his father in his birthplace, Freiberg. And to do this, he would satisfy his “longing for Rome,” for there, before setting others free from their religious chains, he would free himself from his own, both Jewish and, thanks to Sigi’s second mother, Roman Catholic. Accordingly, he handed himself two tasks: subject himself to Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, and take his stand before Michelangelo’s *Moses*. And to ready himself for those critical self-imposed tasks in Rome, he would first make two stops, the first in Orvieto, the other in Salzburg.

#### **THE FIRST STATION: LUCA SIGNORELLI’S *LAST JUDGMENT***

[Freud] grew up devoid of any belief in a God or Immortality, and does not appear ever to have felt the need of it. (Jones, 1953, 19)

In the most proper sense [Paul, a Roman Jew from Tarsus,] was a man of an innately religious disposition: the dark traces of the past lurked in his mind, ready to break through into its more conscious regions.-- *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 1939, 86-7)

In September 1897, three months before his “longing for Rome” letter, Freud takes on the first self-imposed task, subjecting himself to Luca Signorelli’s magnificent frescoes of the “Four Last Things”—Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven (Freud, 1901, 2). The following September, during a carriage ride on the Adriatic coast in September, Freud failed to recall that Renaissance master’s surname. Shortly after, on the 22nd, he wrote Fliess the following account:

I could not find the name of the renowned painter who did the Last Judgment in Orvieto, the greatest I have seen so far. Instead, Botticelli, Boltraffio occurred to me, but I was sure these were wrong. At last I found out the name, Signorelli, and immediately knew, on my own, the first name, Luca--as proof that it had been only a repression and not a genuine forgetting. It is clear why Botticelli had moved into the foreground; only Signor was repressed; the Bo in both substitute names is explained by the memory responsible for the repression; it concerned something that happened in Bosnia and began with the words, "*Herr* [*Signor*, Sir], what can be done about it?" I lost the name of Signorelli during a short trip to Herzegovina, which I made from Ragusa with a lawyer from Berlin (Freyhau) with whom I got to talking about pictures. In the conversation, which aroused memories that evidently caused the repression, we talked about death and sexuality. The word Trafio is no doubt an echo of Trafoi, which I saw on the first trip [that summer]. How can I make this credible to anyone? (Letter of September 22, 1898; Freud, 1985, 326-7)

According to Freud (1901), the lapse was due to his repressing the tragic news which had reached him a few weeks earlier in Trafoi, a village in the Tyrol:

A patient over whom I had taken a great deal of trouble had put an end to his life on account of an incurable sexual disorder. . . . *I forgot the one thing against my will* [Signorelli's name], while I wanted to forget *the other thing intentionally* [the suicide]. (4; Freud's italics.)

And Freud, as he well knows, is on a potentially suicidal trajectory himself.

**The Last Judgment in Orvieto, the greatest I have seen *so far***

Bent on doing away with both Judaism and Christianity, and possessing both Jewish and Roman Catholic sensibilities, Freud dreads divine retribution--be the Lord Jehovah of the visitation-filled Passover portion Bo in Exodus (Ex. 10.1-13;16) or Jesus Christ of the *Last Judgment* when the Damned are condemned to roast in hell everlasting, and if there is indeed a hell, he deserves, Freud understands, to be consigned there--both for having played Cain to Julius's Abel, and for intending to ultimately destroy Christendom. His position vis-à-vis Hell parallels that of Mark Twain, who was a favorite of his, and which goes something like, "Hell no, I don't believe in Hell, I'm just afraid of it."

As George Brandes (1967) notes, Signorelli's *Last Judgment* in Orvieto informed Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*:

As for the nudity of the figures, the dead rising from the ground and Charon and his ferry, Luca Signorelli pointed the way. (385)

The above accords with the guidebook Freud consulted at the time (Burke, 2006, 119):

Signorelli's fertile imagination, mastery of form, and boldness in execution stamp him as the immediate precursor of Michael Angelo. (Baedeker, 1909, 190)

Accordingly, to steel himself for Michelangelo's over 2,100-square-foot incense-blackened *Last Judgment* (on the Sistine Chapel altar wall), before which he anticipates his greatest struggle against acknowledging Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, Freud

crosses the threshold of the Orvieto Cathedral, and, there, in that specimen of Italian Gothic, subjects himself to “the greatest *Last Judgment* [ he has] seen so far.” During his anticipated trial before Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, as Freud well understands, his stirred up or broken through Roman Catholic sensibility could render him powerless to resist “bending the knee,” for, in addition to guaranteeing this haunted Cain redemption, converting holds out the promise, although Julius died unbaptized, that he would be reunited with his baby brother in Paradise; that is, his suppressed wish to acknowledge Christ as his Lord or *Signor* very well could happen in the Sistine Chapel.

