Rabbi Hisda said: A dream which is not interpreted is like a letter which is not read.

—Talmud, *Berachos* 55b

Rabbi Bana'ah said: There were twenty-four interpreters of dreams in Jerusalem. Once I dreamt a dream and I went round to all of them and they all gave different interpretations, and all were fulfilled, thus confirming that which is said: All dreams follow the mouth [a dream follows its interpretation].

—*Berachos* 55b

But there remained enough other things to make the attraction of Judaism and Jews irresistible—many dark emotional forces, all the more potent for being so hard to group in words, as well as the clear consciousness of our inner identity, the intimacy that comes from the same psychic structure.

—Sigmund Freud in a speech to the B'nai Brith Lodge of Vienna on his 70th birthday

... the Talmudic rabbi takes a clinical attitude towards his own ideas, and certainly towards those of his fellows... By its stress on the unfolding possibilities of reason and its relentless testing of all propositions against the measure of skeptical reason, the Talmud prepared the Jews to recognize the relativity of successive truth claims, the probability that each in its turn would have to give way to the next... The Talmud's persistent dubiety disciplined the Jewish intellectual to speculate about the unthinkable—“Perhaps things are the opposite of what they seem?”—to investigate the forbidden, to reconsider the commonplace, and so to reshape reality.

—Jacob Neusner

We have attached no less importance in interpreting dreams to every shade of the form of words in which they were laid before us...
short, we treated as Holy Writ what previous writers have regarded as an arbitrary improvisation.

—Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

And lastly, it is not attractive to be classed with scholastics and Talmudists who are satisfied to exercise their ingenuity, unconcerned how far removed their conclusions may be from the truth.

—Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*

Freud may not have liked being classed with Talmudists, but as he admitted, the uniqueness of his approach to the dream and his success in revealing its secret (and thereby the secrets of psychic life) was that he treated it as Holy Writ—like a Rabbi—searching for hidden significance in every word and detail, and applying ingenious methods of symbolic and linguistic interpretation which to his contemporaries were unorthodox, unscientific madness. To be classed with Talmudists was certainly also painful for Freud as he tried to make his way in a secular European culture which was just beginning with difficulty to accept Jews. It was not only the method in his madness, and the stunning revelations of psychoanalysis concerning the hidden and less savory side of man’s life that were offensive, but also, as Freud knew, the religious identity of its founder. Psychoanalysis was the Jewish science. It is the thesis of this paper, though, that psychoanalysis was the Jewish science in a far deeper way than has been recognized. Its founder, who affirmed a common “psychic structure” with the Jews, indeed created a secular version of Talmud, and an interpretative science whose methodology was deeply rabbinic. Freud displaced Rabbinic hermeneutics from the text of the Holy Writ to the text of the dream, that is—the speaking psyche of the person. A serious consideration of the relation of psychoanalytic hermeneutics to the tradition of classical Jewish hermeneutics can not only account for the anomalous nature of psychoanalysis in the history of Western European thought, but also might answer Freud’s own question in his letter to Oskar Pfister: “... by the way, how comes it that none of the godly ever devised psychoanalysis and that one had to wait for a godless Jew?”

For it is precisely around the nature of psychoanalysis as a specific technique of interpretation and hermeneutics that the controversy concerning its status as a “science” rages to this day. The question is whether the validity of science depends on the achievement of a completely objective, non-involved and non-prejudicial point of view—or whether the acknowledgment of the necessary relativity, subjectivity, and prejudice involved in any act of perception is, in fact, a truer and more “scientific” approach to knowledge.

In a well-known passage, Freud wrote that, indeed, after the cosmological revelations of Copernicus and the biological discoveries of Darwin, psychoanalysis was the third great blow to man’s ego. Its two major discoveries concerning the unrestrained nature of the sexual instincts, and the unconscious nature of the mental processes which “only reach the ego and come under its control through incomplete and untrustworthy perceptions—amount to a statement that the ego is not master in its own house.” And the entire enlightened, scientific, Gentile culture was shaken. The precious achievement of Western European man, the conscious thinking ego—its theorems, reason, science, objectivity—became suspect, was dispossessed. And once this territory was dispossessed, Freud could conquer Canaan. As he wrote to Jung: “If I am Moses, then you are Joshua and will take possession of the promised land of psychoanalysis, which I shall be able to glimpse only from afar.”

