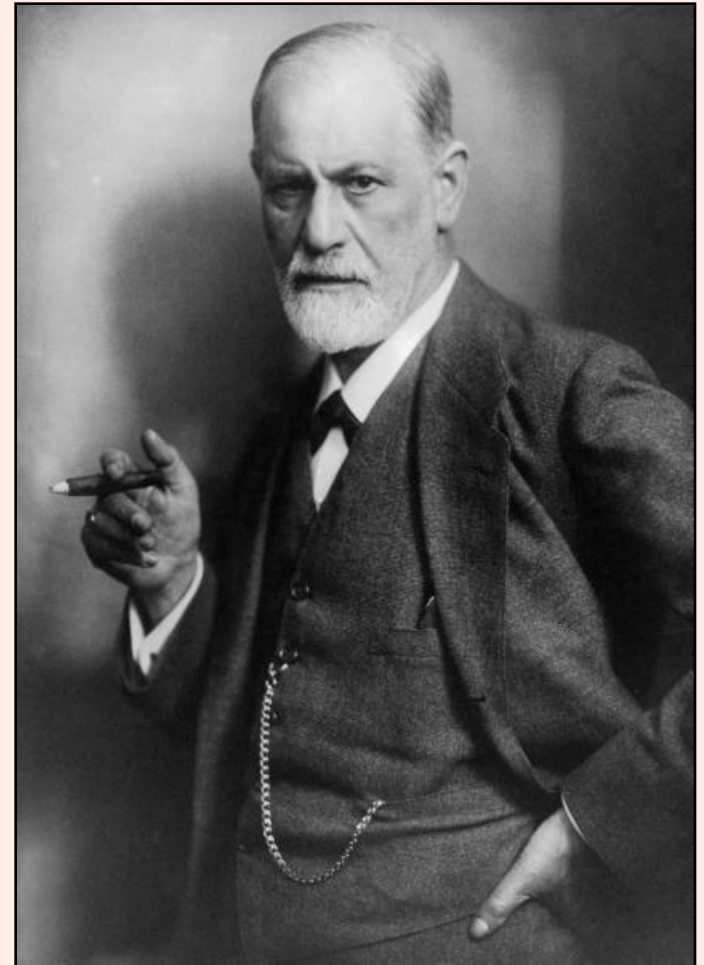


Freud, psychoanalysis, and Kabbalistic cosmology

Key concepts in Freud's psychoanalysis (1)

- There is far more to the human psyche than the individual's conscious perception and definition of his/her own personality
- The polarity of, and struggle between, conscious (*ego*) and unconscious (*id*) is the natural state of the human being
- The contents of the unconscious are primitive, undifferentiated, and often savage, and must be mediated and controlled by the ego through increasing awareness of unconscious drives and desires
- The *supergo* is a concept which Freud connected with social repression and guilt. It is also related to his idea of the unconscious 'censor' which prevents painful and disturbing unconscious contents from reaching conscious awareness
- Freud built on the work of Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Wilhelm Fliess, and Josef Breuer to develop his ideas about the autonomous drives of the unconscious. He rarely credited his sources.
- For a clear synopsis of Freud's work, see Ellenberger, *Discovery of the Unconscious*, pp. 418-570. A good deal of Freud's work is available on the internet, as well as in relatively inexpensive used editions from AbeBooks and Amazon. For other works about Freud, see Anthony Storr, *Freud: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2001); Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (Basic Books, 1974).



Sigmund Freud, 1856-1939

Key concepts in Freud's psychoanalysis (2):

- The dream is like a text which must be decoded to reveal the secret workings of the psyche. Every dream contains a latent and a manifest content. The latent content is expressed through symbols.

‘There is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and...if that procedure is employed, every dream reveals itself as a psychical structure which has a meaning...I shall further endeavor to elucidate the process to which the strangeness and obscurity of dreams are due and to deduce from those processes the nature of the psychical forces by whose concurrent or mutually opposing action dreams are generated’.

— Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 57

Key concepts in Freud's psychoanalysis (3):

Freud believed that the libido of the unconscious is a power permeating, and even dominating, the whole of human existence. In his early work Freud understood the libido to be expressed in humans as the sexual urge.