### **The Duomo’s Sacred Treasure: the *Corporale* of the Mass of Bolsena**

On September 11, the day after arriving in Orvieto, Freud, to further ready himself for Michelangelo’s doomsday, makes a 12-mile side trip to the small town of Bolsena (cf. *Boltraffio*), where a miracle of note occurred in 1263: in the Church of S. Cristina, drops of blood seeped from the Communion Wafer. For the devout, the blood-stained chalice-cloth is *the* treasure of the Orvieto Cathedral—it was built to commemorate the miracle. Today, the *Santo Corporale* is on open display daily in the Chapel of San Brizio, but wasn’t when Freud visited. The sacred chalice-cloth was then stored, as it had been for ages, in a silver-gilt and enamel reliquary depicting the miracle. In 1512, two hundred and forty-nine years after the alleged miracle, Raphael—he was a favorite of Freud’s—depicted the miracle in *The Mass of Bolsena*. Commenting on this mural in the Papal Palace, Vasari, a contemporary of Raphael, makes the following observation in his *Lives* which Freud, a self-described “obsessional type” (Freud, 1974, 82), very well may have read. (In the 1890’s Freud in his correspondence referred to Vasari’s *Lives of the Painters* (Jones, 1953, 346.):

One sees the priest, as he says Mass, flushing with shame as he realizes that through his disbelief in the doctrine of transubstantiation he has made the Host on the corporal turn to blood. With *terror in his eyes*, distraught and dumbfounded in the presence of the congregation, he hardly knows what to do; and in the movements of his hands one can almost see the *fear and trembling* to be expected in such circumstances. (Vasari, 1978, 218, my italics)

(On the fresco's right side, anachronistically taking in this extraordinary 13th century scene, is the figure of Raphael's and Michelangelo's patron, Pope Julius II.)

Freud arrived in Orvieto the evening of September 10th (Jones, 1953; 334). The *Corporale* was then shown only on two holy days: Easter Sunday and the Holy Day instituted by Pope Urban IV in 1264 in memory of the miracle, Corpus Christi, a.k.a. The Feast of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament—"this is my body"--which in 1898 fell on May 29th. So, unless he bribed the Duomo's sacristan, Freud wouldn't have been able to further steel himself for Michelangelo's Day of Judgment: Would I, overwhelmed by the sight of that bloody evidence of Transubstantiation, acknowledge, on the spot, that God is not a mere wish-fulfillment stemming from a longing for the father but that He actually exists--and that He is indeed Jesus Christ "whose blood cleanseth us from all sin"—even brother murder?

During the anticipated self-imposed trial or ordeal before Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, were Freud to maintain self-possession, prevail over or resist the desire to acknowledge Christ which he anticipates would be at peak intensity, then his nanny's and the Church's teachings would no longer have a hold on him (or so Freud believes)—and

he could then get on with his Messianic mission.

Now, if Freud's "Roman Catholic head" believes in the Last Judgment, it must also believe that Satan exists. Suggestive here is the following from Freud's 1898 essay on the Signorelli lapse, "The Psychological Mechanism of Forgetfulness":

. . . I was able to conjure up the pictures with greater sensory vividness than is usual with me. I saw before my eyes with especial sharpness the artist's self-portrait--with a serious face and folded hands--which he has put in a corner of one of the pictures, next to the portrait of his predecessor in the work, Fra Angelico da Fiesole. (Freud, 1898, 296)

As Paul Vitz (1988, 161-2) notes, this fresco is *The Preaching and the Fall of the Anti-Christ*. Did Freud identify with the bearded Anti-Christ, who "[by] medieval tradition was to have been a Jewish avenger—a last desperate attempt by Satan to win the souls of the elect and overthrow the Christian Church"? (Isbister, 1985, 79) In the fresco Lucifer (cf. Luca Signorelli) whispers in the Anti-Christ's left ear, counseling him. And what is to keep Freud from considering, however briefly, a Faustian pact? What has he to lose? His inner torment? But sell his soul to the devil for what? Time to prepare the soil? [Already 41, he fears "51 years being the limit of [his] life" (Freud, 1900, 513)]. Or, perhaps, charisma sufficient to draw followers?:

I consider it a great misfortune that nature has not granted me the indefinite some thing which attracts people. I believe it is this lack more than any other which has deprived me of a rosy existence.

--Letter of January 27, 1886, to Martha Bernays (Freud, 1960, 199).

It was from Fra Angelico's *Christ Sitting as Judge* -- also in the Chapel of San



Brizio--that Michelangelo appropriated for his *Last Judgment* the menacing gesture of Jesus spurning the damned (Brandes, 1967, 35). [Brandes aptly described Michelangelo's terrible Jesus: "Christ as Jove, hurling thunderbolts" (162).] Since Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* bears the impress of both Fra Angelico's *Christ Sitting as Judge* and Signorelli's *Last Judgment*, Freud couldn't have asked for two frescoes more suitable to ready him for Michelangelo's ominous *Last Judgment* than those "predecessor[s] in the work." Moreover, in the Chapel of San Brizio there are frescoes by Signorelli of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; to harden Freud for Michelangelo's doomsday there are, as far as I know, no better drawings, some in color, than Sandro Botticelli's illustrations for Dante's *Inferno* (cf. "Instead, Botticelli . . . occurred to me"). For, as Kenneth Clark (1976, 18) states, "In sheet after sheet of the *Inferno* images of the most horrible sufferings fill the page."

To Gregory Zilboorg (1964, 57-8), the Signorelli slip signifies that Freud, in his daily life, had repressed his fear of the Last Judgment:

For the rest of his life he felt he deserved to die, and so wished death to come and dreaded its possible approach throughout his life. (57-8)

On the other hand, Zilboorg, himself a Jewish convert to Catholicism, asserts that Freud unconsciously longed to convert:

. . . Freud (in the "unconscious" of his psychic apparatus) wished perhaps that the day of the rising of the dead would come and his brother [Julius] would return . . . (58)

Again, according to my reading, Freud was fully aware of longing to reunite in Paradise

with his baby brother, which raises a question: since this haunted Cain's 'atheism' can be traced back to *his* cross --Julius's death--was Jesus' heart-rending cry on the Cross evoked during the lapse? More so, since, *as* Zilboorg notes, *Signor* means Lord and that *elli*, [cf. *Signor-elli*] for the Hebrew, is, euphonically, God (58):

At about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, E'-li, E'-li, la'-ma sa-bach' tha-ni? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast **thou** forsaken me? (Matt. 27:46)

Inasmuch as Freud intends to eradicate Judaism as well as Christianity, it is understandable that during this slip, Freud's Jewish disposition was also aroused.