Behind the thinking Cartesian ego lay another, hidden order of reality impelling, determining, and distorting the character of that consciousness. Freud taught that observation must be shifted off-center, so to speak, to what lay hidden in the gaps of consciousness. (And on the level of culture, to what lay hidden behind and beneath the surface of Christianity.) The problem in psychoanalysis is to make consciousness transparent to itself. But to do so involves using the suspect surface rational consciousness to understand that which it itself conceals. The analyst must become his own patient, displace the center of his rational consciousness and partake of the very thought-processes which are his object of observation.

The analyst is thus an engaged, not an impartial, observer. But he can also “reconstruct” and “translate” back into the language of rational consciousness what he inferred from the gaps, what he learned in his descent into the unconscious and his “teleological suspension of
the rational.” For Freud personally, that meant the arduous effort to defend his discoveries in language acceptable to his scientific peers and the culture of the gentile majority. Perhaps that is why Freud preferred to think of his work as “construction” rather than “interpretation,” comparing his work to that of the archaeologist’s in an attempt to redeem his method in the scornful eyes of those who labelled his constructions arbitrary, irrational, and unscientific.

The argument between “interpretation” and “fact,” objectivity and subjectivity, takes place on the old grounds of the division between the “human sciences” and the “natural sciences.” The natural sciences have assumed for themselves a position of objective neutrality free from the impurities of subjectivity and involvement. Psychoanalysis, however, to use Paul Ricoeur’s word, is a “hybrid” because “it arrives at its energy concepts solely by way of interpretation. Because of this mixed nature, analytic interpretation will always seem an anomaly in the human sciences.” That is to say, Freud operates both within the schemata of mechanistic science and symbolic meaning; his work is an interplay between economics and hermeneutics. Ricoeur explains:

The speculative hypotheses are verified by their capacity to interrelate hermeneutic concepts—such as apparent meaning and hidden meaning, symptom and fantasy, instinctual representation, ideas, and affects—with economic concepts, such as cathexis, displacement, substitution, projection, introjection, etc.106

Ricoeur, along with many other contemporary theoreticians of interpretation, has stressed that Freud’s specific contribution to psychology in particular, and the natural sciences in general, was a hermeneutic one. Gerard Radnitzky, for example, has written:

It is generally agreed that Freud made us see parapraxes, dreams, and neurotic behaviour as “meaningful.” However, “meaningful” in this context is often construed—from the point of view of naturalism—as: He enables us to explain the occurrence of such phenomena in a satisfactory way (hence we understood them). What Freud de facto did was to produce a shift in the tradition of psychology by introducing a new way of studying these phenomena which is primarily hermeneutic.107

Radnitzky takes the model of knowledge in psychoanalysis, which he calls “hermeneutic-dialectic” as universally applicable, as itself a model for all knowledge.

This extension of the concept of hermeneutics to embrace all understanding, to be itself the mode of all understanding follows the tradition of continental philosophy from Schleiermacher through Dilthey, Heidegger, and Heidegger’s disciple, Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer’s work Truth and Method (1960) is, after Heidegger’s Being and Time, the foremost classic of contemporary continental philosophy. Truth and Method is a work devoted exclusively to an analysis of the history, philosophy, and meaning of hermeneutics. This whole school of thought shares the assumption that all knowledge is interpretive, hermeneutic, and that we cannot get out of the “hermeneutic circle;” which is to say that there is no knowledge without foreknowledge, there is no knowledge without presuppositions, without prior engagements that anticipate and determine the meanings ultimately derived. There is no neutral standpoint outside of history (personal or collective) but rather a constant dialogue within it, a mediation of traditions which concentrically widens this hermeneutic circle of knowing. And the task of understanding is conceived as placing oneself more deeply inside of, rather than trying to escape from, this intrinsic condition of our understanding.

Radnitzky, Habermas, Ricoeur, and others are among the few who have tried to “legitimize” psychoanalysis by showing its place within this philosophic hermeneutic tradition. Heidegger and Gadamer, however, have ignored Freud entirely. There is no question that one can and ought to see psychoanalysis in light of this tradition. It is part of my thesis, however, that the German school of philosophic hermeneutics, because its pre-history and foundation is the tradition of Protestant and Christian Biblical hermeneutics, cannot fully, adequately, and insightfully illuminate the specific nature of Freud’s contribution, which was an extension of the line of Jewish Rabbinic hermeneutics and differs decisively from the German-Protestant tradition that culminates in the phenomenology of Heidegger and Gadamer.