'Some of what this book contains – its insistence on the importance of sexuality in all human achievements and the attempt that it makes at enlarging the concept of sexuality – has from the first provided the strongest resistance against psychoanalysis...It is some time since Arthur Schopenhauer, the philosopher, showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by sexual impulses'.

- Freud, *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, p. 43

Key concepts in Freud's psychoanalysis (4):

- Freud's view of the unconscious changed over time, giving way to a concept of two opposing forces comprising the libido: the life-drive or *eros*, and the death-drive or *thanatos*. While *eros* seeks to perpetuate life through pleasure and relationship, *thanatos* seeks to return to the primal state of inanimate matter on both biological and psychological levels. *Thanatos* is characterised psychologically by stasis and by the compulsion to repeat.

‘The manifestations of a compulsion to repeat...exhibit to a high degree an instinctual character and, when they act in opposition to the pleasure principle, give the appearance of some “daemonic” force at work.’

– Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 29

- Freud's family background was Eastern European Hasidic Jewish; both his grandfathers were Hasidic rabbis
- The modern Hasidic movement, emerging in the 18th century and still a dynamic element in contemporary Judaism, utilises elements of both Lurianic Kabbalah and earlier 13th-century Kabbalistic ideas
- Many currents in Hasidism express a markedly panentheistic perspective: the 'holy sparks' of divinity, scattered when the cosmic 'accident' occurred during the emanation of the universe, exist not only in humans, animals, and plants, but in every object that can be found in the earthly world. 'Contemplative prayer' or 'prayer with intent' (*kavvanah*, a form of ritual meditation) can be utilised to 'free' the sparks and help to facilitate the great cosmic process of reintegration
- Hasidism is relatively free of the dualism inherent in many other religious currents; spiritual and material are of equal value and represent different aspects of a unified divinity which may be experienced on inner levels through dreams, visions, and meditations. Even evil can eventually be redeemed and reintegrated, as it too is part of divinity. In other words, God is the unconscious.
- On Hasidism and its psychological orientation, see Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (SUNY Press, 1995). For general discussions about Hasidism and Hasidic cosmology, see Rachel Elior, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism* (SUNY Press, 1993); Rachel Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006); Morris M. Faierstein, 'Hasidism: The Last Decade in Research', *Modern Judaism* 11:1 (1991), 111-124. For scholarly works on the influence of Hasidism on Freud see Willy Aron, 'Notes on Sigmund Freud's Ancestry and Jewish Contacts', *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 11 (1956-57), pp. 286-95; Harry Trosman, 'Freud's Cultural Background', *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 1 (1973), 318-335.

The Lurianic Kabbalah

- The early modern Kabbalist Isaac Luria (1534-1572) developed several ideas which have found their way into esoteric currents in the modern and post-modern periods, as well as into modern Hasidism and, in secularised forms, psychoanalytic models. Here are two key Lurianic concepts adopted by the Hasidic movement, which would have influenced Freud's family:
- *Adam Kadmon* ('primal earth' or 'primal Adam') represents the ten *sefirot* in a configuration which represents the model on which all things, including the human body and the human soul, are based; therefore what is within humans is also within the godhead, including conflicting drives and teleologies.
- The cosmos, and the godhead itself, are damaged or fragmented, not because of human sin but because of a cosmic 'accident' during the process of emanation. This damage includes the separation and alienation of the male and female aspects of deity and the emergence of the dark 'shells' or *qlipot*, resulting in what humans experience as alienation and evil. However, it lies within human capability to reintegrate or 'repair' the godhead (= *tikkun*).



A good introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria is Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul and Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford University Press, 2003)

Jung's view of Freud's theories



Jung, c. 1910, when he was Freud's favourite disciple

'Freud, who had always made much of his irreligiosity, had now constructed a dogma; or rather, in the place of a jealous God whom he had lost, he had substituted another compelling image, that of sexuality'.

- Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 174.