**“only Signor was repressed; the Bo in both substitute names”**

At any one time, depending on whether his Jewish or Roman Catholic disposition is stirred up or operative, Freud's Lord or *Signor* is either Jesus Christ of the Last Judgment or Jehovah of the Torah portion Bo, covering the first Passover (Ex. 10:1-13,16); which begins:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him.

A major focus of Freud's beloved Hebrew and Scriptures instructor Professor Samuel Hammerschlag's curriculum at the Sperl Gymnasium (Rice, 1990, 49; 53), Bo, with clear "signs," reveals both Jehovah's Mercy, the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and His terrible Justice. especially the last and most horrific of the Bo plagues, the death of the first-born son (Ex.13:15). At the Passover Seder, Jakob Freud, conducting the service in Hebrew by heart (Klein, 1985, 42), dutifully related what

Jehovah “[had] wrought in Egypt” that first Passover, thereby fulfilling the Bo commandment *Mitzvah Lesaper* (“You must tell”):

And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them, that ye may know how that I *am* the Lord. (Ex.10:2)

According to the Jewish sage Moses Maimonides (1135-1205):

Such a law [Mitzah Lesaper} was necessary in order to perpetuate the memory of the departure from Egypt; because *such events verify prophecy and the doctrine of reward and punishment*. The benefit of every commandment that serves to keep miracles in remembrance, or to *perpetuate the true faith*, is therefore obvious. (Maimonides, 1946, 340, my italics)

In *The Psychological Mechanism of Forgetfulness*, Freud (1898) unwittingly reveals that during the Signorelli lapse, his fear of Jehovah’s terrible Justice was stirred up but disowned, denied consciousness:

The repetition of the sound “Bo” in the two substitutive names [Botticelli and Boltraffio] might perhaps have led a novice to suppose that it belonged to the missing name as well, but I *took good care to steer clear of that expectation*. (291; my italics)

Having spared the first-born sons of the Israelites when He “slew all the firstborn” sons of the Egyptians, Jehovah, as Freud well knows, makes a claim on his first-born son (Ex.13;15); it is only by being pious—by not transgressing—can Freud redeem his first-born son, Martin. Accordingly, secretly bent on destroying the Law, this impious Jew

“took good care to steer clear of that expectation” of trouble, *der Liebe Gott’s heimsuchungen* (visitations) unto “the third and fourth generation” (Ex. 20:5). Again, the death of one child, his brother Julius, is on his hands—or so he believes.

On the left side of Signorelli’s fresco of “the last time,” the Anti-Christ is hurled into Hell. Similarly, on the left side of Botticelli’s *The Punishment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram* divine punishment is depicted (Numbers 16, 31-35), but taken with liberties): Moses’ right arm is raised in judgment, and as rays issue from his forehead, the earth “open[s] her mouth,” and flames consume those rebelling against Moses’ authority. Inasmuch as Botticelli’s fresco, (is in Vasari’s *Lives of the Painters*, (plate 95; titled, *Punishment of Korah and the Sons of Aron*), it is reasonable to suppose that Freud, before heading for Rome, knew that this fresco, also known as *The Destruction of the Sons of Korah* (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1973, 4, 6), is in the Sistine Chapel (on the Moses wall). To shield himself from terror and guilt, did Freud, during the Signorelli slip, repress that graphic rendering of Yahweh’s terrible Justice--but since repression is never fully successful, "Botticelli . . . occurred"?

### THE SECOND STATION: MOZART’S *DON GIOVANNI*

“Here I await for vengeance on the impious [*empio*] man who brought me to my death.”

[“*Dell’empio, che mi trasse al passo estremo, qui attendo la vendetta.*”]

-- Inscription, the *Commendatore*’s marble tomb.

Driven almost to insanity, Franz [Moor] asked [Pastor] Moser what the worst possible sins a man could commit. Moser replied there were two: "Parricide the one is called, fratricide the other- --Schiller’s *The Robbers*, in McGrath, 1986, 292.

On the evening of August 8, 1901, just three weeks before detraining at Rome, Freud attends a performance in Salzburg of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Freud, 1985, 446). By then, Freud had attended several performances of the opera (Diaz de Chumaciero, 1993, 85-6). And although Peter Gay (1988, 169n) states, "in the absence of Freud's detailed comments on [his particular favorite] *Don Giovanni*, it is impossible to conjecture what the opera meant to him," I intend here to show that, as with Signorelli's *Last Judgment*, *Don Giovanni*, did double duty, readying Freud, who understood Italian (Jones, 1953, 21), for both Michelangelo's huge, over 2,100-square-foot incense-blackened *Last Judgment* on the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel, and his terrible, 8ft, 4-inch, bull-horned Tablet-bearing Moses in the gloomy Church of St. Peter in Chains.

At the beginning of the opera's opening scene, hearing his daughter's cries for help as she, on the palace stairs, attempts to flee from Don Giovanni during a failed seduction the elderly *Commendatore*—in a night robe, carrying a light in one hand and a sword in the other-- to avenge Donna Anna, challenges the "wretch" to a duel ("*indegno, battiti meco*"). The encounter proceeds:

DON GIOVANNI:           *Va, no mi degno, di pugnar teco!*

Go, I will not stoop to fight with you.