That the philosophers of hermeneutics have neglected, displaced, and censored, so to speak, the Jewish hermeneutic tradition is not, in light of the above, accidental. On the one hand, the continental philosophies of hermeneutics arose in a milieu that had excluded Jews from participating in its intellectual, mercantile, and general cultural life since the Middle Ages. Yet, this exclusion of the Jews ultimately goes back to the great debate precisely over the issue of interpretation—interpretation of the Bible, and more explicitly, the
debate over the nature and identity of the Messiah. Here, I would say, is one of the central points of origin of the “conflict of interpretations.” And this fundamental conflict led in a sense to the rejection of the Jewish interpretive science of psychoanalysis two thousand years later.

The origin and history of the science of hermeneutics itself is Scriptural exegesis, and precisely at issue is the validity of Jewish interpretation. When the Christians’ claims were rejected by the Jews, the Christians in turn rejected the validity of the Jewish tradition of interpretation—the Oral Law which had been handed down side by side with the Written Scriptures. Jewish tradition had always affirmed that the authority and divinity of the Oral Torah was equal to the Written; text and interpretation are inseparable. The Written Torah—that is the Five Books of Moses—are considered to be a tightly condensed and compressed guide, which contain everything in a coded shorthand and need to be elucidated and interpreted. An analogy might be to a lecturer’s set of notes, which to an outsider’s eye appear fragmentary, disjointed and illogical, but for the lecturer contain signs, reminders, references, hints to the meanings and contents of the complete speech he will deliver. (Or to compare this notion with Freud—the dream text is a product of condensation—its interpretation is its completion and complementary elaboration.)

From this point of view, not everything was written down at Sinai. Many other laws, details, and explanations were passed on orally. On a deeper level, this means that in every line, word, letter, and vowel are compressed many meanings, instructions, and teachings simultaneously—hinted at, implied, and deducible through the work of interpretation—a critical search which the text itself demands, and without which it is incomplete and incomprehensible. These multiple meanings are latent within the text, concealed within it. Analogously, one of Freud’s most contested assertions was that beneath the seeming fragments and illogical manifest contents of the dream, was a latent content, a locus of comprehensible dream-thoughts which are entirely rational. All other interpreters of dreams, Freud writes, dealt only with the manifest content.

We are almost alone in taking something else into account. We have introduced a new class of psychical material between the manifest content of dreams and the conclusions of our inquiry; namely, their latent content, or (as we say) the dream-thoughts, arrived at by means of our procedure. It is from these dream-thoughts and not from a dream’s manifest content that we disentangle its meaning.2a

The concept of a latent content that needed to be uncovered through hermeneutical procedure places both Freud and the Rabbis in direct opposition to the tradition of Protestant literalism, and at the same time rejects any attempt to define meaning by a reduction of the manifest to any one single latent referent. Freud added in a 1925 footnote to the Interpretation of Dreams, that after overcoming the initial difficulty of persuading his readers to accept the idea of latent content, he then faced the problem that

They seek to find the essence of dreams in their latent content and in doing so overlook the distinction between the latent dream-thoughts and the dream-work. At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the condition of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming—the explanation of its peculiar nature.2b

In the same vein, the Rabbis said, “The Biblical text never loses its simple meaning” (Talmud, Shabbos 63a), but also that “He who interprets a verse according to its literal form is a falsifier” (Talmud, Kiddushin 49a). To reify the concept of latent content is, in a sense, a product of the same kind of literalist mentality that at first refused to search beyond manifest content. It also disallows for the possibility of meaning as continuous process, of content as “convergence,” or in Freud’s words “nodal point” of many thoughts, and of endless interpretability. The interpretive process is the dream-work in reverse; the interpreter’s own procedures must correspond to the procedures of the unconscious in forming and representing the dream. By the interpreter’s own condensations, associations, displacements, reversals, word-plays, multiple meanings, dramatic representation, etc., he can uncover the dream-thoughts, and “construct” the meaning, a meaning which was latent in and not arbitrarily read into the dream. And that was precisely the technique of the Rabbis as well.

