THE QUESTION OF GOD

C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life

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To my wife, Ingrid, and to my children,
Kimberly and Armand III, with love

Contents

Prologue

On the morning of September 26, 1939, at Golders Green in northwest London, a group of friends and family gathered to mourn the death of Sigmund Freud. After his body was cremated, Ernest Jones, in his funeral oration, noted that "he was being buried . . . [as] he would have wished . . . in sheer simplicity, without a note of pomp or ceremony." Stefan Zweig, the author, closed his remarks by predicting that "wherever we seek to advance into the labyrinth of the human heart, henceforth his intellectual light will shine upon our path."

The front page of the Sunday *New York Times* declared in a headline: "Dr. Sigmund Freud Dies in Exile at 83." And in the subheadlines: "Founder of Psychoanalysis . . . Succumbs at His Home Near London." The article described his recent escape from the Nazis, who burned his books, dismissed his theories as pornographic, and demanded a ransom for his freedom. It also mentioned Freud's "worldwide fame and greatness," referring to him as "one of the most widely discussed scientists," mentioning that "he set the entire world talking about psychoanalysis" and noting that his ideas had already permeated our culture and language.

As a young teenager, Freud demonstrated academic brilliance, ranking at the top of his class for seven years and graduating *summa cum laude* from the "Gymnasium." He entered the University of Vienna when seventeen years old, read widely in several languages, conducted research, and studied subjects ranging from physics to philosophy.

Today historians rank Freud's scientific contributions with those of Planck and Einstein. He appears on most lists of the greatest physicians in history. He was recently on the cover of *Time* (with Albert Einstein) for an issue dedicated to the greatest scientific minds of the century and ranked sixth in a book on the hundred most influential scientists. Yet if Freud's fame and influence have continued to grow since his death more than sixty years ago, so have the criticism and the controversy surrounding him. He persists in spite of it all. Freud's photo graces Austrian currency. His ideas remain permanently embedded in our culture and our language.

We use terms such as *ego, repression, complex, projection, inhibition, neurosis, psychosis, resistance, sibling rivalry,* and *Freudian slip* without even realizing their source. Freud's model of the mind is still perhaps the most developed of all. Of the more than one hundred forms of psychotherapy, many continue to use one or another of Freud's concepts. Perhaps most important of all, his theories influence how we interpret human behavior, not only in biography, literary criticism, sociology, medicine, history, education, and ethics—but also in the law. We now take for granted the basic psychoanalytic concept that our early life experiences strongly influence how we think, feel, and behave as adults. Because of the unmistakable impact of his thought, some scholars refer to the twentieth century as the "century of Freud."

As part of his intellectual legacy, Freud strongly advocated an atheistic philosophy of life. He referred to this view as the "scientific *Weltanschauung.*" Freud also waged a fierce, ongoing battle against the spiritual worldview that he referred to as "the religious *Weltanschauung.*" Freud's philosophical writings, more widely read than his expository or scientific works, have played a significant role in the secularization of our culture. In the seventeenth century people turned to the discoveries of astronomy to demonstrate what they

considered the irreconcilable conflict between science and faith; in the eighteenth century, to Newtonian physics; in the nineteenth century, to Darwin; in the twentieth century and still today, Freud is the atheist's touchstone.

* * *

Twenty-four years after Freud's death, on the morning of November 26, 1963, at Oxford, England, northwest of London, a group of friends and family gathered at the Holy Trinity Church at Headington Quarry to mourn the death of C. S. Lewis. The service began with the quote "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord." After the service, the group walked slowly into the cold, clear day, and watched silently as the coffin was carried from the church to the churchyard for burial.

The *New York Times* of November 25, 1963, amid numerous articles on the assassination of John F. Kennedy, announced in a headline: "C. S. Lewis Dead: Author, Critic 64." Under a photo, and an article of several columns, the *Times* surveyed Lewis's prolific life, mentioned his reputation as a brilliant scholar, reviewed some of his scholarly and popular works that had already sold millions of copies, and noted that his success as a writer occurred after his change of worldviews, from atheist to believer.

