Spacing Freud: Space and Place in Psychoanalytic Theory

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department for the Study of Religion
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Abstract

This project is interested in developing a spatial reading of Sigmund Freud’s work to understand how psychoanalysis employs a variety of different spatial categories. Proceeding by way of a close and analytical reading of Freud’s texts, I begin by surveying theories of space coming from both philosophy and geography before applying these understandings to consider Freud’s use of topographical metaphors, the formation of the subject as presented through descriptions of the fort-da game and the oceanic feeling, and Freud’s description of the limits of phantasy and reality. Freud’s writings on religion figure prominently here. I conclude by examining the deployment of individual relations through social space in Freud’s writings and the link between place and character laid out in Moses and Monotheism. The result demonstrates the importance of space in a number of aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis and frames Freud as a thinker with important contributions to make to the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences.
Acknowledgments

Before beginning, I want to take a moment to thank the many parties whose participation made this project possible. Fittingly, this project is a tale of two ‘places’, of Montreal and Toronto.

The ideas put forth in these pages owe much to Dr. Maurice Boutin, who supervised my M.A. work at McGill University and first introduced me both to psychoanalysis and to Sloterdijk’s spherology. Without his breadth of knowledge and adventurous intellect, I would not have sought out these literary traditions that lie well outside the Anglophone academy.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to Drs. James DiCenso and Marsha Hewitt, who received me warmly in Toronto and contributed ideas, revisions, and numerous hours of conversation in their supervision of this project. I have learned much from their close familiarity with the psychoanalytic tradition. Together with Dr. Amira Mittermaier, all three remained flexible and open-minded in allowing me the latitude to explore new ideas which, on many occasions, seemed strange and foreign to them.

I also wish to thank my colleagues at the University of Toronto, who responded to my ideas on a number of formal and informal occasions. I especially thank Bonnie de Bruijn and Barbara Greenberg, with whom I was fortunate enough to explore the vagaries of Freudian psychoanalysis. Had I come to the University a year earlier or a year later, my personal and educational experience would have suffered much by their absence.

Finally, I offer a personal word of thanks to my family, whose support was unfailing in this venture, and to my wife, Jessica, who tread the doctoral path alongside me. With you by my side, I can only imagine the ‘places’ we will go.
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Introduction

It would be better to approach space as a verb rather than as a noun. To space – that’s all.¹

This is a project about Freud. It is interested in highlighting his use of spatial categories – topographies, boundaries, metaphors, spatial relations – in the development of psychoanalytic theory. Born of its commitment to psychoanalysis as an ever relevant and continually evolving theory of culture and to Freud as one of the most creative and revolutionary thinkers in the Enlightenment tradition, this project is especially concerned with reading the way in which these latent spatial elements make psychoanalysis into an already spatial science. It does not strive to reinvent psychoanalysis but rather to point to that which is already overlooked.

Freud and space seem a strange pair. Freud and time – now that makes sense. That looks familiar. Time is everywhere in Freud. When he writes of infantile desires, he thinks of time. The return of repressed traumas? More time. When he posits the existence of a phylogenetic Oedipus complex and locates its formation in the murder of the tribal father,² he again points to time. Yet there is space here as well. Infantile desires originate from a specific stratum of the unconscious mind, a stratum that is characterized differently depending on the Freudian topography to which one refers. The human psyche, for Freud, is conceived spatially. Freud’s cultural theory, too, is deeply spatial. Many of the cultural institutions that organize society find their root, Freud argues, in the affective fallout of the primal murder. Social space – political society, we might call it – takes its shape from this affect. Not only is the psyche spatial, but space is also affective. The development and evolution of these spatial ideas throughout the course of Freud’s writings remains an unexplored area of study, one that I pick up in this project. The objective becomes the elaboration of these hidden elements, a consideration of the impact and importance of Freud’s spatial thinking – in short, a ‘spacing’ of Freud.

¹ Marcus Doel, ‘Un-glunking Space’. In Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds.), Thinking Space (London: Routledge, 2000), pg. 125.

² See Totem and Taboo (1913, CW 13) and Moses and Monotheism (1939, CW 23).
This project does not stand alone in this regard, as it partakes in the ‘spatial turn’ in the social sciences and humanities. The role of space in society and literature has found new appreciation among scholars of late. The reasons for the immediacy of this concern, often located in the realities of the (post)modern world, are many: the unsettling effects of rapid globalization, which progressively eliminates ‘the world we once knew’ and shapes a smaller one, where distant fears (sometimes literally) ‘move in next door’; international media and economics, which create new partners for interaction; the rise of the internet, which opens access to information once inaccessible; and global ecological threats, which demonstrate the interconnectedness of the earth-system and its inhabitants.\(^3\) Part of this spatial turn involves, as proposed here, a return to classical thinkers and a re-reading of their work with this new appreciation for space in mind. Freud comfortably fits this category. The appreciation for a latent spatial psychoanalysis disrupts the notion that scholars ‘understand Freud’ – an incomplete task with any author – and calls me to examine his text from a new perspective.\(^4\) The model for this study might thus become something like Jeff Malpas’ *Heidegger’s Topology*,\(^5\) an investigation into the role of space and place in Heidegger’s thought throughout his career, from *Being and Time* to his later concern with space as ‘dwelling.’ Heidegger’s late interest in spatial categories makes him a logical choice for such a reading, which strives to retroactively uncover a similar concern in his influential earlier works. Malpas lays bare the ‘revolutionary *Being and Space*’ (as German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk calls it\(^6\)) that lays hidden inside Heidegger’s *Being and Time*.

Malpas’ investigation is based on the premise, which I share, that place and space have been central but neglected concepts in the history of philosophical inquiry. There is much evidence to support this conclusion. The tale, which Edward S. Casey lays out in pain-staking detail in *The

\(^3\) Lists of this sort are many. For a comprehensive summary, see the introduction to Barney Warf and Santa Arias (eds.), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2009).

\(^4\) Freud also brings, as I suggest later in this introduction, a new dimension to the spatial analysis of culture by developing a spatial and relational psychology.


Fate of Place, involves the changing relation between space and place. While early philosophy understood space as an abstract backdrop for the realm of human action, place, conceived of as relational or meaningful space, was left behind. The general won out over the specific, the larger scale over the smaller. The focus on space bled from philosophy into the first social sciences, where it often coincided with the pursuit of political power and the scientific quest for dominion over nature, projects which required that space-to-be-controlled be understood as uniform and universal, geometrical in nature. Here again, place lost out to space. In contrast, today’s renewed emphasis on place resonates with postmodern and postcolonial concerns for the particular and the idiosyncratic.

Yet we would be mistaken in thinking that this victory of space over place led to any great philosophical interest in the category; meanwhile, space was losing its own battle against time. Nineteenth-century historicism brought with it a ‘despatialized consciousness’ that left little room for spatial concerns. The constant march of history from simplicity to complexity, moving steadily toward its end without contingency, had no need for a spatial dimension to explain events. For many thinkers in this tradition – Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx – it is history alone that provides the basis for an understanding of the human condition. When space is not excluded altogether, it is greatly overshadowed by time and is very seldom a dimension of ultimate concern. Not until Heidegger, Deleuze, and Foucault did space become a topic of serious philosophical discussion once again.

Casey’s narrative describes then, at best, the philosophical focus on time over space and, at worst, the complete neglect of space as a relevant category of analysis. I do not wish to herald naively the coming of space while intentionally excluding time or place. Such a focus would only create a new imbalance. The three work in concert in any situation, in any thinker. We must recognize the need to consider each of space, place, and time if we are to make sense of Freud. My emphasis, however, will be on space and place, which I will often, when speaking generally,

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7 The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). Chapter 1 of this project looks at these philosophical antecedents in greater detail.


8 Warf and Arias, 2009, pg. 2.
invoke together under the banner of ‘space.’ We have a good grasp, I think, on how time factors into Freud’s ideas. Its consequences line the pages of a century of Freud (and Freudian) scholarship. My emphasis on space, then, is not meant to exclude time but to highlight a neglected dimension, to re-balance the historical scales of philosophical understandings of Freud. We have seen the part of time; so how does space fit in?

1 A spatial psychology

Psychoanalytic theory can be viewed in a number of different ways. It is a theory of culture; it is a theory of subjectivity; it is also a clinical discipline for the treatment of psychological and psychiatric pathologies. I do not see the need to choose between these various incarnations of psychoanalysis, nor do I see them as mutually exclusive. As a result, I strive for a mode of analysis that affirms and elaborates upon each of these perspectives in equal measure. I am not a trained clinical analyst, nor am I a practicing psychiatrist. My ability to contribute to the last of these incarnations of psychoanalytic theory is, as a result, severely limited. I have no clinical experience to share, no data to present. This will not stop me, however, from interacting with clinical literature where it is relevant to my argument. I would suggest that the clinical side of psychoanalysis remains useful for thinking about psychoanalytic theory, even to the untrained. I might even go further and argue that clinical psychoanalysis is not only useful for thinking about psychoanalysis, it is absolutely essential, for it is in the clinical literature that the changing and dynamic nature of psychoanalytic theory surfaces best. Clinical work keeps psychoanalysis changing and moves Freud’s ideas beyond Freud himself. So I will draw readily from clinical writings where appropriate. I realize that psychoanalysis is a clinical practice and, although I cannot speak to it directly, I also acknowledge that any re-thinking of psychoanalytic theory,

10 ‘Culture’ remains a contentious term, one that is impossible – or at least very difficult – to define. The notion of psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic of culture has been developed by Ricoeur (1970) and Habermas (1972), among others. Yet even in this context, the notion of psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic of culture rests on somewhat of a misnomer, grounded in the facile, much debated, and ultimately inaccurate translation of Freud’s *Kultur* as culture, rather than the ‘civilization’ that Strachey prefers. Regardless, psychoanalysis emerges as a theory of culture/civilization insofar as it considers the human search for meaning, the functioning of symbolic processes, and the relation of the individual to groups and societies. This need not imply the universality of culture. In fact, for Freud, it often does the very opposite. The focus, I believe, should be on the pressure that the individual experiences, both conscious and unconscious, to conform and be like those around her.
spatial or otherwise, will hopefully be of some interest to the clinician. With this, I leave it to others better situated than myself to gauge the usefulness of these ideas.

To parallel conceptions of psychoanalysis as a theory of the individual and psychoanalysis as a theory of culture lays bare the contrasting considerations of the one and the many, the individual and the group. Insofar as psychoanalysis is an explanatory enterprise, it makes general statements about large numbers of subjects. These general theories are nonetheless constructed out of particulars, out of the ‘life stories’ of individuals, and are ultimately concerned with the understanding of difference. The extent to which psychoanalysis does justice to these particulars – whether the limited observations of the majority are imposed upon an unknowing minority, for example – is a question for another study. However, I do want to dispel the myth that psychoanalysis is too concerned with the application of general rules and ideas to consider individual difference. Psychoanalysis recognizes differences between individuals and often makes them its primary concern. The exception to the rule is often the most interesting object of study. This becomes crucial when we think about space and place. It means that psychoanalysis can indeed break out of a focus on the universal – the traditional definition of space – and move toward the individual experience of space and place. Psychoanalysis can help us blur the line between the strict dichotomies of objective and subjective, real and unreal, as this project will make clear. The traditional distinction of space as objective backdrop and place as meaningful space thus falls from within psychoanalytic theory itself.

2 Why does space matter?

‘Geography matters’ has become somewhat of a slogan of late in the humanities, but the reasons why ‘geography matters’ often remain unexplained. The question merits brief attention before proceeding.

As geographers Barney Warf and Santa Arias explain in the introduction to their primer on The Spatial Turn, “Geography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space” – a good reason, but only a beginning – “but because where things happen is critical to knowing why and how they happen.” 11 The geographical emphasis on social space

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presents it as an active component in socio-cultural phenomena, as something that shapes as much as it is shaped. Space is not passive and innocent; it ‘matters’ because it participates. This runs counter to what is stereotypically (and all too generally) portrayed as ‘the philosophical view,’ in which space is a passive backdrop to human life and little else. In this sense, the spatial turn begins with the realization that ‘geography matters’ because it affects how we live our lives.

In social theory at least, this shift from space as passive backdrop to space as active social component began with the Chicago school of sociology in the 1920s which, working almost contemporaneously with some of the first phenomenological investigations into space, considered the effect of city layouts in urban analysis.12 With the works of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault in the 1960s, and through the sustained influence of Marxist social theory, the transformation of space into a subjective, social factor was completed. As such, space could no longer be divorced from time and social structure, the three forming the foundation of social theory in geography.13 In the 1980s, the debate turned to a resolution of the structure-agency divide, which sought to create a complementary duality of the strict dichotomy, one that would recognize the ways in which individuals write their own life stories through unintentional and routine behaviour and transform their worlds without conscious intent. As Warf and Arias explain, “Everyday thought and behavior, the unacknowledged preconditions to action, do not simply mirror the world, they constitute it as the outcomes to action. Social structures and relations are thus reproduced, and hence simultaneously changed, by the people who make them; individuals are both produced by, and producers of, history and geography.”14 The point remains the same: the integration of space into social theory as an active component with a role to play in shaping lived experience is again emphasized.

12 Ibid, pg. 3.

13 The relation between space and social structure has been an ongoing point of contention within Marxist geography especially, with any attempt to place the two on an equal footing being labeled Marxist heterodoxy. See pg. 54 for a more detailed discussion of the debate.

14 Ibid, pg. 4.
3 Inroads: Peter Sloterdijk’s spherology

How then can we start to think about Freud and space? One of the most helpful avenues comes from German philosopher and cultural theorist Peter Sloterdijk who, like Malpas earlier, might serve as exemplar to orient the reader in this discussion. Indeed, as I will go on to argue, Freud’s notion of the subject shares many important similarities with Sloterdijk’s spatial and relational understanding. While he has been a mainstay in his native Germany for several decades, Sloterdijk is only now beginning to find an audience in the Anglophone world. While much of his thought draws on Heideggerian ontology and Nietzschean vitalism, Sloterdijk provides at least two unique elements that will be useful for our purposes: an important, albeit implicit, rapprochement with psychoanalytic theory, and a vocabulary for thinking about Freud and space. Finally, Sloterdijk’s philosophy also bridges the gap between social space and the space of the individual.

Sloterdijk’s *magnum opus*, his 2400-page trilogy *Spheres (Sphären)*, proposes a spatial conception of human subjectivity. In answering the question, “Where is the individual when the individual is?”, Sloterdijk follows Freud in presenting the human subject as a “topological enigma [une énigme topologique],” as a being about whom the greatest questions to be asked are questions of space. His answer recalls Freud’s concept of object-relations: the individual is in an area of intimate relationship to another individual, which Sloterdijk calls a bubble (*Blase*). With his answer, Sloterdijk highlights that we truly are ‘in-individuals’; subject and object are inseparable and we do not exist outside of these relations. To suggest otherwise, to postulate a stand-alone individual who exists prior to relation, is to err by fetishising substance, thus falling into the trap laid by much of the Western philosophical tradition.

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15 With Sloterdijk’s extensive list of publications and his frequent appearances on popular media, his many critics are worthy of note. While his *Critique of Critical Reason* (1983) was met with near-unanimous praise, his later works, in which he sought to differentiate himself – often quite sharply – from the new Frankfurt School scholars with which he had once identified attracted public and vociferous criticism from Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and others seeking to enforce party discipline.

16 1998-2004 in the original German, 2002-2010 in French translation.


First with his *Bubbles (Blasen)* and later with its companion volumes *Globes (Globen)* and *Foam (Schäume)*, Sloterdijk works to enlarge common conceptions of space to encompass psychology and culture. In so doing, he follows Derrida and others in running against a long tradition of philosophical thought: “My goal is to contribute to the dissolution of the crushing heritage of the metaphysics of substance and of the isolated object, which still remain anchored in people’s minds.”19 This obsession with substance leads to individualism, Sloterdijk argues, which distorts perceptions of the human subject’s true nature.

Sloterdijk’s bubble creates a view of the subject who is ex-static by nature, who constantly stands outside himself. The great truth in modern psychology then, and a truth which I think Freud makes more obvious than others, is that we are not just located in ourselves and our own symbolic orders, but we are also accepted into the common world and into the private worlds of others as well. This is the sense behind Freud’s topographies of the mind: that we, as subjects, are informed by different people and places and that these can be stratified based on the roles that they play in psychic life.

Despite this, Sloterdijk hardly presents himself as a proponent of psychoanalysis, although he does note the similarities between his ideas and psychoanalytic theory, interacting with it, often critically, with relative frequency. He speaks out against Freudian scientism and Lacanian pathologism,20 positioning his spherology as a remedy to both, that is, as a non-clinical extrapolation of psychoanalytic theories. He clearly distances himself from any form of psychoanalytic dogmatism or orthodoxy, writing that “should one find herein any borrowings from psychoanalytic theory, this is only because the material both permits it and recommends it, and not because I adhere to this school of thought as a source of authority.”21 Without denying any affinity between his ideas and psychoanalytic theory, then, Sloterdijk wants to dissociate himself from the politics of the psychoanalytic movement. In short, Sloterdijk makes it clear that

19 “Ce qui m’importe, c’est de contribuer à dissoudre les héritages écrasants de la métaphysique de la substance et de la chose isolée, qui sont toujours fermement ancrés dans les esprits des gens.” *Ibid*, 161.

20 *Ibid*, pg. 197. I will return to Sloterdijk’s critique in chapter 3.

he is no psychoanalyst, yet he is still comfortable calling psychoanalytic theory “the most interesting practise of interpersonal proximity in the modern world.”\(^{22}\)

### 3.1 Volume I: *Bubbles (Blasen)*

Sloterdijk positions the first volume of the spherology as a spatial extrapolation on Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world.\(^ {23}\) For Sloterdijk, we are never in the world, at least not directly. We experience the world through the lens of our relations. In this respect, Sloterdijk describes the world as “an exterior that contains interior worlds,”\(^ {24}\) an agglomeration of bubbles out of which society is constructed, a sort of foam (*Schäume*), as Sloterdijk will later call it. Reality, as we experience it, along with its components – society, culture, religion, and so on – is not given; it is produced collectively through the interaction of bubbles. To this collective realm created by the many human relationship ‘bubbles’, Sloterdijk gives the name of sphere (*Sphäre*); this is the proper unifying theme of the trilogy. The spherology is concerned with the creation of society and culture through the myriad small-scale and large-scale interactions between individuals.

Sloterdijk sees a pressing need for his project in the modern world beyond the desire to reassert space and ‘right the balances of philosophy.’ Many of the most pressing social and political questions today are, Sloterdijk acknowledges, questions about space, the changes in our perception of it, and our (in)ability to find a meaningful way to live through these changes. In a sense, Sloterdijk is striving to understand how a certain level of necessary human illusion can be maintained in the face of an Enlightenment project whose very definition of progress involves the dissipation of illusion. We have no difficulty locating Freud’s writings on religion, at first glance, at least, firmly within the boundaries of this same project. Yet Sloterdijk and Freud are facing the same problem. As Sloterdijk puts it, the human condition today is faced with the difficulty of living in a world that cares nothing for it, a post-Copernican world in which humanity is pulled sharply from the spotlight. The Enlightenment project, one worth salvaging in Sloterdijk’s view, has removed humanity from the centre of its own world through the

\(^{22}\) *Ibid*, pg. 328.

\(^{23}\) *Ni le soleil ni la mort*, Trans. Olivier Mannoni (Paris: Fayard, 2003), pg. 167.

\(^{24}\) *Ibid*, pg. 31.
destruction of its illusions, but we have never learned to live with the consequences of this change.²⁵

How do we respond to this new reality? We ‘climatize’ the world that we inhabit, we create ‘immune systems,’ similar to Freud’s ‘illusions,’ to protect ourselves from cold realities. Again, we see the point of the metaphor of the bubble – these immune systems or climates are the sum of the actions that are performed at smaller, interpersonal levels (within bubbles) and yet still affect the perception of the sphere, of the world at large. These immune systems take a number of cultural forms: religion, which traditionally returns humanity to the important centre of creation, or globalization, which works to create a unified ‘home’ for humanity out of the disparate regions populating the Earth’s surface. As Sloterdijk explains, “In an unenveloped age, these great projects aim to mimic the imaginary safety of spheres that has become impossible.”²⁶

### 3.2 Volume II: Globes (Globen)

The main difference between each of the volumes of Sloterdijk’s trilogy is one of scale. While the first volume is concerned largely with the interpersonal level of interaction, making it particularly interesting to me in its potential for a spatial rereading of psychoanalysis, the second volume focuses on a larger scale, that of the globe.

Sloterdijk’s main purpose in *Globes* is to demonstrate that conceptions of the globe have been culturally and philosophically created over time, and that these conceptions have in turn coloured the ways in which humans think of themselves as a species. Ultimately, for Sloterdijk, the globe is a symbol of wholeness and totality; it is the Neoplatonic One taken form.²⁷ As such, the globe also serves as a symbolic representation of the divine; god is that which contains everything, the all-inclusive globe. Nietzsche’s “God is dead,” then, which Sloterdijk makes a concerted effort to interpret at a number of different places in his writings, is a true statement if taken as a description of the postmodern situation: “God is dead” because the immune function of

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theological ontology has failed. We no longer conceive of ourselves as being contained within a
defensive globe. Sloterdijk’s definition of globe extends ‘relevant’ ontology beyond science. The creation of a globe is not only a matter for geographers and cartographers, for adventurers and explorers. Rather, whoever attempts to think or represent human being and its conditions creates a globe. And in this respect, philosophy, myth, and literature have as much to contribute to the enterprise as do economics and geography.

Thinking spatially, Sloterdijk’s metaphor of the globe again works to counter radical forms of individualism. As much as we might experience ourselves as being faced with the world, the globe reminds us that we are a part of it. At the same time, globes must be constructed, and the construction of a globe involves power relations. Enter again the realities of modern globalization: the true revolution in understanding the globe may not have come from Copernicus, who proved that the earth revolves around the sun, but from Magellan, for whom trade (money) made the world go round. For this reason Sloterdijk can argue, as he does quite extensively, that the major changes that we are experiencing in our perceptions of space today find their historical origins in the Age of Exploration.

Sloterdijk’s spatial analogy in Globes develops from the same line of thought as that in Bubbles. His bubble is bipolar; as such, it represents the interaction and relationship between any two given individuals. An individual then represents one pole of any number of bipolar bubble relationships. The spatial relation of interest in Globes is also bipolar: that between the centre of the globe and its perimeter, or its exterior. So the globe reproduces the same basic relationship as the bubble, but on a larger scale. We see this tension between centre and periphery in a number of different representations of the globe. In the Abrahamic traditions, humanity stands at the centre of the globe and relates to the divine outside of it. Creation similarly stands in contrast to

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28 Ibid, pg. 20.
29 Ibid, pg. 20.
30 Ibid, pg. 22.
31 Ibid, pg. 50.
external chaos. As mentioned earlier, we see how the construction of globes quickly takes on a moral character, becoming political and exclusionary. Just who can stand at the centre of the globe becomes a loaded question. Hence the perceived psychic need, Sloterdijk argues, for a social immune function or climatization, of the sort laid out in *Bubbles*: society must be defended and insulated against a threatening and encroaching outside. Both inside and outside, both poles of the relationship are affectively charged, as walls in physical space often point to psychic walls as well.\(^{33}\) This tension between inside and outside, between centre and periphery, becomes key to the understanding of any globe for Sloterdijk, and also by extension of any cultural product.

### 3.3 Volume III: Foam (Schäume)

While *Globes* presents a history of human conceptions of the world and ends with the death of metaphysics, theology, and any other illusory form of unifying oneness, *Foam* is left to theorize the resulting multicentred world that we inhabit today. The third volume’s title develops Sloterdijk’s final metaphor, that of the postmodern world as foam, “a republic of spaces [une république des espaces]”\(^{34}\) where each person creates the space within which he or she exists and lives.

The metaphor of foam highlights and theorizes the immune functions of cultures and civilizations. Sloterdijk compares human existence today to space travel, insofar as humanity must create, both symbolically and technologically, a habitat in which beings can coexist in an inhospitable environment.\(^ {35}\) Cultures make the world meaningful and livable. *Foam* thus returns to the immune or climatic function described in earlier volumes and examines its deployment in a post-metaphysical world, noting the resulting individualism. There is, properly speaking, no longer a ‘we’ to society. The meme persists, of course, largely because of the political gains that result from such a perception – a society of complete individuals cannot be governed – but

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\(^{33}\) Sloterdijk 2010, pg. 164.


\(^{35}\) *Ibid*, pg. 32.
descriptively, there is only a series of distinct singular entities whose existence cannot be completely unified or completely separated from that of others.\textsuperscript{36}

There are very few philosophical attempts to deal with the question of space and place. This fact in itself makes Sloterdijk’s spherology worthy of note. The intersubjective nature of his theory and the way in which he relates personal relations to the shape of society add another dimension of interest. And while many of Sloterdijk’s ideas are not completely original, his vocabulary is, and so too is his specific assimilation of philosophical thought into a social theory. Finally, his proximity to psychoanalytic ideas is also worthy of note, as will become increasingly clear. He provides a starting point for thinking about Freud and space because so many of his ideas, especially those concerning the individual level, have psychoanalytic parallels.

4 Wherefore Freud?

Sloterdijk’s spatial trilogy remains the exception\textsuperscript{37} rather than the rule in philosophy. One might argue that space is the traditional province of the geographers, though the increasing interdisciplinarity of the social sciences has opened the topic up to other disciplines in today’s academy. Still, it might be of particular interest to take note of ways in which Freud and psychoanalysis have been appropriated by social scientists whose work deals explicitly with spatial theory.

For the most part, geographers have largely ignored psychoanalysis and have found few uses for it. While there was a brief move in the early 1990s to incorporate psychoanalytic theory into geography, and while a few geographers routinely draw on psychoanalytic concepts in their work, the momentum for psychoanalysis within the field seems to have fizzled out. A long list of reasons for which geographers have ignored psychoanalysis has been drawn up, and few of them demonstrate a reflexive and critical conception of psychoanalytic theory.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, pg. 50.

\textsuperscript{37} I think here of Foucault’s ‘Of Other Spaces’ and of Deleuze & Guattari’s \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, as well as the work of Edward Casey and Jeff Malpas.
Steve Pile, a geographer who routinely employs psychoanalytic categories in his analysis, points to some of the assumptions that geographers make about psychoanalysis that draw them away from it. Many geographers, he explains, shy away from the perceived lack of dynamism in the nature of the unconscious, while others see psychoanalysis as an individualistic science, one that has nothing to contribute to thought about the collective. In the former case, geographers may fear reproducing the power or gender relations implicit in, for example, Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex, a fear that ignores the work of those psychoanalysts who have reconsidered Freudian ideas in light of these concerns. In the latter case, Freud’s entire social theory seems to be ignored, as well as his insight into group dynamics, in favour of a blanket condemnation of Freud’s anthropological works as speculative and irrelevant. There is no doubt that modern scholars interested in Freud must think carefully about the ways in which they invoke his material and be wary of reproducing century-old assumptions in their work. However, we need not throw the baby out with the proverbial bathwater and discard the insights of a provocative and challenging thinker, especially when decades’ worth of scholarship has sought to rethink that which Freud himself might have missed.

Paul Kingsbury, another geographer who regularly interacts with psychoanalytic theory, identifies a poststructuralist concern for difference at the very core of geographical scholarship and suggests this as a reason for which psychoanalysis is often thought to have little to contribute to geography. Human geographers’ commitment to social constructionism runs counter to the assumed acultural and ahistorical nature of psychoanalytic ideas. At the same time, these assumptions, Kingsbury rightly argues, obscure the radicality and insight of Freud’s ideas. Without feeling the need to respond to every critique directed at psychoanalytic theory, I do hope that this project will demonstrate that Freudian theory does have something to say about space and that this contribution need not necessarily run counter to the political concerns of geographers.

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39 See his ‘The extimacy of space’ *Social & Cultural Geography* Vol. 8 No. 2 (2007), pg. 238.
4.1 Freud among the geographers

By examining the ways in which Freud has found a home among a small number of geographers, we may consider the backdrop for a spatial rethinking of Freud. I do not wish to overemphasize this point of similarity – I am not looking to turn Freud into a geographer. There are substantial differences in the aims and assumptions of both geography and psychoanalysis. In almost all cases, geographers have been much more interested in psychoanalytic theory than the psychoanalytic method, and this use of psychoanalytic theory is usually very selective. Even with these warnings in mind, however, this line of inquiry still yields a productive frame for the question of Freud and space.

Aitken and Thomas⁴⁰ have developed the spatial implications of D.W. Winnicott’s notion of transitional space in an attempt to understand how culture arises out of space for young children. For Winnicott, a child’s ability to play creates a potential space in which the developing infant can bridge the gap between the primary narcissistic world of complete egocentrism and the demands of external reality. In this sense, culture arises out of space, an idea that we will revisit in chapter 4. Aitken and Thomas compare this idea to the notions developed in Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*,⁴¹ where space is recognized as a social form tied directly to human experience and practice. From the point of view of gender relations, Aitken and Thomas are interested in the role that Winnicott’s potential space affords the non-rational in culture, countering patriarchal (described as rationalistic) explanations.

While Aitken and Thomas’s work represents the most extensive interaction with Winnicott’s idea of transitional space in geography, it is certainly not the only use of object relations theory. The work of Melanie Klein has implications for the research of geographer David Sibley, one of the more prominent names in psychoanalytic geography. Since the construction of place is intrinsically exclusionary – some people belong, others do not – Sibley uses Kleinian theory to

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⁴⁰ ‘Gender, Power and Crib Geography: transitional spaces and potential places’ *Gender, Place and Culture* Vol. 4 No. 1 (1997).

⁴¹ See chapter one (pg. 49) for a more extensive review of Lefebvre’s work.
understand how intra-psychic othering results in the creation of ‘geographies of difference.’\textsuperscript{42} In Kristevan terms, ‘other’ places can be abject.\textsuperscript{43} Sibley builds on the Freudian interpretation of parapraxes (i.e., slips of the tongue and other ‘meaningful accidents’) to draw a link between the psyche and the construction of space: “Psychoanalysis can help in the elucidation of meanings – it provides a way into a world of distorted understanding and communication, including the distortions which contribute to the bounding of territories separating ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Fragmented social space is marked by stereotyped images of places and of others, and these stereotypes are rooted in the unconscious.”\textsuperscript{44} Furthermore, Sibley points to his own preoccupation with the way emotions shape place and psychoanalysis as a theory of affect. He argues that the Kleinian school, with the prominence granted the introjection of objects and the projection of affect, makes the most convincing link between the self and the social world. I see no reason, however, why similar links could not be drawn using other psychoanalytic theorists.

Combining Aitken and Thomas’s concern for gender relations and Sibley’s attention to excluded spaces, Heidi Nast’s ‘Mapping the Unconscious’\textsuperscript{45} applies Freud’s Oedipus complex to investigate the rhetoric surrounding racial segregation in the United States. Nast argues against a universalist conception of the Freudian unconscious, conceiving of the psyche as something shaped unevenly across space and time and, in relevant contexts, bearing the imprints of colonial violence. On this reading, Nast links segregation to an unconscious understanding of the black male as a threat to white women, a conception grounded in the Oedipus complex and in Freud’s incest taboo. Psychoanalytic theory, she argues, is partly responsible for the infantilization and suppression of colonized people in the present, as it created generalized scripts that, once internalized, served to promote oppression. In short, she portrays psychoanalysis as a discourse of power which, in failing to acknowledge the socio-cultural context from which its theories arise, oppresses those which it excludes. Segregation and other race-related prejudices stem from

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\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, pg. 117.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, pg. 116.
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unconscious memes that psychoanalysis itself served to promulgate. These memes, as Sibley also argued, can find expression in spatial constructions.

Steve Pile’s contribution to the *rapprochement* between psychoanalysis and geography has certainly been the most important. His groundbreaking article, ‘Human Agency and Human Geography Revisited,’ which appeared in 1993 in the midst of theoretical debates concerning the roles of structure and agency in conceptions of the self, presented psychoanalysis as an alternative to the dichotomy between the two debated terms. Psychoanalysis, without whose insights the self cannot be thought, Pile argued, presented the very reconciliation of free choice and social structure for which human geographers had been searching. In explaining the ways in which the social informs the individual psyche through desire and phantasy, psychoanalytic theory also presents the unconscious as a place of resistance, a ground for thinking about political action. Furthermore, turning to the work of Michel de Certeau in 1997, Pile makes it clear that resistance, far from being only a psychic state of mind, is actualized concretely in the creation of spaces of resistance, where dominant power relations can be subverted.

Pile’s *The Body and the City* builds on his 1993 article by setting up a dialogue between psychoanalysis and geography, one in which the concerns of geographers are addressed through Freudian and Lacanian writings. More specifically, Pile lays out the relation between subject, society, and space for Freud and Lacan, furthering his interest in the dialectic between the individual and the outside world. Following Sibley, Pile admits that he is most interested in Freud when he writes of object relations, since it is here that he seems to be at his most spatial, mixing the perception of objects in reality and unconscious affect. Furthermore, not only does Freud’s interest in space surface in his relational writings, but he also conceives of the mind as

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47 ‘Opposition, political identities and spaces of resistance.’ In Steve Pile and Michael Keith’s (eds.) *Geographies of Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
49 *Ibid*, pg. 98.
working spatially.\textsuperscript{50} Dreams, for example, have a geography, and one that represents a distortion of reality coloured by affect. With these remarks, Pile’s work clearly demonstrates a wide-ranging and varied interest in the spatial elements of Freud’s work.

Aside from those geographers who have found inspiration in psychoanalytic theory, a few have sought to bring the insight of the psychoanalytic method to bear on the field. Liz Bondi, for example, points to the coinciding origins of humanistic geography, concerned most explicitly with affect and its relation to space and place, and the humanistic psychotherapy movement, both of which arose in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{51} She is especially interested in the similarities between the construction of narrative required of ethnographic subjects in geographical fieldwork and the psychotherapeutic process, describing both as a process of “giving space to the ‘here and now’.”\textsuperscript{52} Paul Kingsbury takes this insight a step further, describing psychoanalytic psychotherapy as “a critical and even subversive clinical praxis grounded in the intense psycho-spatial dynamics of ‘two subjects linked by a pact’.”\textsuperscript{53}

4.2 Rejoinder: Felicity Callard and Paul Kingsbury

Geographical borrowings from psychoanalysis, then, have been selective, stopping short of a complete or in-depth adoption of psychoanalytic theory and have been limited to a narrow range of stereotyped notions, such as othering and introjection. While important and influential, they have also been few and far between. Looking back on the last twenty years of interaction between psychoanalysis and geography, Felicity Callard and Paul Kingsbury both develop a critical perspective on the work that has been done and point to important directions of which any project working to further the spatial interpretation of Freud ought to take note.