For both Freud and the Rabbis, interpretation was the preeminent mode of knowing, applicable in every context and to every idea. The Rabbis subjected the whole of the Written Law to interpretation after interpretation, to an exhaustive search of every word, letter, and detail—and not just for the purpose of deriving law, or better understanding the text, but for a key to the secrets of the
universe. And for Freud, the dream was the "royal road" to the unconscious, the paradigmatic model of thought, the repository of both individual and collective history, and similarly subject to the most exhaustive search and scrutiny of every detail. In the same way that the Torah is itself the speaking subject, speaking to men, instituting laws, shaping the norms of life and behavior, and yet at the same time the object of analysis shaped by its interpreters—for Freud, the dream is the psyche speaking to men, and yet an object of and subject to their interpretations. The interpreter stands in a passive-aggressive role, engaged and detached, determined by and determining the associations and thoughts of the unconscious, which ultimately lead to the mysterious unknown, beyond reason, explanation, and understanding. Freud writes, "There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unfathomable—a navel, as it were, that is part of its contact with the unknown." Like Holy Writ, it takes on the character of mysterious authority, and yet is subject to human interpretation.

In Hebrew, the word for the exhaustive "search" and "investigation" of the text is drash, and from this root comes the word midrash, which in its generic sense means "interpretation." Midrash also specifically refers to the large set of books and commentaries which resulted from the application of midrashic methods. Midrash was a searching out, a finding of something via exposition, investigation, and study of every minute detail of the Torah—indeed every preposition, particle, monosyllable, letter, and shape of every letter.

Another equally important part of the Oral Torah was the Mishna which, however, dealt solely with legal material, tradition, and judgments that had been handed down orally independent of any scriptural text. Midrash, on the other hand, was always tied to and revolved around the exposition of a verse in the Written Torah no matter how far afield it might go. Mishna, nevertheless, left ample room for argument, debate, and interpretation that in succeeding centuries gave rise to the Gemora. The Mishna plus the Gemora together comprise the Talmud, which is a Mishna on the Mishna. And, of course, the Talmud itself has been subjected to analysis, commentary, and continuous interpretation up to this day. A given page of Talmud is a somewhat "cubist" looking text usually including a section of the Mishna, around it the Gemora, and alongside these two components are columns of further commentaries and appendices, and notes.

The Talmud is well-known for its intricate dialectics. A common pattern is to record a Mishna, follow it with the Gemorra's debate and discussion analyzing the Mishna, cite another text not recorded which must also be analyzed and subjected to opposing statements. The connections between arguments, citations, and traditions may take the discussion seemingly far from its original subject and into explanations of other statements, which in turn may invoke interpolations, stories, proverbs, etc. before the original question is returned to. Like a good Talmudist, Freud claims that in the dream,

Each train of thought is almost invariably accompanied by its contradictory counterpart, linked to it by antithetical association. The different portions of this complicated structure stand, of course, in the most manifold logical relation to one another. They can represent foreground and background, digressions and illustrations, conditions, chains of evidence and counter-argument.... The restoration of the connections which the dream-work has destroyed is a task which has to be performed by the interpretive process.

Freud, the master of interpretation, did not arise in a vacuum. The Talmudic mode of thought became the ingrained model of the Jewish psyche, the intimacy and identity with which Freud so keenly felt. Like psychoanalysis, Talmudic thought is an evolutionary record not just of laws or concepts, but of the processes by which those judgments are reached. It links the entire historical past with the present, in a mode that contemporary literary critics might call "co-temporality." Corresponding to notions developed in recent Structuralist and post-Structuralist criticism, in the Talmud commentators and text exist in a non-temporal community, in a world of "intertextuality," deeply concerned with the problematic of language and "semantic thickness." In the Talmud, time and space do not exist in a linear sense. Commentaries from different centuries and opposite corners of the world debate with each other and are juxtaposed in the surrounding columns. A question asked in Germany may be answered in Fez. All is extant at any given time: diachrony becomes synchrony. Jacques Lacan, contemporary theoretician of psychoanalytic hermeneutics, situated Freud within the exegetical tradition of the Midrash.

Lacan, in fact, views the Jews as the interpretive people par excellence, developing their hermeneutical skills particularly in the crush of Exile: exile for Lacan being the primary condition for interpretation. For Lacan, exile in historical, personal, and metaphorical terms im-
plies loss and distance from the original word, self, unconscious meaning, infantile past, etc. Exile demands interpretation as an act of overcoming, or recovery of loss, a filling in of the gaps. Lacan locates the origins of this intense interpretive genius in the return of the Jews with Ezra from their first exile in Babylon, seventy years after the first Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C.E. Interpretation was needed to bridge the gap for a generation who had grown up in a strange land.