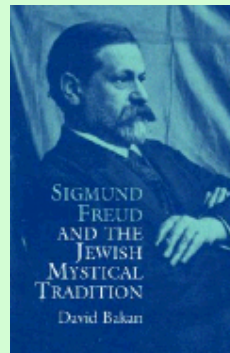


Freud, bottom left, and Jung, bottom right, taken in 1909 at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA. Between them is Granley Stanville Hall, president of Clark University and a pioneering American psychologist and educator, who organised the conference photographed above. In the top row, left to right, are Abraham A. Brill, Ernest Jones, and Sandor Ferenczi, all involved in the psychoanalytic movement.

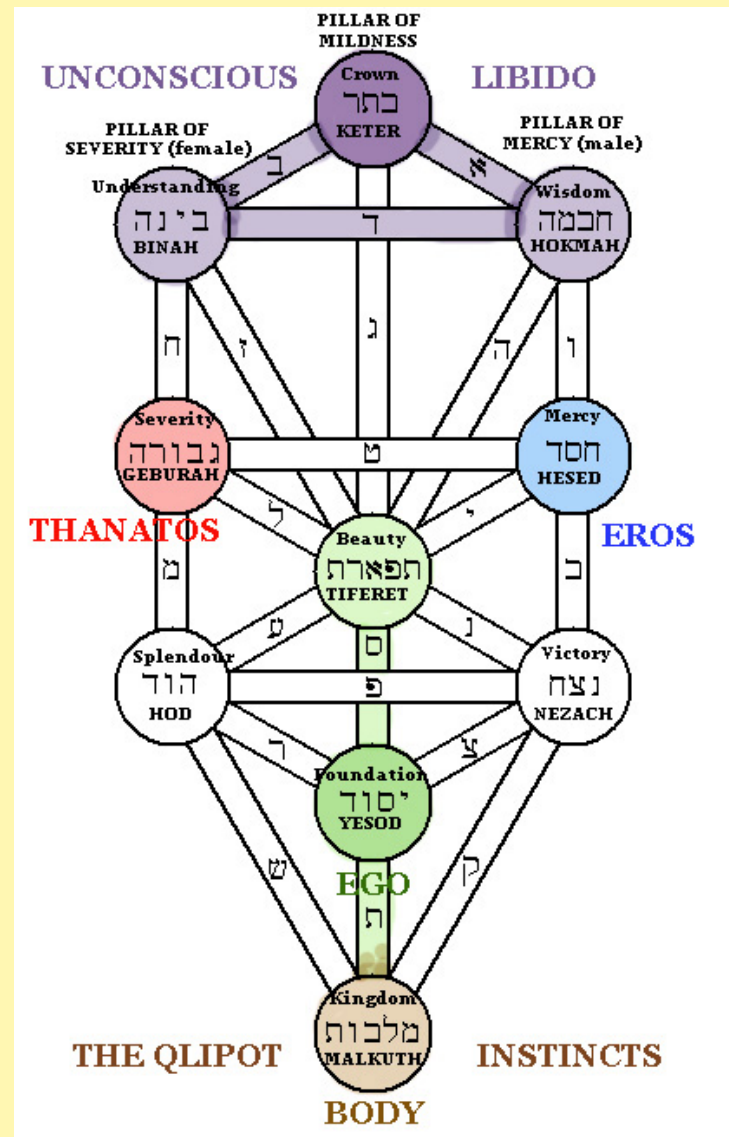
Freud 'consciously or unconsciously, secularized Jewish mysticism; and psychoanalysis can intelligently be viewed as such a secularization'.

- David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Beacon Press, 1975), p. 25

[Bakan (1921-2004) was Professor Emeritus in the Department of Psychology at York University, Toronto, and editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*]



Freud's concepts and the sefirotic Tree



- ‘To this day psychoanalysis is regarded as savouring of mysticism, and its unconscious is looked upon as one of the things between heaven and earth which philosophy refuses to dream of...Alliance and co-operation between analysis and occultists might thus appear both plausible and promising’.