\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 13.

\textsuperscript{53} ‘Psychoanalysis, a gay spatial science?’ \textit{Social & Cultural Geography} Vol. 4 No. 3 (2003), pg. 348.
For Callard, interactions between psychoanalysis and space in the field of geography have come at a great price: the taming of psychoanalysis, a castration in which psychoanalysis’ more problematic and provocative political aspects – the disruptive nature of the unconscious mind, for example – are overlooked or omitted.\textsuperscript{54} In short, if geographers have never been able to apply psychoanalysis to their work in anything more than a selective fashion, the explanation can be found in their refusal to face politically disruptive notions like the death instinct/drive\textsuperscript{55} and the unconscious. The latter notion, she argues, when employed geographically, rarely remains properly psychoanalytic but often degenerates into something only generally psychological, a psychic realm unavailable to conscious access. Furthermore, while many geographers make explicit theoretical commitments to critical race theory or anti-essentialist feminist thought and adopt the views of the subject as malleable and capable of resistance that come with these commitments, they ignore the challenges that psychoanalysis poses to these very conceptions of subjectivity. As she explains, “the Freudian unconscious is not strictly a cultural artefact, and hence is not subject to the kinds of culturalist reworkings and resignifications of identity characteristic of social constructionist approaches.”\textsuperscript{56} Yet geographers often draw on psychoanalysis to defend exactly these theoretical constructs.

Callard’s project, rather provocatively formulated, seeks the recovery of a radical psychoanalysis, of the sort that should trouble our constructs and ideas in the same way that Freud disrupted the thought of his peers. In this respect, Callard identifies the greatest possible contribution that psychoanalysis could make to geography in “the intractability of the unconscious and its imperviousness to political goadings, and the anarchic and implacable movement of drives.”\textsuperscript{57} In short, a spatial appreciation of psychoanalysis cannot afford to be too selective or to sacrifice wholeness for the sake of interdisciplinarity. What is needed is a complete spatial translation of psychoanalysis, one that maintains its subversive potential.

\textsuperscript{54} ‘The taming of psychoanalysis in geography’ \textit{Social & Cultural Geography} Vol. 4 No. 3 (Sept. 2003), pg. 295-312.

\textsuperscript{55} Freud wrote of the \textit{Todestrieb}, which Strachey usually translates as ‘death instinct.’ Some have argued that ‘death drive’ would be a more accurate translation. If one relies on dictionary definitions, either ‘drive’ or ‘instinct’ would be acceptable for ‘Trieb.’ In the future, I will use ‘drive.’

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 300.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 302.
Perhaps most importantly, Callard encourages geographers to actually read Freud, as she finds few direct references to the Freudian corpus, especially outside the set list of a few oft-cited works like the essay on ‘The Uncanny’ and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Much of my chosen method in the elaboration of this project, with its close reading of Freud and its comprehensive approach to his ideas as a system of thought, owes its form to Callard’s insightful critiques.

From Kingsbury⁵⁸ I take the notion that psychoanalysis should begin by understanding itself as spatial before moving outside itself to find spatiality. In addressing Callard’s critique, Kingsbury points out that not only have geography’s selective readings of psychoanalysis made it lose out on the latter’s full political impact, but the spatial potential of psychoanalysis has also remained underdeveloped for these same reasons. The taming of psychoanalysis in geography ultimately weakens both parties. He prescribes caution, however, moving forward:

> The un-taming of psychoanalysis is neither possible nor even desirable until the numerous and rich psychoanalytic theorizations about space, subjectivity and society are taken seriously… The taming of psychoanalysis in geography does not simply involve lame dismissals of its allegedly wild concepts such as the death drive. The taming of psychoanalysis in geography does not only involve such a garish sunny overestimation of people’s ability to transform and progress psychologically. The taming of psychoanalysis in geography also involves a simplification – *an over-rapid spatialization* – of the psychoanalytic subject and the social.⁵⁹

Progress cannot be made, Kingsbury suggests, until we first critically examine the ways in which psychoanalysis is already spatial. Recognizing this as a properly philosophical first step, my project accepts such an objective and takes it as its purpose.

## 5 Layout

Where do we go from here? I have demonstrated thus far that the role of space in Freud’s work has been a topic of general neglect in the study of psychoanalysis and that those most concerned with space in the academy often eschew any kind of deep engagement with psychoanalysis, with

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a few important and duly noted exceptions. I have also pointed to the contributions that a spatial psychoanalysis might make to the spatial turn in the humanities, both adding an appreciation of the spatial implications of the psyche and disrupting common understandings of psychoanalysis itself. Finally, with reference to Sloterdijk’s spherology, it too premised on the unjustifiable omission of space from philosophical investigation in general, I have intimated the potential for a spatial reading of psychoanalysis, the possibility of a ‘spatial Freud’ in the *Collected Works*.

Before proceeding, let me discuss the structure of the project. My interest here is in the role of spatial formulations in Freud’s *Collected Works*. As a result, I intentionally work very closely with Freud’s text and strive to read him in a manner both rigorous and analytic. I only move away from or beyond Freud when I deem such a move advantageous. I have structured the chapters themselves as commentaries on Freud insofar as they are deeply concerned with Freud’s own writings and with the evolution of his ideas. Chapters proceed chronologically through Freud’s works, to best highlight the dynamic nature of his thought. Even Freud’s ‘new’ ideas, like that of the death drive, for example, have often been present from the beginnings of psychoanalysis in some form, emerging from a network of precursor ideas. A chronological approach best recognizes this development.

This textual approach to Freud is helpful for a number of reasons. Primarily, it forces us, as Callard encouraged, to actually read Freud, to appreciate his contradictions, his openings and his insights. It also recognizes that no two individuals who read a text will understand it in precisely the same way. As such, the commentary format takes no specific understanding of Freud for granted but instead seeks to build one from the ground up. I also caution the reader that my primary interest in Freud’s text makes questions of history and context peripheral to my investigation. Psychoanalysis and the question of space have perhaps come closest in one key area – the study of Freud’s life. Much has been written, for example, about the significance of Rome in his life, or that of his many travels and emigrations. I wish to distinguish my project from these well-worn paths.

With the exception of the first chapter, which considers definitions of space, each subsequent chapter focuses on a particular spatial notion and works through its implications in Freud’s writings. In most cases, the common thread linking chapters together is not their specific spatial notion, which varies from one line of inquiry to the next, but rather the general concern with
questions of Freud and space. The project as a whole might then be framed as a series of essays, each of which identifies spatial implications in Freud’s writings from a different angle, but which come together to formulate a general appreciation of space in Freud. Notions of space come to constitute different vectors through which the Freudian corpus can be approached. While this format may run the risk of forming a less cohesive whole than some might be accustomed to, it reflects the plurivocal nature of conceptions of space and allows for a much more comprehensive engagement with a variety of dimensions of Freudian psychoanalysis.

The first question that I look to address is one of definition: what exactly do I mean when I refer to space? This will be the topic of the next chapter. Space, like so many key terms in academic discourse, lacks a universally accepted definition. The goal of this first chapter then is obviously not to develop a restrictive definition to which I might fervently cling thereafter. Rather, by examining the definitions of space and place from Plato and Aristotle to the scientific philosophies of the Enlightenment and on again to poststructuralist theory, I demonstrate the range of ways in which space and place have been conceived. I end with a consideration of social space as it has been understood in the social sciences and the way in which it differs from philosophical abstractions of space. This first chapter thus lays the groundwork for future discussion by demonstrating the range of definitions of space and place and by orienting the reader in unfamiliar philosophical territory.

The second chapter begins the engagement with Freud’s works by considering his use of spatial metaphor in his topographies of the mind. From the anatomical model of the Project for a Scientific Psychology in 1895 to his two subsequent topographies, Freud presents his model of the psyche using spatial terms, though he is also insistent that these should not be understood as representing a literally physical psyche. Freud thus presents a conception of the mind that is intentionally spatial but not physically so. Having identified this tension, I argue that Freud’s model functions as a heuristic aid that is spatial in its relationality: the mind is spatial because the agencies contained therein interact with each other, and this interaction is best depicted using spatial metaphor. Finally, I turn to Lakoff and Johnson’s cognitive theory of metaphor, both to justify Freud’s use of metaphor in this way and to demonstrate how it might lead us to reconsider the scientific nature of psychoanalysis.
Chapter 3 looks at the significant role that space plays in the constitution of the Freudian subject, especially with respect to the oceanic feeling and the fort-da game. Both of these episodes describe a moment of shifting consciousness, one in which a boundary is erected in the unified medium of the psyche. Only after this process of division does a distinction between subject and object come into existence. The creation of the subject, then, can be understood psychoanalytically as a partitioning of space. I am similarly interested here in demonstrating the permeability of the Freudian subject that emerges as a result of these episodes. For while the formation of these boundaries creates the subject, we err in assuming that they therefore remain fixed and unchanging. A number of processes can result in their shifting, leading to a subject who is open and receptive to her environment. I then go on to compare the Freudian subject that results from this partitioning to the postmodern subject of the geographers. My objective here is not to force Freud into the postmodern mould but rather to consider how an appreciation of the shifting boundaries of the Freudian subject might challenge such models.

Chapter 4 builds on the previous chapter’s presentation of the Freudian subject as a play of boundaries by demonstrating the manner in which Freud goes on to blur the boundaries separating the subject from the object and phantasy from reality. The result points to a tension in Freud’s work between a position that emphasizes the tendency toward the reality principle, with its sharp divide between inside and outside, and another, observed most notably in his appreciation of illusion, that tends toward the pleasure principle. In the latter case, reality becomes a relativized phenomenon whose perception depends on personal desires and experiences, pointing to a permeable and fluid boundary shaping the subject. I then go on to highlight noteworthy post-Freudian developments of this tension, especially in British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott’s treatment of potential or transitional space. The ultimate end here, as in the previous chapter, is to demonstrate that the boundaries of the Freudian subject are forever shifting and evolving, thereby precluding any understanding of the Freudian subject as a closed, atomized individual interacting with a fixed reality.

Chapter 5 begins with a shift in spatial considerations. While chapter 2 emphasizes the use of metaphorical space in the creation of the psyche, and the next two chapters focus on concepts of relational space to identify the boundary between Self and Other, I turn in chapter 5 to notions of social space, the space of society, and to the political implications of Freud’s work on group dynamics and culture. The scope of relationality is thus extended to the entirety of social
relations. The investigation proceeds in three distinct phases. First, I briefly consider the concept of social space and the way in which it foregrounds political concerns. Then, in a related move, I look at the ways in which critical theorists concerned with race and class relations have approached Freud’s work. Finally, the majority of the chapter returns to Freud’s text and asks how he understands shared, collective space in his writings.

I end in chapter 6 by considering Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, a book as enigmatic as it is important. I argue that the text can be read spatially as a migration story that demonstrates how the influence of certain locations – in this case, Egypt, Kadesh, and the places in between – can work to shape the psyche. Through the tale of these travels, Freud presents the reader with his theory of Judaism, which is inextricably tied to questions surrounding the formation of the ‘Jewish personality,’ the dynamics of tradition, and by extension the migratory journeys through which Moses leads his people. Freud’s theory of Jewishness suggests a link between places and character, one in which the memories of places shape personality. This once again recalls several issues that have been important in past chapters, such as the relation between the individual and the group, the primal horde situation, and the role of Moses as leader, one who, significantly, claims a different ethnic origin than those he leads. Overall, I want to suggest that the basic question that Freud addresses in *Moses* – “Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?” – implies a spatial – and intensely political – answer, one that points to two complementary spatial orientations, the first highlighting a sense of identity tied to a common place, and the second to an openness to the world.

Through the variety of different avenues provided to the general – and admittedly broad – theme of ‘space in Freud,’ I hope to provide a new perspective from which we might understand Freud’s texts and thereby make him relevant to issues gathered under the banner of the spatial turn in the humanities. From questions of metaphorical space, to theories of the individual’s modes of relation with herself, with reality, and with others, to Freud’s writings on culture and

60 Freud, ‘Totem and Taboo (1913).’ In CW 13, pg. xv. The line is taken from the preface to the Hebrew edition, dated to 1930.
his understanding of social relations, I want to consider Freudian psychoanalysis from the neglected yet fertile lens of spatial studies. But before proceeding, I turn to a preliminary question: how are we to understand this strange notion that is ‘space’?
Chapter 1: What Do We Mean By Space?

‘Space’ is a contested term. Scholars can no more agree on its definition than they can that of ‘music,’ ‘art,’ or ‘religion.’ Instead, they are left with a number of competing definitions, each of which highlights certain aspects of the phenomenon under study and obscures others. As a result, many scholars now see the search for universal definitions as a futile endeavour, one that would only risk enshrining preconceptions and biases under the banner of generalizability.

The aim of this chapter is therefore not to define space. However, we must be clear on what we are talking about when we refer to space. This chapter thus serves primarily to provide background on the issues discussed later in this project and to set the terms of debate, to orient the unfamiliar reader in the philosophy of space. To this end, I turn not to definition but to genealogy in the strictest sense of the term – a discussion of the origins and changes in a term’s understanding. I am interested in the history of the idea of space in Western thought. I argue that it is possible to identify ‘types’ of space – from abstract space to social space – that have been the focus of study at various points in time and that can all provide valuable insight for an analysis of space in Freudian thought. A genealogy of space therefore has the advantage not only of highlighting the history of thought about space but also of demonstrating the ways in which these discussions bring to the fore different types of space over time. In this respect, I agree with social theorist David Harvey’s comments:

‘Space’ often elicits modification. Complications sometimes arise from these modifications (which all too frequently get omitted in the telling or the writing) rather than from any inherent complexity in the notion of space itself. When, for example, we write of ‘material’, ‘metaphorical’, ‘liminal’, ‘personal’, ‘social’ or ‘psychic’ space (just to take a few examples) we indicate a variety of contexts that so inflect matters as to render the meaning of space contingent upon the context.61

Not only is a universal definition of space, one independent of context, impossible to achieve, it is also undesirably limiting and theoretically unnecessary for this investigation. In approaching Freud’s text, we will benefit instead from a broad understanding of space and its adjacent notions, allowing for a comprehensive appreciation of the spatial notions contained therein. The

range of definitions surveyed in this chapter thus facilitates the identification and differentiation of these types of space.

This chapter presents different conceptions of space and place from the perspectives of certain key theorists, philosophers and geographers alike. While philosophy, generally speaking, began with an emphasis on theorizing abstract space and only later moved to phenomenological investigations of space as grounded in the lived body, geography has instead placed the emphasis on social space and on the nature of experienced space. In his suggestion that “the problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practise with respect to it,” Harvey presents the prevailing view in geography today. With this in mind, the real question for this opening chapter not only remains ‘what is space?’ but also “how is it that different human practises create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?” While we may remain unable to define space in the abstract, we nevertheless do so implicitly in our daily actions, through our simple living in space. With this, Harvey highlights an important dimension of the contemporary notion of space and locates himself in a tradition that dates back to Kant and extends into twentieth century phenomenology. But this is only part of the story, especially when dealing with Freud. How, for example, can Freudian spatial metaphor, used to diagram the psyche, be related to this emphasis on practice? Freud seems much more intent here on ‘thinking space’ than on ‘living space.’ Must we not recognize the mutual influence between our abstract spatial theories and our practices? While experience and practice do indeed play a role in defining space for us, we must remember that abstract notions of space, ‘simple theory,’ equally inform the ways in which we view the world.

Finally, let us note that this chapter does not claim to present a comprehensive view of spatial theory. Such a project would fill a book in itself and indeed has; I refer readers interested in greater detail to Edward S. Casey’s *The Fate of Place.* Choices have been made; certain

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63 Pg. 13-14.
64 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). While Casey is particularly interested in the dynamics between space and place throughout the philosophical tradition, the history presented is general enough to be of use even to those with broader interests.
thinkers have been included, others have not. The thinker’s influence on Freud often informed this decision, as did her general contribution to spatial theory.

1 Classical Philosophy

1.1 Plato’s *Timaeus*: Space as Receptacle

Plato’s ‘likely story’ (*eikos muthos*) of creation portrays space as a receptacle (*hupodoche*), a passive vessel in which creation is placed, and is in many ways representative of the role of space in Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian cosmogonies in general. Here, space as backdrop precedes the existence of place as locality – ‘places for things’ – which can only exist by definition once the process of creation has begun. Space also precedes time, since the latter too cannot exist as night and day without the planets, also created objects in Plato’s tale. In the beginning, then, for Plato, there was only space.

Plato’s creator is a reflective and benevolent one who uses his intellect to create the best possible world. That which exists, however, must exist somewhere. Plato’s struggle with the notion of space thus emerges from the necessity of considering *where* the demiurge places his creations and the resultant properties of this space. If space is to ‘contain’ creation, Plato surmises, it must clearly be some sort of receptacle. He is careful to distinguish space from creation, however, despite these receptive properties; we are clearly *in* space, without *being* space ourselves. Space must be a receptacle capable of retaining its own qualities, even during the very act of containing. As Plato explains of the receptacle, “Its nature is to be available for anything to make its impression upon, and it is modified, shaped and reshaped by the things that enter it.”

To be perfectly receptive in such a manner, space itself must be free of all characteristics, since a characterized space would be unable to yield to the particularities of the objects being received. As such, Plato identifies space as a third category for his consideration, one distinct from the world of becoming (creation) and the world of being (the forms). Space is a thing unto itself, one

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67 *Ibid*, 50c.
that makes becoming possible. Plato goes so far, in a gendered description reflective of Greek notions of procreation, as to liken the forms to the father of creation and the recipient, space (chora), to the mother.\footnote{The influence of Plato’s ideas here on psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva’s use of the term chora to describe a pre-linguistic, maternal stage of childhood development is clear.} 

In the world of becoming, then, space remains an unchanging constant, a passive pre-condition of existence. Plato argues that the mind apprehends space by a sort of intuitive reasoning that functions without the need for sensory information: “We look at [space] as in a dream when we say that everything that exists must of necessity be somewhere, in some place and occupying some space, and that that which doesn’t exist somewhere, whether on earth or in heaven, doesn’t exist at all.”\footnote{Ibid, 52d.} Place, on the other hand, is a direct result of sensory experience, perceived as that space occupied by a given object. It is the result of placement by the demiurge at the moment of creation.

Plato’s theory of space is often criticized for its relegation of space to the background of Western philosophical thought. After all, if space is a passive backdrop for creation, what more is there to say about it? We need only know that it exists. Its influence in worldly matters is nonexistent. Plato’s conclusions are, at the same time, a direct result of his approach to the question, framed in the Timaeus as one of cosmogony. Casey, after an investigation of other Near Eastern myths of creation, argues that topogenesis almost always follows cosmogenesis;\footnote{Casey 1997, 28.} the creation of space almost inevitably precedes the creation of place in ancient myth. In this sense, Plato’s story falls in line with a long tradition of creation myths. At the same time, Plato’s receptacle is interesting in that as it is not a void. Creation does not occur \textit{ex nihilo}, as it would later for Augustine, nor is space the substance of creation. The demiurge does not fashion objects \textit{out of} space; it places them \textit{in} space. Place is an afterthought, the belated result of creation.
Plato’s formulation of the passive container remained influential well into the Enlightenment and became an important factor in philosophy’s relative ignorance of space. Plato’s conception of place, however, quickly found a competitor in the works of his student, Aristotle.

1.2 Aristotle’s *Physics*: Place as Boundary

Aristotle takes a different point of departure in his *Physics* than does Plato’s *Timaeus* and ends up with a radically different result as a consequence. While Plato’s emphasis on space relegated place to a lesser position, Aristotle’s interest in physical phenomena gives place much greater prominence.

Plato’s interest in cosmogony leads him to identify abstract space as a necessary precondition for creation. Aristotle, on the other hand, begins with that which is most immediate to the senses, the object itself, and only then moves to the abstract. While Plato’s space is receptive, Aristotle’s place is circumferential. As a result, one of Aristotle’s major points of consideration becomes the level at which this boundary between object and environment can be determined. 71 “A sensible body or substance must be situated somewhere,” he writes, “and any given body has some proper site, which is the same for the part as for the whole.”72 Aristotle thus begins by considering the body as a whole, since most referential or demonstrative statements make reference to the whole rather than the parts. He concludes that space and place are equivalent for any given object: “Place cannot be greater than body.”73 The space that an object occupies, its body, is equal to its place. But space can also exist without a body. Here, Aristotle describes space as potential place; space is an area in which there could be an object but is not. In a sense, then, space is everywhere for Aristotle, though his emphasis on place leads him to make explicit a distinction between full space – place, space that is occupied by an object – and empty space – space which could hold an object but does not. This definition of space, like Plato’s formulation, also acknowledges a receptive quality to space – things can still occupy space – though Aristotle does not theorize this quality to the same extent.

71 An interesting issue in object relations theory as well, and one to which I will return in chapter 4.
The perimeter of a body delimits its place. Aristotle thus describes the place of a body as its immediate envelope, as the first unchanging limit that surrounds it.\textsuperscript{74} So, for example, if a boat is sailing along a river, to use Aristotle’s example, the boat’s place is not the immediate water surrounding it, since this water changes as long as the boat and the water remain in motion. Rather, the boat’s place is ‘the river,’ the body of water as a whole.

Aristotle takes his spatial theory one step further by considering the way in which place makes possible the orientation of bodies in space, a point upon which Kant and the phenomenologists will later build. “Every sensible body has locality,” Aristotle writes, “and the distinctions between localities are ‘above and below’, and ‘to right and to left.’”\textsuperscript{75} Because of this, beings can locate other objects in space from their own standpoint, using the place of their bodies as for reference. For Aristotle, however, this orientation is not in fact relative to the body but is absolute and universal. The table is not to \textit{my} right, it is to the right \textit{tout court}; directions are defined relative to the universe itself. Kant will think differently when he returns to this idea centuries later.

The contrast between Platonic and Aristotelian theories of space exposes the deep roots of the conflict between partisans of space and those of place, between the general and the particular. It is not, once again, that Aristotle lacks a theory of space entirely. He is simply much more interested in place than he is in space, a fact contingent upon the starting point of his investigation. While Plato begins with cosmogony, Aristotle’s text is, after all, a physics. Objects must come first.

2 Enlightenment Philosophy

2.1 Descartes

With the Enlightenment, we come to those philosophers who helped shape the scientific worldview that emerged during that time and who would have directly influenced Freud’s way of thinking. Science played a major role in shaping definitions of space and place. As thinkers

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid}, 212a.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid}, 205b.
began to consider the composition of objects and the world came to be understood in mechanistic
terms, questions of extension and motion began to inform spatial theory. Attempts to understand
the natural world within the framework of ‘cause and effect’ led some to inquire into the role of
space in this equation. Is space merely passive, as Plato suggested, or might it possess a structure
different from matter, one capable of being acted upon? The relation of the divine to space and
matter was closely related to this line of questioning.

Descartes’ famous definition of space as *res extensa*, the extension of an object, proved very
influential in this regard. Here, space was closely linked with matter: an object occupied space
according to its material shape and magnitude. Since the Christian god could not be understood
in a corporeal sense after the resurrection, he could not be said to occupy space. Descartes
thereby rejected the arguments of his opponents, for whom god, space, and the Platonic
receptacle were nearly synonymous, and refuted the idea that god was an eternally extended
being and that creation in a sense existed within god.

Like Aristotle, then, an object’s place was closely related to the space that it occupied. Moving
beyond Aristotle, however, Cartesian theory makes a distinction between internal place and
external place. While internal place is absolute, corresponding to the volume that an object
occupies according to its extension in size and shape, external place is relational and is equated
to the space between a body and other objects (i.e., the distance from my desk to the doorway).76
Importantly, internal and external place could both be quantified through measurement. So while
internal place is equivalent to the space that an object occupies, external place can be reduced to
position, to the location of an object in relation to other objects.

Under Descartes, space becomes absolute, free from modification or contingency, as it was for
Plato. While Aristotle argued that space and time were important categories for naming and
sorting sense perceptions, Descartes elevates space above perception. As space and creation are
again brought closer, the former becomes the sum of the extension of all that is. The debate, until
Kant, returns to a Platonic line of investigation that seeks the nature of space: is it a divine
attribute, given to house the created order, or is it immanent to creation itself? That is, does space

precede or result from creation? With Kant, however, the notion of space as a category returns, as does the question of its priority with respect to consciousness.

### 2.2 Kant: A Priori Space and the Return of the Body

Kant addressed the topic of space as early as 1770 in his inaugural dissertation. Here, time and space are presented as universal principles that make possible knowledge about sensory phenomena. Space does not originate in the senses, then, but is presupposed by them. That is, objects can only be perceived if they first exist in space. As Kant writes, “[A]bsolute space has a reality of its own, independent of the existence of all matter, and indeed as the first ground of the possibility of the compositeness of matter.” Its primary properties remain outside the grasp of human reason. With this characterization, Kant refutes both Descartes and his opponents by making space part of the nature of the mind. Space is neither an endlessly extended container, nor is it formed in the relation of existing objects, but it is subjective, “issuing by a constant law from the nature of the mind, for the co-ordinating of all outer sense whatsoever.”

The relation of existing objects in space does not form a kind of ‘external place,’ as Descartes had called it, but creates a different sort of spatial category, the region, which becomes the new intermediary between the object and space in general. Different parts of space relate to each other and in so doing create regions. These regions are oriented based on position. So, in my relation to other objects, I am able to identify those that stand to my left (the left region), those located above me (the upper region) and so on. This relation also gives each part a position, as Descartes described, relative to the whole. So, my home might lie at 73 degrees west latitude (position) but it is also located within the Western hemisphere (the Western or left region of the globe). It is these regions, for Kant, which stand in relation to space as a whole – in this example, the world as a whole, let’s say – not the individual position. But these regions are only possible

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78 ‘On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space.’ In ibid, pg. 20.

79 ‘Dissertation on the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World,’ in ibid, pg. 61.
through the relation of positions.\textsuperscript{80} Contrary to Aristotle, spatial orientation in region is not absolute or universal, but is, for Kant, related to the perception of the object. Regions are always determined based on their relation to our bodies.\textsuperscript{81} More specifically, regions are formed by the particular spheres of action or influence that objects might have from their given positions. All substances, Kant suggests, have forces that can act outside themselves. Through these forces and their potential reach, objects are connected to others. It is this ‘could potentially be,’ the extent of the possibilities for causal influence that an object has, that creates space.

For the early Kant then, space belongs to the mind as a form of intuition that makes sensory perception possible. Place is reduced to position, as the relative location of an object before other objects. The role of place as a locator in space is usurped by region, which becomes the new standard of reference.

Kant builds on his theory of space in his \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, where he clarifies the exact nature of space with respect to the mind. Space and time are both described as “pure forms of sensible intuition, serving as principles of \textit{a priori} knowledge.”\textsuperscript{82} Since we cannot conceive of the absence of space, Kant argues, it follows that space is the very condition for the appearance of external objects.\textsuperscript{83} Without space, there could be no outside. From this perspective, space is indeed real and objective insofar as it conditions human experience of things.\textsuperscript{84} At the same time, space is subjective, in that it belongs to the subject’s openness to the external world; it only exists from the perspective of the human subject.\textsuperscript{85} For this reason, we can conceive of objects in space in our minds without recourse to the senses. I do not need to be staring at a big red ball on

\textsuperscript{80} ‘On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions in Space,’ in \textit{ibid}, pg. 20.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 22-23.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid}, A24/B39.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid}, A28/B44.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Ibid}, A26/B42.
a grassy field to imagine a big red ball on a grassy field. In this sense, space also contains a transcendental or ideal dimension.  

Like space, time is also given through a priori intuition, but it is not required for sensory perception. While the perception of external objects is impossible without space, Kant is also clear that we do not require space to experience ourselves. Since we do not need to posit ourselves as external objects to become aware of our own inner states, sensory perception is not needed in the same way. Instead, experience of oneself is conditioned by time, insofar as we encounter ourselves as a series of fleeting states, moods and volitions. And since self-perception is also required for the perception of the world, time is essential for the apprehension of both oneself and the outside. As Kant writes:

Time is the formal a priori condition of all appearances whatsoever. Space, as the pure form of all outer intuition, is so far limited; it serves as the a priori condition only of outer appearances. But since all representations, whether they have for their objects outer things or not, belong, in themselves, as determinations of the mind, to our inner state; and since this inner state stands under the formal condition of inner intuition, and so belongs to time, time is an a priori condition of all appearances whatsoever. It is the immediate condition of inner appearances (of our souls) and thereby the mediate condition of outer appearances.

In this respect, time retains its priority over space in Kantian philosophy.

Casey’s history of the reassertion of place in philosophy locates Kant at an important turning point. On the one hand, Kant begins the effacement of the concept of place as Aristotle understood it, replacing it with new emphases on region and position. Kant reduces place to position, noteworthy only in its relation to other objects and valuable only as an upward referent, pointing to region, which in turn points to space. On the other hand, the reassertion of place in phenomenology, accomplished through a focus on the body, picks up where Kant’s ideas about

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86 Ibid, A28/B44.
87 Ibid, A22/B37.
88 Ibid, A34/B50.
90 Ibid, pg. 190.
the orientation of the body in a region leave off. To be sensible is to be in place, with the body playing a mediating role between the knower and the objects and making directionality possible. We are only able to perceive right and left in the world before us, according to Kant, because our bodies are themselves first experienced as possessing these same divisions. To borrow Casey’s example, a blindfolded person in a dark room would still be able to find her way around, using the orientation of the body. So while Kant may appear to deal place the deathblow by reducing it to position, his emphasis on the directionality and orientation of the body opens the door for the reassertion of place in later philosophy.

Kant’s work on space is also influential insofar as he locates space in the mind of the human knower rather than in the mind of god. This space, despite the fact that it can only be perceived subjectively in portions, remains the same, unitary and homogeneous throughout. However, it is his focus on orientation that will inspire the phenomenologists and, ultimately, the extensive developments of Heideggerian theory.

3 Heidegger

This chapter’s move from Kant to Heidegger is important in the scope of the project for a variety of reasons. For one, the transition out of Enlightenment thought into the twentieth century takes us past Freud’s lifetime. If we wanted to consider philosophical influences on Freudian spatial theory, anything coming after the early Heidegger of Being and Time would prove inadmissible. These post-Freudian thinkers of space remain essential to the investigation, however, insofar as their work continues to influence contemporary theories of space and as they might provide avenues for revealing a spatial Freud within early psychoanalytic thought. Furthermore, Heidegger’s later work continues the reassertion of place in spatial thought.

But why does place matter? How can Casey, for example, whose history of place I have referenced several times already, justify his concern for its reassertion in the philosophical

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A focus on place, usually in terms of its role in individual and collective identity formation, is often used politically to reassert a concern for individual difference in the light of grand narratives and generalising theories. We see this, for example, in the work of David Sibley and some of the other psychoanalytic geographers, who examine the ways in which psychic forces contribute to the construction of a place that excludes a designated Other.

The political dangers of such a conception of place quickly come to mind when reading Heidegger’s writings on space. Given his political involvement with National Socialism, many readers hesitate to invest much thought in Heidegger’s spatial theory, assuming it to be ‘corrupted’ with jingoistic rhetoric that only seeks to glorify the homeland. Sadly, such a concern for the political motives behind the construction of spaces rarely surfaces in other instances – as philosopher Jeff Malpas notes, no one would be concerned about the political character of First Nations spatial constructions, for example – making the critique painfully selective. While the concern for place’s political nature is a valid one, there is no reason to judge it more applicable to Heidegger than to any other theorist of space, especially when one considers that the bulk of Heidegger’s writings on space come long after his period of involvement with National Socialism. Furthermore, the spatial implications of Heidegger’s work go far beyond his explicit writings on space, as I endeavour to demonstrate. Heidegger’s ‘being-in-the-world,’ introduced in Being and Time, can be understood as an attempt to explain humanity’s existence in space. To be in the world is already to find oneself in a specific place and to be faced with other objects and people from that place. “On this basis,” Malpas suggests, “the central questions of philosophy, questions of being and existence, as well as ethics and virtue, must themselves make their determination and their starting point from this same place.” Being-in-the-world, then, can be seen to make space one of the key philosophical concepts at the very foundation not only of Heideggerian ontology but of philosophical investigation in general.

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94 David Harvey and Doreen Massey in particular have argued that Heidegger’s notion of place as dwelling, as a form of ‘belonging to the land,’ may have explained his attraction to National Socialism. As I note below, and as Malpas (2006, pg. 18) points out, however, this argument is suspect if one considers that the early Heidegger did not focus on the notion of dwelling (wohnen). While the idea does surface briefly in Being and Time, it is not heavily theorized until 1951, well after the end of his official involvement with the Nazi party.


96 Ibid, pg. 39.
3.1 The Early Heidegger: Being and Time

Let us make no mistake: Being and Time is not a book about space. Space and place rank quite low on the (rather lengthy) text’s list of concerns. However, as Sloterdijk has attempted to demonstrate with his spherology, space is not entirely absent from the subtext of Being and Time; there may be a latent ‘Being and Space’ between its lines after all.

Heidegger’s project is one of ontology. He works to understand what is meant by ‘being,’ a question which, he argues, philosophy has often sought but never managed to answer. As the title suggests, he is particularly interested in the role that time plays in the interpretation of being: “Our provisional aim is the Interpretation of time as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being.”97 With shades of Kant’s argument concerning the importance of time in self-perception, Heidegger suggests that humans can only understand something like Being if they use time as a standpoint.98

But, again, even if time is critical to thought and understanding, there is no denying that existence is physical, that humans live in what Heidegger calls a ‘world.’ This being-in-the-world is coincidental with human existence and it is through this world that humanity has access to other beings. Heidegger is careful to frame this concept, however, as being more than a simple equation of existence and space. Rather, ‘being-in’ for Heidegger does not imply a mere context, the fact of being surrounded by the world. Instead, to ‘be in’ means to be alongside (bei) something, to reside with it. Being-in-the-world is the state of being absorbed in the world that is typical of human consciousness.99 As a result, being-in-the-world makes humanity and its surroundings coextensive:

It is not the case that man ‘is’ and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the ‘world’ – a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never ‘proximally’ an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a ‘relationship’ towards the

98 Ibid., pg. 39.
99 Ibid., pg. 80.
Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some other entity is present-at-hand outside of Dasein and meets up with it. Such an entity can ‘meet up with’ Dasein only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a world.\(^{100}\)

It is this line of thought upon which Sloterdijk draws in the first volume of his spherology to develop his notion of bubbles.