Similarly, when the second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E., Judaism was saved by the establishment of a center of Torah study in Yavneh. Even though the Temple had been utterly destroyed and the people decimated, in Yavneh all the intricate laws dealing with the Temple and its sacrifices were not abandoned, but instead intensively studied and interpreted, as they are to this day. Study replaces sacrifice. The Talmud says that when one studies the laws of the sacrifices it is accounted as if he offered them (Menachot 110a). Nothing was lost, so to speak . . . in the same way in which Freud, the archaeologist of the psyche in exile, returns to build its Temple from the ground up through the study and interpretation of the remnants of dreams, and the dialectical theories of psychoanalysis. The Freudian Midrash was a search into every dark corner of the self as text, and like the Rabbinic, concerned itself with the off-centered phenomena such as word-plays, parapraxes, acrostics, ambiguities, things that seemed meaningless and insignificant.

For Freud, interpretation is itself part of this dream-work. Filling in the gaps was not an arbitrary play of nonsense as the critics claimed, but rather the illumination of a concealed meaning, a hidden unity behind all the disparate phenomena, one which comprehended every detail. Both the psychoanalyst and the Rabbi assume a hidden meaning, which in its manifestation is multiple—and not so much found in the text as a reified essence, but in the process of interpretation. What Freud analyzed was not so much the mechanisms in the dream, or the latent content, as the arrangements of the dream-work which became indistinguishable from the arrangements of the interpreter's own psyche, his method of making sense of the dream-work. The dream, says Freud, is the form of thinking called the dream-work, which is manifested through its interpretation, with which it becomes one.

Both Rabbinic hermeneutics and psychoanalysis attain unity by expansion and dilation of meaning, by making manifest the hidden, unseen connections between phenomena. Even the most trivial details connect to and conceal a higher unity which implicitly pervades all things. In particular, the technique of free-association grounds itself on this assumption of hidden unities and connections already laid down. And when Freud steps back to theorize what emerges is a dialectics on the Talmudic model, for dialectics depends on the ability to see the unities in opposites. Gadamer indeed sets up dialectics as the ideal hermeneutical method.

There is in Freud's world of dreams—which is the model of the psyche and of culture itself—nothing arbitrary. Nor is there anything arbitrary in the world of the interpreter. Behind the irrationalities and trivialities lies an all-embracing unity of meaning, achieved through condensations, displacements, and overdeterminations. Even the most far-fetched associations are pathways which follow concealed circuits back to the dream-thoughts. Freud writes:

> These new connections are only set up between thoughts which were already linked in some way in the dream-thoughts. The new connections are, as it were, short or long circuits, made possible by the existence of other and deeper connecting paths. It must be allowed that the great bulk of the thoughts which are revealed in analysis were already active during the process of forming the dream.\(^8\)

Everything is already connected under the surface—the interpreter reveals these connections and applies them to the developing life of the present. But the character of that ongoing life itself is formed by these already laid-down materials. Nevertheless, the constant illumination of the ways in which everything comes together, converges—this truth makes free. Likewise, the constant study and scrutiny of the Torah for the Rabbis, the search for ever deeper meanings and connections is a prime value in the Jewish tradition. In a sense, the intellectuality, verbosity, and agonistic relation of patient and analyst corresponds to this ongoing process. The question of the value of the long, drawn-out and intellectual nature of psychoanalytic procedure as opposed to more immediate therapeutic means can perhaps be traced to Freud's Jewish bias: study, debate, interpret—that will lessen the pain of the self in exile.

But to know is an endless process in both Talmud and psychoanalysis. Instead of final statements, there are only continuous interpretations, constructions of narratives. The claim of Christian exegesis, however, was that with the appearance of Jesus, the Word literally becomes incarnate; that all refers to and is fulfilled by this
absolute referent, and thus the painstaking labor of constant search and interpretation is no longer needed. For the Jew, study replaces the sacrifices of the destroyed Temple; for the Christian, sacrifice is literalized again in the person of his savior. The text becomes an icon instead of an open play of signification. What is now required is not continuous interpretation, but the immediacy of grace. This point of view emerged with particular force through Luther. As Gadamer explains:

In so far as scriptural hermeneutics is regarded as the prehistory of the hermeneutics of the modern human sciences, it is based on the scriptural principle of the reformation. Luther's position is more or less the following: scripture is sui ipsius interpret. We do not need tradition to reach the proper understanding of it, nor do we need an art of interpretation in the style of ancient teaching of the fourfold meaning of scripture, but the text of Scripture has a clear sense that can be derived from itself, the sensus literalis. 