Lewis, the celebrated Oxford don, literary critic, and perhaps the twentieth century's most popular proponent of faith based on reason, won international recognition long before his death in 1963. During World War II, his broadcast talks made his voice second only to Churchill's as the most recognized on the BBC. A few years after the war, a cover article in *Time* magazine described him as the most influential spokesman for the spiritual worldview. His books continue to sell prodigiously and his influence continues to grow. During 1998, the centennial year of his birth, conferences focusing on his work were held throughout the United States and Europe.

His extraordinarily popular *Chronicles of Narnia* ignites the imagination of children around the world. The sheer quantity of personal, biographical, and literary books and articles on Lewis, the vast number of C. S. Lewis societies in colleges and universities, and *Shadowlands,* the award-winning London and Broadway plays and the movie based on his life—all attest to the ever-growing interest in the man and his work.

Lewis began his brilliant academic career as an undergraduate student at Oxford, where he won a triple first, the highest honors in three areas of study—a feat seldom achieved. After finishing his studies, he stayed on at Oxford as a member of the faculty. For the next thirty years, he taught philosophy and then English language and literature. In 1955, he left Oxford to accept a chair in medieval and Renaissance English literature at Magdalene College, Cambridge University. At both Oxford and Cambridge, his immensely popular lectures often filled lecture halls to standing room only.

Lewis embraced an atheistic worldview for the first half of his life and used Freud's reasoning to defend his atheism. Lewis then rejected his atheism and became a believer. In subsequent writings, he provides cogent responses to Freud's arguments against the spiritual worldview. Wherever Freud raises an argument, Lewis attempts to answer it. Their writings possess a striking parallelism. If Freud still serves as a primary spokesman for materialism, Lewis serves as a primary spokesman for the spiritual view that Freud attacked.

Sadly the two men never debated directly. When Lewis began teaching at Oxford, he was in his twenties, and Freud was already in his mid-seventies. Lewis was well aware of Freud's theories; the new psychology was widely discussed. Even earlier, by the time Lewis enrolled as an undergraduate at Oxford, Freud had already become father of the new literary criticism that Lewis studied. Later, Freud may very well have read some of Lewis's early writings—such as *The Allegory of Love,* published to critical acclaim several years before

Freud died. He may have read Lewis's *Pilgrim's Regress,* in which Lewis satirizes Freudian psychology. Lewis named one of the characters Sigismund, Freud's real name until, at the age of twenty-two, he changed it to Sigmund.

Unfortunately, because Lewis trailed Freud by a generation, his responses to Freud's arguments were the last written word. Freud never had the chance to rebut. Yet if their arguments are placed side by side, a debate emerges as if they were standing at podiums in a shared room. Both thought carefully about the flaws and alternatives to their positions; each considered the other's views.

Thirty years ago, Harvard invited me to teach a course on Freud. I have been teaching it ever since to the undergraduates, and also for the last ten years to the Harvard Medical School students. At first, the course focused solely on Freud's philosophical views. Roughly half of my students agreed with him, the other half strongly disagreed. When the course evolved into a comparison of Freud and Lewis, it became much more engaging, and the discussions ignited. I have been teaching it that way ever since. I found, however, that a third voice needs to be added to that of their writings, in the form of their biographies. Their arguments can never prove or disprove the existence of God. Their lives, however, offer sharp commentary on the truth, believability, and utility of their views. (In analyzing their biographies, however, we do well to keep in mind that human beings do not always live what they profess, nor profess what they live.)

* * *

The purpose of this book is to look at human life from two diametrically opposed points of view: those of the believer and the unbeliever. (Freud divided all people into these two catagories.) We will examine several of the basic issues of life in terms of these two conflicting views. We will look at both views as objectively and

dispassionately as possible and let the arguments speak for themselves. (I am aware that no one—including the author—is neutral on such emotionally charged issues. None of us can tolerate the notion that our worldview may be based on a false premise and, thus, our whole life headed in the wrong direction.) Because of the far-reaching implications for our lives, we tend to dismiss and contradict arguments for the worldview we reject. I hope each reader will critically assess the arguments of both Freud and Lewis and follow Sir Francis Bacon's advice to "Read not to contradict . . . but to weigh and consider."