We do not encounter space as space, for Heidegger, but rather as the objects that populate it. This mode of encounter differs, as one might expect, for animate and inanimate objects. Only human beings can properly be said to exist; animals, for example, which Heidegger does not grant consciousness, may live, but they do not exist, since they do not consciously organize a world around themselves.\(^{101}\) In the case of inanimate objects, which Heidegger terms ‘equipment’ (Zeug), these are encountered as objects before us in space (Vorhandenes) and as objects within reach, ready-to-hand (Zuhandenheit) and available to perform a given function.\(^{102}\) Equipment, which is always encountered in space, can either be placed – it can be organized in relation to other environmentally available tools – or it can be placeless – it can ‘just lie around.’\(^{103}\) As Kant too argued, if the equipment does have a place, it ultimately refers upwards or points to a region. Remember that region is closely related to the body’s ability to orient itself in space:

The kind of place which is constituted by direction and remoteness (and closeness is only a mode of the latter) is already oriented towards a region and oriented within it. Something like a region must first be discovered if there is to be any possibility of allotting or coming across places for a totality of equipment that is circumspectively at one’s disposal. The regional orientation of the multiplicity of places belonging to the ready-to-hand goes to make up the aroundness – the ‘round-about-us’ [das Um-ums-herum] – of those entities which we encounter as close environmentally.\(^{104}\)

\(^{100}\) *Ibid*, pg. 84.


\(^{102}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962, pg. 98.

\(^{103}\) *Ibid*, pg. 136.

\(^{104}\) *Ibid*, pg. 136.
Because the body divides the space before us into directional regions, we are able to find specific places (and thus objects) within these regions and identify our spatial context. Note that, aside from the Kantian emphasis on directionality, Heidegger’s notion of region is also characterized by the remoteness and closeness of objects, which allow for the ‘to-handedness’ of equipment. And contrary to the Cartesian emphasis on measured space, directionality is completely relative to the body, for Heidegger, and need not be measured: “all ‘wheres’ are discovered and circumspectively interpreted as we go our ways in everyday dealings; they are not ascertained and catalogued by the observational measurement of space.”¹⁰⁵ Still, this does not make directionality subjective. That is, “left and right are not something for which the subject has a feeling.”¹⁰⁶ They do not exist simply in the mind, but are related to the person’s relation to a world of ready-to-hand objects. They ‘exist’ in the world through this relation.

While the prior analysis properly describes the way in which equipment and other objects ready-to-hand might exist, Heidegger needs to theorize the existence of conscious objects like humanity in a different way, since these have the special ability to organize a world around themselves. While other objects are encountered, humanity itself can encounter. This ability is linked to an essential tendency towards closeness, one that is expressed differently in each encounter.¹⁰⁷ Closeness is not a matter of physical distance but rather of emotional or perceptual investment. Heidegger’s example concerns a man who wears glasses. These glasses, while physically close, are further from the man’s realm of concern than the picture that he is looking at through the glasses.¹⁰⁸ While physically close, the visual aid occupies none of his attention or

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 137.
¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 140. Heidegger’s critique of technology is built in part upon this important point. As this ‘tendency towards closeness’ inspired humanity to find ways to bring the objects in its world closer through technological means (Heidegger cites the radio as an example, but the internet might prove more suitable to this era), it brought about a break with the world, with which human consciousness has yet to learn to deal.
mental energy. For Heidegger, it is concern (*Sorge*), not physical proximity, which determines the closeness of an object.\footnote{This brief turn to the notion of concern will be developed substantially in Heidegger’s later writings on place. To be in the world is to reside alongside people and objects as if it were one’s own place. In short, to be in a world is to dwell, but also to be at home.}{109}

Space, for Heidegger, emerges in the act of making room (*einträumen*) for another being to disclose itself. To encounter other beings first requires that we clear a space for them in the world of ready-to-hand objects.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 146.}{110} Heidegger clarifies the implications of this idea:

*Space is not in the subject, nor is the world in space.* Space is rather ‘in’ the world in so far as space has been disclosed by the Being-in-the-world which is constitutive for Dasein. Space is not to be found in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world ‘as if’ that world were in a space; but the ‘subject’ (Dasein), if well understood ontologically, is spatial. And because Dasein is spatial in the way we have described, space shows itself *a priori*.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 146.}{111}

Space clearly does not exist before the subject comes to the world (contra Plato), nor does the space exist only in the subject’s mind (contra Kant). Rather, the subject’s organization of the world in itself creates space. Space is created through the existence of the human subject. This also means that only other objects, pieces of equipment, can occupy space. Another person, as a world-creating being, does not occupy space, because it relates to the world through relations of care rather than through measurable distances. As Heidegger writes:

Dasein does not fill up a bit of space as a Real Thing or item of equipment would, so that the boundaries dividing it from the surrounding space would themselves just define that space spatially. Dasein takes space in (*nimmt Raum ein*); this is to be understood literally. It is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of space which its body fills up. In existing, it has already made room for its own leeway.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 419.}{112}

Heidegger will build upon this notion of ‘making room’ or ‘clearing space,’ which remains somewhat vague at this point, in his later works.
Despite the many spatial elements in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, the emphasis remains on time, which takes priority over being-in-the-world.\(^{113}\) This priority of time over space, however, differs from Kant’s, insofar as it is not a logical or intuitive priority but an ontological one. In this regard, Heidegger and Kant are both concerned with very different questions.

### 3.2 The Late Heidegger: Dwelling

As mentioned earlier, there is no great leap between Heidegger’s description of the way in which humanity exists alongside *(bei)* the world and the notions of dwelling and home that come to dominate his later thought. There is, however, a conscious break from his attempt to derive the spatial nature of human existence from temporality in section 70 of *Being and Time*, which Heidegger readily admits was untenable.\(^{114}\) Insofar as the late Heidegger came to realize that the spatiality of human existence had to be derived as something separate from its temporal existence, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’\(^{115}\) and other later spatial texts come to supercede section 70.

In Heidegger’s later works, space, place and aesthetics are often closely related. In ‘Art and Space,’\(^{116}\) Heidegger approaches space by way of a particular sculpture and seeks to determine the way in which space comes into play in the appreciation of the piece. The sculpture itself is a play of full (occupied) and empty (unoccupied) space – so a sculpture of a wheel might have empty space between the spokes, but this empty space is still part of the sculpture. Yet where does space go when it is occupied by an object, Heidegger asks? Does the object reveal itself to be an empty vessel, containing the space that it occupies?\(^{117}\) While this short essay offers more

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\(^{113}\) *Ibid*, pg. 402.


\(^{117}\) *Ibid*, pg. 306.
questions than it does answers, it opens the door to asking “the question of what space as space is.”

On the topic of place, Heidegger seems much more certain of the previous determinations made in *Being and Time*. Place, as an upward referent to region, plays an important role in organizing other objects in that region. So while place forms a region, that region then gathers into it other places. Region, less directly related to corporal orientation in these later works, becomes the name for the free expanse of space between objects: “through [region], the open is urged to let each thing unfold its resting in itself. But this means at the same time: preserving, the gathering of things in their belonging-together.” By organizing each thing into its place, region allows these objects to disclose themselves as they are, to come to the world.

Heidegger’s ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ picks up on this idea. Here, to be a work of art means primarily “to set up a world”:

The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.

Again, this moves beyond Kant’s description of being faced with the world as a collection of sensory perceptions. For Heidegger, the world is immersive. It is something that we are lost in – or not, as long as places and regions exist through which we might orient ourselves. To be in a world is to “dwell in the overtness of beings, of the things that are,” to be surrounded by placed people and objects who, being placed, can come to the world and reveal themselves.

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118 Ibid., pg. 306.
119 Ibid., pg. 308.
121 Ibid., pg. 43.
122 Ibid., pg. 43.
‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ is likely Heidegger’s most important work on space. In it, he tries to determine the meaning and nature of the notion of dwelling (wohnen), of being ‘at home.’ What can we say about dwellings? First, they are built. Not every building is a dwelling, of course – we can build a road or a bridge, on which no person would normally dwell – but all dwellings are built. So building and dwelling seem to be related. But what is building (bauen)? Etymologically at least, human existence and building are related, as Heidegger argues, insofar as bauen and bin (‘I am,’ a form of ‘to be’) are related. So the essence of human existence may well lie in building and dwelling.123

But, again, not all buildings are dwellings. Buildings in themselves share a number of characteristics. All buildings make location possible. Heidegger uses here the example of a bridge, though his spatial lexicon has changed somewhat from the one adopted in earlier writings. The bridge itself constitutes a site (Stätte) – it has its own place. It sits somewhere. From that vantage point “are determined the localities and ways in which a space is provided for.”124 The ‘localities’ represent the places of other objects in the area of the site. Furthermore, Heidegger now seems less concerned with region. The focus has shifted, after his investigations into matters of aesthetics, to the way in which space is cleared for objects. Mostly absent since section 70 of Being and Time, space (Raum) surfaces again: ”Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds… Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations and not from ‘space.’”125 So instead of having place as an upward referent to region, the later Heidegger is concerned with the way in which space is generated based on sites and locations (roughly, ‘places’). Space, here, is nothing absolute or uniform; it does not even exist until something is built. The act of building, Heidegger goes on, creates space in two separate ways: by generating a quantifiable space between objects (Descartes’ external place) and by creating an equally quantifiable three-dimensional measure of space equivalent to the volume of the object itself (Descartes’ internal place).126 So instead of organizing a region, an

123 ‘Building Dwelling Thinking,’ pg. 145-146.
124 Ibid, pg. 152.
125 Ibid, pg. 152.
object creates a space, which exists in a multitude of spaces generated from a multitude of placed
objects. And these spaces are neither matters of inner experience, nor do they possess external
objective existence, but they are a part of the subjective world. In thinking about a bridge, for
example, I may as well be there; I am faced with the space of the bridge in the same way through
thought as I would be were I actually present.¹²⁷ Recall Heidegger’s notion of proximity based
on concern – I am equally ‘close’ to the bridge in either case. It is because we dwell in spaces
that we are able to experience them. To dwell is to exist in space. Dwelling, then, is the name
that humanity has given to space.¹²⁸

When compared with Enlightenment philosophy, Heidegger’s theory of space is most
noteworthy in that it emphasizes place without recourse to the body.¹²⁹ Ultimately, place is
crucial in its ability to organize region, even though the latter is a broader or larger spatial
category. And regions themselves contain spaces, as is revealed in ‘Building Dwelling
Thinking.’ Contrary to Kant, these spaces are not contained in the subject, since the subject is
never worldless. Spaces may remain an a priori category for Heidegger, inherent in regions, but
they exist in the world in which the human being is immersed.¹³⁰ Place remains the ultimate
referent. While space and region may both exist as larger categories, they are generated from
place. Place is no small portion of space, as it had been previously. Instead, space and region are
implicit in the creation of place.¹³¹

4 Bachelard: A Psychic Phenomenology of Space

French thinker Gaston Bachelard also stands in a particular relation to the specific aims of this
project. Not only does Sloterdijk all but name him as one of the inspirations behind the
spherology, drawing the epigraph to the trilogy from Bachelard’s work, but he also remains one
of the few theorists of space to have approached the topic from a quasi-psychoanalytic point of

¹²⁷ Ibid, pg. 154.
¹²⁸ Ibid, pg. 155.
¹³⁰ Ibid, pg. 252.
¹³¹ Ibid, pg. 275.
view. Bachelard’s interests lie in the lasting psychic impact that different types of space have and, as a result, in the way in which these influences shape how the human imagination creates meaningful space later on. Drawing heavily at times from C.G. Jung’s analytic psychology, Bachelard’s project often approximates a search for ‘archetypes of space,’ stereotyped motifs that influence human perceptions of certain spaces.

Bachelard calls these stereotyped images ‘poetic’ insofar as they are spontaneous and not directed toward the task of scientific explanation. They are not, strictly speaking, archetypal, since Bachelard has no interest in the clinical uses of such a label. He describes the Jungian archetype as “an echo from the past,” a characterization that he rejects for his poetic image. Bachelard does, however, see himself as operating on a similar level of experience as did Jung. Like the archetypes, poetic images have a being and a dynamic nature, perhaps even autonomy, of their own. The images’ ability to draw on spatial dimensions of the house is Bachelard’s main theme in his best-known work, The Poetics of Space.

Bachelard is only interested in the house as “felicitous space,” as loved space, and thus risks a romanticization of ‘home’ that would prove problematic for psychoanalysts. In this analysis, the house is above all a place of safety, one that must be defended against intruders. Most importantly, Bachelard’s space is affective; space that has been lived in can never be neutral. One develops emotions – attachment, fear – related to it and, as such, it becomes a tool for the imagination, for unconscious representations of affective states.

While Bachelard may not distinguish between space and place or define the two as carefully as do other theorists – his references to ‘space’ would normally be the ‘place’ of other thinkers – he does challenge spatial theory in a few important ways. For one, Bachelard’s places need not be physical or sensible at all. Contra Aristotle or Descartes, for whom the label of ‘place’ was reserved for physical items existing in the real world, Bachelard is interested in the psychic reflections of real places, not in the places proper. Bachelard’s places can be entirely psychic and

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132 The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994), pg. xvi.
133 Ibid, pg. xxxv.
yet still count fully as places. Furthermore, Bachelard’s notion of the psyche is spatial as well, insofar as it is presented as a stage on which memories of places can appear.

While Bachelard may feel a certain affinity for the Jungian concept of the archetype, he rejects psychoanalysis as a method for studying space and does not want to call his project a form of psychoanalysis. Ultimately, his opposition to psychoanalytic theory stems from its scientific aspirations; the poetic image is independent of causality and its appearance cannot be explained in any scientific manner:

To say that the poetic image is independent of causality is to make a rather serious statement. But the causes cited by psychologists and psychoanalysts can never really explain the wholly unexpected nature of the new image, any more than they can explain the attraction it holds for a mind that is foreign to the process of its creation. The poet does not confer the past of his image upon me, and yet his image immediately takes root in me. The communicability of an unusual image is a fact of great ontological significance.

To explain scientifically, Bachelard argues, is to deny that our first encounter with the object is purely subjective, even imaginative and intuitive. When we see or experience something, we immediately construct daydreams and hypotheses, drawn from the imagination, and confuse these with knowledge. This process continues as long as we experience the object: “scientific objectivity is only possible if we have broken with the immediate object... Any kind of objectivity, duly verified, denies our first contact with the object.” And this ‘first impression’ is of much greater interest to Bachelard than the explanations that follow it. In some cases, this break has never occurred and objectivity remains impossible. In his La psychanalyse du feu

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135 Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, pg. xvii.
136 “l’objectivité scientifique n’est possible que si l’on a d’abord rompu avec l’objet immédiat... Toute objectivité, dûment vérifiée, dément le premier contact avec l’objet.” La psychanalyse du feu (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pg 11.
137 Bachelard defends his use of the word ‘psychoanalysis’ in the book title here, describing his project as psychoanalytic only insofar as it is concerned with the subjective elements that condition personal understandings and perceptions of the phenomenon of fire. It is not, therefore, psychoanalytic in any strict sense. By 1942, four years after the publication of La psychanalyse du feu, Bachelard refuses to call his L’eau et les rêves (‘Water and Dreams’) a ‘psychoanalysis of water,’ since, he argues, “to speak of psychoanalysis, one must have categorized primordial images without leaving a trace of their first privilege; one must have named, and then untied, the complexes that have long held dreams and desires together” (“Pour parler de psychanalyse, il faut avoir classé les
(‘The Psychoanalysis of Fire’), Bachelard argues that human ‘first impressions’ concerning fire are so engrained in the mind that humanity has never had truly ‘scientific’ (i.e., completely objective) knowledge of fire. Poetic images of fire remain all the more fertile in the imagination, then, and are left to fight for the minds of the people with scientific explanations which, considering that we all claim to know what fire is, are rarely heard. What needs to be understood, for Bachelard, are the unconscious motives at the root of scientific explanations. The “unconscious of the scientific mind [inconscient de l’esprit scientifique]” \(^{138}\) needs to be unearthed.

With this aversion to explanation in mind, Bachelard sees his project as a phenomenological or ontological study. He gives it the name of ‘topoanalysis’ – “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives,”\(^{139}\) and while he does believe that psychoanalysis could contribute to his study by providing material concerning “the simple localization of memories,”\(^{140}\) he argues that topoanalysis would differ considerably from psychoanalysis from that point onward.

Ultimately, Bachelard’s project can also be read as an attempt to undermine the perceived temporocentrism of psychoanalytic theory – “life is not just a function of durational flow, but of where we experience that flow.”\(^{141}\) As he explains, “The unconscious abides.”\(^{142}\) We must remember that every unconscious element is also tied to a place, not only to a biographical time. But these images also transcend biography at some level and are common to humanity;

\(^{138}\) Ibid, pg. 27.

\(^{139}\) Ibid, pg. 8.

\(^{140}\) Ibid, pg. 8.

\(^{141}\) Casey 1997, pg. 288.

\(^{142}\) The Poetics of Space 1994, 9.
collectively, humans imagine certain types of places in the same way. The house or home, defined here as any sort of inhabited space,\textsuperscript{143} plays a particular role in this process as one of the most affective of all places. As a result, the home is as important a virtual space as it is a real one. Individual homes become transferable and are subsumed under the psychic category of ‘home’: “An entire past comes to dwell in a new house. The old saying, “We bring our lares with us” has many variations.”\textsuperscript{144} Physical space and psychic space, or “exterior space” and “intimate space,”\textsuperscript{145} as Bachelard calls them, inform each other mutually.

The recognition of virtual space is the first noteworthy innovation of Bachelard’s spatial phenomenology. The resultant appreciation of the psychological dimension of space is the second. To this list, as Casey notes, might be added the development of an ‘eventmental’ understanding of space: not only does place help us locate objects and thus carry out our lives, but place itself is an event; “not only do things happen in place, but the place happens too.”\textsuperscript{146} In his appreciation of place’s potential virtuality, Bachelard could also be read as highlighting a role for culture in the formation of place: places are matters of experience, at least in part. In this regard – and this certainly applied to Bachelard’s analysis of the house – “built places are extensions of our bodies.”\textsuperscript{147} They project human embodiment on a larger scale.

5 Post-Structuralist Philosophy

5.1 Foucault

“Bachelard’s monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well.”\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, pg. 5.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, pg. 5. Lares was the name given to the protective deities of the household in ancient Rome.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, pg. 201.

\textsuperscript{146} Casey, Getting Back Into Place, 1993, pg. xxv.

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, pg. 120.

\textsuperscript{148} Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’ Diacritics (Vol. 16 No. 1 (Spring 1986)), pg. 23.
If Foucault was able to appreciate Bachelard’s innovative approach to space when he first spoke these words during a 1967 lecture – words later to be published in 1984 – it also remains clear, from his interview with the French Marxist geography journal *Hérodote* in 1976,¹⁴⁹ that he may not have been entirely certain of where he stood with respect to spatial theory in general. On the one hand, Foucault’s great histories often demonstrate a certain concern with specific locations as sites of power. The clinic, the prison, the panopticon – all of these concentrate power relations and deploy them spatially. Furthermore, Foucault’s concern with the body as the recipient of these power relations is also spatial. Despite these two points, however, Foucault does little to theorize space in his major works, with his greatest contributions to spatial theory coming in short essays long-forgotten until geographers got a hold of them.

The dynamics of the *Hérodote* interview are interesting, as the editors try to convince Foucault of their point, one which seems painfully obvious to them yet seems to elude the great thinker: that geography plays an important role in his work. Considering the numerous appropriations of Foucault’s work by geographers looking to understand the relationship between space and power, the editors are surprised to find that Foucault never mentions the discipline, even in the multidisciplinary meditations of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The philosopher defends himself by listing the many disciplines about which he has nothing to say in the *Archaeology*, admitting that he simply has no personal investment in the questions that geographers pose. Only after much back-and-forth and convincing must Foucault admit the central role of geography in his investigations of knowledge and power.

Most often cited in discussions about Foucault and space is his ‘Of Other Spaces.’ Especially relevant, and having provided the epigraph to many a chapter on space, are the opening words to the essay, in which Foucault predicts the increased importance of space in twentieth century thought, a call especially well received given the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history… The present epoch will perhaps above all be the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our

experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.  

This experience of the world as a network of places, Foucault argues, can be related to the way in which space has been defined. If in the Middle Ages everything had ‘its own place,’ a place of belonging in an infinite universe, space today is dominated by the site which, like Heidegger’s ‘place,’ organizes space into a group of related locations, each proximate to another.  

Foucault’s great concern in this essay is the individual’s ability to carve out a space of resistance in the midst of these surrounding forces of oppression. He proposes a solution to this problem through his concept of the heterotopia.

As the name suggests, heterotopias are sites that stand in discordant relation to other sites. If the world can be seen as a network of interconnected places, the heterotopia is the place that does not quite fit in and, as such, can become a space for resistance, for escaping the prevailing spatial order. Foucault defines heterotopias as sites that “that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect.”  

Heterotopias disrupt the uniformity and monotony of regular space. Foucault uses the example of the cemetery, though several kinds of liminal or sacred space fit the bill. The cemetery is connected to every one of us, since we all know someone in a cemetery and will all end up there one day as well. With the variety of corpses buried therein, the cemetery is connected to a number of different times, the epochs in which each of its inhabitants lived, as well as the places where they lived. So the cemetery succeeds in superposing or juxtaposing times and spaces that would be entirely incompatible otherwise. Furthermore, the cemetery is treated as a ‘special place.’ One only visits a cemetery at certain times and is strongly averse to doing so outside of these designated circumstances. Cemeteries are not available to the public in the same way that other spaces might be. Without being an organized space of resistance, then, the heterotopia disrupts power structures by

150 Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces,’ 1986, pg. 22.  
151 Ibid, pg. 23.  
152 Ibid, pg. 23.  
153 Ibid, pg. 25.
refusing to ‘fall in line’ with the order established by the prevailing series of sites. Foucault’s heterotopia thus makes it clear that no spatial order is total, that certain spaces will always escape its grasp and disrupt the prevailing order. Certeau takes Foucault’s ideas further, finding opportunities for resistance around every corner.

5.2 Certeau

Geographers have heavily criticized Foucault for focusing almost exclusively on social forms of repression.\footnote{See, for example, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), pg. 213.} As we have seen above, even the heterotopia is not so much an individual place of resistance as it is a disruptive force within the social order itself. The critique becomes clearer if we contrast Foucault’s ideas with those of Michel de Certeau, for whom social spaces are quite clearly open to the creative moulding of human agents.

Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*\footnote{Trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).} is built on the argument that the individual creates space through his daily actions, thereby reasserting human agency in the face of oppressive social structures. Cutting through an alleyway instead of taking the main thoroughfares can become an act of resistance, Certeau argues, a rejection of the prevailing order. To the extent that these actions are intentional, the creation of spaces of resistance can even be willed and controlled. Contrary to Foucault, for whom the individual often appears as a passive unit within a grid of oppressive power structures, Certeau’s individual is an active agent and, as such, can choose to resist.\footnote{Harvey, *The Conditions of Postmodernity*, 1990, pg. 214.}

Certeau’s individual is a master at subverting the majority culture, at taking the space that is available, laden with ideology though it may be, and making it her own. Speaking linguistically and drawing on Lacanian theory, this process is described as a way of making one’s own sentences out of a given cultural syntax.\footnote{Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984, pg. xi.} While the social theorists of his day were interested
in the way that ideology produced and reproduced space, Certeau focused on what human behaviour was able to do with this space.

To this end, Certeau makes a distinction between ‘tactics’ and ‘strategies’. Strategies are the tool of the majority, of the dominant spatial power. They are the method through which said power makes a space its own. So a plant manager makes the rules in his plant, extending his sphere of influence and keeping the workers under his thumb, or a scientist follows the scientific method which, once it gains cultural currency and spreads to the people, becomes the method of investigation, assuring the scientist’s continued reign.

Tactics, on the other hand, are the tools through which minority forces make majority elements their own, asserting their own identity in the process. Since the majority owns the social space in question, the minority can, at best, encroach temporarily upon this space, using time to its advantage. Everyday practices like walking, shopping, or reading are tactical. My earlier example of walking though the alleyway provides one example. Certeau gives another, that of la perruque, the lathe worker who, when his manager’s attention is averted, uses the lathe to fashion something to be taken home for his own purposes instead of doing his work. In each of these cases, the oppressed party commandeers the oppressor’s space and draws his own benefit from it. It is a temporary measure and one that relies on a moment of distraction. Rarely do tactics add up to any kind of greater strategy; they remain ad hoc and fleeting. But they constitute individual acts of resistance nonetheless.

Even for Certeau, then, space remains an instrument of the majority culture that cannot be easily appropriated. Only time, properly managed, can be turned to the oppressed party’s benefit. Space remains oppressive, crushing in its ideological content.

6 Space and Social Theory

My separation of philosophy and geographical theory in this chapter is admittedly an artificial one. The two areas are mutually influential and rarely can any given thinker be identified as

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158 Ibid, pg. xix.
159 Ibid, pg. 24.
belonging to one category rather than the other. The final section of this chapter, if somewhat
degree than the others, will look at the role of space in social theory, a prominent topic of
study in geography and one to which I want to return in my analysis of Freud’s cultural works.
The strict distinctions between space and place, characteristic of systematic philosophers like
Kant and Heidegger, give way to comments on the experience and politics of space and place.
The focus is no longer on abstract definition but on space as a variable worthy of investigation in
social questions. We see the attempt to reassert the value of space in humanistic and social
scientific analyzes come to the fore. As geographers Derek Gregory and John Urry write,
“Spatial structure is now seen not merely as an arena in which social life unfolds, but rather as a
medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced.”160 Researchers question
the ideological content of space, as well as its propagation and its hold on society. Definitions are
generally implicit in the work. For our purposes, this discussion will provide valuable
background to our consideration of Freud’s later works on social and group dynamics.

6.1 Lefebvre

Before Henri Lefebvre’s The Production of Space,161 the notion of social space had little
currency. It existed, of course, and was spoken of at times, but Lefebvre gave it prominence and
definition. In addition, Lefebvre furthered the integration of Marxist theory into geography as he
sought to understand the role that ideology might play in the creation of social space. While the
marriage of geography and Marxist theory would remain ‘typically French’ for some time,162 the
proliferation of such approaches to social space in Anglophone geography since the 1960s
speaks to the influence of Lefebvre’s work.

For Lefebvre, philosophical definitions of space as something abstract and purely perceptual are
dangerous because they assume that space lies outside the realms of ideology.163 If, for
Bachelard, space can never be neutral because it is affectively informed, Lefebvre argues that

160 Social Relations and Spatial Structures (London: Macmillan, 1985), pg. 3.
162 See Edward W. Soja, Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory (London:
Verso, 1989), pg. 43.
space can never be neutral because it is ideologically informed. As Certeau would later suggest, space can be used as a tool to serve hegemonic powers. But how can the dominant forces – in Lefebvre’s analysis, the forces of capitalism – maintain their hegemony over space? This is the question that Lefebvre wants to address.

Capitalism, Lefebvre argues, is a self-propagating mechanism. The space that capitalism produces is necessarily capitalist space as well, ensuring the dominant ideology’s survival. Social space, he points out, is a social product.\(^\text{164}\) A capitalist society creates capitalist space, which in turn guarantees said society’s capitalism into the future. While commonplace in many contemporary works on space and place, Lefebvre’s assertion that space is not innocent was revolutionary at the time. Ultimately, he wished to dispel two common myths: that everything occurring in space is obvious and transparent and that space is something that exists absolutely, free from social influence and production. Rather, he argues, social space takes its shape from the ideologies that society espouses. The production of space is an instrument for propagating hegemony. The exact way in which this mechanism functions, however, remains unclear until later theorists return to and build on Lefebvre’s ideas.

### 6.2 Tuan

In many ways, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan returns to the same themes as does Bachelard, translating them to the framework of his discipline. A name central to humanistic geography, Tuan asks about the role of affect in discussions about place. In doing so, he too opens a door – albeit one he would hesitate to walk through – to a psychoanalytic understanding of space.

“In what ways do people attach meaning to and organize space and place?”\(^\text{165}\) This is one of Tuan’s guiding questions. Traditions, meaning-making systems, and social forms provide part of the answer, but it is a part that Tuan already sees well represented in the geographical literature. Often ignored, however, are human universals, aspects of biology and common experience.\(^\text{166}\)

\(^{164}\) Ibid, pg. 26.

\(^{165}\) Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pg. 5.

\(^{166}\) Ibid, pg. 5.
Returning again to a sort of Bachelardian phenomenology of space, Tuan describes the difference between space and place as being one of scope: while we associate place with belonging, with a feeling of security, space is experienced and yearned for as boundless freedom.\footnote{167}

Tuan links place, a space of our own, and biology. Our place is where our needs – “food, water, rest”,\footnote{168} – are met. In this sense, place becomes territory. In its narrowness, it allows us to belong, to invest affectively in the world. This is not to say, however, that space is any less affective. Primarily, spaces are perceived and organized by the senses. They are the realms in which direct experience can occur. But they also represent the potential for movement, for activity. Above all, spaces are symbolic. They are the register in which the mythical and the theoretical play out, to make sense of the wider world outside the sphere of immediate influence.\footnote{169}

Ultimately, Tuan reproduces a Heideggerian relationship between space and place: place is the known space through which we organize our experience of the wider world. And while Tuan may have more to say about space than did Heidegger, place remains the ultimate referent. For Tuan as for Heidegger, “place is a type of object;”,\footnote{170} it is from place and other perceived objects that we organize our world. Similarly, the role of the body here remains the same. It is our body’s specific being-in-place that imposes a directional and orienting schema upon the world.\footnote{171} So while space can only arise from place, place must itself be formed from space as well: only affectively charged space can become place.\footnote{172}

\footnote{167}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 3.}
\footnote{168}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 4.}
\footnote{169}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 17.}
\footnote{170}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 17.}
\footnote{171}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 34.}
\footnote{172}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 136.}
6.3 Harvey

Social theorist David Harvey is one of those figures who builds on Lefebvre’s notion of spatial production. He argues, like his predecessor, that the capitalist system plays an important role in shaping the sorts of space that are produced. As he puts it, “Those who define the material practises, forms, and meanings of money, time, or space fix certain basic rules of the social game.” This follows inevitably from the very notion of social space, for Harvey: since we are both social beings and spatial beings (i.e., beings who ‘practice,’ who act), the social and the spatial must intersect as well in us, such that even social processes play out in space.

One of Harvey’s early works, Social Justice and the City, strives to make this exact point by relating the spatial form of the city to the social processes that shape it. His concern lies primarily with questions of urban planning and architecture, demonstrating that the city can be a symbol of our values, our hopes and our fears. Again, space is not innocent but is loaded with the baggage of those who create it. The city is not merely a physical being; it is a creative act. Social space is a reaction to this act: “Social space is made up of a complex of individual feelings and images about and reactions towards the spatial symbolism which surrounds that individual.” Contrary to Lefebvre, however, Harvey wishes to emphasize the relational dimension of space, allowing for a greater heterogeneity of meaning at the individual level.

In so doing, Harvey puts forth a decidedly ‘postmodern’ (as he terms it) sense of space in his The Condition of Postmodernity. The modernist project of emancipating humanity from its chains through advances in knowledge required a conception of space as something unified that could be explained and ideally controlled as well. Postmodernism, as Harvey defines it, is characterized by the loss of faith in the modernist project in the wake of the events of the twentieth century. A rejection of humanism, of the supremacy of science, technology, reason,
abstract thought, theory – all of these soon followed.\textsuperscript{178} As a result, human perception of time and space has changed as well. Here, Harvey argues for a fragmented sense of space, one that highlights “the multiplicity of the objective qualities which space and time can express, and the role of human practises in the construction.”\textsuperscript{179} Theoretical understandings of space in the postmodern era must reflect this shift in perception. An end to attempted conceptualizations of space as an absolute category and recognition of its contingency on practice and perception, Harvey argues, are essential first steps.

6.4 Soja

For geographer Edward Soja as for the others in this section, space must be understood as a product of social processes. This produces a double prescription for academic geography: society cannot be studied without paying attention to space, and space cannot be understood without also considering social processes. As a result, social space becomes that type of space without which others cannot be grasped. As Soja explains, “Spatiality, as socially produced space, must thus be distinguished from the physical space of material nature and the mental space of cognition and representation, each of which is used and incorporated into the social construction of spatiality but cannot be conceptualised as its equivalent.”\textsuperscript{180} The study of space and of different types of spaces must begin with the notion of social space, to which all other forms can be related.

Following Foucault, Soja’s first premise is that it may indeed be space, rather than time, which “hides consequences from us,”\textsuperscript{181} which deploys power relations and serves as the most revealing lens for analysis today. Geography has become a tool for politics and ideology, a point that critical theory has largely missed, Soja argues, until the Marxist influence came to geography:

The development of critical social theory has revolved around the assertion of a mutable history against perspectives and practises that mystify the changeability

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, pg. 41.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid, pg 203.

\textsuperscript{180} In Derek Gregory and John Urry (eds.), \textit{Social Relations and Spatial Structures}, 1985, pg. 92.

of the world. The critical history discourse thus sets itself against abstract and “transhistorical universalizations” (like human nature, empiricism, positivism, religious dogma, and anything else that eliminates the possibility of breaking history). It overemphasizes the historical context of social life and peripheralises the spatial.\(^{182}\)

In this respect, Soja’s premise repeats the foundations of Sloterdijk’s spherology. The solution lies, as Sloterdijk would agree, in achieving a new balance between the concepts of space and time, by way of a focus on and reassertion of the spatial. His *Postmodern Geographies*, a collection of essays, seeks to demonstrate the need for this reassertion by tracing the twilight of space in social theory.