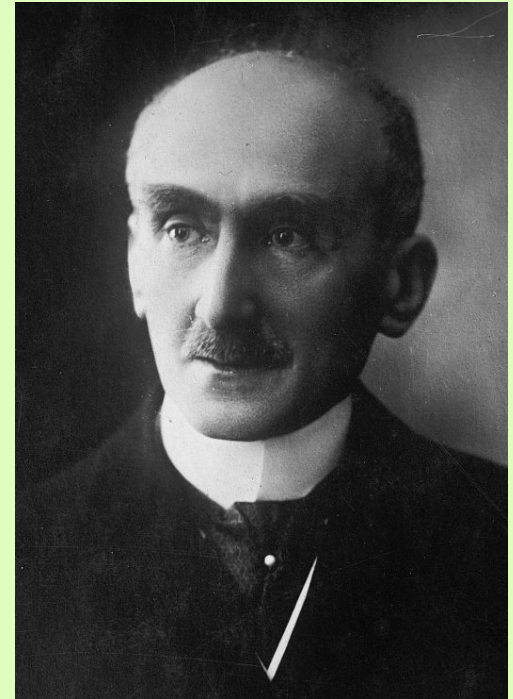
– Freud, ‘Psychoanalysis and Telepathy’ (1921), p. 178

According to Beatrice Hinkle, who translated and wrote the introduction to the first English edition of Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* (London: Kegan Paul, 1917), Freud's concept of sexuality was 'entirely different' from the popular understanding.

According to Hinkle, Freud conceived sexuality as 'practically synonymous with the word *love*...It must also be borne in mind that Freud strictly emphasises the psychic idea of sexuality...as well as the somatic expression'.

[Hinkle, 'Introduction', in Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, xii]

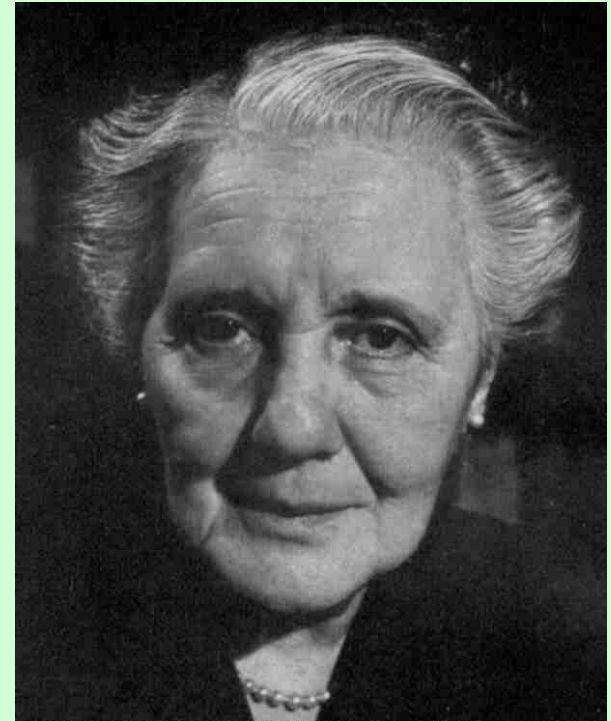
Freud's idea of sexuality as libido, life-force, is close to the French philosopher Henri Bergson's idea of *élan vital*, echoing the Hasidic view of divinity streaming through life and animating all things. Bergson's family background was also Hasidic. It is possible that Freud and Bergson knew each other or were in correspondence; it is probable that Freud knew Bergson's work.



Henri Bergson, 1859-1941. His sister, Mina Bergson, married Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, one of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The work of Melanie Klein (1882-1960)

- Klein was one of Freud's most important followers
- Like Freud, her family background was Eastern European Hasidic Jewish
- Klein's theories were circulating at the Medico-Psychological Clinic at the same time as Freud's, and influenced occultists such as Dion Fortune
- Klein's idea of 'reparation' seems to be derived from the Lurianic Kabbalah and the concept of an eventual healing of cosmic fragmentation and polarisation between good and evil, and a return to divine unity. This idea is transposed onto the development of the human psyche from infancy: 'splitting', 'depressive position', and 'reparation'.



References for Klein:

Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Works of Melanie Klein* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975)

Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (London: Hogarth Press, 1981)

Harriet Lutzky, 'Reparation and Tikkun: A Comparison of the Kleinian and Kabbalistic Concepts', *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 16 (21989), 449-58

Joseph H. Berke and Stanley Schneider, 'Repairing Worlds: An Exploration of the Psychoanalytical and Kabbalistic Concepts of Reparation and Tikkun', *Psychoanalytic Review* 90 (2003), 723-49