Socrates said "the unexamined life is not worth living." Within the university, students and professors scrutinize every possible aspect of our universe—from the billions of galaxies to subatomic particles, electrons, quarks—but they assiduously avoid examining their own lives. In the wider world, we keep hectically busy and fill every free moment of our day with some form of diversion—work, computers, television, movies, radio, magazines, newspapers, sports, alcohol, drugs, parties. Perhaps we distract ourselves because looking at our lives confronts us with our lack of meaning, our unhappiness, and our loneliness—and with the difficulty, the fragility, and the unbelievable brevity of life. Pascal may have been right when he observed that "if our condition were truly happy we should not need to divert ourselves from thinking about it . . . the sole cause of our unhappiness is that we do not know how to sit quietly in our room." One of my Harvard students stated during a class discussion that "living a human life is a scary business." Perhaps the reason we find it difficult to sit quietly and examine our lives is because doing so makes us anxious. But until we examine our lives, we can do little to make them less unhappy and more fulfilling. It is my hope that Freud and Lewis can jointly guide us through just such an examination.

* * *

Whether we realize it or not, all of us possess a worldview. A few years after birth, we all gradually formulate our philosophy of life. Most of us make one of two basic assumptions: we view the universe as a result of random events and life on this planet a matter of chance; or we assume an Intelligence beyond the universe who gives the universe order, and life meaning. Our worldview informs our personal, social, and political lives. It influences how we perceive ourselves, how we relate to others, how we adjust to adversity, and what we understand to be our purpose. Our worldview helps determine our values, our ethics, and our capacity for happiness. It helps us understand where we come from, our heritage; who we are, our identity; why we exist on this planet, our purpose; what drives us, our motivation; and where we are going, our destiny. Some historians of science such as Thomas Kuhn point out that even a scientist's worldview influences not only what he investigates but also how he interprets what he investigates. Our worldview tells more about us perhaps than any other aspect of our personal history.

Both Freud's and Lewis's views have existed since the beginning of recorded history—the spiritual worldview, rooted primarily in ancient Israel, with its emphasis on moral truth and right conduct and its motto of Thus saith the Lord; and the materialist or "scientific" worldview, rooted in ancient Greece, with its emphasis on reason and acquisition of knowledge and its motto What Says Nature? All of us embrace some form of Freud's or Lewis's worldview. If we accept Freud's materialism, we may call ourselves atheists, agnostics, or skeptics. There are likewise many different expressions of Lewis's worldview. We will consider the specific form of the spiritual worldview embraced by Lewis and, according to a recent Gallup poll, by more than 80 percent of Americans.

Why Freud and Lewis? For several reasons. First, both write extensively about a specific, representative worldview with great

depth, clarity, and conciseness. Freud won the coveted Goethe Prize for literature, and Lewis became a professor of literature, a noted literary critic, and a widely read, prolific author. Furthermore, both wrote autobiographies and thousands of letters that provide a reasonably good perspective on how they lived their lives. Freud and Lewis provide a particularly clear lens through which we can examine these two views.

Are these worldviews merely philosophical speculations with no right or wrong answer? No. One of them begins with the basic premise that God does not exist, the other with the premise that He does. They are, therefore, mutually exclusive—if one is right, the other must be wrong. Does it really make any difference to know which one is which? Both Freud and Lewis thought so. They spent a good portion of their lives exploring these issues, repeatedly asking the question "Is it true?"

Freud was preoccupied with the question of whether or not God exists. In a collection of letters he wrote as a college student at the University of Vienna, the question of God's existence arises constantly. It continues throughout his philosophical writings until his last major work, *Moses and Monotheism.* In "The Question of a *Weltanschauung,*" Freud argues against the existence of God. He points to the problem of suffering and he develops the psychological argument that the whole concept is nothing but a projection of a childish wish for parental protection from the vicissitudes and sufferings of human existence. He also argues against the objection of those holding the spiritual worldview that faith "is of divine origin and was given us as a revelation by a Spirit which the human spirit cannot comprehend." Freud says this "is a clear case of begging the question" and adds this comment: "The actual question raised is whether there is a divine spirit and a revelation by it, and the matter is certainly not decided by saying this question cannot be asked."