In light of this, Soja spends a certain amount of time with Lefebvre, defending him against the attacks of orthodox Marxist geographers like David Harvey and Manuel Castells. For them, Lefebvre was a better theorist of space than he was a Marxist, a “fetishist of space”\(^{183}\) who stumbled by elevating space as a category independent of modes of production. In short, they argue that Lefebvre forgot that even the production of space must fall in line with other modes of production; it is nothing special. For Soja, this critique of Lefebvre is an overly simplistic one that fails to appreciate the subtleties of the “socio-spatial dialectic”\(^{184}\) prevalent in *The Production of Space*.

### 6.5 Massey

Geographer Doreen Massey’s work incorporates feminist themes and gender relations into spatial theory. If space is socially informed and constructed, then gender relations must be taken into consideration as part of this equation. Massey’s work explicitly opens up geography to interdisciplinary cooperation; if space is social, then each of the social sciences and humanities has something to teach us about the shape of modern space.


\(^{183}\) *Ibid*, pg. 76.

\(^{184}\) *Ibid*, pg. 77.
Massey’s work is important in that it challenges several trends prevalent in the academic study of geography, revealing their (flawed) assumptions. She begins with the focus on place.\textsuperscript{185} For many, there is a need to reassert the importance of place in geography, both as the immediate surrounding area which plays a role in informing individual and collective identities and also as the only possible refuge, open to personalization, from the increasingly unifying world of globalization, which tends to treat all places as if they were the same. Place becomes a possible site of resistance. Massey challenges the definition of space implicit in this view, which she dates back to Heidegger and Bachelard, for whom space is fixed and static, the realm of Being in the face of Becoming. In short, the presumed need to reassert place fails to acknowledge the social construction of space, repeating philosophical definitions deemed outdated. Furthermore, all too often is place seen as a defensive zone, an area of last stand against forces of oppression. As Massey asks, “Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-enclosing and defensive, but outward-looking?”\textsuperscript{186} For her, the focus on place is based on the assumption that everyone needs to feel at home somewhere, a need exacerbated by the conditions of the modern world. But is it true? Considering the increase in immigration, transnational communities, and the like, Massey questions this assumption as well.

Massey also challenges the perceived uniqueness of the problems associated with globalization, which is frequently said to be making a monolith of space, eradicating differences that are important to communities. By bringing a post-colonial and feminist perspective to her analysis, she points out that the complaints of geographers today must have resembled those of colonized peoples. Furthermore, since the experiences of women, whose mobility outside of the home has always been limited in certain historical and geographical contexts, differed from those of men, it is inaccurate to make a blanket claim concerning the effects of globalization on our perception of space without being both androcentric and ethnocentric.

Instead, Massey reasserts a notion of place as a ‘meeting place,’ an area in which certain social relations and activities intersect: “Instead, then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and

\textsuperscript{185} In \textit{Space, Place, and Gender} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pg. 136ff.

\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 147.
understandings.” Place becomes a moment in the globalized network, a location where paths cross. As such, places retain their personality even in the face of globalization. Space, on the other hand, is under constant social construction and has no existence proper to the relations that exist within it. Yet it is these social relations that make multiplicity and difference within space possible, a point that Massey’s work highlights.

This survey has made clear that no consensus exists on a single definition of space or place, though the current trend of study is to highlight the different and diverse experiences of both, consistent with the postmodern and postcolonial leanings of the social sciences. In this lens, it becomes clear why Plato’s definition of space as a passive backdrop has become increasingly problematic. Since the influence of his ideas persisted well into the Enlightenment, Descartes, Kant and others adopt similarly unsatisfactory positions. Place, on the other hand, harkens back to Aristotle and remains related to objects and the area that they occupy, as well as to the orientation of the body in space. For both space and place, then, the early Greek influences remain formative.

This multiplicity of definitions can also be resolved, as I have suggested earlier, by focusing on manifestations of space, an approach that will be useful in this investigation of Freud’s work. Since each definition of space emerges from particular contexts and analytical concerns, they need not be mutually exclusive. So Freud, for example, might make use of abstract, universal space in his theories of the mental apparatus. Enlightenment science required a conception of space as something that could be explained and controlled. Space was something uniform that human knowledge could grasp universally. Such a conception could be consistent with Freud’s objective in formulating his topographies of the mind. This is one possibility. But if space is not to be seen as a passive backdrop, then considering different types of space and the ways in which they act can help break space down into a manageable analytic category. Social space, as

188 For Space (London: Sage, 2005), pg. 9.
theorized by Lefebvre and his successors, provides one such example, and Freud can contribute to such a discussion as well.

With respect to Freud and psychoanalysis, I would argue that space is much less productive as a phenomenon for analysis in itself than are spatial categories – metaphors, relations, boundaries, and other manifestations. True, Freud has conceptions of space implicit in his work, as I mentioned above, and there is value in identifying these. It is less useful, however, to reject these conceptions as outdated and seek to rewrite psychoanalysis from a contemporary spatial perspective. It is not in this sense that I want to find space in Freud. Instead, I am interested in developing a spatial reading of Freud – a ‘spacing,’ as my title suggests – that looks not necessarily at space itself but rather at what space does in Freud’s texts, at the purpose that it serves and the ways in which it is deployed, often unintentionally, by its author. We begin with the topographies of the mind.
Chapter 2: Above/Below: Freud’s Topographies of the Mind

I relate my project to that attempt, known through Freud, which seeks to identify the human being as a topological enigma or, more specifically, as a creature about which we must constantly ask the question: where is it really?\(^{189}\)

The premise of this chapter is a simple one. It relates to the spatial nature of Freud’s descriptions of the human psyche. Throughout his works, Freud uses overtly spatial language to describe both the structure of the mind and the processes that take place within it. While the terms used change with the evolution of his thought, the psyche’s spatial nature remains constant. For this reason, Freud’s models of the mind are often called ‘topographies,’ depictions of a spatial layout. Henri Ellenberger, in his history of the concept of the unconscious, traces the use of the term ‘topography’ in descriptions of the mind back to the works of Freud’s contemporary, Gustav Fechner, who similarly adopted a model that divided the conscious mind from the unconscious.\(^{190}\) So it seems likely that Freud inherited this spatial model, although he willingly adopts it as well and refines it in ways never seen before. As he repeatedly uses this spatial language, however, Freud is equally emphatic that it must not be taken literally and that the spatial psyche that he describes cannot and should not be mapped onto physiology. The spatial psyche does not actually occupy any space. In what sense, then, is it spatial? How are we to understand the psyche’s spatial nature if not literally?

This chapter investigates the spatial nature of the mind in Freud’s work, both through the descriptions that he provides and the processes that he ascribes to it. As such, it begins by outlining Freud’s model of the psyche and tracing its evolution throughout his career, with the intent of establishing the psyche’s changing spatial nature. From there, I propose that Freud’s spatial descriptions of the psyche must ultimately be understood metaphorically, a conclusion that Freud himself endorses when he describes his metaphors as an inevitable part of theoretical

\(^{189}\) “je me rattache à la tentative…, connue grace à Freud, consistant à caratériser l’être humain comme une énigme topologique, ou plus précisément comme une créature de laquelle on doit constamment se poser cette question: où se trouve-t-elle en vérité?” Sloterdijk, \textit{Ni le soleil ni la mort} (Paris: Fayard, 2003), pgs. 167-168.

thought. The inevitability of metaphor in theory will also be justified through the lens of the contemporary theory of metaphor, especially the cognitive model developed by Lakoff and Johnson.

Finally, the consequences of such a perspective on the scientific nature of psychoanalysis will be considered. Historically, the relationship between psychoanalysis and science has been fraught with complications, with many a page written challenging Freud’s scientific pretensions. The question, however, remains an important one for me, especially when I identify modern clinical analysis as the innovative and dynamic core of psychoanalytic practice today, as I have done in the introduction. The question of science resurfaces constantly in this project insofar as it brings with it a definition of reality that, as I will argue, arises in Freud through a spatial process, the creation of a boundary between inside (subject) and outside (object). In this chapter, however, I argue that a metaphorical reading of Freud’s topographies of the mind leads us to challenge the facile yet often repeated claim that Freud is purely a scientist, a modernist, and a man of medicine. He is all of those things, to be sure, but there is more to the equation. The spatial reading of Freud’s metaphors of the mind should lead us to question Freud’s scientism and to appreciate the extent to which Freud challenged the science of his day, both stretching its limits and simultaneously recognizing its limitations. His use of spatial metaphor in itself implies a philosophy of science – a ‘reflective modernism’ of sorts that emphasizes the metaphorical nature of theory – that I tease out throughout the chapter.

1 Antecedents to the First Topography (1895-1900)

I take the publication of the *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899/1900\(^{191}\) to mark the beginning of the first topography (T1), a model that divides the psyche into unconscious, preconscious and conscious segments. This map is refined further and takes on greater definition with Freud’s papers on metapsychology in the mid-1910s. But even before the release of Freud’s opus on dreams, we find intimations of a spatial psyche in his work. The *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, written in 1895 but never published, contains the germ of many of Freud’s later

\(^{191}\) While the text was technically published in 1899, it bore the date 1900.
ideas and we see him slowly developing his first topography in contemporaneous works as well. We begin with these early texts before moving on to the Project.

Freud’s first model of the mind is clearly stratified and envisioned as a multi-layered construction. The unconscious is but one of these layers. Layers by their very nature imply hierarchy – some sit above others, some below – and transmission – ideas must be able to move between regions. In a letter written in 1896 to his colleague Wilhelm Fliess, an otolaryngologist based in Berlin and – for a time – a close friend, Freud describes the population of these psychic strata with memories:

As you know, I am working on the assumption that our psychical mechanism has come into being by a process of stratification: the material present in the form of memory-traces being subjected from time to time to a re-arrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances – to a re-transcription.192

We can point to a few characteristics of this model. First of all, Freud readily admits that it is an assumption, a hypothesis that helps explain his observations. At the time, Freud was working with hypnosis, a technique that helped patients recall forgotten memories. The stratified model of the mind allows Freud to explain the presence and absence of memories. Clearly they cannot disappear entirely, since some of them can readily be called back to mind, while others still can be made conscious through hypnosis. Those memories that are not readily at hand, then, must be stored somewhere else, available for recall at a later moment. The strata of the mind explain this phenomenon, with one stratum reserved for highly affective but non-conscious memories and another for consciousness. Within this model also lies the possibility of movement. Memories can move between layers, being re-transcribed, as Freud puts it, into consciousness at various times.

Time and space are closely related in this model. Aside from the primary stratification between consciousness and the unconscious, Freud envisions strata within the unconscious portion of the mind itself, which are based on periods of the life cycle:

192 Sigmund Freud, ‘Letter 52.’ In CW 1, pg. 233. All passages from Freud’s work are taken from Strachey’s translation in the Collected Works, though the original German will also be cited where relevant. For better or for worse, Strachey’s translation remains the gold standard and the most used translation of Freud’s complete work, at least for the time being.
I should like to emphasize the fact that the successive registrations represent the psychical achievement of successive epochs of life. At the frontier between two such epochs a translation of the psychical material must take place. I explain the particularities of the psychoneuroses by supposing that this translation has not taken place in the case of some material, which has certain consequences… A failure of translation – that is what is known clinically as ‘repression’. The motive for it is always a release of unpleasure which would be generated by a translation.\(^{193}\)

At certain moments and under certain circumstances, the material in a given stratum is reorganized, forming a new sub-stratum above it. But not all of the material is transcribed at any given time. Those elements whose transcription would cause pain are dropped from the next stratum – a process which Freud calls ‘repression.’ While this notion will evolve over time, the key element to keep in mind is that Freud is ultimately trying to explain how memories can be dropped from consciousness. This explanation is closely related to the observations that he has made during his work with hypnosis and thus to his clinical efforts. In part, he is trying to explain the aetiology of hysteria. Finally, note that the model proposed in letter 52 is decidedly physiological, as Freud “…assumes that the different registrations [of the mind] are also separated (not necessarily topographically) according to the neurones which are their vehicles.”\(^{194}\)

In one of the drafts of the *Project* sent to Fliess,\(^{195}\) Freud’s concept of repression becomes further defined, allowing its spatial implications to become clearer. The process of repression forms the boundaries of the conscious and unconscious minds. In this respect, the early model of the psyche is spatial in that it is bounded. A repressed memory, Freud explains,\(^{196}\) is one that cannot enter consciousness directly but which must be coded before entering indirectly. Repressed memories face an obstacle at the threshold of consciousness, the limit at which the process of repression functions. Yet


\(^{194}\) *Ibid*, pg. 234.

\(^{195}\) Sigmund Freud, ‘Draft K.’ In *CW 1*.

\(^{196}\) *Ibid*, pg. 225.
this process is not one of opposition, as the term might imply, but is rather a failure in translation at the boundary. Freud explains:

Repression does not take place by the construction of an excessively strong antithetic idea but by the intensification of a boundary idea, which thereafter represents the repressed memory in the passage of thought. It may be called a boundary idea because on the one hand it belongs to the ego and on the other hand forms an undistorted portion of the traumatic memory. So, once again, it is the result of a compromise; this, however, is not manifested in a replacement on the basis of some category of subject-matter, but by a displacement of attention along a series of ideas linked by temporal simultaneity.\textsuperscript{197}

Repressed memories, which cannot re-enter consciousness, are instead allowed to cross the border in the form of a ‘boundary idea,’ which represents them. The added dimension to the explanation here is that of affect or libido displacement: a boundary idea can represent a repressed memory because it carries its affective significance. This is closely related to the process of symptom formation as well.

We will return to the notion of displacement in our discussion of the \textit{Interpretation of Dreams}, where it plays a much larger role. At this point, however, let me once again draw attention to the close relation between time and space. A boundary idea can represent a repressed memory and make the passage into consciousness possible \textit{only if} it is linked to it by ‘temporal simultaneity,’ as Freud puts it above. Movement of libido within the psyche is related to the simultaneity of perception of memories and ideas.

Ricoeur comments that the psyche is topographical for Freud insofar as it includes “relations of exclusion that are relations of force.”\textsuperscript{198} In light of our investigation so far, I can agree with Ricoeur on this point. The mind is topographical insofar as it is bounded, at least in Freud’s early works. The spatial nature of the psyche thus far has emerged out of Freud’s desire to explain the

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 228-229.

preservation of memories that are not readily available to conscious. This leads him to posit that “they are not destroyed but merely overlaid [überlagert],"\(^{199}\) built over in the unconscious.

### 1.1 The *Project for a Scientific Psychology*

Although Freud never deemed the *Project* worthy of publication in his lifetime,\(^ {200}\) it has received a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention as a document containing the germ of many of his ideas. The model of the mind that Freud presents therein represents a serious contrast to the two topographies that he would formulate later in his career.

The main point of contrast between the model presented in the *Project* and that developed later concerns questions of physical reality. While Freud will later emphasize that the psyche occupies no physical space, the *Project* gives the psyche the physical space of the nervous system, creating a “psychology for neurologists.”\(^ {201}\) As such, not only is Freud concerned here with the preservation of memory within the nervous system, as he was earlier, but his focus lies almost exclusively on the brain’s internal defense mechanisms in the face of external stimuli. In the *Project*, in contrast to later works, mind is explicitly reduced to brain.

The objective of the *Project*, as Freud puts it, is to “furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science.”\(^ {202}\) The mapping of the psyche onto the brain goes a long way toward achieving this goal, insofar as it relies on empirical and quantitative suppositions to explain psychical phenomena. While largely theoretical – Freud himself has not collected any of the quantitative data that would be required to firmly establish the existence of his proposed nervous structure – the model does rely on the basic unit of brain anatomy, the neuron, and applies the laws of physics to its functioning. Neurons, Freud suggests, are capable of storing and divesting themselves of quanta of energy when faced with certain kinds of stimuli.\(^ {203}\) In keeping with the

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\(^{200}\) Sigmund Freud, ‘Project for a Scientific Psychology (1895).’ In *CW 1*. It was only published in 1950, roughly a decade after Freud’s death.

\(^{201}\) As Strachey suggests in his introduction to the piece, *ibid* pg. 283.

\(^{202}\) *Ibid*, pg. 295.

\(^{203}\) *Ibid*, pg. 296.
principle of inertia, these neurons will oppose any change in their state; when forced to take on charge, they will seek to divest themselves of it as quickly as possible. The management of this discharge is the primary task of the nervous system. Since physics tells us that neurons will seek to divest themselves of charge and biology tells us that organisms seek to avoid unpleasurable situations, Freud posits that the individual will perceive a neuron’s inability to release its charge as unpleasurable.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 312.}

The nervous system, Freud argues, will react differently to internal stimuli than to external stimuli. When forced by an external stimulus to release its energy, neurons can fuel the flight reflex. The influx of new energy, very broadly conceived by Freud here, allows us to escape from a threatening or unpleasurable situation; the external stimulus can be avoided. So neuronal discharge results here in physical action in the external world. But what of internal stimuli, like hunger? An internal stimulus will still force the neuron to take on a charge, which it will once again seek to release as quickly as possible. In this case, however, the energy must be managed differently; there is no point in trying to run from hunger. Instead, the neuron will have to hold its charge longer than desired and await an environmental solution. The spatial dimension of this explanation is fairly obvious and lies in the fact that the psyche actually occupies physical space. Freud capitalizes on the recent discovery of the neuron in 1891 to further speculate on its function within the context of his own clinical concerns.

Freud argues that the location of memory in the brain proceeds from the laws of physics. Positing that memory may be the result of stored energy, he begins to question where such energy/memory might be stored.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 299.} The neuron seems a likely initial candidate, except that, since the body reacts similarly to stimuli time after time, the neurons themselves cannot be modified. A neuron whose state has changed, after the absorption of energy/memory, for example, would be expected to react differently. Neurons therefore prove unlikely candidates. Freud then turns to the synapses, the gaps between neurons. Having no concept of a neurotransmitter – acetylcholine, the first such chemical isolated, was not identified until 1921 – he assumes that the resistance to transmission may lie in the synapse rather than in the neuron.
itself. If certain synapses offer resistance to transmission while others do not, then certain neurons might be unable to pass on their entire charge. Those neurons whose synapses offer resistance to transmission, forcing their neuron to retain some of the discharged energy, are identified as the locus of memory and are named $\psi$ neurons. Those neurons that face no synaptic resistance are called $\varphi$ neurons.

The point of this detailed digression into Freud’s rejected physiological model is to demonstrate that the *Project* strives to answer the same questions as do Freud’s earlier letters while mapping out the psyche in a different way. Gone are the earlier discussions of strata. Rather, memory is now explained in terms of two different anatomical bodies,\(^{206}\) the $\psi$ and $\varphi$ neurons, and physical laws that dictate energy preservation.

The counterpart to this unconscious process of memory, consciousness requires some further theorizing on Freud’s part to explain. While memory makes sense in terms of quantity, conscious perception appreciates quality and requires the observation “of masses in motion and nothing else”\(^{207}\) – an early Freudian definition of reality. This becomes the province of a third kind of neuron, the $\omega$ neuron, which translates qualitative sensations into consciousness when stimulated. For Freud, this explanation requires the expansion of the traditional definition of science. An empirical science concerned exclusively with quantities can offer no explanation for qualitative consciousness.\(^{208}\) For this reason, the explanation of consciousness had been left to those engaged in unscientific enterprises, like philosophers. Similarly, the action of $\omega$ neurons cannot be explained using charge, which is quantifiable. Rather, Freud suggests that stimulated $\omega$ neurons take on the period of a charge – they begin to rotate. Movement, then, is once again introduced into the model.

Many of the themes in Freud’s early letters recur in the *Project*. The main difference lies in the mapping of the *Project* model onto the brain, giving it physical space to occupy. In this model, at least, Freud’s use of space is unambiguous – the spaces he discusses have real-life referents.

\(^{206}\) Freud takes his description so far as to locate the $\psi$ (memory) neurons in the cerebral grey matter (*ibid*, pg. 303).

\(^{207}\) *Ibid*, pg. 308.

\(^{208}\) *Ibid*, pg. 308.
Here, Freud is concerned with the physical place of the mind/brain. Yet much of the spatial language from the *Project* persists in Freud’s later descriptions of the psyche and this even though he will come to dissociate mind and brain. As Ricoeur suggests, “this quasi-physical conception of the psychical apparatus was never completely eliminated from the Freudian theory.”\(^{209}\) There is no topography in the *Project*; there is physicality instead.

### 1.2 The *Studies on Hysteria*

Freud’s *Studies on Hysteria*, published together with Breuer three years after the *Project* was written, sets the stage for the first topography by beginning to introduce the concept of the Freudian unconscious as we know it. Again, the data behind the theory comes from Freud’s clinical work with hypnosis, which he and Breuer both practiced, and works toward his desire to explain the pathology of hysteria. In the years following the publication of the *Studies*, Freud began to give up the practice of hypnosis in favour of word association, which achieved the same ends by different (and much simpler to master) means.

The *Studies* link repressed memories and disease: “Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences.”\(^{210}\) Incorporating the concern for energetic equilibrium of the *Project*, the affective reaction that a memory generates becomes key to its place in the psyche.\(^{211}\) Here, affect and energy are nearly equivalent. A memory retains its affective quality (its traumatic character, for example) if one is unable to vent the affect related to it for whatever reason. Therapeutic treatment consists in the venting of stifled affect through speech, allowing for the neutralization of the memory. The ability to vent or discharge pent up affect then is once again crucial to the maintenance of psychic balance.

If Freud develops this idea of the *Project*, however, he quickly distances himself from its physiological implications, presenting the scientific language of neurology as an unnecessary complication:

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\(^{209}\) Ricoeur 1970, pg. 70.


\(^{211}\) *Ibid*, pg. 8.
In what follows little mention will be made of the brain and none whatever of molecules. Psychical processes will be dealt with in the language of psychology; and, indeed, it cannot be possible otherwise. If instead of ‘idea’ we chose to speak of ‘excitation of the cortex’, the latter term would only have any meaning for us insofar as we recognized an old friend under that cloak and tacitly reinstated the ‘idea’. For while ideas are constant objects of our experience and are familiar to us in all their shades of meaning, ‘cortical excitations’ are on the contrary rather in the nature of a postulate, objects which we hope to be able to identify in the future. The substitution of one term for another would seem to be no more than a pointless disguise.\textsuperscript{212}

Here, Freud appears to choose phenomenology over science. For if scientific language can aspire to become ‘truth’ in the light of further research, phenomenological speech is more empirical, in that we may attest to the concept of ‘idea’ through our own experience and language. Furthermore, he identifies his own terminology as psychological, in contrast to the medical or neurological lexicon of the \textit{Project}. His concern shifts from the structure of the brain to the psyche.

Much of the discourse on the unconscious in the \textit{Studies} cannot properly be attributed to Freud, since it belongs to Breuer’s part of the text. While the extent to which Freud shared the ideas that Breuer puts forth in this section will remain in doubt, the fact that many of the same ideas and definitions reappear in Freud’s own works later on point convincingly to their commonality. Breuer defines the conscious mind quite simply as containing those ideas of which we are aware.\textsuperscript{213} He feels no need to characterize unconscious ideas or to argue for their existence, presumably because it is either self-evident from previous works on memory or because of the (albeit philosophical) currency of the notion of the unconscious. Instead, Breuer is much more concerned with demonstrating the equation of his unconscious and Janet’s notion of the subconscious, which had previously been coined in a similar attempt to shed led on the aetiology of hysteria.\textsuperscript{214} While Janet’s term is explicitly spatial in its formulation – \textit{sous-conscient}, \textit{Unterbewusste} – this is not the dimension to which Breuer objects, and this despite his rejection

\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 185.
\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 222.
of physiological language. He mirrors Janet’s spatial relation by defining unconscious ideas as ones that “exist and are operative beneath the threshold of consciousness.”

Breuer retains the energic model from Freud’s earlier letters, adding one element: “As a rule, when the intensity of an unconscious idea increases it enters consciousness ipso facto.” We might speak here, as the astrophysicists do, of ‘escape velocity.’ A certain level of libidinal intensity is required to break through the barrier separating consciousness from the unconscious. Highly charged ideas will thus reach consciousness unless they are “inadmissible to consciousness” and repressed. While the presence of ideas of low intensity in the unconscious would be entirely normal according to this model, the presence of repressed ideas in the unconscious is pathologized tout court. Though Freud will later argue that repressed ideas exist in everyone and are in fact necessary for society to persist, Breuer and Freud find in these repressed ideas the source of hysterical symptoms. In this clinical vein, Breuer readily speaks of a “splitting of the mind” into two realms, once conscious and the other unconscious, each populated with ideas that differ based not only in their availability to consciousness but also in their energy as a result.

The final element worthy of note in the Studies involves the first of many pleas that the formulation of the unconscious not be taken literally:

It is only too easy to assume that every substantive has a substance behind it – which gradually comes to regard ‘consciousness’ as standing for some actual thing; and when we have become accustomed to make use metaphorically of spatial relations, as in the term ‘sub-consciousness’, we find as time goes on that we have actually formed an idea which has lost its metaphorical nature and which we can manipulate easily as though it was real. Our mythology is then complete.

All our thinking tends to be accompanied and aided by spatial ideas, and we talk in spatial metaphors. Thus when we speak of ideas which are found in the region of clear consciousness and of unconscious ones which never enter the full light of

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215 Breuer & Freud, Studies, pg. 222.
216 Ibid, pg. 223
217 Ibid, pg. 225.
218 Ibid, pg. 225.
self-consciousness, we almost inevitably form pictures of a tree with its trunk in daylight and its roots in darkness, or of a building with its dark underground cellars. If, however, we constantly bear in mind that all such spatial relations are metaphorical and do not allow ourselves to be misled into supposing that these relations are literally present in the brain, we may nevertheless speak of a consciousness and a subconsciousness. But only on this condition.

We shall be safe from the danger of allowing ourselves to be tricked by our own figures of speech if we always remember that after all it is in the same brain, and most probably in the same cerebral cortex, that conscious and unconscious ideas alike have their origin.\textsuperscript{219}

Breuer admits that his model of the unconscious is a spatial metaphor, which can be located in the brain in the most general manner but not mapped onto it in as the \textit{Project} attempted. His comments about the role of spatial metaphors in thought foreshadow Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of metaphor in several important ways, which we will return to at the end of this chapter.

To recap the survey thus far: Freud’s models of the mind before the publication of the \textit{Interpretation of Dreams} are derived to explain the interplay of presence and absence of memories in consciousness as encountered in his clinical observations. Linking memory to disease, they posit a level of the mind, the unconscious, which is unavailable to consciousness and is bounded by the forces of repression. With the exception of the neurological model of the \textit{Project}, these models take on a heuristic, even metaphorical character, as Freud uses them to explain observations but insists that they not be taken literally.

The transition from these early models to the first topography depends largely on the function of the nervous system in the \textit{Project}. Trained as a physician, Freud’s \textit{Project} model is in keeping with the medical practice of cerebral topography as it was known in his day,\textsuperscript{220} and despite his protests that the topographies are heuristic constructions, many of the ideas from the \textit{Project} model, including the quasi-anatomical language, persist into the topographies.\textsuperscript{221} One shift is

\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 227-228.


\textsuperscript{221} See Ricoeur 1970, 82.
decisive, however: Freud makes no further attempt to locate the psyche until very late in his career.

2 The First Topography (1900-1920)

The addition of the preconscious segment of the psyche as the antechamber to consciousness signals the shift from the psychological model of the mind as proposed in the Studies on Hysteria to the first topography proper, which is first developed in The Interpretation of Dreams (Traumdeutung).

2.1 The Interpretation of Dreams

2.1.1 The Space of the Dream

In contrast to the neurological model of the Project, the task taken on in the Interpretation is resolutely psychological, seeking to revive a topic of discussion dropped in medical circles. Against popular scientific sentiment, Freud sets out to demonstrate a) that dreams have a meaning and are thus psychic activities worthy of study, b) that the psychic generation of dreams can be understood scientifically, and c) that the obfuscation of a dream’s meaning is understandable in light of the process through which dreams are generated. It is in this last endeavour, central to the famous seventh chapter of the Interpretation, that Freud’s comments on the structure of the psyche will interest us most.

The psychic process of dream formation involves the spatialization of an image, which is in turn connected to a memory. As Freud explains, dreams dramatize an idea, which requires the placement of a dream-image within a constructed context or scenario. An idea on its own cannot constitute a dream; it remains a thought. A dream involves a story, for which the psyche must reproduce the spatial deployment of reality. These constructions too will carry some kind of hermeneutic weight; they will ‘mean something’ to the dreamer and the analyst. While Freud rarely picks up on this dimension of dream analysis in his case histories – locations are present, of course, in the dreams of his patients, but he never makes them central to his interpretation –

222 See Sigmund Freud, ‘The Interpretation of Dreams (1900).’ In CW 4 & 5, pg. 1

223 Ibid, pg. 50.
psychoanalytically oriented geographer Steve Pile has made a convincing case for the geography of dreams. He argues that the psyche treats places in the same manner that it does people in dreams, charging them with meaning and relating them to memories.

While Freud never goes so far – though I can also find no reason for which he might disagree with this assertion – he does admit that dreams have a “spatial consciousness [Raumbewußtsein]” since they remain embodied experiences. Space, for Freud, is intimately linked to perception here. One feels in a dream as if one is seeing images and feeling sensations; there is a reproduction of the inside/outside or subject/object divide within the psyche, made possible through one’s embodied existence. So the creation of a scenario and the placement of the dream-image in turn require the pseudo-embodiment of the dreamer within the dream. Dreams are thus experienced spatially in the same way as reality: through the mediation of sense perceptions in the body.

At the same time, Freud’s lack of attention to the relevance of locations in dream interpretation is related to the model of representation that he adopts. He compares the reading of dreams to the reading of a rebus, adopting from Schleiermacher the notion of a dream as a sequence of images. While this may explain the experience of dreams, it does not allow the psychoanalyst to uncover their meanings, since the subjective experience of dreaming cannot be shared. A rebus only makes sense when its images are first converted into words or syllables; the experience of a dream must be shared orally. Freud’s psyche thinks in words, not images. So while the images of the dream may be embodied and placed, the words required for interpretation have no place and divorce the analyst from the immediate spatial experience of the dream itself.

2.1.2 The Dream-work: Displacement and Condensation

Regardless of the medium used, a dream’s meaning is far from being transparent. For Freud, the meaning of a dream inevitably represents the conscious expression and fulfillment of a repressed

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224 See Pile 1999.
225 Ibid, pg. 51.
226 Freud, Interpretation, pg. 278.
That which cannot find satisfaction in reality finds it in the constructed reality of the dream. Freud terms the obscuring function that gives dreams shape while concealing their meaning the dream-work (*Traumarbeit*). It functions in two distinct steps, first constructing the wish to be expressed in the dream and then censoring or distorting its expression.\textsuperscript{228} The principal means to achieve this distortion, termed ‘condensation’ (*Verdichtung*) and ‘displacement’ (*Verschiebung*), are also described in spatial language.

The spatial implications of ‘condensation’ – literally ‘compression’, the occupying of less space, from the German – and displacement – the occupying of a different space – are clear. It remains unclear, however, what exactly Freud judges to be occupying this space. Again, we cannot take this spatial language literally. Freud explains his choice of terms as follows, writing:

> What takes place would seem to be something in the nature of a ‘displacement’ – of psychical emphasis, shall we say? – by means of intermediate links; in this way, ideas which originally had only a weak charge of intensity take over the charge from ideas which were originally intensely cathected and at last attain enough strength to enable them to force an entry into consciousness.\textsuperscript{229}

So while Freud literally sees ‘psychical emphasis’ as that being displaced, there is also a biological appeal to the quanta of the *Project* and the idea that charges of intensity or energy are responsible for movement within the psyche. In this case, the displacement of energy not only signals a shift in emphasis within the dream but also recalls the physiological manner in which a different idea is able to traverse into consciousness – by accumulating the energy required to cross the boundary of the unconscious. As Ricoeur correctly suggests, the move from the neurological model of the *Project* to the psychological model of the *Interpretation* means that cathected ideas replace cathected neurons.\textsuperscript{230} The object changes, but much of the language remains the same through the *Interpretation*.

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\textsuperscript{227} *Ibid*, pg. 160.

\textsuperscript{228} *Ibid*, pg 144.

\textsuperscript{229} *Ibid*, pg. 177.

\textsuperscript{230} Ricoeur 1970, pg. 88.
But if the language remains the same, intensity and quanta being related, the mechanism changes. For while the *Studies* placed the emphasis on the energy that ideas require to enter consciousness, central to the *Interpretation* are those low-intensity ideas that enter the dream in place of repressed, high-intensity ideas.\(^\text{231}\) The analysis of dreams is difficult specifically because of this process of displacement, through which repressed elements load their psychical intensity onto other, seemingly innocuous elements, thereby over-determining the meaning of the latter but also guaranteeing that this intensity will find expression in consciousness. Only in this manner can repressed ideas evade the censorship. As Freud explains, through this transmission of affect along a chain of associations, the true topic of the dream need not be in the dream at all.\(^\text{232}\)

The spatial language of condensation operates on a slightly different register. The over-determination of meaning that certain dream ideas carry calls for condensation, explaining why their meaning is not readily available. Freud explains condensation in physically spatial terms by pointing to the fact that it takes longer to analyze a dream than it does to write it out.\(^\text{233}\) Here again, we can observe the relation between time and space, with the time taken to represent orally contrasted with the space occupied by a written interpretation, as well as the closely related issue of representation, with Freud placing greater faith in the flexibility of oral speech than in spatial representation. Since dreams can only represent memories and ideas – abstract entities – in terms of images, the conversion back to ideas is essential if the meaning of a dream is to be grasped. As Freud explains, “The thoughts have to be reproduced exclusively in the material of visual and acoustic memory-traces, and this necessity imposes upon the dream-work *considerations of representability* which it meets by carrying out fresh displacements.”\(^\text{234}\)

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\(^{231}\) See *ibid*, pg. 305.

\(^{232}\) *Ibid*, pg. 305.

\(^{233}\) *Ibid*, pg. 279.