COMMENDATORE:       *Cosi pretendi da me fuggir?*

Do you imagine you'll escape me thus?

DON GIOVANNI:       *Va, non mi degno, no!*

No, I will not stoop, no!

COMMENDATORE:       *Cosi pretendi da me fuggir?*

Do you imagine you'll escape me thus?

DON GIOVANNI (aside): *(Misero!)*

Wretched man!

COMMANDATORE: *Battiti!*

Fight!

*Don Giovanni draws his sword*

DON GIOVANNI : *Misero! Misero! attendi se vuoi morir!*

Wretched man! Wretched man! Look out if you wish to die!

*A fight ensues, and the Commendatore, mortally wounded, falls to the ground.*

COMMENDATORE: *Ah! soccorso!*

Ah! Help!

This dramatic scene of Don Giovanni murdering an avenging sword-brandishing father-figure would evoke, Freud fully understands, emotions and attitudes when he wished to kill his father, Jakob, in order to possess his mother, Amalie, young enough to be Jakob's daughter-- breakthroughs which would, he hoped, steel him for his face-off, in Rome, with the foremost symbol of the great man "who created the Jews" (Freud, 1939, 106)-- and "whose anger waxed hot" against transgressors (e.g., Ex. 32:19). To get on with his vast ambition, it is essential that he maintain his emotional balance, recognize that he is experiencing but new editions of emotions and attitudes from his boyhood pertaining to his father, Jakob--the patricidal rage; the terror while awaiting the dreaded anticipated horrible retribution, castration; and guilt; the latter even that "climaxwretch" ("*indegno*") Don Giovanni experiences deeply, as evinced by his singing soto voce--"to the

accompaniment of a *wailing* phrase in the violins and oboe” (Newman, 1928, 71)-- the following while the *Commendatore* in agony, gives up the ghost:

Ah! Already the villain is fallen, gasping and breathing his last,  
already I see his soul parting from his heaving breast.

I see his soul parting from his heaving breast...

Given his intention to sacrifice Moses, the Ur-father of the Jews, to his vast ambition, Freud is only too aware that to ready himself for “the crown of modern sculpture,” Michelangelo’s *Moses* (Freud, 1914b, 213), and, on the other hand, for Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, he cannot have chosen a more appropriate scene than the opera’s riveting climax, the confrontation between Don Giovanni and that stone father-figure, the *Commendatore*/ *Commendatore*.

Spurning the *Commendatore*/ *Commendatore*’s repeated demands that he repent his debaucheries, Don Giovanni wrests his hand free from the icy clasp of the *Commendatore*/ *Commendatore*, thereby sealing his fate: as smoke and flames begin to envelop Don Giovanni, the *Commendatore*/ *Commendatore*, backing away, announces, “Ah! there is no more time”; from below a chorus of demons summons Don Giovanni to Hell where “worse is in store for you”; terrified (“Ah! *che inferno, che terror!*”), the ‘parricide’ sinks to Hell, uttering one final scream (“Ah”).

Inasmuch as Freud is bent on destroying the Law and sacrificing Moses, it is reasonable to assume that that gripping dress rehearsal or trial run evoked in Professor Hammerschlag’s former prize student a structurally similar scene--uncannily so--in the Fourth Book of Moses, Numbers 16: 31-35. (Again, rendered in Botticelli’s *The Punishment of\_Korah, Dathan, and Abiram*):

And it came to pass, as [Moses] had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and *their* houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit; and the earth closed upon them and they perished from among the congregation... And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them... And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred men that offered incense.

Three weeks later, on Monday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, four years of detailed self-analysis behind him, already 45, and fearing that time is running out, Freud enters the city of dreams, overcoming, at long last, his so-called Rome phobia:

...there is plenty of evidence that the fulfillment of this great wish [to visit Rome] was opposed by some mysterious taboo which made [Freud] doubt if the wish could ever be realized. (Jones, 1985, 16)

### **THE THIRD STATION: MICHELANGELO'S *LAST JUDGMENT***

... someone led me to the top of a hill and showed me Rome half-shrouded in mist; it was so far away that I was surprised at my view of it being so clear. There was more in the content of the dream than I feel prepared to detail; but the theme of “the promised land seen from afar” was obvious in it ... (Freud, 1900, 194)



Apposite here are the following quotes from a couple of Freud's letters to Martha Bernays sixteen years earlier November 19 (and 24, 1885), which suggest strongly that his devout second mother, who had taken her precocious two year-old Jewish charge **regularly** to Mass in the Notre Dame of his Moravian birthplace—Freiberg's the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady—had left her mark:

My first impression on entering [Notre Dame de Paris] on Sunday was a sensation I have never had before: "This is a church." I looked about for Richetti, who knows the churches of Italy. There he stood, deeply lost in wonder. I have never seen anything so movingly serious and somber ... I sometimes come out of [Charcot's lectures] as from out of the Notre Dame .with an entirely new idea of perfection.