... Modern hermeneutics, as a protestant discipline of the art of interpreting Scripture, is clearly related in a polemical way to the dogmatic tradition of the Catholic church. It has itself a dogmatic denominational significance.

This point of view was a blow to the whole theory and science of interpretation. It was no longer a question of methodological rules, mediated traditions, dialectics with the past. Luther's reformation culminated in the idea of interpretation as an existential mode of understanding—not as a set of rules, but rather as a condition of one's being, as the dassein of Heidegger, and the demythologized text of Bultmann. The European philosophic hermeneutic tradition dates from Luther's rejection of traditional interpretation in favor of immediate, individual inspiration. (The influence of this continental philosophy on the Romantics is well-known. And Nietzsche, who is now being hailed by the "deconstructionist" school of critics, follows directly in this line of German Protestant thought.)

Freud, however, wanted to claim that indeed interpretation is scientific, and that the existential, engaged mode of the interpreting psychoanalyst ought to be subject to scientific procedures and methods that can lead to valid theoretical, objective, and scientific knowledge of the psyche... and, moreover, of history and culture in general. The very first paragraph of chapter one of the Interpretation of Dreams states:

In the apt phrase of W. W. Meissner, psychoanalysis is the "science of subjectivity." It is precisely this hybrid nature of psychoanalysis that makes it an anomaly for both the human and the natural sciences. And psychoanalysis has been rejected both by humanists zealously guarding the minimal space left them in an era of science, and by scientists zealously pursuing the eradication of these "ritual forms of mental alchemy" in modern, rational thought. For in Freudian science, true objectivity means the revelation of the subjective dynamics behind every act of judgment; data and interpretation are inseparable. Just as for the Rabbis, interpretation was not a provisional prelude to a final "pure" understanding (as it was for the Christians) but part of the divine revelation itself.

In the Christian Logos, the Word means one thing, one person, and interpretation is the proper affirmation of the truth of that person's identity. The Jewish concept of interpretation, as has been seen, is multivocal, indeterminate, rhetorical, and poetic in addition to being logical (as is Freud's). It is concerned with the affirmation of truth or falsehood in terms of uncovering deeper meanings, and the adjudication of disputes through decisions of the majority (though the refuted opinions remain a studied part of Torah). Instead of a logic of oppositions, of either/or, the Talmud uses a dialectical mode of reasoning which presents and encourages opposing opinions.

For Freud, likewise, interpretation is not, in the Aristotelian sense, the distinguishing of truth or falsehood, but the relationship of hidden to shown—not appearance to reality (that obsessive theme of Western literature), but manifest to latent. The idiom is disguise, displacement, censorship. It is not a question of the dream being true or false, but rather of having a more or less deep meaning. Everything that logical consciousness rejects as nonsensical, useless, disconnected has, in fact, a meaning. And to say that dreams do indeed have a
meaning.” Freud recognized, placed him in opposition to every ruling theory. As Rivière writes, Freud was the exorcist who rediscovers the logic of the illogical kingdom. What looked illogical was only so because the text was truncated and lacunary, however, nothing in its arbitrary, senseless or out of place.

And so, Freud writes.

INTERPRETATION AS DEVOTION

SUSAN HANDELMAN
past, and yet to uncover his relation to it; to be part of modern science in non-Jewish Vienna, and yet maintain his sense of inner identity with the Jews, might to some degree account for his heavy emphasis on the ideas of concealment, distortion, disguise, and censorship—on representation as a compromise between censorship and desire. Recent psychoanalytic theory has criticized Freud for his lack of understanding of symbolic and semantic functioning in different levels of conscious representation, and for his deterministic scheme of unconscious censorship. Perhaps this theme of censorship had again deeply to do with Freud’s Jewish identity. And psychoanalysis itself might be seen as a compromise formation between Freud the Talmudic dialectician and midrashic commentator, the scrutinizer of texts and secrets, the believer in hidden unities, historical original sin, and moral responsibility—and Freud the German scientist, materialist, skeptical professor, and dispassionate observer. Psychoanalysis deeply shares Freud’s peculiar “hybrid” character, and his position as a kind of pariah in both the human and natural sciences.