\(^{234}\) *Ibid*, pg. 507.
2.1.3 The Model of the Psyche

Once again in the Interpretation, Freud refuses to give in to the temptation to represent the psyche in anatomical terms. Using the language of psychology, he is content to speak vaguely about the psyche existing in some undetermined state while still acknowledging the physiology of the brain: “I shall entirely disregard the fact that the mental apparatus with which we are concerned here is also known to us in the form of an anatomical preparation, and I shall carefully avoid the temptation to determine psychical locality in any anatomical fashion.” The Interpretation marks Freud’s first real attempt to discuss the structure of the psyche. He begins by proposing an analogy with a microscope, “a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus, or something of the kind” within which, as with dreams, an image is produced. Freud is again emphatic that this sort of language, while undeniably useful for elucidating the model that he has in mind, is not to be taken literally, and while Breuer was apologetic for this in the Studies, Freud sees no reason to do so:

I see no necessity to apologize for the imperfections of this or any other kind of similar imagery. Analogies of this kind are only intended to assist us in our attempt to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the function and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus… We are justified, in my view, in giving free rein to our speculation so long as we retain the coolness of our judgement and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building.

The different parts of the microscope are compared to the different “agencies” or “systems” of the mind, each of which “may perhaps stand in a regular spatial relation to one another,” just as the pieces of the microscope must line up in a particular order if the tool is to function properly. So, on the one hand, the analogy is apt because the different parts relate to each other in a given way and the particular formation of the spatial arrangement represents this order. Spatial relation stands in for the functional relation of the areas of the mind. Yet this same

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235 Ibid, pg. 536.
236 Ibid, pg. 536.
237 Ibid, pg. 536.
238 Ibid, pg. 537.
relation could just as well be represented temporally, an option that Freud prefers: “It would be sufficient if a fixed order were established by the fact that in a given psychical process the excitation passes through the systems in a particular temporal sequence.”

Time and space are equiprimordial in both examples. Light passes through the highest lens of the microscope first only because it is highest, and no such priority exists in a purely psychic structure. Still, a dream originates in the wishes of the unconscious before clearing the censor and becoming conscious. As Pile puts it, “space and time are co-constitutive of causal relations within the dream – and, therefore, that it is the space-time production of dream-space that re-presents causal chains amongst dream-thoughts.” Freud’s desire here to minimize his own use of spatial language in favour of a temporal register points once again to the risk that he runs – one of which he is very much aware – of overemphasizing the structural nature of the unconscious and leaving his reader with the idea of a fixed physical system.

Freud uses a similar analogy to describe the unconscious at a later point, in his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Here, he admits both the crudeness and convenience of the spatial metaphor, comparing the unconscious to a lecture hall, with mental impulses jostling together at the entrance to get in:

> Adjoining this entrance hall there is a second, narrower, room – a kind of drawing-room – in which consciousness, too, resides. But on the threshold between the two a watchman performs his function: he examines the different mental impulses, acts as a censor, and will not admit them into the drawing-room if they displease him.

The objective here is obviously to represent the censorship of dreams. The ‘drawing-room’ represents the *Interpretation*’s new addition to the psychic structure, the notion of the preconscious. Yet despite these analogies providing more abstract definitions of the psyche and often meant to highlight a particular process, Freud holds on to a biological understanding of the

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241 In *CW 15 & 16*.

psyche and its relation to the nervous system, one that often comes to light best when the question of embodiment is raised. The psyche, while psychological, obviously remains closely tied to questions of brain. In the seventh chapter of the *Interpretation*, for example, Freud reproduces the model of the psyche found in the *Project* using the diagram found below:

![Psyche Diagram](image)

Again, Freud refers to this structure as a “psychical apparatus,”\(^{244}\) and this even though the model returns to the *Project*’s concern about the storage of memories in the nervous system. The arrow at the left end of the diagram represents sensory perceptions entering the psyche, while the arrow at the right represents motor functions, the products of the nervous system. The lines in the middle are memory-traces, produced with the passing of sensory perceptions. While Freud uses this model to argue that all psychic structures, including the amorphous ones making up the first topography, must be based on the neurological model of the reflex arc,\(^ {245}\) it also clearly demonstrates that the model of the psyche proposed in the *Project* has not been completely abandoned.

### 2.1.4 The Addition of the Preconscious

Referring again to the above diagram, Freud locates the preconscious at the right end of the diagram, before the exit into motor activity. This intermediary realm between the unconscious

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\(^{243}\) Freud 1900, pg. 537.

\(^{244}\) *Ibid*, pg. 537.

\(^{245}\) *Ibid*, pg. 538.
and conscious minds, standing “like a screen,”\footnote{Ibid, pg. 615.} is responsible for the censorship of dreams and thereby the production of their cryptic meaning. Consciousness is then completely passive in most psychic processes. It is a theatre, a sphere of action, but little else. As Freud puts it, it is only a sense-organ for perceptions that enter the psyche.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 615.} The task of choosing those elements that will be represented and those that will remain hidden is a product of the interaction between the unconscious and preconscious areas of the mind.

What then can we make of the first topography thus far? In many ways, it resembles the preliminary model that Freud developed in the \textit{Studies}. The key to transitioning between the levels, to ‘crossing the boundaries’ as it were, lies in the displacement of charge and the ciphering and deciphering of meaning.\footnote{See Ricoeur 1970, pg. 84.} But, lest we get carried away with the hermeneutics of dreams and forget Freud’s clinical concerns, we would do well to remember that the formation of symptoms in hysterics operates in a similar way.

As mentioned, Freud’s spatial language often comes into play in an attempt to compensate for the irrepresentability of time, which is often the element he truly wishes to highlight. Ricoeur, for example, points to the first topography as a testament to the indestructibility of desire;\footnote{Ibid, pg. 105.} the unconscious, in its timeless nature, which stores ideas forever in a simultaneous ‘standing now,’ contains those recurring ideas that lie at the base of ontogenesis and phylogenesis. In this sense, the unconscious emerges as a space to be filled, as Platonic \textit{chora} or containing space. But this, of course, does not make the unconscious any more physical in nature.

Instead of seeing this model of the psyche as a reified structure, Freud suggests later on\footnote{In ‘A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis (1912).’ In \textit{CW 12}.} that we view the unconscious as a classificatory scheme\footnote{Ibid, pg. 266.} based on the play of presence and absence.
in consciousness. Remember the dilemma that the first topography is supposed to solve: how can ideas which are not always in mind come and go from consciousness unchanged, and why can they be shown to still exist through hypnosis and word association? Unconsciousness is a state of being, of psychical latency. But latency here does not signify inactivity. Unconscious ideas can still motivate thoughts and actions or produce pathological symptoms.

If repression is one of the cornerstones of psychoanalysis, as the early model certainly seems to bear out, then the first topography is largely a product of this cornerstone. The addition of the preconscious to the conscious-unconscious binary points to a distinction between unconscious ideas that can enter into consciousness when sufficiently charged and those that will never enter consciousness, regardless of their affective weight. Dream-ideas, which can enter after censorship, are of the first category and pass through the preconscious. But unconscious ideas that influence pathology remain repressed until the barriers are lifted therapeutically. Unconscious ideas, while strong and forcibly separated from consciousness, retain their covert power over conscious processes.

2.2 The Papers on Metapsychology

If the addition of the preconscious in the Interpretation marks the foundation of the first topography, the papers on metapsychology take the extra step of defining the relations between the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious levels of the psyche through their investigation of the mechanisms of psychic functioning.

2.2.1 On Narcissism

While the movement from a neurological structure to a psychic structure required that Freud take some distance with the Interpretation from the model of the mind proposed in the Project, his 1914 paper on narcissism begins by reminding us that the basic problems that he is trying to resolve have not changed from one model to the other. As he writes, “We have recognized our

\[\text{Ibid, pg. 260.}\]

\[\text{Ibid, pg. 261.}\]

\[\text{Ibid, pg. 262.}\]
mental apparatus as being first and foremost a device designed for mastering excitations which would otherwise be felt as distressing or would have pathogenic effects.”\textsuperscript{255} The basic principle behind psychic mechanisms, then, or at least behind the notion of repression, remains the physical principle of constancy invoked in the \textit{Project}. In its attempt to master these excitations, the unconscious emerges as a system of classification grounded in the movement or displacement of charge. But once again, while the notions of the \textit{Project} are still present, their context has been shifted away from the material register. The concept of charge or excitation, then, is translated into Freud’s infamous ‘libido,’ the sexually energy of the psyche.

Freud’s renewed concern with libido in the essay is closely linked to its central theme, the explanation of narcissism, which he defines as the investment of libido in the ego (\textit{Ich}) or ego-ideal (\textit{Idealich}). With the introduction of these agencies, the slow shift to the second topography begins. The ego and ego-ideal are clearly related – the former represses ideas that do not conform to the high standards of the latter, which represents who we wish we were in relation to who we actually are.\textsuperscript{256} So on the one hand the ego-ideal is treated as a reified entity, one which can be charged with libido and can act of its own accord. On the other hand, however, it clearly represents an idea, a form of self-aspiration. The formation of the ego-ideal is a process that Freud relates to the human life cycle. While the young child may originally believe that she is perfect, investing libido in the ego, she quickly learns through the reproaches of others and through human socialization that she is not. As a result, she withdraws the libido invested in the ego and places it in the ego-ideal, formed through others’ expectations. In this case, repression occurs at the will of the ego,\textsuperscript{257} and is granted a form of agency in the process. Freud similarly suggests that the ego-ideal may enforce the censorship of dreams,\textsuperscript{258} further locating the abstract processes defined in the \textit{Interpretation}. This whole discussion, of course, foreshadows Freud’s development of the superego (\textit{Überich}), his concerns with social dynamics, and his discussion of sublimation.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Sigmund Freud, ‘On Narcissism: An Introduction (1914).’ In \textit{CW 14}, pg. 85.
\item \textit{Ibid}, pg. 93-94.
\item \textit{Ibid}, pg. 95.
\item \textit{Ibid}, pg. 97.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
2.2.2 **Instincts and their Vicissitudes**

The internal stimuli first mentioned in the *Project*, those for which the ‘fight or flight’ response provides no resolution, are here given the name of instinct (*Trieb*).\(^{259}\) An instinct is an internal, constant need that requires satisfaction.\(^{260}\) In the *Project*, these internal stimuli required that neurons push the boundaries of the constancy principle and retain their charge longer than desired, posing a challenge to the nervous system and resulting in unpleasure. Freud still recognizes that these internal needs are more difficult to deal with than external needs, referring again to the constancy principle.\(^{261}\) But in this case he argues that the mind deals with the challenge psychically, by altering its perception of reality. As a result, Freud identifies the instincts as one of the links between the mind and reality:

> If we apply ourselves to considering mental life from a *biological* point of view, an ‘instinct’ [*Trieb*] appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body.\(^{262}\)

Questions of embodiment and representation thus surface once more. The mind cannot think in terms of needs but requires that they be represented as aims instead.\(^{263}\) So while hunger originates somatically as a nerve impulse from the digestive system, the brain does not register ‘stomach’ or ‘hunger’ but rather ‘food.’ The instinct, as a drive, is necessarily a drive toward an object. The drive is thus seen to bridge the gap between the body, the mind, and reality.

The instinct or drive is one of those concepts that critics have tended to locate more often in the realm of mythology than of science. Above all, the concept of the drive is an attempt to explain a process, to represent how the psyche experiences need. Ultimately, we must remember that when

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259 The alternate translation of *Trieb* as ‘drive’ is more effective at conveying the sense of urgency behind the phenomenon. In this section, I will use ‘drive’ and Strachey’s ‘instinct’ interchangeably, largely to maintain correspondence between the notion and the essay title, but I prefer ‘drive’ overall.


261 *Ibid*, pg. 120.


Freud pushes the limits of empirical observation with his ideas, he is intensely aware that he is doing so and even appears to feel quite comfortable with this. Our brief study of *Instincts* is perhaps most valuable for the following lengthy statement, with which Freud defends his notion of science:

We have often heard it maintained that sciences should be built up on clear and sharply defined basic concepts. In actual fact no science, not even the most exact, begins with such definitions. The true beginning of scientific activity consists rather in describing phenomena and then in proceeding to group, classify and correlate them. Even at the stage of description it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from somewhere or other but certainly not from the new observations alone. Such ideas—which will later become the basic concepts of the science—are still more indispensable as the material is further worked over. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of indefiniteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed. Thus, strictly speaking, they are in the nature of conventions—although everything depends on their not being arbitrarily chosen but determined by their having significant relations to the empirical material, relations that we seem to sense before we can clearly recognize and demonstrate them. It is only after more thorough investigation of the field of observation that we are able to formulate its basic scientific concepts with increased precision, and progressively so to modify them that they become serviceable and consistent over a wide area. Then, indeed, the time may have come to confine them in definitions. The advance of knowledge, however, does not tolerate any rigidity even in definitions.\(^{264}\)

Freud has often been apologetic thus far for his use of spatial language, emphasizing its heuristic nature and its inevitability. But this statement shies away from such an apology, instead justifying his choice of terms with an argument against absolute scientific precision. Theory must accompany observation if one is to make sense of that which is observed, but theory is inherently abstract and, as such, imprecise. Theory is convention; it is metaphor. But it is a metaphor that begins as a rough outline, gaining definition and detail only over time. This provides a lens through which we might view Freud’s use of spatial language in the description of the psyche, one to which we will return at the end of the chapter. Freud’s spatial language is, ultimately, metaphorical.

\(^{264}\) *Ibid*, pg. 117.
2.2.3  The Unconscious

The final point of investigation before moving on to the second topography is Freud’s metapsychological paper on the unconscious, which summarizes much of what has been said so far. Freud re-emphasizes his use of ‘unconscious’ as an adjective rather than a systemic noun; to be unconscious is a state of being for ideas.\(^{265}\) The foundation of the theory of the unconscious as a play of absence and presence is thus brought to the fore once again. At the same time, Freud relates this use to the systemic sense of the term: an idea that is unconscious also belongs to the unconscious, the system Ucs.\(^{266}\) Like the microscope analogy presented earlier, these systems stand in spatial relation to each other insofar that they form a link, a series of steps through which ideas must pass. An idea begins in the unconscious. To be promoted, it must clear censorship. If it can, it becomes conscious. If not, it is repressed. In this initial portion of the discussion, Freud makes no mention of the preconscious, harkening back to the pre-Interpretation model of the Studies. The role of the preconscious only becomes clear as the discussion progresses:

But the fact that it [the idea] belongs to that system does not yet unequivocally determine its relation to consciousness. It is not yet conscious, but it is certainly capable of becoming conscious (to use Breuer’s expression) – that is, it can now, given certain conditions, become an object of consciousness without any special resistance. In consideration of this capacity for becoming conscious we also call the system Cs. the ‘preconscious’. If it should turn out that a certain censorship also plays a part in determining whether the preconscious becomes conscious, we shall discriminate more sharply between the systems Pcs. and Cs.\(^{267}\)

Freud locates the process of censorship between the unconscious and the preconscious-consciousness combination. So ideas must clear the filter before becoming preconscious; it is at this point that repression occurs. Because of this location, and with his theoretical emphasis on the process of repression in the first topography, Freud is much more concerned with distinguishing sharply between the unconscious and consciousness than he is between the

\(^{265}\) Sigmund Freud, ‘The Unconscious (1915).’ In CW 14, pg. 167.

\(^{266}\) Ibid, pg. 173.

\(^{267}\) Ibid, pg. 173.
preconscious and consciousness. Again, we see the extent to which the context of the heuristic uses of the models modifies the shape that they take and the manner in which they are deployed.

Freud closes the essay by once again divorcing himself from anatomical understandings of the topography. While he feels comfortable locating psychic processes in the brain, he is unwilling to hypothesize as to which specific part of the brain the relevant neurons are located. Past attempts to do so, he argues, have “miscarried completely.”

Freud even goes one step further in this case, divorcing himself from psychology as well, a discipline with which he had previously identified, by suggesting that his topography adds greater definition to usually vague psychological notions of the unconscious.

In concluding this investigation of the first topography, I can venture a few preliminary conclusions. First, we can see that, while Freud refuses to locate the psyche in the brain after the failed attempt of the Project, he still retains many of the ideas related to this model and thus continues to speak of the psyche in physical, spatialized language. So, for example, the processes of displacement and condensation, which pointed to a literal movement of energy between neurons in 1895, come to represent a non-physical shift in emphasis. At the same time, there is a sense in which even the model of the Project remains spatial beyond the physiological requirements of the explanation that Freud prefers in this text. For example, Freud explains the play of presence and absence of memories in consciousness by using his neurological model. But the problem that he seeks to resolve – the play of presence and absence itself – is spatial in a different manner insofar as it deals with consciousness. We might say that the model of the Project is physiologically spatial, yes, but it is psychically spatial as well, insofar as it deals with questions of consciousness that transcend the physiological model. The process of repression and the bounded nature of the mind that it creates provide other examples. This is a psychic, not a physiological, problem that Freud attempts to solve.

Next, it is worth noticing that Freud’s emphasis on time, which is well documented elsewhere, often brings with it an emphasis on place. That is, Freud’s topographies are spatial in part

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269 Ibid, pg. 173.
because they are also temporal. Time and space come together. So, for example, the strata of the mind are related to specific points in time and the simultaneity of the agencies of the mind in the microscope model is translated into a spatial simultaneity. As Ricoeur has suggested, depth psychology is ‘deep’ because of the connection that it seeks to maintain between “the time function of consciousness and the characteristic of timelessness of the unconscious.”

Finally, we should take note of the relation between Freud’s scientific aspirations and the models of the mind that he uses. Freud is aware that he is using imprecise language to describe the mind, and while he sometimes makes apologies for this, he frequently refuses to do so, particularly as his career progresses. In his mind, this sort of imprecise language is intrinsic both to theory in general and to scientific thought in particular. The models serve a heuristic purpose as provisional explanations for the empirical observations that he has gathered. Freud will continue in this defense as we proceed into the second topography.

3 The Second Topography (1920-1940)

Freud’s ideas quickly outgrow the first topography, as he seeks to answer questions that its confines cannot elucidate. Ricoeur argues that the first topography is ultimately solipsistic, providing only intra-psychic explanations for real-world questions that demand a theory of intersubjectivity. For Merton Gill, the first topography collapses from the inside the moment that both repressing forces and repressed contents are attributed to the unconscious. Logically, he argues, they must belong to different registers. The important element for our purposes is that the exhausted heuristic potential of the first topography, which Freud never builds on directly, leads him to formulate a second topography to supplement – but not replace – the first. And while the spatial relations of the first topography are fairly direct and can be inferred

270 1970, pg. 442.
271 See Ricoeur 1970, pg. 61.
272 See my discussion of Beyond the Pleasure Principle in the next section.
273 Gill 1963, pg. 41.
logically from Freud’s choice of language, forming “a building up of superimposed agencies,”

those of the second topography are less clear.

If the first topography is closely grounded in the language and concepts of the Project’s representation of the mind, placing it in relation with the neurology and psychology of Freud’s day, Ellenberger sheds light on the historical antecedents of the second topography in his history of dynamic psychiatry. Magnetists and early 19th century hypnotists encountered the unconscious as a separate individual that emerged when consciousness was bypassed, much as Freud did in his early work on hypnosis. As such, early research into the unconscious was not centred on notions of unconscious ideas or word associations but on the problem of the coexistence of two minds in one body and their relation. From this work, two main explanations arose: dipsychism, the coexistence of consciousness and the unconscious, and polypsychism, the idea that several personalities existed in the mind. Freud’s first topography and Janet’s notion of the subconscious, against which Freud protests constantly in his early years, represent dipsychic explanations. The second topography, with its triad of ego, superego, and id signals a shift to the polypsychic model.

3.1 Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)

While the work to define the ego and the id in the 1923 essay of the same name marks the transition to the second topography, Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle sets the stage with its reflection about the nature of consciousness. In so doing, Freud again returns to some of the themes of the Project, especially the constancy principle. We have already touched upon the relation of charge to pleasure on several occasions thus far, but Beyond demands the revision of previous theories with its presentation of new data.

If consciousness is programmed to seek pleasure, why can it not achieve this goal? On the one hand, the pleasure principle is opposed to the reality principle, the result of enculturation to

274 Sigmund Freud, ‘The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901).’ In CW 6, pg. 147.


276 Ibid, pg. 147.
social demands and an impediment to the satisfaction of desires. On the other, unpleasure can result when we feel guilty, which can occur when repressed ideas manage to bypass the psychic censor. But Freud suggests a new case to propose a third solution to the problem of unpleasure — the death drive (Trieb). He observes that patients seem incapable of simply recalling traumatic experiences during therapy but are compelled to relive them instead. For example, a patient cannot remember what his relationship with his father was like without also reliving it in the transference. Freud also proposes the example of traumatic dreams, forcing him to revise his earlier suggestion in *Interpretation* that dreams always enact the fulfillment of a repressed wish. While an average dream might act according to the pleasure principle by providing in phantasy that which is elusive in reality, traumatic dreams point to an effort to retroactively master a form of stimulus “by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the trauma neurosis.” Freud calls this phenomenon the compulsion to repeat.

We know that psychic forces of repression proceed from the ego. So too do the resistances felt to psychoanalytic therapy, which follow the pleasure principle in seeking to block traumatic unconscious memories. But we also know that these repressions and resistances are unconscious — they proceed from the ego without the conscious mind knowing of their existence. Otherwise, psychoanalytic theory would be pointless; the patient would be working to uncover that which is already held in consciousness. As a result, Freud suggests that part of the ego must be unconscious. It does not suffice to use ‘ego’ as a synonym for ‘consciousness.’ The situation is more complex than that.

What, then, is consciousness? Obviously, it belongs to the conscious agency, to the system Cs. Its products are sense perceptions, mediated from the outside, and feelings of pleasure and unpleasure, mediated from the inside. Freud continues:

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277 Sigmund Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920).’ In *CW 18*, pg. 18.

278 *Ibid*, pg. 22.

279 *Ibid*, pg. 32.

It is therefore possible to assign to the system $P_{cpt.}-C_s.$ a position in space. It must lie on the borderline between outside and inside; it must be turned toward the external world and must envelop the other psychical systems. It will be seen that there is nothing daringly new in these assumptions; we have merely adopted the views on localization held by cerebral anatomy, which locates the ‘seat’ of consciousness in the cerebral cortex – the outermost, enveloping layer of the central organ.\textsuperscript{281}

As with the neurons of the \textit{Project}, everything in consciousness is transitory.\textsuperscript{282} The conscious mind receives information and passes it on, but the storage of memories and other such sensations occurs in the unconscious. Consciousness is but a medium. As such, Freud now feels comfortable locating consciousness in that part of the brain responsible for sensory perception, since it accomplishes no greater function. The place of consciousness also correlates directly with that of the cerebral cortex in the brain. Just as consciousness forms the surface of the mental apparatus insofar as it is the first portion of the mind that perceptions reach when entering the body from the external world, the cerebral cortex forms the surface of the brain.\textsuperscript{283} With the first topography, the unconscious had been most greatly distinguished from the ego. But as it becomes evident that a large part of the ego too is unconscious, the distinction falls apart and new ones are required. The question of consciousness now tells us little about the structure and layout of the mind.\textsuperscript{284} The scene of interest, then, shifts even further in the direction of the unconscious realm, simplifying consciousness considerably. But the notion of the unconscious is in turn complicated with the formulation of the id ($E_s$) and superego.

### 3.2 The Ego and the Id

So the need for a second topography has much to do with the evolution of Freud’s understanding of what makes up the unconscious. The original focus on repression emphasized the distinction between consciousness and the unconscious, allowing for a systematic understanding of the

\textsuperscript{281} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 24.

\textsuperscript{282} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 25.

\textsuperscript{283} Sigmund Freud, ‘The Ego and the Id (1923).’ In \textit{CW 19}, pg. 19.

\textsuperscript{284} See Strachey’s introduction to ‘The Ego and the Id (1923),’ pg. 6.
unconscious as a containing or encompassing region. But when repression and guilt, both identified as ego processes, were shown to be unconscious, Freud had to either revise the origins of repression and guilt or relocate the ego. He chose the latter. Freud’s understanding of the ego, then, must be redefined. In his initial description, the ego retains much of its original link to consciousness. It controls motility and goes to sleep at night. But it also represses unwanted or unpleasurable ideas. For this reason, it must be positioned as overlapping both consciousness and the unconscious. This highlights a new role for the ego in the second topography – the mediation between unconscious demands and conscious reality.

The elements opposing the ego in this struggle are the id and the superego, the former of which Freud locates unambiguously in the unconscious. Borrowing the term from Georg Groddeck, who himself likely adopted it from Nietzsche, Freud defines the id as the collection of “unknown and unknowable forces” that influence the ego, the natural and animal part of our being. The structural relation between ego and id is represented as follows:

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285 See *ibid*, pg. 3-4.
287 According to Strachey, at least. See *ibid*, pg. 23.
The diagram itself represents the entirety of the psyche, upon which sit the perception systems. The psyche is dominated by the presence of the id. The ego occupies a portion of the id, merging into it on the bottom levels and receiving perceptions on the upper. It thus mediates between the id and the sensory data of external reality. Repressed elements form a portion of the id as well and these are “cut off sharply from the ego by the resistances of repression,” represented by the tunnel slicing through the ego on the right hand side.

This diagram is helpful in understanding the spatial relations of what might seem a rather ‘untopographical’ topography. Aside from the obvious attempt at spatialization that comes with the act of depiction, space remains relevant to this model in at least two ways. If we recall that the second topography is meant to supplement rather than replace the first, the spatial relations of the first topography can be sought out and mapped onto the second. Furthermore, the spatial dimension of the relations between the entities or agencies of the second topography can be brought to light and their spatial structure assessed. As Freud writes, the spatial relations – “‘in front of’ and ‘behind’, ‘superficial’ and ‘deep’” – that the entities share are a direct result of “the regular succession of their functions.”

The ego, then, is the part of the id that has been modified through its contact with external reality through the perception systems. As such, it seeks to impose the results of this learned experience, the reality principle, on the demands of the id, which remain grounded in the search for pleasure. So while the id is ruled by instinct, the ego’s instinctual urges are mitigated by perception. We can thus see that the ego’s proximity to the surface of the id, as represented in the diagram, and most especially its location neighbouring the perception systems are key to understanding its function.

292 Ibid, pg. 194.
293 Freud, The Ego and the Id, pg. 25.
The id, on the other hand, represents the “lower passions” (niedrigen Leidenschaften) and makes object choices, since sexual impulses govern its decision-making. So the id plays an important role in shaping the ego’s character, which is largely a precipitate formed throughout the history of one’s object relations. But the ego can also turn this situation around on the id; by assuming the characteristics of the object that the id seeks, the ego can attract the id’s affection. Still, the id remains most noteworthy as an amorphous mass of unconscious desire with which the ego must contend, a mass that structurally occupies the entire unconscious.

If the ego emerges as a defined space within the id, the superego forms such a space within the ego. Freud readily equates the superego with its seminal equivalent in the ego-ideal and applies everything that he had already set out about the latter to the former. The superego is thus that portion of the ego responsible for “self-observation, the moral conscience, the censorship of dreams, and the chief influence in repression.” However, as a moral judge, the superego also has the ability to set itself against the rest of the ego and persecute it for failing to live up to the standards of the ego-ideal. The extent of this distinction will depend upon the moral demands that each individual places upon him or herself. The superego is thus left out of Freud’s diagrammatic representation of the second topography, the space that it occupies being highly variable. Still, Freud does locate it within the ego, largely as a result of the formative role that it

294 Ibid, pg. 26. Freud readily admits the extent to which this talk of ‘lower passions’ and ‘higher cultural achievements’ represent his own socio-cultural context, adding, “Accustomed as we are to taking our social or ethical scale of values along with us wherever we go, we feel no surprise at hearing that the scene of the activities of the lower passions is in the unconscious; we expect, moreover, that the higher any mental function ranks in our scale of values the more easily it will find access to consciousness assured to it.”

295 Ibid, pg. 29.

296 Ibid, pg. 29.

297 Ibid, pg. 28. While Ricoeur’s argument, contra Freud, that the superego and ego-ideal must ultimately be distinguished is well-taken, it is not directly relevant to our aims. See Ricoeur 1970, 183.

298 Sigmund Freud, ‘Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921).’ In CW 18, pg. 110.

299 Ibid, pg. 129. Freud suggests that, in most cases, the distinction is minimal, belying a sense of “narcissistic self-complacency.”

300 Ibid, pg. 36. “It would be in vain, however, to attempt to localize the ego ideal, even in the sense in which we have localized the ego, or to work it into any of the analogies with the help of which we have tried to picture the relation between the ego and the id.”
plays in human life. As a precipitate of the Oedipus complex, it represents “the first identification and one which took place while the ego was still feeble.”\textsuperscript{301} But since this first object choice, while manifested in the ego, was made by the id, the superego maintains a close relation with it as well. Freud writes, “Thus the super-ego is always close to the id and can act as its representative vis-à-vis the ego. It reaches deep down into the id and for that reason is farther from consciousness than the ego is.”\textsuperscript{302} It would seem, then, that we can locate the superego in Freud’s diagram as well. It would sit near the centre, straddling both the intersection of the ego and the id.\textsuperscript{303}

3.3 Subsequent Elaborations

After \textit{The Ego and the Id}, Freud’s larger works often deal with social issues, placing them outside the purview of this chapter. We will return to them later. Instead, Freud’s comments on metapsychology and the further elaboration of the second topography are limited to shorter papers. This final section then will assemble some of Freud’s brief remarks written after 1923 that advance the second topography.

Ricoeur argues that both topographies, while created based on economic problems, operate from different points of reference. If the first focused on the play of presence and absence as a result of charges in libido, the second finds its reference point in the relative strength of the ego,\textsuperscript{304} which must mediate the demands of both the id and superego to consciousness. At times, it appears to be in control, while it falls sway to the id at others. As Freud explains:

\begin{quote}
[I]f the ego remains bound up with the id and indistinguishable from it, then it displays its strength. The same is true of the relation between the ego and the super-ego. In many situations the two are merged; and as a rule we can only distinguish one from the other when there is a tension or conflict between them.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{301} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 48.
\textsuperscript{302} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 48.
\textsuperscript{303} Freud does indeed go on to locate the superego in this manner. See pg. 78-79 of the \textit{New Introductory Lectures} (1933).
\textsuperscript{304} See Ricoeur 1970, pg. 211.
In repression the decisive fact is that the ego is an organization and the id is not. The ego is, indeed, the organized portion of the id.\textsuperscript{305}

In contrast to the relatively fixed structure of the first topography, the variability of relations in the second topography also accounts for the variety of psychic occurrences.

The question of the consciousness of the ego, superego, and id occupies a considerable amount of space in the metapsychological discussions after 1923, presumably because of the opposition voiced within psychoanalytic circles to the proposal of the second topography. The ego, we know, is split between the unconscious and consciousness, while both the id and superego, if unconscious in the dynamic sense, can be made conscious through therapy.\textsuperscript{306} Freud emphasizes here that, with the advent of the second topography, the systematic sense of the term ‘unconscious’ should be dropped.\textsuperscript{307} We can no longer speak of a spatial realm of the unconscious. ‘Unconscious’ remains useful, however, in the dynamic sense, with reference to presence and absence in consciousness. The systematic unconscious is replaced with the id, ego, and superego, which offer more accurate descriptions. Even these, though, Freud does not hesitate to describe in spatial language: “these [the id, ego and superego], then, are the three realms [Reiche], regions [Gebiete], provinces [Provinzen], into which we divide an individual’s mental apparatus.”\textsuperscript{308} And in a note dated 22 August 1938, in the twilight of his life and in the final volume of his \textit{Collected Works}, Freud proposes a brief and somewhat Kantian understanding of psychic space, writing: “Space may be the projection of the extension of the psychical apparatus. No other derivation is possible. Instead of Kant’s \textit{a priori} determinants of our psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing of it.”\textsuperscript{309}

How, then, can we understand the spatiality of this second topography? Initially, Freud leaves the door open to the possibility of mapping the first topography onto the second, thus preserving

\textsuperscript{305} Sigmund Freud, ‘Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926).’ In \textit{CW} 20, pg. 97.

\textsuperscript{306} Sigmund Freud, ‘New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1933).’ In \textit{CW} 22, pg. 69.

\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 71-72.

\textsuperscript{308} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 72.

\textsuperscript{309} Sigmund Freud, ‘An Outline of Psycho-Analysis (1940).’ In \textit{CW} 23, pg. 300.
the same sort of spatiality. However, he eliminates this option later on with his suggestion that the systematic sense of ‘unconscious’ be dropped. Still, the dynamic sense of the term, which is spatial in itself, remains. More importantly, the second topography is spatial insofar as it depicts three agencies whose relations are deployed spatially. We can see this in Freud’s diagram. As Steve Pile has suggested, the spatiality of the second topography lies in the location of the ego at the crossroads of id impulses and superego censorship. Brennan makes a similar suggestion, but instead of pointing to relational structure as Pile does, she suggests focusing on functional links between agencies. The second topography remains spatial, for example, because the ego is “directed towards” the superego, and the ego towards the outside world.

4 Digression/Postscript: The Archaeological Analogy

In this exploration of Freud’s uses of heuristic devices to describe the mind, I would be remiss if I did not say something about his extensive and persistent use of archaeological references. At the same time, I relegate these comments to the end of my data, partly because so much has already been said about them and their existence is well documented, and partly because their spatial implications are closely related to those of the first topography, already described at length, and the notion of the unconscious as a stratification of memories.

The first analogy between psychoanalysis and the practice of archaeology dates to early in Freud’s career and his 1896 text on The Aetiology of the Neuroses. There, Freud writes:

Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view, with questioning the inhabitants – perhaps semi-barbaric people – who live in the vicinity, about what tradition tells them of the history and meaning of these archaeological remains, and with noting down what they tell him – and he may then proceed on his journey. But he may act differently. He may have brought picks, shovels and spades with him, and he may set the inhabitants to work with these implements. Together with them he

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310 Pile 1999, pg. 216.


312 Sigmund Freud, ‘The Aetiology of the Neuroses (1896).’ In CW 3.
may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries are self-explanatory: the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure-house; the fragments of columns can be filled out into a temple; the numerous inscriptions, which, by good luck, may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and, when they have been deciphered and translated, yield undreamed-of information about the events of the remote past, to commemorate which the monuments were built.  

Psychoanalysis is analogous to unconscious excavation, pointing to the manner in which unconscious elements can help explain the arrangement and relation of conscious elements. Remember that Freud’s concern here is the elucidation of hysterical symptoms, which are rooted in repressed unconscious ideas. While the analyst may readily observe conscious manifestations – the tip of the ruins – the actual structure is hidden. The archaeological analogy is also particularly apt in linking time and space. Those elements that lie buried are old and tend to increase in age the lower one goes. The stratification of levels of memory in the unconscious is directly reflected in the layers of artifacts buried in the earth.