(Freud, 1960, 183; 185)

Two years earlier, Freud, five days before Christmas, wrote his fiancée the following related account::

But the picture [in Dresden's Zwinger Museum] that really captivated me was the "Maundy Money," by Titian . . . This head of Christ, my darling, is the only one that enables even people like ourselves to imagine that such a person did exist. Indeed, it seemed that I was compelled to believe in the eminence of this man because the figure is so convincingly presented. And nothing divine about it, just a noble countenance, far from beautiful yet full of seriousness, intensity, profound thought, and deep inner compassion; if these qualities do not exist in this picture, then there is no such thing as physiognomy. I would love to have

gone away with it, but there were too many people about. So I went away with a full [heavy] heart. (Freud, 1960, 82-3)

eerily similar to Freud's above comment is the following by the distinguished Polish poet Aleksander Wat (b. Chwat, 1900), who, too, had come from a family of Chasidic background--and who, at age 41, converted to Catholicism:

... even when I was an absolute atheist, not just an agnostic but a militant atheist, and even when I did not believe in Christ's historical existence, I also had no hesitation or doubt that humanity had created nothing more sublime and beautiful than the face of Christ ... And I, a Jew, the son of a Hasid, am drawn by by the very figure and phenomenon of Christ. Not only that, I believed that if humanity had reached so high as to have invented this, that was a miracle in itself. An indirect proof of the existence of God and the divine. Because from where else could that image have come to man? And so I had always been prepared for Christianity by the face of Christ--for a long, long time. Even in the periods I needed sacrilege. (Wat, 1990, 299-300.).

As with Sigi, a devout maid brought Aleksander along to church services—but “secretly”:

Anusia used to take me to church secretly for vespers and that had its influence. Imagine a boy from what was still a Jewish home surrounded by all those candles, that music. So the inclinations were always there.”  
(294)

In Freud's case, too, “the inclinations were always there,” but after becoming

fully aware of these tendencies stemming from Sigi's church-going days with his nanny, he had consciously struggled against them. According to Vitz, 1988, "[Freud's] rejection of music came from [his] early experience of church music. To hear organ, instrumental, and choral music, and also bells, would activate painful, unconscious memories in Freud—memories of his lost nanny and her world" (117). If so, it is not a stretch to assume: among the activated painful memories of Sigi's "lost nanny and *her world*," there were frightful thoughts of souls burning in Hell. At any rate, according to my reading: anticipating that the merciless justice of Michelangelo's vindictive Christ would activate memories of hell and eternal damnation, the ensuing torrent of concomitant emotions could, Freud understands, overwhelm him, and--not unlike a long ago zealous Jewish foe of Christians—he'd fall away and instantaneously acknowledge Christ. [In 1885, after a botched nose surgery by Fliess on a patient of his, Freud "nearly fainted." (Bonomi, 2013, 697).]

Here it is worthwhile to turn once more to Brandes (1967):

... the image in which the Savior manifested himself to Michelangelo first and foremost was that of Judge. The ancient Hebrew doctrine of retribution, with its glorification of vengeance as the Lord's essential attribute ("vengeance is mine"), was much closer in his mentality than any gospel of love, any doctrine of grace and forgiveness... On his orders the executioner demons take on the damned for torture. By the time he had reached the age of sixty, Michelangelo looked on mankind as repulsive in the mass. (389-90) [Michelangelo was 61 when he began working on *The Last Judgment*.]

Now, Titian's painting which "captivated" Freud in the Zwinger Museum is actually titled *The Tribute Money*, not, as he writes, "*Maundy Money*" (Vitz, 1988, 68)-- a telling slip. Maundy money refers to alms distributed on Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter)--a tradition stemming from Jesus' "love one another" commandment at the Last Supper (St. John 13:34). More to the point: Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday is observed in commemoration of the instituting of the Eucharist; accordingly, this slip signifies: despite his disclaimer, "nothing divine about [Titian's head of Christ]," Freud, in 1883, was, at some level of his being, "really captivated," held in thrall, by the Lord Jesus—Jesus "full of deep compassion." Freud's nanny and their church-going had left their mark. [According to Vitz (1988) "it is virtually certain that Freud was consciously and unconsciously tempted to convert..." (81)]

As far as I know, Freud never disclosed his experience while in the presence of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*. But from the following written to Fliess upon returning to Vienna, it is clear that Freud had prevailed over his aroused or broken through Roman Catholic sensibility; that is, he resisted acknowledging Christ and returning to his nanny and to her—to their--Church:

I should write to you about Rome now....I found it difficult to tolerate the lie concerning man's redemption, which raises its head to high heaven—for I could not cast off the thought of my own misery and all the other misery that I know of. (Letter dated September 19, 1901; Freud, 1985, 449)  
(In *The Jewish State* published five years earlier (1896), Theodor Herzl termed anti-Semitism, *Judennot*, the "misery of the Jews.")

Now, on to "[t]he sculpted, wrathful, retaliatory Moses...reminiscent of the

Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*.” (Blum, 1991, 520-1).

### **THE FOURTH STATION: MICHELANGELO’S *MOSES***

...for [Freud] the Moses statue was a totem, an icon, alive, yet a religious relic of Biblical antiquity... (Blum, 2017, 7)

... the totem is the common ancestor of the clan . . .

(Freud, 1913, 2)

---the hero ... always rebels against his father and kills him in some shape or other. (Freud, 1939, 87)

'Letters had reached him telling that Alhama was taken. He threw the letters in the fire and killed the messenger.' (Freud, 1936, 246)

In addition to exorcising his “Catholic head,” Freud would deliver himself from the “yoke of the Law,” Judaism’s hold. What better means to do so than by taking his stand before the world’s greatest representation of Jehovah’s Lawgiver, Michelangelo’s terrible *Moses* stationed in the Church of St. Peter in Chains, so-named because it was built to store the prison chains of St. Peter which miraculously fell away in Peter's Jerusalem jail cell just before he was to be executed. (It had been the titular church of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere (1443-1513), who, later, as Pope Julius II, commissioned Michelangelo to sculpt *Moses* for his tomb.). And to make his Jewish chains, the Law, fall away, Freud in that

gloomy church would “go in unto” Moses in his dark chamber. In the weeks leading up to the visit, Freud, I suspect, made several visits to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts to stand before the large plaster copy of Michelangelo’s *Moses* stationed there.