Lewis agrees with Freud that this is indeed the most important

question. He writes: "Here is a door behind which, according to some people, the secret of the universe is waiting for you. Either that's true or it isn't. If it isn't, then what the door really conceals is simply the greatest fraud . . . on record." Because so many people embrace Lewis's answer—a recent Gallup poll reports that the vast majority of adult Americans believe in God—Lewis is right: if not true, then the spiritual worldview is not only a fraud but also the cruelest hoax ever perpetrated on the human race. And the only alternative is to follow Freud's advice to grow up and face the harsh reality that we are alone in the universe. He says we may find less consolation, but the truth, harsh as it is, will ultimately set us free from false hopes and unrealistic expectations. But if the spiritual worldview is true, then all other truth fades in significance. Nothing has more profound and more far-reaching implications for our lives.

If both Freud and Lewis thought the question of God's existence to be life's most important question, let's see how they arrived at their conflicting answers. And let's see if their biographies—how they actually lived their lives—strengthen or weaken their arguments and tell us more than their words convey.

PART ONE

WHAT SHOULD WE BELIEVE?

1

THE PROTAGONISTS

The Lives of Sigmund Freud and C. S. Lewis

Although C. S. Lewis, a full generation younger than Sigmund Freud, embraced Freud's atheism during the first half of his life, he eventually rejected that view. When Lewis began teaching at Oxford, Freud's writings had already influenced many intellectual disciplines, including Lewis's field, literature. Lewis knew well all of Freud's arguments—perhaps because he used them to bolster his position when he himself was an atheist. In his autobiography he writes: "The new Psychology was at that time sweeping through us all. We did not swallow it whole . . . but we were all influenced. What we were most concerned about was 'Fantasy' or 'wishful thinking.' For (of course) we were all poets and critics and set a very great value on 'Imagination' in some high Coleridgean sense, so that it became important to distinguish Imagination . . . from Fantasy as the psychologists understand that term."

Rare indeed is the person whose views never change throughout

his life. Before we compare the views of Lewis and Freud, therefore, we need to know something about how they reached them.

Freud's Background

On May 6, 1856, in the town of Freiberg, Moravia, Amalia Freud gave birth to a son. Little did she realize her child would someday be listed among the most influential scientists in history. Her husband, Jacob, named him Sigismund Schlomo and inscribed these names in the family Bible. The young boy eventually dropped both of these names. He never used "Schlomo," his paternal grandfather's name, and, while a student at the University of Vienna, changed "Sigismund" to "Sigmund."

A nursemaid took care of the young Freud for the first two and a half years of his life. A devout Roman Catholic, she took the young boy to church with her. Freud's mother, many years later, told Freud that on returning from church he would "preach and tell us what God Almighty does." The nursemaid spent considerable time with Freud, especially when his mother became pregnant and delivered a younger sibling. Freud considered her a surrogate mother and became very attached to her. When less than two years old, he lost his younger brother, Julius, whose sickness and death must have absorbed all of his mother's time and left him almost totally in the care of his nanny. He wrote that although "her words could be harsh," he nevertheless "loved the old woman." In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, an ear, nose, and throat specialist with whom Freud developed a close friendship for several years, he stated "in my case the 'prime originator' was an ugly, elderly, but clever woman, who told me a great deal about God Almighty and hell and who instilled in me a high opinion of my own capacities." During this time the nanny, after being accused of stealing, left the household suddenly. As an adult, Freud would dream about her.

Scholars have speculated that Freud's antagonism to the spiritual worldview and specifically to the Catholic Church stemmed in part from his anger and disappointment at being left by the Catholic nanny at a critical time in his life. Freud acknowledged that "if the woman disappeared so suddenly . . . some impression of the event must have been left inside me. Where is it now?" He then also recalled a scene that had been "for the last twenty-nine years turning up in my conscious memory . . . I was crying my heart out . . . I could not find my mother . . . I feared she must have vanished, like my nurse not long before." Still, it is itself a Freudian stretch to assume that his feelings toward the church were formed by one person's departure from his life.