Returning to the analogy in 1910, Freud similarly employs it to demonstrate that hysterical symptoms are rooted in repressed memories:

The monuments and memorials with which large cities are adorned are also mnemonic symbols. If you take a walk through the streets of London, you will find, in front of one of the great railway termini, a richly carved Gothic column – Charing Cross. One of the old Plantagenet kings of the thirteenth century ordered the body of his beloved Queen Eleanor to be carried to Westminster; and at every stage at which the coffin rested he erected a Gothic cross. Charing Cross is the last of the monuments that commemorate the funeral cortège. At another point in the same town, not far from London Bridge, you will find a towering, and more modern, column, which is simply known as ‘The Monument’. It was designed as a memorial of the Great Fire, which broke out in that neighbourhood in 1666 and destroyed a large part of the city. These monuments, then, resemble the hysterical symptoms in being mnemonic symbols; up to that point the comparison seems justifiable. But what should we think of a Londoner who paused to-day in deep melancholy before the memorial of Queen Eleanor’s funeral instead of going about his business in the hurry that modern working conditions demand or instead of feeling joy over the youthful queen of his own heart? Or again what should we think of a Londoner who shed tears before the Monument that commemorates the reduction of his beloved metropolis to ashes although it has long since been risen
in far again greater brilliance? Yet every single hysteric and neurotic behaves like these two unpractical Londoners. Not only do they remember painful experiences of the remote past, but they still cling to them emotionally; they cannot get free of the past and for its sake they neglect what is real and immediate. This fixation of mental life to pathogenic traumas is one of the most significant and practically important characteristics of neurosis.  

The concern here is less with archaeology than it is with geography proper or urban planning. Similarly, the shift in emphasis from the discovery of repressed memories in the unconscious to the affective reaction that these memories provoke is mirrored in the change of concern.

Freud picks up the same analogy years later in *Civilization and Its Discontents* with his discussion of Rome. Again, the analogy demonstrates that memories never perish. Yet here, instead of using a remote village as his archaeological site, Freud refers to a bustling European metropolis, one that was dear to his heart. The analogy presents consciousness differently, first as a site of frenzied activity, like the city itself, but also one in which the remnants of memories – the top of the ruins – are less visible than in the previous case. In Rome, it is not a question of finding a ruin and digging down but of technique, of possessing the knowledge and skill needed to orient oneself in a virtual landscape that no longer exists. Of many old buildings one sees nothing; they have been built over entirely with new structures. But she who knows her Roman history can still find where a given monument had been despite the lack of ruins. And even in Rome, despite its new landscape, the foundations of old constructions still lie beneath the surface.

The problem with the Roman case, it seems, is that its history is too rich for Freud’s purposes. For a given street corner not only contains ruins from the times of Augustus or Trajan, but also from that of the Medici and of Mussolini. Yet for Freud, two memories cannot occupy the same place. There is only room for one unconscious memory, overlaid by consciousness. The analogy thus fails because buildings can be demolished and replaced even in good times, whereas memories inevitably persist and are only repressed as the result of a conflict. Freud readily

admits the limitations of his analogy, calling it “an idle game” that carries with it “unimaginable
and even absurd” consequences and demonstrates “how far we are from mastering the
characteristics of mental life by representing them in pictorial terms.”

5 Analysis: Topography as Metaphor

To this point, I have demonstrated that Freud understands the psyche in spatial terms. It is
equally obvious from this exposition, however, that he does not intend for his reader to take these
spatial terms literally. I suggest, rather, that Freud’s spatial descriptions of the psyche are
metaphorical. While this proposal may hardly seem revolutionary, I believe that its consequences
can be important for our understanding of Freud’s conception of science.

Aristotle, who coined the term ‘metaphor,’ praises its use as “by far the greatest thing,” a tool
that cannot be learned but that is instead “the token of genius” and a testament to a writer’s
particular ability to perceive a likeness in dissimilar things. The traditional definition of
metaphor handed down from Greek philosophy presents it as a device through which one sees
something in terms of something else, an elliptical simile used for stylistic, rhetorical, or
didactic purposes. Aristotle’s classic treatment of metaphor has endured for centuries with little
modification. For him, metaphor is ultimately about words, specifically single words used in a
manner that deviates from literal language and produces a change of meaning based on
similarities between things. In our case, for example, Freud uses spatial language to represent
dimensions of the psyche – relationality, temporality, and so on – which cannot be shown
otherwise, all the while denying the literal reading of this language. He recognizes the perils of

317 Ibid, pg. 70.
Press, 1953), pg. 91.
320 Mark Johnson, ‘Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition.’ In Mark Johnson’s (ed.) Philosophical Perspectives
321 Ibid, pg. 6.
this endeavour, of which Aristotle also warns: “a metaphorical definition is always obscure.”

Metaphor must be wielded carefully then, constantly weighing costs and benefits, and seems resolutely inappropriate to any context that relies heavily on unambiguity and determinism.

With the rise of empiricism in the 16th and 17th centuries, the medieval and classical appreciation of skillful metaphor gave way to its critique at the hands of empiricist philosophers, who saw in metaphor a threat to scientific epistemologies. If truth was to be defined literally, as many of them argued it should be, there could be no room for figurative or rhetorical language in science. Hobbes and Locke, for example, argued fiercely against metaphor, describing it as absurd and misleadingly emotional, preferring objective science over the Romantic “wandering amongst innumerable absurdities” of figurative language. More recently, Ricoeur continues in the same vein, describing metaphor as a literary trope of resemblance whose basic unit is the word, all the while following Aristotle in highlighting metaphor’s ability to creatively reinterpret reality. Even for Ricoeur, then, metaphor is primarily a literary and poetic device, albeit one that requires artful skill to master. On the other end of the spectrum, we can identify a line of thought stretching from Heraclitus to the postmodern philosophy of Derrida, running through Vico, Nietzsche, de Man, and others, which sees metaphor in all language and argues against the objectivism of the Enlightenment.

For our purposes, we should also distinguish carefully between metaphor, as described above, and analogy, another tool that Freud uses in explaining his theories. While the topographies can be understood as spatial metaphors, Freud’s appeal to the model of the microscope or to archaeological tales are analogies. As Genter and Jezierski define it, “an analogy is a mapping of knowledge from one domain (the base) into another (the target) such that a system of relations

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322 Aristotle 1953, 139b.
323 Johnson 1981, pg. 11.
326 Kirby 1997, pg. 517.
that holds among the base objects also holds among the target objects.” Analogy involves a fixed, one-to-one correspondence between the two terms being compared, through which extra information is inferred by comparison. The difference between analogy and metaphor is often very thin, however, especially when we consider the manners in which both devices can produce knowledge – through creative thought with metaphor, through inference with analogy – and serve heuristic purposes.

5.1 The Cognitive Theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson

Cognitive scientist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson propose a theory of metaphor that runs counter to those presented thus far, and which I find to be much more productive for this project. Lakoff and Johnson deny that metaphor is simply a literary or rhetorical device and grant it instead a central role not only in artistic composition but also in many other facets of everyday thought. They ground their cognitive theory on three suggestions, the first two of which are shared with psychoanalysis, and the third of which will be my point of focus in the remainder of the chapter. Cognitive science and psychoanalysis both agree that the mind is inherently embodied and that the majority of thought processes occur outside the purview of consciousness – unconsciously, in psychoanalytic terms. Their third proposition is that metaphor has much less to do with the mastery of words and rhetoric than it does with basic thought. All abstract concepts, they suggest, are metaphorical to some extent because the mind is incapable of thinking in completely abstract, unembodied terms. Metaphor thus works to ground abstract concepts, including theories. In this manner, they argue against the traditional definition of metaphor from Aristotle onwards.


328 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Perseus, 1999), pg. 3.

329 Kirby (1997) has argued, successfully, I think, that much of this theory is actually foreshadowed in Aristotle’s own treatment of metaphor, which similarly sees the ability to identify likeness as a key cognitive capacity crucial to both inductive and deductive reasoning. In this sense, poetical and rhetorical language as Aristotle describes them fit nicely under the Lakoff and Johnson umbrella. Ultimately, Kirby wants to demonstrate that Aristotle locates metaphor in thought as well, rather than only in language as many – including much of the philosophical tradition – have read him to suggest.
Metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson suggest, arise from the mind’s everyday embodied experience. They “supply the logic, the imagery, and the qualitative feel of sensorimotor experience to abstract concepts.”\(^{330}\) In short, metaphors ground abstract ideas in somatic experience. The mind is not capable of thinking in complete abstraction. It requires familiar reference points, drawn from its understanding of the world, as a basis for understanding. This process is key to all forms of scientific thought, including Freud’s psychology.\(^{331}\) Metaphors thus become cornerstones of creative thought in general, coming to the rescue in situations where common language and communication fail us.\(^{332}\) As a case in point, Lakoff and Johnson’s argument goes on to demonstrate the myriad of ways in which the functions of the mind, abstract ideas, are metaphorically treated as a body in everyday language, grounding them in somatic experience: thinking is conceived as moving (we ‘approach’ a topic), as perceiving (we ‘get the picture’), or as object manipulation (we ‘exchange’ ideas).\(^{333}\) These expressions go beyond mere turns of phrase; they structure the manner in which we think about certain actions and processes. Consider the metaphor of war that structures our conception of argumentation. We win arguments. We defend our positions. We structure discussions as actual battles, parrying back and forth. The metaphor used to describe argumentation influences the way in which the activity itself is actually carried out. As Lakoff and Johnson suggest, in a context in which argumentation is viewed as a dance, arguments themselves would take on a different form.\(^{334}\)

Metaphor is highly specific to a given context, making it extremely variable in its presentation. We have already seen this with respect to the different configurations that Freud’s psychic structures adopt, as well as with the shift from the first to the second topography. The question under investigation framed the creation of the models. Metaphors elucidate particular aspects of a comparison that are relevant to what is being explained, all the while obscuring other

\(^{330}\) Lakoff and Johnson 1999, pg. 128.

\(^{331}\) As they suggest (1999, pg. 235): “It is virtually impossible to think or talk about the mind in any serious way without conceptualizing it metaphorically.”


\(^{333}\) *Ibid*, pg. 235.

\(^{334}\) *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pg. 4.
elements. Since the mind is embodied, Lakoff and Johnson identify spatial metaphors as being the most common in any explanatory enterprise. We think in terms of the body, which exists in space. The body’s orientation in space is often unconsciously translated into an orientation metaphor. For example, since we stand when we are awake and lie down when we are asleep, the mind might correlate ‘up’ with ‘conscious’ and ‘down’ with unconscious. These sorts of metaphorical correspondences are highly contingent upon socio-cultural circumstances, since spatial relations are not found in the world but impressed upon it through social and sensory means.

5.2 Scientific Explanation and Metaphor

Following Lakoff and Johnson, then, metaphor is identified as a cognitive process that plays an unconscious role in the development of any kind of abstract thought. As a result, metaphorical thought becomes central to both science and philosophy. Johnson goes so far as to suggest that “without metaphor, there would be no philosophy.” Derrida has made a similar attempt to demonstrate that philosophy cannot avoid the use of metaphor, try as it may to do so. Yet metaphor has proven much less controversial in philosophical circles than it has in scientific ones, largely because of the implications of metaphor for scientific objectivism. A heavy emphasis on metaphor in abstract thought can eliminate any pretension to truth, defining it instead as a correspondence of terms within a given word-game. Freud’s apologies for his use of imprecise language make perfect sense in context, when we consider that metaphor was in his day banned from scientific language, though commonplace for poets and writers. The scientific community simply could not tolerate such imprecise language, understanding the challenge that

335 Ibid, pg. 10.
336 This discussion recalls an important thread in the philosophy of space that begins with Aristotle and passes through Kant, phenomenology, Heidegger, and others.
337 Ibid, pg. 15.
it posed to their empiricist model. The suggestion that Freud’s spatial language is ultimately metaphorical and, additionally, that he knew he was using language that contemporary science would judge to fall short of its standards, raises the issue of the scientific credibility of Freud’s theories.

Psychoanalysis’ scientific credentials have already been the topic of much discussion and critiques of its method have often been scathing. For Popper, for whom “the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability,” psychoanalysis is metaphysics rather than science because its statements cannot be proven to be wrong. For others like Ricoeur and Habermas, psychoanalysis is more valuable as a hermeneutical system than a science. Ricoeur sees psychoanalysis as an interpretation of culture, one based primarily on the interpretation of meaning, rather than as a system of psychology. Similarly, Habermas views psychoanalysis as a form of “systematically generalized self-reflection,” a union of hermeneutics and natural science that suffers from its creator’s misrepresentation of it as pure science.

In light of their theory, Lakoff and Johnson seek to modify objectivist understandings of human reason, removing it from its place as a universal and transcendent standard. Instead, they emphasize that reason is embodied and evolutionary, largely unconscious and intensely affective. In short, if a condemnation of psychoanalysis as pseudoscience is inevitably premised on a particular definition of science, Lakoff and Johnson’s cognitive theory of metaphor similarly requires that we reevaluate our definitions and expectations. Let me be clear: I agree with Ricoeur and Habermas in calling psychoanalysis a hermeneutical system, insofar as a large part of it strives for the interpretation of hidden meaning. It is also clear that Freud

342 See Ricoeur 1970.
considered his work to be scientific, or at least to be of interest to the scientific community. Ultimately, though, I want to suggest that Freud had a very different definition in mind of what constituted science, one that put him at odds with his contemporaries, and that part of this different definition is reflected in his free use of spatial metaphor.

Suzanne Raitt suggests that Freud’s move from the localization of the psyche in the *Project* to his topographical models demonstrates a reticence on his part to consider the placement of the psyche in the brain as a proper task of science. For Freud, Raitt writes, the failure of the *Project* did not point to the shortcomings of psychoanalysis but to a different conception of science. She continues, “Freud was able to continue to argue that psychoanalysis was a ‘natural science’ almost until the day of his death partly because, for him, ‘science’ itself was a protean and unreliable concept.” She identifies “critical reflection on the conventions of scientific language and method” as one of the central yet often unrecognized tasks of psychoanalytic theory. In short, psychoanalysis was not only a revolution *in* science, but also a revolution *of* science. Freud used spatial metaphors and analogies to describe the mind because he felt that he had no other choice, that no other language would express his ideas in a satisfactory manner. This led him beyond his own theories to question the transparency of the literal terms of positivist science.

We must also realize that, while much of ‘Freud the scientist’ is genuine, much of it is also a construct of translation. Bettelheim and Ornston both blame James Strachey, the English editor and translator of the now-authoritative *Collective Works*, for creating an artificially verbose and overly scientific English translation of Freud’s text, one that ultimately misrepresents his ideas. For Bettelheim, reading Freud in the original German reveals a humanist

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349 *Freud and Man’s Soul* (New York: Vintage, 1982)

thinker more than a scientist, one whose mastery of the subtleties of his mother tongue is almost unrivaled at the time.\textsuperscript{351} He suggests that Freud’s metaphors are carefully chosen and quite intentional, selected to “vivify a concept that defies more concise expression”\textsuperscript{352} and “to bridge the rift that exists between the hard facts to which psychoanalysis refer and the imaginative manner in which it explains them.”\textsuperscript{353} In the same vein, Ornston finds in Strachey’s translation a reification of Freud’s ideas, one that, in its replacement of affect-laden language with neutral terms, transforms processes into structures.\textsuperscript{354} In this case, Ornston argues, “Strachey usually took it on himself to silently decide for his readers when Freud was using a verbal diagram,”\textsuperscript{355} and this even though he recognized that many of Freud’s images were not to be taken literally. While this argument may somewhat underestimate Strachey’s skill as a translator in my mind, the general idea that Strachey often renders processes as structures is well taken.

As Spence points out, metaphor creates a different kind of science, one in which explanations form a sort of mythology, no less powerful in their explanative potential but operating on a different epistemological register.\textsuperscript{356} Such a science cannot be based on direct empirical observation but must instead take into consideration how cognitive metaphors mediate and arrange these observations. But to say that such a place for metaphor in science divorces theory from its responsibility to clinical data, as Spence does,\textsuperscript{357} requires further investigation. We will return to this topic shortly.

\footnotesize
352 Ibid, pg. 21.
353 Ibid, pg. 37.
354 Ornston 1985, pg. 382.
355 Ibid, pg. 392. Ornston’s argument is ultimately about Strachey’s overuse of scientific language as opposed to colloquial language, which he argues would have been more appropriate. Spence 1987 voices a similar objection. I have obviously demonstrated my disagreement with Ornston’s other point, which argues that Freud abhorred spatial language as being “inherently primitive and misleading.”
357 Ibid, pg. 69.
5.3 Spatial Metaphor

Freud lived through a strong wave of materialism and positivism in Germany, during which the organic basis of medicine was emphasized.\textsuperscript{358} This period was a reaction against the dominance of Romantic thought that preceded it. Psychology, which had been heavily allied with Romantic philosophy, was still considered unscientific, leading psychiatrists to renounce it along with all other ideas linked to this philosophy, including that of the unconscious. Their focus instead was on the classification of disease and its location in the nervous system.\textsuperscript{359} Having only recently differentiated their project themselves from the philosophy of mind, psychiatrists of Freud’s day were hesitant to accept new theories, especially those that threatened to diminish their scientific credibility.\textsuperscript{360}

Freud, then, sat between two worlds. As a clinician and a trained doctor, he was a psychiatrist. His focus on classification also locates him in this camp. But his system of classification, based on the unconscious, divorces him from it, as does his refusal, post-\textit{Project}, to deal with questions of anatomical location. Furthermore, Decker documents that Freud “never attended a general medical or psychiatric congress and repeatedly urged his followers not to do so.”\textsuperscript{361} So while he did publish his ideas for debate in journal articles, he refused to ‘play the game’ of science in at least one important respect. We must also remember that Freud studied philosophy as a young student in Vienna and that he inherited from his philosophical mentor, Franz Brentano, the aspiration to an empirical psychology grounded in personal experience.\textsuperscript{362} In describing the reception of Freud’s work, Decker demonstrates that German psychiatrists adopted his ideas

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{358} Hannah S. Decker, \textit{Freud in Germany: Revolution and Reaction in Science, 1893-1907} (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), pg. 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{359} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 30.
  \item \textsuperscript{360} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{361} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{362} See Alfred I. Tauber, \textit{Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Tauber describes Brentano as a ‘proto-phenomenologist’ who relied on inner perception and self-observation to draw conclusion about the mind. This obviously ran counter to the Wundtian project, and experimental psychologists considered Brentano a philosopher of the mind.
\end{itemize}
selectively, only interested in them insofar as they related to clinical pathology. Wilhelm Wundt’s experimental psychology, as performed in his laboratory in Leipzig after 1879, set the gold standard for empirical investigations into the mind. Free from introspection, purely empirical, and yielding results that were relatively easy to replicate, Wundt’s psychology stood in contrast to psychoanalysis, which consequently failed to measure up as science in his eyes. As Decker explains, for Wundt “[o]nly readily observable physical and chemical explanations were scientific. Anything else would be a return to the dark days of Naturphilosophie.” As his brand of psychology began to establish itself among both foreign and German universities, psychoanalysis was kept on the fringes. Outside of Germany, however, in countries like Switzerland, which did not react so strongly against Romantic philosophy, Freud’s notions of repression and of the unconscious, which required that German psychiatrists stretch their idea of science too generously in Freud’s favour, were received much more positively.

In light of this, we must end by considering how Freud’s spatial metaphors modify our understanding of the scientific status of his work. Montuschi’s comments, which are in line with the results of this investigation, suggest that metaphor usually enters the vocabulary of science through models, which inherently describe something that lies beyond the abilities of ordinary language. The role of these models will vary depending on the definition of science that one adopts. For the formalist, models are useful heuristic devices, but ones which add nothing to the theory itself and which could easily be removed. Following Brown, I want to take Montuschi’s argument a step further. While the metaphorical nature of scientific models has often been granted, Lakoff and Johnson’s theory requires that we extend this to scientific theories and

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363 Decker 1977, pg. 103.
364 Ibid, pg. 195.
365 Ibid, pg. 196.
366 Ibid, pg. 322.
368 Ibid, pg. 94.
hypotheses. For the cognitivist, the metaphor is an intrinsic part of the theory itself. So while Freud’s constant apologies for his use of topographical language and his pleas that they not be taken literally anticipate his reader’s reaction to this metaphorical language and reflect the scientific standards of his day, one might also argue that his inability to think about the mind in any other way but through topography places him squarely, albeit unwittingly, in the cognitivist camp.

The consequences of Freud’s use of spatial metaphor can be seen on his science. On the one hand, as Silber writes, the use of spatial metaphor lends itself to a correspondence between theory or model and reality, since the latter is experienced spatially. Remember that, for Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors originate in the mind’s embodiment, and that for Freud, the mind mediates objects. A theory that employs metaphor must recognize the complexity of human thought beyond the one-to-one thought-reality correspondence of scientific formalism. Metaphors influence the manner in which the world is viewed, changing it in the process.

This is not to suggest that an emphasis on metaphor must inevitably lead to a relativist theory of knowledge; far from it. Complete objectivity becomes an impossibility, insofar as one must recognize the construction of both knowledge and reality in the mind by the language used. Knowledge is thus dependant to some extent on socio-cultural circumstances. As Cazeaux suggests, “epistemology is metaphorical in the sense that the task of describing how our faculties mesh with the world requires us to make claims which exceed what is given in experience and which therefore can only be articulated by drawing on external areas of discourse.” Lakoff and Johnson present their understanding of the theory of truth that emerges from their emphasis


372 See Montuschi 2000, pg. 278.


374 Ibid, pg. 134.
on metaphor by pointing to the impossibility of a context-free, assumptionless science.\textsuperscript{375} This does not mean, however, that we must completely denounce science as a fraud or endorse radical subjectivity and relativism, since the evidence upon which scientific truth is grounded will still converge regardless on context. So the earth is still round, for example, and DNA still has a helical structure. We can still make truth claims about the brain – it has neurons, neurotransmitters, and the like – despite the emphasis on metaphor. As Brown explains, “To understand how science works and to account for its success, we have no need for the proposition that scientists have unmediated access to the world ‘as it really is.’ We have no ground for believing that there exist objective, mind-independent truths awaiting discovery. Rather, statements we regard as truths about the world are the product of human reasoning.”\textsuperscript{376} Metaphor, which Lakoff and Johnson define elsewhere as “imaginative rationality,”\textsuperscript{377} is in fact helpful in the formulation of scientific hypotheses, in thinking beyond empirical evidence to find explanations. Ultimately, we come to understand the world through our interactions with it, as mediated by our cultural and physical environments, but we need metaphor to think about these experiences as well. As Brown points out, language fails us particularly in our attempts to share practical knowledge.\textsuperscript{378} That which we know by doing we cannot describe well to others. The observations and analyses of scientists are valid, but their descriptions are metaphorical and relative, and ultimately play a role in guiding the course of future study.

There is nothing special or unique about scientific thought. It possesses no great ability to discover ready-made truths out in the world. Instead, scientists use the same conceptual framework in their research as they do in the rest of their lives, a thought process closely linked to the embodiment of the mind.\textsuperscript{379} Since these embodied experiences are largely shared (although social and cultural environs are not), truth emerges as a form of cognitive consensus

\textsuperscript{375} Lakoff & Johnson 1999, pg. 89.
\textsuperscript{376} Brown 2003, pg. 12.
\textsuperscript{377} 1980, pg. 185.
\textsuperscript{378} Brown 2003, pg. 11.
\textsuperscript{379} Brown 2003, pg. 50.
To state that there is a real world that exists independently of our knowledge of it need not imply that scientific descriptions picture this world exactly as it is.

This investigation brings us to a number of conclusions, the first group of which concern Freud’s topographies, which emerge as spatial metaphors devised to explain clinical data. The context of the topographies is thus of prime importance, the first having been created to elucidate hysterical symptoms and dream formation processes, and the second questions of enculturation and unpleasurable psychic phenomena. While metaphorical, the spatiality of these models can be shown through the relations of the agencies contained therein.

On a more general scale, consideration of Freud’s spatial metaphors can lead us to reflect on Freud the scientist. His use of spatial metaphor and his repeated pleas for its inevitability in theoretical thought, while they ran against the prevailing scientific standards of his day, could be read as an anticipation of modern cognitive science, as demonstrated through Lakoff and Johnson’s theory of metaphor. While the charge of ‘scientism’ has often been repeated, it is mitigated here by another aspect of Freud’s thought that readily embraces spatial metaphor and suggests that he had a somewhat different notion of science than did his contemporaries, one less markedly grounded in a dogged objectivism. More importantly, Freud, as I have presented him here, can help us think critically about the epistemological status of scientific claims, denying the very scientism with which he is so often associated. Freud’s use of spatial metaphor presents us with a critical conception of science and an acknowledgement – albeit an implicit one – of its limitations. While Freud may not take the issue far enough – we are trapped in language just as we are trapped with language – his use of metaphor demonstrates an important step along the path to a reflective science, one that many of his contemporaries were unable to take.
Chapter 3: Here/Gone: The Formation of the Spatial Subject

The child who has just received the gift stands nervously on the balcony and follows with his eyes the bubbles that he has just blown into the sky from the small ring that he holds in front of his mouth… Another burst of small bubbles flies out. Then, on a later attempt, a large oval bubble slowly detaches itself from the ring, trembling, filled with a nervous life: the wind catches it and it floats down to the street. The joyous child’s hopes follow it. For a moment, the child himself is lifted with his miraculous bubble, as if, for a few seconds, his destiny was linked to that of this quivering structure. When the bubble finally bursts, after its trembling and languishing flight, the soap bubble’s artist, on his balcony, lets out a cry at once a sigh and a sound of jubilation. For the short time that the bubble was intact, the blower was outside himself, as if the bubble’s very existence depended on the fact that it remain enveloped in his attention. Any lack of accompaniment, any negligence on the part of the hope and trembling that followed it in its flight would have condemned the brilliant thing to premature failure.

The episode described above opens the first volume of Sloterdijk’s spherology. It represents, in the most literal sense of the term, an ecstatic – ex-static – experience; the child, filling the bubble that he has created, stands outside himself, his hopes linked to its existence. Watching the bubble, he is not a Cartesian subject observing an external object in space. His existence extends instead into the bubble that he has blown. While Sloterdijk frames this brief discussion as a commentary on Sir John Everett Millais’s 1887 painting ‘Bubbles,’ the parallels with Freud’s fort-da game are surely not lost on the German philosopher.

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380 “L’enfant auquel on a fait le cadeau se tient sur le balcon, fébrile, et suit des yeux les bulles de savon qu’il a soufflé dans le ciel à partir de l’anneau qu’il tient devant sa bouche… Ensuite, lors d’une tentative ultérieure, c’est un gros ballon ovale qui se détache du petit cercle, tremblant, empli d’une vie anxieuse: la brise l’emporte et il descend en planant dans la rue. L’espoir de l’enfant ravi le suit. L’enfant en personne s’élève dans l’espace avec sa bulle miraculeuse, comme si, pendant quelques secondes, son destin était suspendu à celui de cette structure tressaillante. Lorsque la bulle éclate enfin, après un vol tremblant et languissant, l’artiste de la bulle de savon, sur son balcon, émet un son qui est à la fois un soupir et un cri jubilatoire. Pendant le laps de temps où la bulle a vécu, le souffleur a été hors de lui, comme si l’existence de la bulle avait dépendu du fait qu’elle demeurât enveloppée dans une attention qui accompagnait son vol. Tout manque d’accompagnement, toute négligence dans l’espoir et le tremblement qui escortent cette bulle dans son vol aurait condamné cette chose scintillante à un échec prémature.” My translation. See Peter Sloterdijk, Sphères I: Bulles (Paris: Fayard, 2002), pg. 19.

381 Which depicts, as one might expect, a curly haired boy of perhaps five, sitting outdoors on a rock, holding a bowl of soap and blowing bubbles out of a corncob pipe.
For Sloterdijk, the individual has never existed. The model that he puts forth is an intersubjective one stated in the language of Heideggerian ontology. \(^{382}\) “What is being?” becomes a spatial question – “where are we when we are in the world?”\(^{383}\) The sphere provides the answer. We cannot be in the world, at least not directly, without being in relationships with others. The ‘spheres’ that we inhabit, the human relationships that inform us, mediate our experience of the world. So the basic unit of society becomes not the individual but the relational dyad, the couple, and the psyche is never one but is an intrinsically paired structure. The resultant subject is not bounded or insulated against the influence of others but is permeable and fluid, only existing to the extent to which it interacts with others. The Other is always somehow inside us. As previously mentioned, Sloterdijk’s spatial-relational notion of the subject shares many important similarities with Freud’s.

Sloterdijk acknowledges his debt to Freud but only in a limited sense. On the one hand, he sees Freud and himself as engaged in a common project of describing the individual as a topological mystery, \(^{384}\) Freud through his topographies and Sloterdijk through his spherology, but at the same time he takes consistent and considerable pains to distance himself from Freud’s work. In *Bulles*, he represents psychoanalysis – no particular school is mentioned, though the context clearly points to European Lacanianism – as an authoritarian school with whose ideas he may share commonalities but whose dogma he rejects. \(^{385}\) Sloterdijk traces his own intellectual heritage beyond Freud to Platonic notions of fascination, as developed by Marcilio Ficino in particular, and to mesmerism and magnetism, \(^{386}\) finding his influences in these notions that also heavily shaped psychoanalytic thought.

Sloterdijk’s own reticence toward Freud’s work is of minimal concern to me here and I wish to emphasize the similarities between the ‘bubbles’ episode and the fort-da nonetheless. Also

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\(^{382}\) Sloterdijk 2002, pg. 96.

\(^{383}\) Ibid, pg. 31.


\(^{385}\) “si l’on trouve dans ces pages des emprunts aux représentations psychanalytiques, c’est uniquement parce que le matériel le permet et le suggère, et non parce que cette école constitue pour nous une autorité.” See 2002, pg. 109.

\(^{386}\) 2002, pg. 136.
relevant to this investigation is Sloterdijk’s conception of space. For him, spatial language provides a new lexicon for thinking about relationality. We have already seen something similar with Freud in the previous chapter, where our discussion of topographies came down to a consideration of the relations that existed between the different agencies of the mind. An emphasis on relationality frequently brings with it spatial questions, it seems, since relations must occur across space. By this logic, a spatial Freud similarly puts forth an intensely relational psychoanalysis. This chapter will develop this line of thought beyond the arguments of the previous one by focusing on the seminal relations that help shape the subject. Here, we concern ourselves with the sorts of relations that are possible outside of the individual, or, rather, in the liminal area between inside and outside. Sloterdijk’s intersubjective argument that ‘there can be no ‘I’ without an ‘us’’ is not new; indeed, he himself acknowledges that it has been current knowledge in psychology and neuroscience for quite some time, in large part, one might argue, because of Freud’s historic influence. But the intersubjective case still has headway to make in a number of areas in which an assumed Cartesian subject continues to dominate, and Sloterdijk helps to further this cause by providing a new language with which to think about intersubjectivity.

How can we think spatially about the Freudian subject? The last chapter provided some answers by looking at the role of space in the topographies of the mind; the next chapter will go further still in considering the division between ‘the subject’ and ‘the real.’ Here, though, we interrogate the part that space plays in the formation of the subject. In particular, we consider the fort-da game, which Freud describes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and another closely related episode, the discussion of the oceanic feeling figuring at the beginning of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). In both of these episodes, Freud depicts a shift in the state of consciousness, a moment that might be described as its formation. Here, a boundary is erected in the unified medium of the psyche, creating a division between subject and object and, in the process, creating space. The creation of the subject, then, can be understood psychoanalytically as a partitioning of space. After establishing the role of space in the formation of the subject, we move on to consider the nature of this subject. In particular, I am interested in establishing the

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387 2003, pg. 124.
permeability of the Freudian subject, in contrast to those who continue to denounce Freud’s model of the subject as Cartesian. This discussion will extend into the next chapter, which furthers this line of inquiry by considering the example of phantasy as a manner of breaking down the strict dichotomy between subjective and objective.

As I made explicit with Sloterdijk’s philosophy, ‘what is the subject?’ and ‘where is the subject?’ are closely related questions. Before we begin, though, we should consider this vague yet ubiquitous term, ‘subjectivity.’ Nick Mansfield defines it as a “principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why, our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience.”

Coming from a Derridean perspective, he similarly emphasizes the intersubjective element, placing it at the centre of his definition. To be a subject is to experience oneself as being connected to others. Mansfield goes on to locate psychoanalytic thought in the middle of a continuum that runs from Cartesian to postmodern subjectivities. So while Freud builds his theory on the common Enlightenment assumption that the subject is a ‘thing’ which can be studied, he moves closer to postmodern philosophy – a category for which I use Foucault and Derrida as representatives – in acknowledging that the self is a construct and not an innate identity.

I state these claims categorically now, knowing that I will complicate them later. I do not think that Freud reifies the self; instead, he seems to me to locate the subject at the intersection of a number of processes and agencies, both conscious and unconscious. Nor do I know exactly what one might designate as ‘self’ in the Freudian context if one is to acknowledge the importance of unconscious elements. ‘Subject’ and ‘self’ are certainly not interchangeable, then, as Mansfield uses the terms. Rather, Freud’s subject is a confluence of conscious and unconscious processes, nourished and shaped from both inside and out. I will use the term ‘subject’ to signify the psyche in general, a rubric under which the above processes are included.

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As Kathleen Kirby has suggested, any discussion of subjectivity inevitably implies spatiality, at least insofar as the subject is perceived as bounded.\(^{390}\) Even Sloterdijk’s model, which extends the bounds of the subject beyond the integrity of the unified, undivided, Cartesian self only moves to include the dyad, drawing a limit there. Freud’s model, I think, makes a similar move, but it does so from an original position of unboundedness, described at the beginning of \textit{Civilization}. The question of where the barrier between inside and outside lies remains a complicated one in his work.\(^{391}\)

The main research questions guiding the inquiry in this chapter, then, run as follows: i) what role does space play in the formation of the subject? This will lead to a consideration of the subject-formed-through-absence of the fort-da game, as well as to an investigation into the oceanic feeling and the question of how the erection of boundaries shapes the subject. Preliminary moves include establishing the importance of space and place for the Freudian subject as well as the permeability of the Freudian subject; ii) how does the Freudian subject compare to the postmodern subject of the geographers? The objective of this discussion is emphatically not to force Freud into the postmodern mould, as it were, nor are geographical models of the subject granted any authority. In a sense, I am much more interest in the challenge that Freud might pose to postmodern models. In the larger plan of the study, I use the postmodern subject only as a point of contrast, to raise new questions through which the role of spatiality in the Freudian subject might be approached.