Now, in September 1901, Freud still holds to the cathartic method of cure for neuroses:

. . . [we] lead the patient's attention back from his symptom to the scene in which and through which that symptom arose; and having thus located the scene, we remove the symptom by bringing about, during the reproduction of the traumatic scene, a subsequent correction of the psychological course of events which took place at the time. (Freud, 1896, 193).

In other words, when a patient in the relative safety of the psychoanalyst's office relives a traumatic event, there is a purging of the emotions which sustain the neurotic symptom which arose from that event; hence, the symptom collapses. Freud’s neurotic symptom is submission to the Will of the Father, be the father Jakob Freud, Moses, or Jehovah.

Like the patient whose suicide was repressed or evoked at the time of the Signorelli slip, Freud has, he fears, an “incurable sexual problem”-- his emotional or libidinal ties to his father, Jakob; that is to say, his unresolved Father complex. But were Freud to heal himself, transcend his Father complex, become his own person, then, no longer submissive to the Will of the Father—again, be the father Jakob Freud, Moses, or Yahweh—he could get on with his Messianic mission.

Inasmuch as the situation before Michelangelo's *Moses* would be reminiscent of his childhood when *Sigi* fervently wanted to kill his father in order to possess his mother, Freud, secretly bent on killing Moses (by destroying the Law) in order to possess Mother Earth, understands that there would be uprushes of feelings and attitudes concerning Jakob when **Sigi** wanted to bed his mother, Amalie. It is essential that Freud prevail over these broken through uprushes, especially the patricidal rage and the terror while awaiting the dreaded horrible retribution, castration.

Moment by moment Freud must be vigilant, recognize that he is experiencing but new editions of feelings and attitudes from his childhood pertaining to his papa. Maintaining emotional balance is essential if he is to set himself free from the Will of the Father, again, be the father Jakob Freud, Moses, or Jehovah.

In the rebound volume of the family Bible that he presented Freud ten earlier on his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jakob closed his dedication in Hebrew as follows: "And I have presented it to you as a memorial, and as a reminder of love from your father, who loves you with everlasting love." (Yerushalmi, 1991, 71; translation his). Because he loved his grey-haired, Talmud-reading papa who loved him "with everlasting love," Freud understands that guilt or filial piety could sabotage his intention not to preserve, but to destroy the Law--see to it that there would be no remnants of the Torah to re-bind, not one leaf, not one law. Moreover, not having surmounted his belief in what he will call

“the Bible Story” (Freud, 1925, 28), this impious son who would surpass Moses--both as the new moral authority (with but one law, “Know Thyself” ) and as deliverer of his besieged nation--fears Jehovah and His terrible Justice or visitations, especially that his little ones, his three boys and three girls, will suffer, and pay for their father's transgression. Fearing paternal retribution, Sigi abandoned his intention to kill his papa, Jakob, in order to possess his mama, Amalie; dreading Jehovah's visitations, would Sigmund abandon his impious intention to kill his and every Jew's father, Moses, in order to take possession of Mother Earth? Or would he, on the other hand, risk sacrificing to this evil ambition his little ones, and unto “the third and the fourth generation” (Ex. 20:5)? Again, the death of one child, his brother Julius, is already on his hands—or so, against his better judgment, he believes.

Like Janus, the two-headed Roman guardian of the threshold, Freud must be ever vigilant or he would never resolve his father problem, never be his own person, never govern his own life, forever be bound to the Law. One momentary lapse in the gloomy Church of St. Peter in Chains, and he could kiss goodbye his longed-for Promised Land, an enlightened brotherly world grounded in reason, and in which that perpetual scourge anti-Semitism is unknown.

Michelangelo's *Moses*, however, is more than a mere prop for Freud to set himself free from bondage to the Law--much more. For when it comes to his vast secret



ambition, Freud is superstitious:

. . . My own superstition has its roots in suppressed ambition

(immortality) and in my case takes the place of that anxiety about

death which springs from the normal uncertainty of life. . . .

[Freud's jottings for his eyes only in the interleaved copy of the 1904

edition of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud, 1901, [1904],

260, ed.n.)]

And because “murdering” the biblical Moses (by doing away with the Law) and surpassing him—as both the new moral authority and the deliverer of his people--guarantees Freud immortality, Michelangelo’s terrible, 8-ft, 4-inch, Tablet-bearing representation of that great man of his people so excites his superstitious tendencies that that magnificent, fierce-looking statue is his personal totem, that is, Moses or his shade--possessing the awful, destructive supernatural radiance or *mana* which had been transferred from Jehovah on to him—and which had so unnerved the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai, and which Freud (1921) will reference in *Group psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*:

Even Moses had to act as an intermediary between his people and Jehovah, since the people could not support the sight of God; and when he returned from the presence of God his face shone—some of the *mana* had been transferred on to him. (125)

Freud understood that in his face-off with *Moses/Moses* his castration fear and passive-submissive attitude would surface--and in full force. This "return of the repressed" Freud

feared could overwhelm him, and force him to, again, abandon his intention to kill the father and replace him, the father this time being Moses. When the Bible was translated into Greek, *Karan*, the Hebrew word for "was radiant" was mistranslated as *Keren*, "cornuate," horns (Blum, 1991, 521); in the fourth century, this error was carried over into the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Scriptures. Thus, the dreaded anticipated retributive castration and the dreaded *mana* are both called up by one and the same feature: *Moses'* crown of horns.