What is true is that the nanny exposed Freud to Catholic practices. When the nanny took the little boy to mass, Freud apparently observed worshippers kneeling, praying, and making the sign of the cross. These early childhood impressions may be what he had in mind when, as an adult, he wrote papers comparing religious practices with obsessive symptoms and referring to religion as the "universal obsessional neurosis." They may also have been Freud's first exposure to music, Rome, and the holidays of Easter and Pentecost (also known as Whitsunday—the celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples). Although Freud disliked music, he appeared to possess a strange attraction to Rome and an unusual awareness of these two holidays. He mentioned them often in his letters. He writes of his "longing for Rome," of his wish to spend "next Easter in Rome," and how he "so much wanted to see Rome again."

Sigmund Freud grew up in an unusual, complicated family. Freud's father Jacob married Amalia Nathansohn when she was still a teenager and he was forty years old and already a grandfather. Amalia was Jacob's third wife. Jacob had two sons from his first marriage, one older than Amalia, and one a year younger.

Freud's father had been educated as an Orthodox Jew. He grad-

ually gave up all religious practice, celebrating only Purim and Passover as family festivals. Nevertheless, he read the Bible regularly at home in Hebrew, and he apparently spoke Hebrew fluently. In his autobiography, written when almost seventy years old, Freud recalled, "My early familiarity with the Bible story (at a time almost before I had learnt the art of reading) had, as I recognized much later, an enduring effect upon the direction of my interest." During several visits to the Freud home in London, I spent time alone in Freud's study perusing his bookshelves. I noticed a large copy of a Martin Luther Bible. Many of Freud's numerous biblical quotations suggest that he read this translation. The Bible that he read as a boy, however, appears to be the Philippson Bible, consisting of the Old Testament and named after a scholar of the Reform Movement that led to Reform Judaism. On Freud's thirty-fifth birthday Jacob Freud sent his son a copy of the Philippson Bible with the following inscription in Hebrew:

> My dear Son:
>
> It was in the seventh year of your age that the spirit of God began to move you to learning. I would say the spirit of God speaketh to you: "Read in my Book; there will be opened to thee sources of knowledge and of the intellect." It is the Book of Books; it is the well that wise men have digged and from which lawgivers have drawn the waters of their knowledge.
>
> Thou hast seen in this Book the vision of the Almighty, thou hast heard willingly, thou hast done and hast tried to fly high upon the wings of the Holy Spirit. Since then I have preserved the same Bible. Now, on your thirty-fifth birthday I have brought it out from its retirement and I send it to you as a token of love from your old father.

Freud naturally associated the spiritual worldview with his father. His feelings toward his father were at best ambivalent. Unlike him,

Freud never learned to speak Hebrew and knew only a few words of his mother's Yiddish.

Jacob Freud struggled to make a living as a wool merchant, and the entire family occupied a single rented room in a small house. The Freuds lived above the owner, a blacksmith, who occupied the first floor. During the time of Freud's birth the population of Freiberg—later known as Příbor in modern Czechoslovakia—ranged from about 4,000 to 5,000. The Catholic population of Freiberg far outnumbered the Protestant and Jewish populations of about 2 to 3 percent each.

When he was about three years old, in 1859, Freud and his family moved to Leipzig, and then a year later to Vienna. He lived and worked the rest of his life in Vienna—until in 1938, when eighty-two years old, after the Nazi invasion, he escaped to London with the help of colleagues, the American secretary of state, and President Franklin Roosevelt.

During his adolescent years in Vienna, Freud studied Judaism under Samuel Hammerschlag, who emphasized the ethical and historical experience of the Jewish people more than their religious life. Hammerschlag remained a friend and benefactor to Freud for many years. When he was fifteen, Freud also began corresponding with a friend named Eduard Silberstein. These letters, extending over a full decade, give us some insight into the theological and philosophical thoughts and feelings of the young Freud, especially on the question of whether or not an Intelligence exists beyond the universe. Silberstein was a believer who became a lawyer and married a young woman whom he sent to Freud for treatment of her depression. After arriving at Freud's office, she told her maid to wait downstairs. Instead of going to Freud's waiting room, she went up to the fourth floor and jumped to her death.