1 Lost Lands: Subjects Bound to Place

Freud’s subject is formed through loss or, interpreted spatially, in the play of presence and absence. As Sloterdijk suggests, we become individuals primarily through the loss of those who are a part of our spheres, an experience that challenges us to fill the missing half of the sphere\(^{392}\) or, in Freud’s case, to introject the lost object and thus allow it live on within us. While the fort-


\(^{391}\) And a question to which we will return in chapter 4.

\(^{392}\) Sloterdijk 2010, pg. 141.
da is the paradigmatic example of this, I demonstrate that others can be found and, more importantly here, that Freud leaves the door open to individuals bonding affectively with places. The loss of place can be as formative as the loss of an individual. This runs against the common assumption that Freud overestimates the role of human agents in psychic life and tends to personify trauma.  

In Freud’s early case histories, the question of place surfaces constantly – insofar as each of his patients has a story tell, this story is necessarily situated – but this situation is rarely the object of analysis. Freud’s case history of Anna O., who was treated together with Breuer, looks into the situation of a young woman who fell ill in 1880, at the age of 21, while caring for her dying father. In one instance, she hallucinates that she is standing at her father’s bedside, watching him die. In an attempt to remember these events while in therapy, she reenters her father’s room and immediately loses consciousness. This is only one of a number of fainting spells from which she suffers over that time period, many of which are tied to specific locations. Breuer’s general point, made in these very early stages of psychoanalytic thought, is that those memories which patients claim to have forgotten persist in the unconscious and can be brought to the surface under the right conditions. In Anna’s case, the places relevant to her experience with her dying father seem to form part of these ‘right conditions,’ able to trigger memories and, by extension, the symptoms of her illness.

Again, these early encounters with place do not become the objects of Freud’s analysis, though the evidence continues to accrue as the years progress. In the Interpretation of Dreams, Freud discusses the displacement of affect and the substitutions that account for the distortion of

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393 Many of Sloterdijk’s more recent works, especially those interested in the social construction of environmental and cultural forms – as, for example, the third volume of his spherology – approach Bruno Latour’s actor network theory, which strives to attribute a form of agency to non-sentient and non-living factors of life, such as oil or air. I do not wish to suggest that Freud can be taken this far. Still, the possibility of Freud’s human subject bonding to place seems to me an important one to establish if we are to think through the academic literature on space, with so much of it being concerned specifically with the socio-cultural ways in which human agents bond to the spaces they inhabit.


395 See ibid, pg. 33-37.

396 Ibid, pg. 112.
dreams. He argues that while displacements involving individuals can be quite complex, those involving the names of places are almost always simple. The proper names of individuals and the proper names of places are to be treated differently:

Identifications in the case of proper names of localities [Örtlichkeiten] are resolved even more easily than in the case of persons, since here there is no interference by the ego, which occupies such a dominating place in dreams. In one of my dreams about Rome, the place [Ort] in which I found myself was called Rome, but I was astonished at the quantity of German posters at a street-corner. This latter point was a wish-fulfillment, which at once made me think of Prague… At the time at which I had the dream, there was a prospect of my meeting my friend [Fliess] in Prague; so that the identification of Rome and Prague can be explained by a wishful common element: I would rather have met my friend in Rome than in Prague and would have liked to exchange Prague for Rome for the purpose of this meeting.²⁹⁷

The substitution results from a direct, and very literal, form of wish fulfillment. To suggest that there is less interference from the side of the ego, however, puts into question the affective investment in these places. If displacement is primarily the displacement of affect, then the quantity of affect displaced is related to the complexity of said displacement. A simple, easily interpreted form of displacement, as Freud identifies in the proper names of places, might signal that the affective investment in places is low. The names of places may not merit censoring.²⁹⁸

Yet if this holds true for the proper names of places, it need not be so for the places themselves. In some cases, the locations of dreams are simply collected from memory, charged with relatively little meaning. Such is the case with Freud’s naval dream,²⁹⁹ where the locations of the dream are simply culled from recent trips taken around the Adriatic. Now these are, of course, Freud’s own memories that come into play, so the dream remains egoistic in that sense – it focuses on Freud’s own experience of particular places. It does not make reference, for example, to stereotyped notions of what a place that he has never visited might look like but draws from his own memories and direct experiences.

²⁹⁷ Freud, ‘The Interpretation of Dreams (1900),’ in CW 4, pg. 322.
²⁹⁸ As displacement occurs through the demand of censorship; see ibid, pg. 531.
²⁹⁹ See Freud, ‘The Interpretation of Dreams (1900),’ in CW 5, pg. 463ff.
In other cases, however, locations can carry concealed meaning, related to sexuality for example. In one case, Freud argues that a church represents genitalia and a hill the pubic mound.\textsuperscript{400} In another, a specific tunnel and lake in the area of Vienna are given sexual meanings, as is the seashore.\textsuperscript{401} Dreams, it seems, have the ability to draw both on generic elements of landscape – hills, valleys, buildings – and specific locations in memory – childhood houses, favourite vacation spots – to create a narrative. And if Freud describes the associations relating to places as relatively simple, there are at least a few examples – that of Anna O. prominently among them – that leave the door open to the possibility that places are linked to both memory and meaning. Should this prove to be the case, the notion that memories of places could occupy a crucial position in the unconscious could not be ruled out.

1.1 Mourning Place

Among Freud’s texts, his essay on ‘Mourning and Melancholia’\textsuperscript{402} comes closest to drawing a link between the unconscious, affect, and place. Freud defines melancholia as the pathological counterpart to mourning, though he readily admits that the distinguishing factors between the two are quite arbitrary. More often than not, time is determinant; mourning passes in a reasonable period of time while melancholia drags on.

Of course, we immediately think of mourning as resulting from the loss of a loved one. Freud is careful, however, to extend his definition well beyond these narrow confines and suggests that mourning can also result from the loss of other things, such as spaces and ideals: “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.”\textsuperscript{403} The possibility of mourning space and place is thus explicitly stated. The determining element, as Freud describes it, is specifically the affective bond for which we are searching. The mourning psyche treats

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{400} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 366.
\item \textsuperscript{401} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 400.
\item \textsuperscript{402} See Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia (1917),’ in \textit{CW} 14.
\item \textsuperscript{403} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 243.
\end{itemize}
places as it does loved ones insofar as it charges both with affect and generates meaning for them both.

The mourning process presents the ego above all with a challenge of reality-testing. Here, the ego is conservative by nature; it changes with great difficulty and the loss of the object requires that the ego withdraw the psychic energy that it has invested in it. The ego must bend to the will of the reality principle and acknowledge that the loved object is gone. Mourning itself results from the ego effecting this change and its duration is coextensive with this process. At the same time, the physical loss of the object results in its introjection and thus in its psychic survival. As libido is withdrawn from the absent object, identification replaces love.

The parallels for an analysis of place are obvious. Any form of physical displacement, even one so common as buying a new home and moving out of an old one, can result in a form of mourning. The experience could be all the more traumatic, as Casey points out, in situations where movement is forced – exile, for example, or deportation. To reference Freud again, the psyche treats places as it does people. Both are charged with meaning, housing memories and providing a sense of familiarity, of integrity.

The question though of what exactly an introjection of or identification with place might look like is an interesting one. Surely, places are proscriptive and restrictive in nature – all places come with stated or unstated rules about ‘what the place is for’ and what is permissible within its confines – and these regulations can be internalized and generalized, resulting in an identification of sorts. More interestingly, though, Freud’s subject identifies with lost spaces insofar as these are idealized; places become nostalgic sites, the standard against which others are judged.

Contemporary psychoanalysis has taken Freud’s line of thought further with its consideration of the immigrant experience. Salman Akhtar is one of those psychoanalysts whose clinical work has led him to observe the ‘trauma of dislocation’ that can result from immigration or forced exile.

404 Ibid, pg. 244.
405 Ibid, pg. 249.
407 Cf. Bachelard and his appreciation of the house/home in The Poetics of Space.
Remaining wary of an overly generalized ‘immigrant experience,’ his considerations are helpful in emphasizing the relational element of space and its influence on the subject. In any kind of relocation, the change of environment requires that the psyche ‘restart’ in a new social network. As he explains:

[Ever major move alters both the human and non-human components in our environment, which are densely intertwined. When we leave a place, we lose ties not only with our friends and relatives but also with a familiar, non-human environment. The same applies to arriving at a new place: we not only meet different sorts of people, but encounter unfamiliar landscape, climate, and architecture as well.]

This sense of the uncanny, of a new land that is similar to home in so many ways yet so different in others, is often ‘made familiar’ as the subject attempts to recreate elements of his old life in the new place. Such is the explanation offered, for example, for the ‘Chinatowns’ or ‘Little Italies’ of the world: they are attempts to recreate an authentic ethnic community, a small piece of home, in a new setting. But not all places lend themselves to this kind of activity, often reserved for large urban centres where a significant population of a given ethnic group already resides. A move to a rural area could prove to be much more destabilizing.

Speaking with his patients, Akhtar notes that a verbal break often marks their transition from one location to another. ‘Living’ is differentiated from living ‘in Canada’ or ‘in America.’ Before the relocation, one simply ‘lives’ and location is rarely signaled unless it is relevant to the narrative. But living after immigration is often ‘living somewhere,’ belying “a rough-edged union and narcissistically taxing demarcation from the environment.” Identity has yet to be re-organized around the new place. The end result, Akhtar notes, is often a nostalgic relation to the original home:

[T]he immigrant expresses his or her core dilemma: he or she can neither give up the attachment to the internal representation of primary environment by mourning.

409 Ibid, pg. 172.
410 Ibid, pg. 172.
nor ever re-create it in external reality to his or her ego’s satisfaction. Instead, he or she retains the memory of the original land in a psychic limbo by a stubborn nostalgic relationship with it.\textsuperscript{411}

While Freud’s early case histories often neglect this consideration, his essay on mourning makes it clear that affective bonds with spaces and places are not only a possible but also an important part of the psychic constitution. Spaces can be mourned when lost and internalized when missed and as such are treated in much the same way as are human objects. This preliminary conclusion, basic as it may be, is an essential first step in establishing the importance of space for the Freudian subject.

1.2 Making Space: The Oceanic Feeling

Though published at a later date, Freud’s discussion of the oceanic feeling (1930) both logically and developmentally precedes the events of the fort-da game (1920). The two events share a common connection to Freud’s formulation of the death drive, a notion central to both Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Civilization and Its Discontents, although the frame is different in each case. While the former text draws heavily from biology to posit the existence of a death drive, described here mainly as an internal conservative force, the latter directs the death drive outward by considering it as a motivating factor behind human aggression. While the fort-da game will become the object of our attention at a later point in this chapter, I wish to demonstrate here how Freud’s discussion of the oceanic feeling presents the formation of the subject as a spatial process, a cleaving and dividing of the original unified medium of consciousness.

The idea of the oceanic feeling is not Freud’s but comes from his friend and correspondent Romain Rolland, himself a learned writer, scholar, and orientalist. Having read Future of an Illusion, Rolland responds to Freud’s argument therein with his own suggestion that the core of religion might be found not in dogma or belief\textsuperscript{412} but in a subjective experience that he terms oceanic: “It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of ‘eternity’, a feeling as of

\textsuperscript{411} Ibid, pg. 178. Original emphasis.

\textsuperscript{412} While Future was indeed concerned primarily with religious belief, Freud in no way suggests that belief be identified as the ‘core’ of religion, as Rolland suggests.
something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic.’”

We should note here that there is nothing specifically ‘religious’ about the experience in question – one might imagine it surfacing in a number of different scenarios – other than the fact that Rolland finds therein the source of the energy upon which religious groups seize. This is, of course, a circular logic.

Freud finds the notion interesting enough to use to begin *Civilization* and his treatment of it is anything but dismissive. He begins by admitting the difficulties in approaching subjective “feelings” (*Gefühl*) scientifically, insofar as they present no empirical data to study. The problem is compounded by the fact that Freud himself cannot relate to the oceanic feeling; he has never experienced it, though he does not deny its possible existence in others. The subjective approach is thus impossible as well. Instead, Freud suggests that one might approach these feelings by way of their physiological signs, of which none exist in this case, or by investigating the content of the idea upon which they are grounded. Freud chooses the latter option, which is frequently the psychoanalyst’s preferred choice: where might this notion of an ‘oceanic feeling’ come from?

The oceanic feeling is one of placelessness, of floating in an undifferentiated space, without path-markers for orientation. It is, as Freud writes, “a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole.”

Thinking developmentally, Freud links the feeling to an early perception of the world as a unified medium:

> Normally, there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of our own self, of our own ego. This ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else. That such an appearance is deceptive, and that on the contrary the ego is continued inwards, without any sharp delimitation, into an unconscious mental entity which we designate as the id and for which it serves as a kind of façade – this was a discovery first made by psycho-analytic research, which should still have much more to tell us about the relation of the ego and the id. But towards the outside, at any rate, the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation. There is only one state – admittedly an unusual state, but not one that can be stigmatized as pathological –

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413 Freud, ‘Civilization and Its Discontents (1930),’ in *CW* 21, pg. 64.
in which it does not do this. At the height of being in love the boundary between the ego and object threatens to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that ‘I’ and ‘you’ are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact.\textsuperscript{416}

There are a number of points to make here. First of all, we notice that the ego requires formation. The presence of an ego makes for an experience of space as divided, since only a formed ego is capable of identifying something as distinct from itself. There is, then, presumably an original state of unity prior to the ego’s ability to identify the other, a state which the oceanic feeling references. Secondly, the ego’s perceptive ability is both variable and incomplete. Because the ego has no knowledge of the unconscious, it fails to recognize spaces of importance separated off from itself. This division of space, then, conceals as much as it illuminates. Finally, the division between ego-subject and object is not stark but changes with affect. The case of love, which Freud presents above, provides important evidence. To suggest that lovers behave as if they were one is more than a mere turn of phrase; Freud takes it as a literal truth in many respects. A lover’s willingness to sacrifice his or her well being for that of his or her partner is an important case that demonstrates that self-preservation instincts can be overridden or directed outwards to motivate acts of altruism. A number of pathological cases can also move or disrupt this boundary between inside and outside.\textsuperscript{417} Somatic delusions, in which a patient believes that he is hearing another’s thoughts or that a part of her body belongs to someone else, follow the same general mechanism.

The cleaving of space into inside and outside occurs with the creation of the first object, which Freud posits to be the mother’s breast. Freud’s infant is primarily narcissistic and is accordingly concerned almost exclusively with the satisfaction of his desires. The breast, at least at first, appears as an extension of his own body insofar as it appears almost magically to satisfy the child’s desires. But as satisfaction becomes more fleeting, the infant learns to distinguish between those pleasurable sources over which he has control and those that come from outside. Some sources of excitation are always available whereas others come and go. “In this way,” Freud explains, “there is for the first time set over against the ego an ‘object’, in the form of

\textsuperscript{416} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 65-66.
\textsuperscript{417} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 66.
something which exists ‘outside’ and which is only forced to appear by a special action”\textsuperscript{418} – namely, the cries of the child. So while the oceanic feeling might be related to the unified experience of space of an undifferentiated ego, the cleavage of this space is related to the play of presence and absence of pleasurable objects. This theme will return with the fort-da game.

This is not to suggest that the initial cleavage of space remains fixed in time. Indeed, as I have already mentioned and as I will address in the next chapter, the boundary between inside and outside is constantly shifting. Freud points to the initial cleavage as one ruled almost entirely by the pleasure principle: “A tendency arises to separate from the ego everything that can become a source of such unpleasure, to throw it outside and to create a pure pleasure-ego which is confronted by a strange and threatening ‘outside.’”\textsuperscript{419} This is consistent with the narcissistic ego of the infant, which emerges unharmed and morally impregnable from the division. All ills come from the outside. The reality principle, however, soon provides a counter-balance and rectifies the division, demanding the incorporation of certain unpleasurable sensations – the drives, most notably – into the body and recognizing other sources of pleasure as objects. Freud reaches the conclusion that the oceanic feeling may persist as a vestige of an original unified perception of the world, one that runs parallel to a differentiated perception of space.\textsuperscript{420}

While the critique of religion in \textit{Future} provides the context in which the oceanic feeling is approached in 1930, intimations of similar ideas can be found in Freud’s earlier works. In his 1915 essay ‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes,’\textsuperscript{421} Freud uses a similar example to lay out the difference that exists between subject and objects:

Let us imagine ourselves in the situation of an almost entirely helpless living organism, as yet unorientated in the world, which is receiving stimuli in its nervous substance. This organism will very soon be in a position to make a first

\textsuperscript{418} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 67.

\textsuperscript{419} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 67.

\textsuperscript{420} “In this way, then, the ego detaches itself from the external world. Or, to put it more correctly, originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of a much more inclusive – indeed, an all-embracing – feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it.” See Freud 1930, pg. 68.

\textsuperscript{421} See \textit{CW} 14.
distinction and a first orientation. On the one hand, it will be aware of stimuli which can be avoided by muscular action (flight); these it ascribes to the external world. On the other hand, it will also be aware of stimuli against which such action is of no avail and whose character of constant pressure persists in spite of it; these stimuli are the signs of an internal world, the evidence of instinctual needs. The perceptual substance of the living organism will thus have found in the efficacy of its muscular activity a basis for distinguishing between an ‘outside’ and an ‘inside’.  

The ‘almost entirely helpless living organism’ could quite easily represent the infant, and this time Freud makes explicit the link between the creation of space and orientation. To receive stimulus is to create place, to ‘get one’s bearings’ in relation to the source of the stimulus. As long as stimuli remain endogenous – instinctual, in Freud’s terms – there is no need for the infant to move outside the confines of the body to locate their source. The outside world is thus of minimal interest, providing no real satisfaction. The creation of an outside is here framed as a product of muscular activity, the realization that some forms of unpleasure (Unlust) can be fled whereas others cannot. But the point remains the same: the creation of space and place emerges through the cleavage of the original, unified perception of consciousness, of which the oceanic feeling provides a vestige.

Kirby uses Freud’s discussion of the oceanic feeling to demonstrate how he holds on to a conception of the closed in and autonomous Cartesian ego. This may be true, but only up to a point. I can agree that the ego is formed through a process of closing off, of erecting boundaries, as discussed above. This does not necessarily mean, however, that we can speak of the Freudian ego and the Cartesian ego in the same breath. The boundaries of the Freudian ego, as I have demonstrated, are constantly changing in response to affective states and environmental pressures. The ego’s limits are not static. Most importantly, however, the Cartesian ego represents the whole self. Freud’s does not, excluding unconscious elements. So while Kirby will acknowledge that the ego’s feeling of autonomy and completion is illusory because of the

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422 Freud, ‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes (1915),’ CW 14, pg. 119.
424 1996, pg. 80.
presence of the unconscious.\textsuperscript{425} I take it further. Freud’s subject is radically de-centred, created at the intersection of a number of different agencies and processes. As such, it differs considerably from the Cartesian subject often criticized by social constructionists and cultural theorists.

1.3 The Subject of Presence and Absence: The Fort-Da Game

I now wish to extend the argument presented in the preceding section to include Freud’s fort-da game, as described in \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle} (1920).\textsuperscript{426} Not only does the fort-da game represent a pivotal moment in the foundation of the subject but it also describes an intensely spatial process. As Perelberg argues, the loss of the object, as described both in the mourning essay and the description of the fort-da game, opens up a space in which the object can be thought in its own absence.\textsuperscript{427} The relation to the death drive must also be considered here and has already been intimated above. If it is the self-preservation instincts that first drive the infant-ego out into the world in search of objects to satisfy its desires, hate must also arise from the same process,\textsuperscript{428} for while pleasurable objects are loved, unpleasurable ones are hated. That same part of the interior content that the narcissistic ego despises for bringing it pain and frustration is projected outwards to create hated objects in the world. The death drive thus has a role to play in the later Freud’s reading of this situation as well.

While \textit{Civilization} approaches the question of the death drive from the direction of human aggression, Freud first does so in \textit{Beyond} in search of an explanation for the psychic compulsion to repeat, which troubles his assumption of the pleasure principle’s dominance. On the one hand, the compulsion to repeat becomes a pressing issue in the wake of the First World War, as legions of soldiers return from the front haunted by traumatic memories. In particular, Freud’s attention is drawn to the recurring dreams that many of these soldiers have, dreams that force them to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{425} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 81.
  \item \textsuperscript{426} See \textit{CW} 18.
  \item \textsuperscript{427} Rosine Jozef Perelberg, \textit{Time, Space and Phantasy} (London: Routledge, 2008), pg. 18.
  \item \textsuperscript{428} See Freud, ‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes (1915),’ in \textit{CW} 14, pg. 136. While Freud theorizes hate well before the formulation of the death drive – as an element of emotional ambivalence, for example – the two become directly connected in his later work.
\end{itemize}
relive traumatic or dangerous moments and produce great anxiety and distress. But there is also a
technical interest behind the compulsion to repeat, one upon which Freud has touched in the past.
The compulsion to repeat is related to the mechanism of the transference, through which
analysands relive, rather than remember, unconscious moments and affect. So the patient will not
recall trauma, for example, but will act out the emotions associated with it in her relation with
the analyst.

In either case, the compulsion to repeat presents a challenge to Freud’s formulation of the
pleasure principle, which he had presented as the guiding principle in psychic life: the
compulsion to repeat regularly overpowers the pleasure principle. The economic view of the
mind suggests that the psyche seeks pleasure and avoids unpleasure (Unlust). But the
compulsion to repeat forces upon the psyche an intensely unpleasant event time and time again,
overriding the pleasure principle. Now, even within the economic model, there are a number of
reasons that explain why the pleasure principle might fail. For example, the reality principle
might require it. In its desire for self-preservation, the psyche regularly seeks unpleasurable
objects that will further its survival. But these cases, Freud suggests, explain only a small number
of unpleasant situations. Unpleasure can also result from sense perceptions or from internal
conflicts involving the ego, but Freud finds these options unlikely in this case. Instead, he turns
from the economic view and suggests that an answer to the question of the compulsion to repeat
in traumatic neuroses be sought in metapsychology.

The above provides the context for Freud’s discussion of the fort-da game. He claims to have
observed the game on several occasions performed by a boy of about 18 months, which many
historical sources identify as his grandson. This would make sense, considering Freud’s
subsequent explanation that he knew the boy’s temperament well, having lived with the boy and
his family for a period of time. The short analysis of the game is meant to provide both a
contribution to psychoanalytic scholarship on play, which had yet to take into consideration,

429 See, for example, Freud, ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920),’ in CW 18, pg. 7.
430 Ibid, pg. 10.
431 See ibid, pgs. 14-16.
Freud claims, how play and pleasure might be related, but also a non-pathological parallel to the compulsion to repeat in early childhood.

Freud takes great care to establish the boy’s temperament. To use the vocabulary of attachment theory, the boy could be described as ‘securely attached.’ He gets along well with his parents and does not cause them any undue trouble but, most importantly, he “never cried when his mother left him for a few hours,” and yet remained very much attached to her when she was around. He did not dislike her but was able to tolerate her absence. With these details in mind, Freud describes the game as follows:

This good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small object he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out ‘o-o-o-o’, accompanied by an expression of interest and satisfaction. His mother and the writer of the present account were agreed in thinking that this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word ‘fort’ [‘gone’]. I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play ‘gone’ with them. One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expression ‘o-o-o-o’. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful ‘da’ [‘there’]. This, then, was the complete game – disappearance and return.

What Freud describes here as ‘disappearance and return’ I have renamed ‘presence and absence,’ to emphasize the spatial element with which we are presently concerned. Freud’s immediate explanation of the game relates its actions to the instinctual renunciation involved in the child tolerating his mother’s absence. If the boy was able to allow his mother to leave for a few hours without crying, it was because he had first

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435 See *ibid*, pg. 15.
learned to tolerate her absence. He did so through the game, by restaging the events of her departure with objects. Now, to relate the game to traumatic neuroses, a question arises: why would the child repeat this game in the first place? If his mother’s departure was, at first, a painful and unpleasant event, why would the child choose to relive these events through play? So both the boy and the soldier are reliving traumatic memories, except that the soldier’s condition is pathological and the child’s is not.

Before proceeding with the analysis, I wish to introduce one more similar episode, which Freud describes in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and which closely parallels the events of the fort-da game. During a discussion on screen memories, Freud presents the following episode as an example of a memory that seems to hold no significance but which actually conceals a wealth of insight:

I saw myself standing in front of a cupboard [‘Kasten’] demanding something and screaming, while my half-brother, my senior of twenty years, held it open. Then suddenly my mother, looking slim and beautiful, walked into the room, as if she had come in from the street. These were the words in which I described the scene, of which I had a plastic picture, but I did not know what more I could make of it. Whether my brother wanted to open or shut the cupboard – in my first translation of the picture I called it a ‘wardrobe’ [‘Schrank’] – why I was crying, and what the arrival of my mother had to do with it – all this was obscure to me.

Freud determines that he could not have been older than three at the time of the events, so it seems likely that he was at least a few months older than the boy in the fort-da episode. At first, Freud assumed that his brother had been teasing him and that his mother had come into the room to intervene but he quickly revises his interpretation. Instead, Freud suggests:

I had missed my mother, and had come to suspect that she was shut up in this wardrobe or cupboard; and it was for that reason that I was demanding that my brother should open the cupboard. When he did what I asked and I had made certain that my mother was not in the cupboard, I began to scream. This is the

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436 That is, before the child learned to tolerate her departure. Freud posits an original state in which separation is painful and difficult.

437 In *CW* 6.

moment that my memory has held fast; and it was followed at once by the appearance of my mother, which allayed my anxiety or longing.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 50.}

This memory shares several key similarities with the fort-da episode, the play of presence and absence most notably. The question of instinctual renunciation also arises; Freud is not able to tolerate his mother’s absence in the way that the boy can. Instead, he cries until she arrives.\footnote{The other possibility, of course, is that the mother has been away for an inordinate amount of time and that Freud has simply passed his threshold of toleration with respect to her absence. Even the securely attached child has his limits. But there is nothing to suggest this possibility in the scenario as it is presented.}

Freud has no real interest in analyzing the cupboard episode; his purpose is didactic rather than analytic, as mentioned above. Still, the episode remains important because it demonstrates that the events of fort-da may present somewhat of a recurring theme in childhood. If Freud hesitates, in \textit{Beyond}, before drawing any conclusions “from the analysis of a single case like this,”\footnote{Freud, \textquote{Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)},’ pg. 16.} the cupboard episode at least suggests that it may not be an isolated incident.

How can we make sense of the fort-da incident in relation to the discussion on pleasure? First of all, the game allows the child to take control of the situation, moving from a passive to an active situation.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 16.} He cannot, of course, control his mother’s actions but he can control the spool’s disappearance. In terms of our earlier analysis of the oceanic feeling, the game allows the child to regress to a state of spatial indifferention; he masters his emotions by eliminating the subjective boundary between himself and the object, yielding narcissistic gratification. Through play, the spool becomes like the breast – an object yielding pleasure that the child can control. So the elimination of the subject-object divide, if only for a short time, allows the child to transition to complete separation, to test the waters of object-choice instead of jumping straight in.\footnote{Highly relevant here is Winnicott’s notion of potential space, which I will address in the following chapter.}

Closely related to this option is another, which Freud also considers: the child may be trying to take revenge on his mother for leaving him, to demonstrate that he does not need her. In this sense, the position of power in play does not serve as a way of transitioning to the object but of
leaving it behind entirely, motivated by the aggressive forces of the death drive. Here, we come closer to Melanie Klein’s violent infant, who hates the mother, realizes that he needs her, and manically tries to repair the relationship. Freud’s sparse and open interpretation of the power dynamic of this relation would seem to leave several options, including the Kleinian one, open.

For Freud, the compulsion to repeat is closely related to the experience of anxiety. The boy at play is attempting to deal with a form of spatial alienation, to calm his fear that his mother might never come back. The boy knows that he needs the mother. The mother brings food. The mother keeps him warm. But the anxiety experienced at the moment of her departure is not only a cuddly desire to have a loved object nearby but also a more pressing sense of concern about survival. Will mother come back? Where will I get my food if she does not? How will my needs be satisfied? Anxiety, here, is the product of human biological helplessness, the desire to have one’s needs fulfilled in the face of one’s inability to satisfy them on one’s own. But as he learns in play that the spool does come back, the boy overcomes his fears. As Ricoeur suggests, the fort-da is grounded in the triumph over a lost object. The fort-da game, then, allows us to build on Freud’s conclusions drawn from the explanation of the oceanic feeling to identity a number of undeniably spatial processes that prove formative in

444 Ibid, 137.

445 Ricoeur 1970, 314. The technical psychoanalytic term for this concept is ‘negativity.’

446 In the case of traumatic neuroses, Freud similarly hypothesizes that the compulsion to repeat is the psyche’s attempt to retroactively deal with the anxiety produced by the event itself. So the soldier ‘shell-shocked’ by the death of a colleague before his eyes is reliving the experience in an attempt to do – or, rather, to feel – as he should have at the time. Anxiety, then, remains key. While the boy can master the anxiety on his own terms during play, the soldier is at the mercy of unconscious repetition.
the development of the psyche. In both cases, questions of presence and absence are pivotal. French historian Michel de Certeau has taken the spatial dimension of psychoanalysis further than any other in his famous comments on walking in the city, contained in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988). Operating within a Lacanian framework, which re-interprets Freud’s comments to suggest that the game marks the subject’s initiation into the symbolic order, Certeau compares pedestrian movements through a city to speech acts that remain unconscious to the knower. Just as “pedestrians use space in a way that they cannot see or understand” from their vantage point, immersed in the city, so too does the unconscious meaning of words remain hidden to most. He suggests that cities, indeed any spatial order, possess a superego, a list of proscribed and prescribed actions for that place, which unconsciously govern behaviour. At the same time, he is interested in the metaphorical city that escapes this superego, in the possibility for resistance or subversion of the prescribed order.

In this context, Certeau describes all spatial practice as a repetition of the fort-da: “To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent expression of childhood; it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other.” Just as the pedestrian lacks a place – constantly in motion, he never really is anywhere – so too does the psychoanalytic subject live her life linked to places that she no longer inhabits. Certeau reads the unconscious as a set of memories grounded in specific places. At the same time, he recognizes that the existence of space is only made possible as a result of the fort-da: “subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it ‘be there.’” But this ‘being there’ is a repetition of the fort-da, for him, insofar as the ‘not everything’ of different spaces results from the object choice of the game. As he suggests, “this departure of the mother… constitutes localization and exteriority against the background of an absence.” Space here again emerges in terms of relationality: space is a

447 See, for example, Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pg. 135.
448 Certeau 1984, pg. 98.
network of places. As such, space takes shape through the relation of the places that constitute it. This is exactly the process of fort-da as we have considered it so far this chapter.

While Certeau’s Lacanianism leads him to emphasize the role of absence slightly more than I have here, since the notion of absence is so central to Lacan’s understanding of the subject, we can still appreciate the extent to which Lacan’s ideas are reflected in Freud’s text. If I have developed the implications of the oceanic feeling and the fort-da with respect to the formation of the subject, the creation of space, and the possibility of object choice, Certeau takes it a step further – and, in a sense, beyond our sphere of immediate concern, albeit interestingly so – to frame spatial relations in terms of fort-da relations. In either perspective, the formative role of spatial – or relational – processes in forming subjective perceptions is crucial.

1.4 The Permeable Subject

At this point, my research question changes slightly to consider the kind of subject that the spatial processes considered so far produce. I hope to have shown to the reader’s satisfaction that Freud’s subject is spatially constructed. I now turn my attention to a second question, which concerns the comparison between the Freudian subject and the subject of the social sciences. The argument runs as follows: some geographers have argued that psychoanalysis is not useful for studying space in a contemporary context because Freud’s subject differs considerably from the views of the subject prevalent today in the social sciences. I will demonstrate that the Freudian subject, while perhaps different, can challenge popular views in a number of important ways and disrupt certain basic assumptions about the politics of the subject. These questions will be tackled in greater detail in the next section. For now, as a preliminary to this investigation, I want to demonstrate the permeability of the Freudian subject. In short, I argue that Freud’s theory is an intersubjective one that goes beyond the Cartesian view of the self, by which I understand a self that is radically autonomous and is insulated against outside influence. This section’s argument flows naturally from the thrust of the argument up until now: Freud’s theory is spatial because it is relational and relations necessarily occur across space. My argument that Freud’s subject is open to influence from these relations, often in unconscious and unpredictable ways, will be of little surprise to the attentive reader. I simply wish to highlight the point in greater detail, working more closely with the texts.
Psychoanalysis is grounded on two cornerstones, explains Freud by his middle years. The first is
the theory of repression, as we have already seen. But the second, equally important, is that of
transference. Only those treatments that acknowledge the importance of resistance and
transference can rightly call themselves psychoanalytic. But transference is essentially a
concept of affective intersubjectivity, an unconscious and automatic bond that forms between the
analyst and the analysand, skewing perceptions and disrupting the therapeutic process. Freud
first describes the concept as follows:

What are transferences? They are new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and
phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the
analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species,
that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it
another way: a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as
belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present
moment.

So the transference involves the reactualization of unresolved affect, directed toward the analyst.
Freud routinely gives the example of unresolved Oedipal issues, through which he becomes the
target of the hate directed at the father. Speaking technically, this can work either to the analyst’s
advantage or disadvantage, depending on the sorts of emotions involved. While Freud
acknowledges the projection of negative emotions and of erotic desires as forms of ‘negative
transference,’ he also suggests that positive transference might be helpful to the analyst. Of
course, holding true to his model of emotional ambivalence, he also reminds us that both forms
of transference usually occur at the same time.