Indeed, in "*Der Moses des Michelangelo*," Freud (1914) unwittingly reveals his castration anxiety before *Moses/Moses*, who, furious, had glowered at the backsliding Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf:

. . . Sometimes I have crept cautiously out of the half-gloom  
of the interior as though I myself belonged to the mob upon  
who his eye is turned--the mob which can hold fast no con-  
viction [*das keine Uberzeugung festhalten kann*] . . .(213 [175])

In the phrase "the mob which can hold fast no conviction," Freud uses "*uberzeugung*" to denote the word "conviction, and since "*zeugungslied*" means "penis" (Cassell's, 1962), the following rendering of Freud's recounted experience is reasonable (that is, if, as I maintain, Freud intends to kill and surpass Moses):

" [It's] as though I myself belonged to the mob unto whom [Moses'] eye  
is turned... the mob which [can not hold on to their penises]."

Again, moment by moment Freud must stay alert, recognize that he is experiencing but new editions of feelings and attitudes from his childhood pertaining to his father

Jakob. Maintaining emotional balance is essential if he is to set himself free from the Will of the Father; again, whether that father be Jakob Freud, Moses, or Jehovah.

Feeding Freud's "totem" superstition is, I suspect, his Roman Catholic sensibility: if bread, a Communion Wafer, is Jesus, what's to keep stone, Michelangelo's marble *Moses*, from being Moses? (cf. the *Commendatore/Commendatore*.) Here it is worth noting that in his birth place, the small, heavily Catholic Moravian town of Freiberg where he learned that symbols (Wine and Wafer) can be what they represent (the Blood and Body of Jesus), a statue inspired by Michelangelo's *Moses* was stationed in its town square: this Israelite writes on a stone tablet and wears a helmet with horn-like projections. And as this impious striver knows only too well, in his shadowy Roman chamber *Moses/ Moses* has no veil cloaking his *mana*.

\ Relevant here is following from Freud's essay, "*The 'Uncanny'*,":

Our analysis of instance of the uncanny has led us back to the old animistic conception of the universe. This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers, or '*mana*' . . . It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to *the animistic stage* in primitive men, that *none of us has passed it without preserving some residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves* . . . . (Freud, 1919, 240; my italics)

Having been born in a caul (Jones, 1953, 4), which is a sign of greatness--and which his proud mother, Amalie, never let her "*goldener Sigi*" forget--Freud *superstit-*

*iously* believes that he, himself, possesses *mana* from birth, and, so, may just be able to support or withstand the terrible *mana* of *Moses/Moses*:

. . . kings and chiefs are possessed of great power, and it is death for their subjects to address them directly; but a minister or other person of greater *mana* than common can approach them unharmed . . . . This power is attached to all *special* individuals, such as kings, priests or newborn babies, to all *exceptional states*, such as the physical states of menstruation, puberty or birth, and to all *uncanny* things. (Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 1913, 20; 22; Freud's italics)

Having had signs of heart trouble dating from 1893, Freud, while readying himself, in all likelihood fears that under the impending strain he could suffer a fatal heart attack before *Moses/Moses*. (Max Schur [1972, 62], who had been Freud's longtime physician, believed that he had "suffered an organic myocardial lesion" in 1894.) And what if he were to suffer a breakdown, have a psychotic break? To have such a grand ambition and to believe that he could pull it off, maybe this big dreamer is already a *meschuggene* lunatic, just another messianic pretender, one more deluded Messiah of the Jews who comes on the scene during times of especial Jewish misery. Regardless, this haunted Cain does not turn back, but continues his perilous path.

Now, in "The 'Uncanny'," Freud (1919) asserts that an uncanny impression, which is characterized by "dread and horror" (219), may occur "when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes" ( 244); moreover, the factors which can produce an uncanny impression are "silence, solitude and darkness" ( 252). Bearing in

mind these three uncanny producing factors, let us consider the following from the famous passage of "The Moses of Michelangelo":

. . . no piece of statuary has ever made a stronger impression on me  
 .than this. How often have I mounted the steep steps from the unlovely  
 Corso Cavour to the *lonely* piazza where the *deserted* church stands, and  
 have essayed to support the angry scorn of the hero's glance! Sometimes I  
 have crept cautiously out of the half-*gloom* of the interior as though I  
 myself belonged to the mob upon whom his eye is turned . . .(Freud, 1914,  
 p. 213; italics mine.)

The "uncanny" factors of "silence, solitude and darkness" were then present, which made the Church of St. Peter in Chains a fitting setting for "a symbol [to take] over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes." So, it is not a great leap to infer: whenever Freud "crept cautiously out of the half-gloom of the interior" psychic reality was in play, i.e., *Moses* was Moses. The original paper, "*Der Moses des Michelangelo*," which, at Freud's insistence was published anonymously, provides a clearer sense of his ordeals or trials before *Moses/Moses*:

. . . How often have I mounted the steep steps from the un-  
 lovely Corso Cavour to the lonely piazza where the deserted

church stands, and have essayed to support [*standzuhalten*] the angry  
 scorn of the hero's [Moses'] glance [*Blick des Heros*]! Sometimes I have  
 crept cautiously out of the half-gloom of the interior . . . (Freud, 1914b,  
 213; [1914a, 175])