When Freud entered the University of Vienna in 1873 and studied under the distinguished philosopher Franz Brentano, a

former Catholic priest who left the priesthood because he did not accept the infallibility of the pope, he wrote about it to Silberstein. Brentano made a profound impression on the young Freud. Eighteen years old, Freud exclaimed in a letter to his friend: "I, the godless medical man and empiricist, am attending two courses in philosophy . . . One of the courses—listen and marvel!—deals with the existence of God, and Prof. Brentano, who gives the lectures, is a splendid man, a scholar and philosopher, even though he deems it necessary to support his airy existence of God with his own expositions. I shall let you know just as soon as one of his arguments gets to the point (we have not yet progressed beyond the preliminary problems), lest your path to salvation in the faith be cut off."

A few months later Freud comments further on his impressions of Brentano: "When you and I meet, I shall tell you more about this remarkable man (a believer, a teleologist . . . and a damned clever fellow, a genius in fact) who is in many respects, an ideal human being." Under Brentano's influence Freud wavered and considered becoming a believer. Freud confided to Silberstein the strong influence Brentano had on him: ". . . I have not escaped from his influence—I am not capable of refuting a simple theistic argument that constitutes the crown of his deliberations . . . He demonstrates the existence of God with as little bias and as much precision as another might argue the advantage of the wave over the emission theory." Freud also encouraged Silberstein to attend Brentano's lecture: "The philosopher Brentano, whom you know from my letters, will lecture on ethics or practical philosophy from eight to nine in the morning, and it would do you good to attend, as he is a man of integrity and imagination, although people say he is a Jesuit, which I cannot believe . . ."

Then Freud made a startling quasi-admission: "Needless to say, I am only a theist by necessity, and am honest enough to confess my

helplessness in the face of his argument; however, I have no intention of surrendering so quickly or completely." In the same paragraph, he made a contradictory statement: "For the time being, I have ceased to be a materialist and am not yet a theist." This confusion and ambivalence would stay with him, despite his many ringing pronouncements in favor of atheism.

In another letter a few weeks later, Freud continued to share his struggle: "The bad part of it, especially for me, lies in the fact that science of all things seems to demand the existence of God . . ."

Freud may have repressed the experience of becoming a "theist by necessity." When he was seventy years old, in an address to the B'nai B'rith (Sons of the Covenant), he stated: "What bound me to Jewry was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever . . ." If Freud found the arguments by Brentano for the existence of God so compelling, what made him so reluctant to accept them, to "surrender" to reasoning he was unable "to refute"? Some answers to these questions may lie among the other influences on the young Freud during his long years of medical education.

First, in his letters to Silberstein, Freud mentioned reading another philosopher, Ludwig Feuerbach. "Feuerbach is one whom I revere and admire above all other philosophers," Freud wrote his friend in 1875. Ludwig Feuerbach, born in 1804, studied theology at the University of Heidelberg. A student of Hegel, he wrote books critical of theology, stating that one's relationship to others—the "I-and-thou" relationship—was more compelling than one's relationship to God. Although he claimed to be a believer, his writings reinforced the atheism of both Marx and Freud. His main thesis in *The Essence of Christianity* is that religion is simply the projection of human need, a fulfillment of deep-seated wishes.

The purpose of his book, Feuerbach wrote, was "the destruction of an illusion." He summarized the work in his conclusion: "We have

shown that the substance and object of religion is altogether human; we have shown that divine wisdom is human wisdom; that the secret of theology is anthropology; that the absolute mind is the so-called finite subjective mind." Freud spent many years of his adult life working out the implications of Feuerbach's assertions.