Rabbinic thinking in its openness, indeterminacy, interpretive play with words and ideas, delight in dialectics, is strikingly modern—as is its concern with the concrete, the organic relation of part and whole, its rigorous skepticism, critical attitude and commitment to method. It was an international and cross-temporal record, accumulating the thoughts of the sharpest minds of a scattered people, who in their devotion to learning, study, and practice were able to thereby survive the rigors of exile.

Perhaps only one who belonged to and felt himself to be part of a people in exile, could have transformed the hermeneutics of “historical understanding” from the cool philosophical abstractions of Dilthey and the Protestant nineteenth-century schools of historicism, to a passionate confrontation with the inner lost and pained self, and its suffering. “Remember” is the theme that permeates both the Bible and Jewish history. In place of what is lost, the Temple, the Land, the glory of the Nation... is study, analysis, interpretation. And as for Freud, no immediate grace, but only a continuing narrative.

NOTES

*1 stress the fundamentally Talmudic nature of Freud’s hermeneutics to emphasize my difference from the thesis put forth by David Bakan in his book *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (New York: Schocken, 1958). Bakan also recognizes the deep and significant structural affinities between the hermeneutics of the psychoanalytic method and the Rabbinic method of textual exegesis, but locates Freud within the Jewish mystical tradition instead. Bakan claims that psychoanalysis was a secularization of Kabbalah, and that Freud obscured his Kabbalistic ideas to make his work scientifically and culturally acceptable to his contemporaries, the Gentile anti-Semitic majority.

On the one hand, it is well-nigh impossible to prove that Freud ever knew anything about Kabbalah, or if he did that he consciously or unconsciously used it in formulating the methods and concepts of psychoanalysis. And, moreover, all the methods of exegesis which Bakan cites as Kabbalistic are, in fact, Talmudic and belong to the vast array of traditional non-mystical methods which were openly available and commonly used by all the sages of the Jewish tradition. Kabbalah is not so much a set of interpretive rules or scientific method of exegesis, but traditionally thought of as a concealed body of knowledge passed down to a spiritual elite. Kabbalah itself is most difficult to study; Bakan is limited to the few available works in English and is not intimate with the literature.

While it is far beyond the scope of this paper to examine in detail the hundreds of hermeneutic rules developed by the Jewish sages, some of the more important are as follows. There is a whole class dealing with the relationship of the placement of words, verses, sections, or laws next to each other, such as semidim (juxtaposition) and lehorka. Lehorka is close to free-association, for by comparing two subjects in two different passages, it is inferred that what is true of one is also true of the other. Another important rule is that “The Torah does not proceed in chronological order” (Pis. 6b). Similarly, Freud’s fundamental principles of dream-interpretation are relations of juxtaposition, chronological simultaneity, similarity, inversion to express cause, parallelism, and concomance (SE, Vol. 4, 319-20). By the hermeneutic principle of ribhut and mutat, “extension and limitation,” certain grammatical particles or conjunctions in the text are seen as intending to either extend or limit its provisions. There are many techniques dealing with plays on words which derive from the lack of vowels in the written text of the Torah, thus leaving room for words to be read in different ways. In the method of *al tikkrei*, the vowels are changed, transforming the word to convey an entirely different meaning. In the method of *natorakh*, one word is seen as an acrostic or abbreviation of the first letters of an entire phrase. Freud uses this same technique in several interpretations and calls it “syllabic chemistry.” His even more exotic use of numerologies in dreams correspond to the familiar Rabbinic technique of *gematria*. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a specific numerical value, and words with the same total numerical value are considered to have an underlying connection. There is also a special set of thirteen logical hermeneutic principles of the book of R. Ishmael (d. 135 C.E.) dealing with the nature of inference and the relations of general and particular, which are so fundamental that they are included in the liturgy of the daily morning prayers—an interesting light upon hermeneutics as devotion. In addition, there were the thirty-two rules of R. Eliezer (2nd C.E.) and countless others.

REFERENCES

1. DIESING, P. *Patterns of Discovery in the Social Sciences*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1971. pp. (a) 218; (b) 145; (c) 280.

2. FREUD, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Standard Edition*, 4 and 5: pp. (a) 277; (b) 506-7; (c) 111, n. 1: 525; (d) 312; (e) 28; (f) 1; (g) 513-14.