According to *The New Cassell's German Dictionary* (1962), *blick* (“glance”) means “touches of light,” and *blicken*, in addition to meaning “to glance,” means “to shine” (cf. Ex. 34:30: “. . . the skin of his face shone”). And in the *Cassell's* edition of 1914 (Bruehl, 1906 [rev. 1914]), the year that *Der Moses des Michelangelo* was published, we find that *anblitzen*, which stems from the same root, in addition to meaning “to cast a furious look upon,” means “to throw a ray upon.” (In the frontispiece of the Freud family Bible, the illustrated German-Hebrew Philippon Bible, rays emanate upward in ‘bundled’ fashion from both sides of the fore-head of the Tablet-bearing biblical Moses.) From *blick*, we now turn to *standhalten* (used for “support” above). The 1914 edition of *Cassell's* defines *standhalten* as follows: “To withstand; to resist; to hold one’s own; to stand firm.” By contrast in 1921 in *Group Psychology and The Analysis of the Ego*, when referencing Ex.34:30 “. . .the people could not support the sight of God,” Freud, instead of using *standhalten* for “support,” uses *ertragen*, which implies passive-submission, resignation - “To bear; to suffer; to tolerate; to put up with.” Remarkably, Freud withstands the *blick* or *mana* of *Moses/Moses*, thereby acquiring that terrible supernatural charge, or so he superstitiously believes :

The source of taboo is attributed to a peculiar magic which is inherent in persons and spirits and can be conveyed by them through the medium of

inanimate objects. ... The *strangest fact* seems to be that *anyone who has [successfully] transgressed one of these prohibitions himself acquires the characteristic of being prohibited--as though the whole of the dangerous charge had been transferred over to him ...*(Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 1913, 21-21; Preface penned, "Rome, September 1913"; my italics.)

Pertinent here is the following lifted from a letter that Freud, ten years later, will write Carl Jung while laboring over *Totem and Taboo*:

My *study of totemism* and other work are not going well. I have very little time, and to draw on books and reports is not at all the same as *drawing on the richness of one's own experience*. Besides, my interest is diminished by the conviction that *I am already in possession of the truths I am trying to prove*. Such truths, of course, are of no use to anyone else, I can see from the difficulties I encounter in my work that I was not cut out for inductive investigation, that *my whole make-up is intuitive*, and that in setting out to establish the purely empirical science of [psychoanalysis] *I subjected myself to an extraordinary discipline*. (d. December 17, 1911; Freud, 1974, 472; my italics)

Freud will leave Rome on Saturday, September 14 (Jones, 1955, 201), the first of Tishri, Rosh Hashanah, New Year's Day. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, from Berggasse 19, he writes Fliess, "Rome ... was ... a high point of my life." (Freud, 1985, 449 ).

Turning point is more like it.

Having prevailed in his face-off with *Moses/Moses*, disciples gather round Freud in the fall of the following year, 1902 (Gay, 1988, 136), and he is on his way to preparing

the ground for his Promised Land--and this former impious Jew-boy from the miserable streets of Vienna is well on his way to becoming FREUD who “could on occasion create a formidable impression with a stern and somewhat scowling glance” (Jones, 1955, 15). Six years later, on April 15, 1908, fifty years to the day of Julius Freud’s death, the six-year-old Psychological Wednesday Society is re-named--on Freud’s carried motion—the Vienna Psycho-analytic Society (Nunberg and Federn, 1906–1908, 373); in this manner he secretly dedicates to the memory of Julius the psychoanalytic movement which, if all goes according to plan, would institute his Promised Land, an enlightened secular world in which *der Kinder* can move across frontiers freely, develop their talents, and satisfy their needs.

### POSTSCRIPT

In the Vatican, after Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*, his sculpted *Pieta* (1499) in St. Peter’s was, I believe, of greatest concern to Freud. Facing the sorrowing, youthful-appearing mother, the lifeless body of her son lying across her lap, would he be able to contain himself, resist acknowledging Jesus? As you read the following, bear in mind that his mother, Amalie, was just twenty-two when Julius died:

we find our souls deeply touched by the quiet sublimity of overwhelming but muted sorrow that speaks without words and does without a minimum of gesture. This Madonna, composed despite her deep agony, is the noblest expression of an elementary sense that something incomprehensible has happened doing violence to nature, senseless in its outrageous horror ... At the age of twenty-four [Michelangelo] had plumbed the abyss of sorrow in a single human soul ... (Brandes, 1967, 147-8).



In self-exile in London, commenting on *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud will unwittingly show his hand, his impious hand:

Neither in my private life nor in my writings have I ever made a secret of my being an out and out unbeliever. Anyone considering the book [then at the printer's] from that point of view will have to admit it is only Jewry and not Christianity which has reason to feel offended by its conclusions. For only a few incidental remarks which say nothing that hasn't been said before, allude to Christianity. At most one can quote the old adage: '*Caught together, hanged together.*' (letter of October 31, 1938, to Charles Singer, a professor of history of science; in E. L. Freud, 1960, 453; my italics. )

Freud penned the last sentence of this his final assault on religion in his temporary London home (39 Elsworthy Road, N.W. 3) on Sunday, July 17, 1938 (Gay, 1988, 633); --or the civil date of the Fast of Tammuz, the day of mourning commemorating both the Chaldean breach (586 B.C.E.) and Roman breach (70 C.E.) of the walls of Jerusalem, which led to the destruction of the First and Second Temples (Spier, 1986). And this is fitting, for universal acceptance of the book's essential premise or speculation-- Jewish monotheism can be traced back to a patricide, the killing of Moses by the Jews [Deuteronomy 34:-7 notwithstanding] would result in the destruction of the Jews' 'stone' fortress, the Torah.

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Robert L. Lippman, Ph.D.

1107 Glenbrook Road,

Louisville, KY 40233

e-mail: [roblylippman@aol.com](mailto:roblylippman@aol.com); ph.502-244-5151