Other influences that may have played an important role in Freud's rejection of the spiritual worldview include the cultural environment of Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the specific environment of the medical school where Freud trained. During the late nineteenth century many publications discussed the assumed conflict between science and religion. Two well-known books—John William Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* and Andrew Dickson White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*—illustrate the prevailing perception. Historian Peter Gay refers to "sizable pockets of anticlericalism and of secularist contempt for all religion" that pervaded European culture during Freud's years in medical school. Many of these "pockets" involved the medical community, whose acceptance Freud strongly desired—for his professional advancement early in his career, and later, for the acceptance of his theories.

Freud worked in the laboratory of Ernst Brücke, one of a group of physiologists who had attempted to found a science of biology on thoroughly materialistic grounds. In his autobiography, Freud described Brücke as the person "who carried more weight with me than anyone else in my whole life." Brücke, along with many other of the medical faculty that Freud admired, took a strong stand against the spiritual worldview, insisting that irreconcilable differences exist between science and religion and that no truth existed except that attained through the scientific method. As Freud would write late in his life, "there are no sources of knowledge of the universe other than . . . what we call research."

Freud coveted a prestigious professorship at the University of Vienna. For many years his appointment was turned down. Other colleagues who spent the same number of years teaching received professorships, and yet Freud year after year watched a parade of promotions pass him by. Refusing to wait passively any longer, he used a friend and former patient of his to exert political influence, and finally obtained the post. The usual wait for a member of the faculty with Freud's experience was four years; Freud had waited seventeen. Freud had been warned by an old physiology professor of his that there was prejudice against him in official circles. In addition, the two professors who proposed his promotion reminded him of the anti-Semitism prevalent in Austria at that time and hinted that he might meet resistance.

During the years of Freud's medical training the intense anti-Semitism of the political world of Austria, and of the general population, also infected the medical profession. For the Jews living in Vienna at the close of the nineteenth century, this atmosphere produced a kind of psychological holocaust—a precursor to what took place under the Nazis a generation later. The medical literature at that time reflected intense racism and anti-Semitism. As historian Sándor Gilman points out, the European medical journals reflected the eighteenth-century view that "Jews were profoundly flawed . . . and predisposed to a host of illnesses." Freud's official biographer, Ernest Jones, notes that Freud had the "common Jewish sensitiveness to the slightest hint of Anti-Semitism—and had suffered much from school days onward, and especially at the University, from the anti-Semitism that pervaded Vienna."

Freud's early experiences with anti-Semitism critically influenced his attitude toward the spiritual worldview. In Austria over 90 percent of the population registered as Catholic. Freud said that in this environment "I was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew." One can understand Freud's motivation to dis-

credit and destroy what he called the "religious *Weltanschauung*" and why he referred to religion as "the enemy." Without this "enemy" he would not be in a tiny minority and expected to feel himself "inferior and an alien."

Freud recalled all of his life a story his father told him when he was about ten years old. His father had been approached by an anti-Semitic bully who knocked his father's cap off into the mud and shouted, "Jew! Get off the pavement!" Freud asked about his father's reaction. His father replied, "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap." Freud said that struck him "as unheroic conduct on the part of the big, strong man . . ." Freud confronted anti-Semitism not like his father, with a passive acceptance, but with a strong desire to fight it tooth and nail.

In April of 1882, Freud met Martha Bernays, and two months later they became engaged. Her grandfather had been the chief rabbi of Hamburg, and her father maintained the Orthodox Jewish faith of her grandfather.

When he was twenty-seven years old, Freud wrote his fiancée of an experience he had on a train: "You know how I am always longing for fresh air and always anxious to open windows, above all in trains. So I opened a window now and stuck my head out to get a breath of air. Whereupon there were shouts to shut it . . . I declared my willingness to close the window provided another, opposite, were opened, it was the only open window in the whole long carriage. While the discussion ensued and the man said he was prepared to open the ventilation slit instead of the window, there came a shout from the background: 'He's a dirty Jew!'—And with this the whole situation took on a different color." Freud describes how one of the men involved in the argument threatened to settle the fight physically. Freud said he was "not in the least frightened of the mob, asked the one to keep to himself his empty phrases which inspired no respect in me, and the other