Freud recommends that analysts use the transference to curb the compulsion to repeat. Traumatic
memories, we will recall, are not remembered as often as they are unconsciously repeated. The
transference itself is motivated by this same compulsion and participates in it. But once the
transference is recognized as transference, Freud posits that the analytic session can be used as a

\[^{452}\text{Freud, ‘History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement (1914),’ in CW 14, pg. 16.}\]

\[^{453}\text{Freud, ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (1905),’ in CW 7, pg. 116.}\]

\[^{454}\text{Freud, ‘The Dynamics of Transference (1912),’ in CW 12, pg. 105-106.}\]
‘safe space’ in which the compulsion can play itself out harmlessly.\footnote{455}{"We render the compulsion harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to express itself in a definite field." See Freud, ‘Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through (1914),’ in \textit{CW} 12, pg. 154.} The transference constitutes the primary mode of access that the analyst has to the psyche. As Freud explains:

The transference thus creates an intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from the one to the other is made. The new condition has taken over all the features of the illness; but it represents an artificial illness which is at every point accessible to our intervention. It is a piece of real experience, but one which has been made possible by especially favourable conditions, and is of a provisional nature. From the repetitive reactions which are exhibited in the transference we are led along the familiar paths to the awakening of the memories, which appear without difficulty, as it were, after the resistance has been overcome.\footnote{456}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 154.}

Transference thus becomes the primary mode of treatment, an avenue through which the psyche is revealed, diagnosed, and treated. Any actual change that the analyst wishes to effect in the unconscious of the analysand can be brought about through the transference.

Freud’s essay on group psychology (1921) also provides another interesting perspective on the intersubjective nature of the psyche. Individuals in groups, Freud writes, become gullible and highly open to influence or suggestion.\footnote{457}{Freud, ‘Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921),’ in \textit{CW} 18, pg. 77.} Affect becomes contagious in the group situation. As he describes it, “There is no doubt that something exists in us which, when we become aware of signs of an emotion in someone else, tends to make us fall into the same reaction.”\footnote{458}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 89.} Whatever this mechanism is, it is intensified in groups. At the same time, this shared affectivity results in bonds of solidarity between group members; common emotion draws group members closer together. This process runs to such an extent that it regularly overpowers the individual’s own instincts of self-preservation. Like someone in love, a group member will sacrifice his own wellbeing for that of another member.\footnote{459}{\textit{Ibid}, pg. 102.}
My point in this short digression is merely to show that Freud’s subject is open to the world, particularly to affective intrusions from those around her. Freud’s is not a view of the subject that has fixed and stalwart boundaries. There is, of course, a whole history to this, which provides much more detail than I have here, tracing Freud’s permeable individual back to Plato, running through Greek occult traditions, Marcilio Ficino, mesmerism, magnetism, and hypnosis. But such detail is not required here, especially considering how ubiquitous this genealogy has become in modern scholarship. I refer the interested reader to Ellenberger or to the third chapter of Sloterdijk’s *Bulles*.

### 1.5 The Death Drive

The notion of the death drive is an important yet contentious part of Freud’s theory of the individual, especially when thinking about the political implications of psychoanalytic thought. On the one hand, some theorists will argue that the drives in general provide evidence that “human subjectivity and agency are not and cannot be entirely determined by biology or culture.”\(^{460}\) The drives occupy a third intermediate realm, complicating the former two. They force us to consider the messiness of human action and thought, including aggression, excess, destruction, and resistance to change. For this same reason has much of contemporary psychoanalysis decided to ignore Freud’s formulation of the drives, which was a topic of much debate, of course, even during his lifetime. At the centre of this debate lies Freud’s postulation of the death drive: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* relies on a biological argument – it is perhaps his most ‘biological’ text since the *Project* – that modern science would call into doubt. Still, for many theorists of psychoanalysis, including Slavoj Zizek, who take the death drive outside of its Freudian context and understand it more generally as a psychic propensity to repeat beyond the pursuit of pleasure,\(^{461}\) the drives become an important formulation, one which I will now discuss in detail.

Freud's notion of the instinct (*Trieb*) goes back to the *Project* and is developed further in ‘Instincts and their Vicissitudes’ in 1915. Here, instincts are primarily contrasted with external

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stimuli. While one can flee from a stimulus, an instinct is an internal need from which one cannot flee. Spatially, Freud locates the drive at the boundary between the mind and the body: the drive arises “as a measure of demand upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body.” The categorization of instincts arises as a source of contention from the outset. Freud admits the general sense of the term and can therefore make no objection “to anyone’s employing the concept of an instinct of play or of destruction or of gregariousness, when the subject matter demands it and the limitations of psychological analysis allow for it.” At the same time, he encourages his readers to dissect these categories and reduce them to two basic ones, which stand only for a period of time: instincts of self-preservation, which he calls ‘ego instincts,’ and sexual instincts. While he formulates these two categories based on the idea that neuroses arise out of a conflict between the ego and sexual energies, he also readily admits that these categories only constitute a “working hypothesis” that remains open to revision upon the discovery of contradictory evidence. By 1917 and the Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis Freud is already minimizing the distinction between the two categories, although he still uses them readily to explain his ideas.

‘The Uncanny’ further alludes to the death drive by presenting a case involving a compulsion to repeat anxiety-producing ideas. Freud describes the uncanny itself as an emotion approximating fear or dread that arises from an experience that recalls the familiarity of unconscious content. Uncanny elements in literature, for example, while seeming completely strange and foreign to consciousness, actually remind us of the content of thoughts or memories from early childhood. The essay also contains a short discussion about death, which sets up Freud’s biological formulation of the death drive in 1920. Here, Freud links the uncanny feeling surrounding death to science’s inability to provide information about death’s true status: “is it an inevitable fate, or

464 Ibid, pg. 124.
465 See CW 16, pg. 413.
466 Freud, ‘The Uncanny (1918),’ in CW 17, pg. 219-220.
a regular but inevitable event of life?"467 He is obviously not suggesting that we should pursue eternal life but he is pointing to the fact that the question of death remains open-ended in our minds, which explains why it remains the topic of continuous investigation (in religion and occultism, for example). The psyche continues to fear death because it does not understand it. This whole discussion belies a preoccupation with death, dating back to Freud’s works on occultism and continuing through *Beyond*.

I have already reviewed some of the context for the formulation of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*468 – the end of the war, the spike in traumatic neuroses, the challenge to the pleasure principle – in the context of our earlier discussion about the fort-da game. Indeed, the two topics are closely connected, though Freud develops the idea of the death drive further on in *Beyond*, after the fort-da episode. It is also important to note that, while the death drive has been a topic of great debate in Freud’s time as well as in our own, Freud himself frames his investigation as “speculation, often far-fetched speculation, which the reader will consider or dismiss according to his individual predilection”469 and grounded in metapsychology, which is abstract and theoretical in nature. In this context, the role that biology plays in the investigation becomes all the more interesting to consider.

Freud’s theory of trauma as presented in *Beyond* relies on the prevailing psychiatry of his day and posits a protective shell of sorts around the brain meant to guard against excessive stimulation.470 A traumatic event is one that overpowers this barrier and consequently disturbs the normal functioning of the mind, including the pleasure principle. The psyche’s new problem becomes that “of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can be disposed of.”471 Such is the goal of the traumatic

470 *Ibid*, pg. 29. Hence the notion of ‘shell shock.’
471 *Ibid*, pg. 29.
memories that, in their compulsive repetition, aim to reproduce the anxiety that the original event should have triggered. This is a manner of retroactively neutralizing excessive stimuli.

This new context leads Freud to revise his notion of drive. Here, a drive becomes an inherently conservative attempt to restore an earlier psychic state: “It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life.” Freud attributes this ability not only to the human psyche but to all living organisms. It is a universal attribute of human life, an inherently conservative force. Politically, this is important. It implies an innate psychic resistance to change. Biologically, it flows from the notion that everything dies for internal reasons, that the aim of all life is death, an idea drawn from the science of Freud’s day. This also demands that Freud revise the list of basic drives. The basic opposition is no longer between self-preservation and sexual instincts, which are henceforth collapsed into a common category, but between self-preservation and self-destructive instincts, the drive to propagate and the drive to die.

Even after the formulation of the death drive, Freud minimizes his attachment to the original theory in his writings. He goes to great pains to express his doubt and uncertainty about almost every detail of his description. In 1925, for example, he writes that, “It remains to be seen whether this construction will turn out to be serviceable. Although it arose from a desire to fix some of the most important theoretical ideas of psycho-analysis, it goes far beyond psycho-analysis.” So the topic is important but the conclusions are uncertain. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that even his more speculative forays are grounded in a desire to identify trends and

472 Ibid, pg. 32.
474 Ibid, pg. 38. Regardless of the veracity of this scientific statement, the psychic implications are too important to ignore.
475 Ibid, pg. 42. Importantly, the drive to propagate does not include a drive toward perfection, as Freud points out. There is no progressive instinct.
tendencies discovered while working with patients. The fundamentals are still empirically grounded.

The investigation in *Civilization and Its Discontents* provides a new angle of approach on the issue, one in which the death drive is not examined as an internal conservative force but is rather projected outward, resulting in violence and aggressive tendencies. Still, Freud argues that the former flows from the latter without any necessary modification in the theory set forth in *Beyond*. Aggression emerges as a psychic attempt to make the death and life drives work together; by projecting the death drive outward, the life drive is satisfied, since the psyche no longer attacks itself but a foreign object. As Freud explains:

It might be assumed that the death instinct operated silently within the organism towards its dissolution, but that, of course, was not proof. A more fruitful idea was that a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness. In this way the instinct itself could be pressed into the service of Eros, in that the organism was destroying some other thing, whether animate or inanimate, instead of destroying its own self. Conversely, any restriction of this aggressiveness directed outward would be bound to increase the self-destruction, which is in any case proceeding.

In most cases, the two drives work together in this fashion, making them difficult to distinguish other than in theory. This was, we will remember, the original difficulty with the opposition between self-preservation and sexual instincts as seen in the ‘Instincts’ essay. The notion of the death drive, then, persists not so much through empirical support but rather through its heuristic potential: it helps explain a number of different phenomena. Freud would go on to describe the theory of the instincts as the mythology of psychoanalysis, difficult to pin down but “magnificent in their indefiniteness.”

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478 Freud, ‘Civilization and Its Discontents (1930),’ in *CW* 21, pg. 119.
479 *Ibid*, pg. 121.
480 “The theory of the instincts is so to say our mythology. Instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness.” See Freud, ‘New Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis (1933),’ in *CW* 22, pg. 95.
2 Reconciling Subjectivities

If many social scientists – and I have been in mind here geographers in particular – have yet to become entirely comfortable with using Freud’s ideas, this is largely because of a presumed divide between psychoanalytic and postmodern notions of the subject. If the first half of this chapter has carefully considered how space shapes the Freudian subject, this second half moves in a different, though related, direction by investigating this presumed gulf. My objective here is to map and assess the presumed conflict between Freudian theory and social constructionist notions of the subject. This continues the argument I have already begun, that Freud should not be read as embracing a Cartesian view of the subject. Closely related to this are classic critiques of Freudian thought – that he essentializes gender, for example, that he operates with a normative male subject, or that a progressive view of sexuality that embraces homosexuality is impossible within the Freudian framework – which I want to revisit. Central to social constructionist views of the subject are the theories of feminists and critical race theorists, often built upon a direct refutation of Freud’s ideas. This makes coexistence difficult and cooperation even moreso. My goal, then, is to assess this conflict. Where are the critiques justified and where do they ignore key tensions in Freud’s text?

Those who would have me assume that social constructionists ‘have it right’ when Freud fails to conform to their model, however, will be disappointed with my analysis. My goal here is not to make Freud bend to the prevailing winds of contemporary theory nor to stuff him into another theoretical mould. I readily admit that I accept many of the common liberal biases of the contemporary academy, though I try to do so with a critical mind. I do believe that theories need to include varied perspectives on gender, race, and sexuality, and I want no part of a theory that proves discriminatory on these grounds. I am not comfortable in assuming, however, that social constructionism is the only way in which power relations of this sort can be addressed and my interest here is not only in points of intersection and of divergence between Freud and these theories but also in the challenge that Freudian theory can pose to social constructionism, in the ways that Freud can push contemporary theoretical views beyond themselves or challenge ‘comfortable’ hermeneutical models.

481 With, of course, a few notable exceptions – see the works of Callard, Pile, Kingsbury, and Seiden, for example.
My focus in reading Freud thus far – and one of the primary reasons for which I immerse myself so deeply into his writings – is on the importance of tensions, contradictions, and the evolution of ideas throughout Freud’s career. He was, of course, terribly prolific and covered a great range of ideas. My primary emphasis is on identifying and understanding these tensions and evolutions. My concern with many of the critiques leveled at Freud’s work is that they tend to be one-dimensional and lack nuance, assuming uniformity and consistency in the text, which even Freud could readily admit was not there. This may give the impression that I am an overly sympathetic reader. I do not think this has to be the case. I am not trying to defend Freud; I simply suggest that we revisit and pay attention to the text.

2.1 The Geographers’ Critique

Geographers Paul Kingsbury and Felicity Callard, both of whom regularly invoke psychoanalytic ideas when thinking about space, summarize the difficulties that many of their colleagues have with the psychoanalytic approach. For Kingsbury, the major challenge is the one with which I am most concerned: notions like those of the unconscious and the drives are seen to be acultural and ahistorical and to conflict with “geographers’ paradigmatic commitments to social constructionism, historicism, and cultural studies.” This, in his evaluation, has limited the interaction between psychoanalysis and geography to mere borrowings. Certain key ideas have at times been adopted for specific purposes but thoroughly psychoanalytic readings are rare. Furthermore, in removing ideas from their context, borrowed terms lose their psychoanalytic character. The unconscious, for example, no longer functions with the dynamics of the Freudian unconscious but represents a generic vessel containing knowledge and memories that consciousness cannot access. This loss of context brings with it a loss of political power; the radicality of Freud’s ideas is also lost. As Kingsbury explains:

[B]ecause geographers have, for the most part, selected concepts and literatures that conform to and emerge from the above dominant paradigms in human geography, much of the radicality and thus the very points of psychoanalytic epistemologies and ontologies have been elided. Thus psychoanalysis is widely viewed in geography as both an extravagant and redundant theoretical detour:

482 Kingsbury 2009, pg. 481.
psychoanalysis spends too much theoretical time on problems that could be more easily tackled with other, thriftier theoretical frameworks.\(^{483}\)

So a vicious circle is created. Psychoanalytic ideas are condemned for lacking political relevance, yet they appear politically irrelevant because they are habitually removed from their context. Rarely motivated to read Freud or Lacan closely, geographers learn about psychoanalysis, Kingsbury argues, based on their colleagues’ partial uses of it, and the dominant path becomes the path of least resistance: social constructionism, cultural studies, historicism. Consequently, Kingsbury suggests that geographers rarely have to struggle with “the fundamental epistemological, ontological and methodological propositions and potentials of psychoanalytic theory.”\(^{484}\)

Kingsbury sees a definite contribution that psychoanalytic theory can make to the investigation of spatial issues and, focusing on its heuristic potential,\(^{485}\) sees in it a hybrid theory that combines a number of useful perspectives. He sees in the acultural and ahistorical nature of the unconscious an important challenge to social constructionism, one that “makes the radical claim that people are ultimately cut off from and cannot know what they want.”\(^{486}\) This complicates questions of agency considerably and reframes the subject in a different light, one that blends culture and biology, discourse and history. Affect does not move directly between two individuals, for example, on a one-to-one basis. It is complicated by a number of different processes – fragmentation, displacement, introjection, and so on – which both Kingsbury and I

\(^{483}\) Ibid.

\(^{484}\) Kingsbury 2007, pg. 235. The extreme to which Kingsbury takes his point about the neglect of Freud in geography may be questionable. I am tempted to give him the benefit of the doubt, primarily because he, as a geographer, surely knows the overall trends in his discipline better than I do. At the same time, a mitigated version of his point suffices for my purposes here – psychoanalysis is not a dominant method in geography.

\(^{485}\) Kingsbury, ‘Psychoanalytic Theories/Psychoanalytic Geographies.’ In R. Kitchin and N. Thrift’s (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* Vol. 8, 2009b, pg. 487. As he puts it, “Critical evaluations of a theory seldom proceed by asking whether a theory is true or false. Theories are primarily hypothetical propositions that attempt to explain and analyze phenomena. Theories also help to guide speculative thinking, coordinate research questions, inform methods and methodologies, as well as provide interpretative frameworks through which we can make sense of complex data. Strictly speaking, then, theories provide neither ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ results, nor ‘good’ or ‘bad’ answers.”

\(^{486}\) Ibid, pg. 488.
wish to frame as spatial processes.\textsuperscript{487} The world that exists is not the product of conscious intent alone but also that of unintended consequences, of dreams and phantasies, which take us beyond a simple model of human agency. As Kingsbury again suggests:

\[T\]he sine qua non of psychoanalytic theory is its contention that the human subject is fundamentally and forever radically split and conflicted: on the one hand, our minds are divided in terms of consciousness and the unconscious. On the other hand, our bodies are forcibly carved by the dictates of biology and language or cultural significations. Taking into account these two divisions, much of psychoanalytic theory is concerned with understanding how the world must be organized and work in ways that people can hold onto something that resembles ‘subjectivity’ and ‘reality’.\textsuperscript{488}

Felicity Callard similarly writes of the “taming of psychoanalysis”\textsuperscript{489} by social constructionists concerned with space as a way of avoiding the more difficult political challenges of Freud’s work. Instead, she sees geographers cramming Freudian notions into the dominant historicist and social constructionist moulds. Her article focuses on the specific challenges that psychoanalysis should pose to the “curiously idealized model of subjectivity and politics”\textsuperscript{490} that exists in the social sciences, one that sees the psyche as malleable and always able to contest social factors that hold it down. This is inconsistent, she argues, with Freud’s formulations of the unconscious, the death drive and the compulsion to repeat, aggressiveness and phantasy. She proclaims that her own attraction to psychoanalytic views of the subject lie specifically in their opposition to those “many other theories that aim to understand the processes of socio-cultural formation – particularly those of social constructionism.”\textsuperscript{491}

Callard’s article seeks primarily to complicate the notion of change and to highlight how difficult – sometimes near-impossible – subjective change is to bring about. The Freudian unconscious, which is both grounded in and yet transcends culture, “is not subject to the kinds of culturalist

\textsuperscript{487} See \textit{ibid} pg. 489.
\textsuperscript{488} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 493.
\textsuperscript{489} See Callard 2003.
\textsuperscript{490} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 299.
\textsuperscript{491} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 299.
reworkings or resignifications of identity characteristic of social constructionist approaches."  

She criticizes the fetishism of resistance and those projects that have channeled psychoanalysis to this end not only as being overly optimistic but also as failing to consider the psychic resistance to change built into Freud’s ideas. She is equally careful to point out, however, that she does ally herself with those who would use psychoanalysis toward progressive or “liberatory” social ends. She is less convinced than her colleagues, however, about the shape that this resistance must take and thinks psychoanalysis can help complicate prevailing notions.  

That said, Callard’s article diagnoses the problem rather than providing the solution. She rejects the notion that the unconscious can be ‘resignified’ – that is, that it can be made to change through discursive interventions – specifically because she argues that the unconscious is more than a product of discourse. To ignore this is to move away from Freud and assimilate the unconscious to the social constructionist paradigm. Callard is committed to a Freudian unconscious; she does not deny the existence of other psychoanalytic models that lie much closer to social constructionism, nor is she championing a ‘true psychoanalysis’ in Freud. But she does suggest that the Freudian subject should not be theorized in terms of power and resistance so much as impotence and the lack of agency. This does not necessarily mean that the Freudian subject is incapable of change. It does, however, mean that there are a number of additional barriers that first need to be considered.  

So while Kingsbury focuses in the interaction of space and the Freudian subject – while also, I should add, heartily endorsing Callard’s critique on a number of occasions – Callard is more interested in the question of political change, rebuking geographers for their simplistic readings of Freud. On the one hand, I am very sympathetic to Callard’s critique, although somewhat disappointed by her inability to provided a lack of alternatives to the status quo. It is unclear from her article how we might move beyond the present situation to achieve the sort of alternative psychoanalytic social theory that she proposes. I hope that the range of options will

492 Ibid, pg. 300.
493 Ibid, pg. 303-304: “I undoubtedly share the political urge towards developing a politics of resistance, position and subjectivity. But I want also to add further commentary about the manner in which such a political project is imagined, and to express some caution about the speed with which decisions about what ‘resistance’ and ‘subjectivity’ might mean tend to be made.”
become clear in chapter 5, which concerns itself with psychoanalytic notions of social space. On the other, however, the use of psychoanalytic theory in geography is a secondary – albeit interesting – line of investigation to my primary question, which asks how space figures in psychoanalytic thought. Both Callard and Kingsbury agree that psychoanalysis can be and is relevant to how we think about space. I suspect that part of the solution moving forward will lie in recognizing the diversity of the psychoanalytic tradition – this is one of the reasons for which I refuse to shut the door on clinical psychoanalysis.

The rest of this chapter will thus consider how psychoanalytic and social constructionist theories of subjectivity interact. First, I wish to consider two key critiques directed at Freud’s work – that it excludes women and that it cannot provide a progressive sexuality that accepts homosexuality – as a way of demonstrating the tensions that exist in his thought surrounding these issues. I wish to overcome the conception of psychoanalysis as an unchanging, arrogant, and totalizing theory. From there, I move on to consider how psychoanalysis and social constructionism can be considered together.

2.2 Tensions

Freud’s ideas about female sexuality seem to have made him nervous. He knew that they would not be popular and took great care to point out how uncertain he was and how open he was to correcting his views. Psychoanalysis was not meant to be a ‘system’ of thought, as he calls it in 1914,494 a dogma, but rather a science in its method if nothing else – a system of hypotheses and heuristic statements open to revision upon the discovery of new evidence. As he writes, “Psychoanalysis has never claimed to provide a complete theory of human mentality in general, but only expected that what it offered should be applied to supplement and correct the knowledge acquired by other means.”495 If we find something in these words beyond apologetics then the notion of psychoanalysis as a totalizing and unchanging science clearly does not match the one that Freud had in mind. At the same time, there was something disruptive about psychoanalysis

\[\text{\textsuperscript{494} Freud, ‘History of the Psycho-analytic Movement,’ in } CW \ 14, \ pgs. \ 50\text{-}52.\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{495} Ibid, pg. 50.}\]
in Freud’s mind; it was meant “to stimulate thought and to upset prejudices.”\(^{496}\) Some amount of resistance was thus to be expected.

Freud’s theories about female sexuality are often assumed to be retrograde, misogynistic, and androcentric. As DiCenso points out, Freud’s paradigmatic subject is often found to be male and female sexuality is thus shaped around the male developmental scheme and the Oedipus complex.\(^{497}\) For many readers, DiCenso included, this understanding produces no major issue of conscience because Freud’s ideas undergo a deliteralized reading in which analyses become more important than statements. I would also add that contemporary psychoanalysis has spent decades re-reading and re-writing Freud’s statements on female sexuality, taking Freud beyond himself and pointing to tensions in his ideas. Even when reading the original text, it is unclear whether Freud is speaking descriptively or normatively about female sexuality. Is he describing observations or is he theorizing?\(^{498}\) In times, he seems to be struggling to make sense of what he has observed in female patients, specifically because his observations do not fit the androcentric mould that he has created – although he is often quick to apply that mould, regardless of gender, when he sees similarities.

There is no doubt that, in many ways, the critiques leveled at Freud are justified. My concern, however, is with the frequency with which some condemn Freud on principle without having appreciated the ambiguities in his work. From the beginning, for example, Freud’s clinical work leads him to position himself as a critic of the Victorian sexual mores of his day, especially because of the way in which its conditioning of women to be ashamed of their sexuality often resulted in psychopathology.\(^{499}\) He similarly comments on the ‘trauma of the wedding bed,’ in which women who have been taught to repress desire have aggressive male sexuality thrust upon


\(^{497}\) DiCenso 1999, pg. 5.

\(^{498}\) See Filip Kovacevic, Liberating Oedipus? Psychoanalysis as Critical Theory (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2007), pg. 15ff. For Kovacevic, if we recall that Freud’s method is empirical, we should critique the society in which Freud lived rather than Freud himself. He draws on Juliet Mitchell’s seminal article on Freud and female sexuality to develop this point.

them, in what is often “not an erotic seduction but a violation.”

In so doing, Freud presses his peers to realize that ‘sexuality matters’ and to pay attention to sexual factors in their practices.

At the same time, Freud does hold on to a notion of female sexuality as inherently passive. The aetiology of neuroses is linked to the passive sexuality of both women and abused children. More importantly, at the root of hysteria lies not the memory itself but the affect with which the act is met – here, one of fear and helplessness. The critique again is not so much one of passive female sexuality, to whatever extent we might wish to generalize it, but of aggressive male sexuality, of the harm of using others. Similarly, Freud’s description of passive and active sexuality comes without value judgement; never does he suggest that one is healthier or ‘better’ than the other.

Overall, Freud has very little to say throughout his writings on female sexuality, but his lecture on the topic in 1933 often draws the most ire from critics, though he again emphasizes that his theories are “certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly.” Here too Freud appears to present an essentialization of masculine and feminine categories, based largely on active and passive sexual action, but he presents them in a context that affirms the inherent bisexuality of the psyche. In this light, notions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ emerge as descriptors or adjectives, almost synonymous to ‘active’ and ‘passive.’ Freud explicitly opposes the sort of essentialization that would lead one to equate ‘active’ and ‘masculine’ or ‘passive’ and ‘feminine,’ and this even though he continues to employ the terms in exactly that sense:

We are accustomed to employ ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ as mental qualities as well, and have in the same way transferred the notion of bisexuality to mental life. Thus we speak of a person, whether male or female, as behaving in a masculine way in one connection and in a feminine way in another. But you will soon perceive that this is only giving way to anatomy or to convention. You cannot

500 Ibid, pg. 246.
501 Ibid, pg. 246.
502 Kovacevic 2007, pg. 15.
503 See Freud, ‘New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis (1933),’ in CW 22.
504 Ibid, pg. 135.
give the concepts of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ any new connotation. The discussion is not a psychological one; when you say ‘masculine’, you usually mean ‘active’, and when you say ‘feminine’, you usually mean ‘passive’… But by this you have precisely reduced the characteristic of masculinity to the factor of aggressiveness so far as psychology is concerned. You may well doubt whether you have gained any real advantage from this when you reflect that in some classes of animals the female are the stronger and more aggressive and the male is active only in the single act of sexual union.505

The essentialization of gender is too simplistic to reflect the variety of practices known to biology. In this way, the theory of drives, which attribute aggressiveness not to masculinity but to an innate force common to both sexes, contradicts such an essentialization. Freud cites a number of female analysts who confirm that little girls at play are just as aggressive as little boys.

At the same time, this notion of psychic bisexuality allows Freud to attribute a common course of (sexual) development to both boys and girls, within a framework that prioritizes the androcentric Oedipal triangle: “With their entry into the phallic phase the differences between the sexes are completely eclipsed by their agreements. We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl [Mädchen] is a little man [Mann].”506 To put this line in context, Freud is referring specifically to the phallic stage marking the beginning of masturbation for both boys and girls. His general statement is based on concordant empirical evidence, on common observations. Thus the second line, that the little girl becomes a little man, can also be read in reverse; it is equally true that the little man becomes a little girl.507

A similar case can be made for Freud’s writings on homosexuality. He begins by advocating frank and open speech about the sexual perversions (Perversionen), a category that includes both male and female homosexuality.508 Again, the term ‘perversion’ should not be understood in the

505 Ibid, pg. 114.
506 Ibid, pg. 118.
loaded manner of contemporary parlance, but instead carries a more neutral meaning.\footnote{509} As Freud writes, “The perversions are neither bestial nor degenerate in the emotional sense of the word. They are a development of germs all of which are contained in the undifferentiated sexual disposition of the child.”\footnote{510} Everyone, it seems, can be a sexual pervert, and almost everyone is in one way or another. This runs contrary to the neuroscience of Freud’s day, which thought perversion, and homosexuality most especially, to result from a form of nervous degeneracy, a possibility that Freud explicitly rejects.\footnote{511}

Freud’s theory acknowledges that the choice of sexual object is highly variable and is dependent on psychological, not biological factors.\footnote{512} The aim of the sexual act, according to Freud, is the release of sexual energy to satisfy the sexual drive. This is normally done, admittedly, through male-female copulation. The theory is thus heteronormative in this sense, less so because of the psychic dimension of the theory than because of its Darwinian foundation, which privileges the propagation of the species. A fetish, then, is any sexual act that obsesses over parts of the body other than those designed for sex or, alternatively, one that lingers in the regions reserved for foreplay. So even the kiss fits the category, as an overt sexual focus on the mouth.\footnote{513} Perversions only become pathological, Freud posits early on in his career, when “the sexual instinct goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust, horror and pain.”\footnote{514} The example that he provides is that of necrophilia. Homosexuality is not mentioned.

A number of attempts to explain the psychic aetiology of homosexuality arise throughout Freud’s career. Homosexuals are not born, nor do they choose to be gay. Homosexuality results from unconscious processes. Initially, Freud suggests that homosexuality arises when sexual

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\footnote{509} Freud, ‘Three Essays on Sexuality (1905),’ in \textit{CW} 7, pg. 160: “No healthy person, it appears, can fail to make some addition that might be called perverse to the normal sexual aim; and the universality of this finding is in itself enough to show how inappropriate it is to use the word perversion as a term of reproach.”

\footnote{510} Freud, ‘The Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (1905),’ in \textit{CW} 7, pg. 50.


\footnote{512} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 149.

\footnote{513} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 150.

\footnote{514} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 161.
development is stunted in the transition from auto-eroticism to object-love, causing individuals to become fixated on the importance of their own genitals and seek a similar feature in their object.\textsuperscript{515} This idea is developed further in the 1910 essay on Leonardo da Vinci.\textsuperscript{516} Here, Freud hypothesizes that Leonardo was a repressed homosexual who suffered from the cultural mores of his time. The truth of the biographical statement is irrelevant; what one finds here is another critique of societies and cultures that fail to recognize the plurality of sexual expression. The theory of homosexuality is again ambivalent. On the one hand, homosexuality involves a narcissistic object choice – in loving other men, the male homosexual loves himself as a child – which the presence of a strong father figure could prevent.\textsuperscript{517} On the other, though, Freud adds a footnote ten years later explaining that: “everyone, even the most normal person, is capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and has done so at some time in his life, and either still adheres to it in his unconscious or else protects himself against it by vigorous counter-attitudes.”\textsuperscript{518} Again, Freud concludes by emphasizing the incompleteness of the portrait presented. He cannot make any conclusive statements, nor does he deny that a number of other processes aside from the one described may contribute to homosexuality. He even leaves the door open to unknown constitutional factors that he has yet to observe.\textsuperscript{519} The picture is thus at best very partial and Freud goes to great lengths to acknowledge this.

\textsuperscript{516} Freud, ‘Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood (1910),’ in \textit{CW 11}.
\textsuperscript{517} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 99: “Indeed it seems as though the presence of a strong father would ensure that the son made the correct decision in his choice of object, namely someone of the opposite sex.”
\textsuperscript{518} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 99.
\textsuperscript{519} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 100-101: “We are far from wishing to exaggerate the importance of these explanations of the psychical genesis of homosexuality. It is quite obvious that they are in sharp contrast to the official theories of those who speak for homosexuals, but we know that they are not sufficiently comprehensive to make a conclusive explanation of the problem possible. What is for practical reasons called homosexuality may arise from a whole variety of psychosexual inhibitory processes; the particular process we have singled out is perhaps only one among many, and is perhaps related to only one type of ‘homosexuality’. We must also admit that the number of cases of our homosexual type in which it is possible to point to the determinants which we require far exceeds the number of those where the deduced effect actually take place; so that we too cannot reject the part played by unknown constitutional factors, to which the whole of homosexuality is usually traced.”
2.3 The Social Construction of the Subject

Social constructionist views of the subject emphasize the influential role that social and cultural forces play in shaping psyches, beliefs, and practices. As a result, individuals and bodies of knowledge are presented as emerging from a particular context – histories, societies, discursive patterns – and the agent’s ability to subvert these dominant systems is considered within these bounds. I have no interest in rejecting any of these ideas which, at this moment in the intellectual tradition, seem to be well established and self-evident.

It is interesting to consider, in light of this description, Freud’s lack of a definition of culture as we understand it. This issue will resurface more prominently later on, but allow me some brief words of introduction at this moment. Working from the German *Kultur*, Freud collapses civilization – the social organization – and culture – its product – into a common category and defines it as “that which differentiates us from the animals.”\(^{520}\) It is grounded both in the renunciation of instincts and in the social regulation of relationships. Now Freud does, I think, identify certain mechanisms – sublimation, for example – that are perhaps more relevant to the cultural side of *Kultur* than to its social side, but my point here is only that Freud may not have a specific theory of culture as we would define it. In this sense, there is some anachronism in forcing Freud into a social constructionist mould. While I point to the tensions in Freud’s text as a way of complicating the social constructionist critique of his ideas, a number of other methods have previously been adopted to the same end. Freud is, like any other thinker, the product of his own moment in history and his ideas reflect that context. But much of the debate over Freud centres on the place that he grants reason and scientific thought in his work. The modernists, then, confront the postmodernists.

Many, including Jürgen Habermas, find in Freudian philosophy a way of rethinking Enlightenment notions of rationality and subjectivity without resorting to “the radical critique of reason in French thought.”\(^{521}\) While both Habermas and the French critics – by which I refer to the ‘usual suspects’ of Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, and so on – agree that reason is

\(^{520}\) Freud, ‘Future of an Illusion (1927),’ in *CW 21*, pg. 5.

contextually situated, both drawing from and feeding back into notions of history, society, body, and language, the two camps disagree on how to resolve the situation. For the French, it seems, there is no escape; Enlightenment has failed. For Habermas, however, this only presents an obstacle – and an important one to recognize and deal with – on the path to knowledge. He criticizes postmodern philosophy as hypocrisy, discarding all totalizing theories and ideas except the very ones upon which it is founded; true postmodernism should in turn deconstruct itself. If both Freud and the postmodernists present themselves as ‘masters of suspicion,’ to borrow Ricoeur’s term, and aim to unmask illusion, only Freud acknowledges that this task requires a particular understanding of reason and its function.

Cultural anthropologist Melford Spiro presents a similar critique of postmodern dismissals of Freudian psychoanalysis, although he locates himself more squarely in the modernist camp than does Habermas. Spiro too acknowledges the critique of postmodern subjectivity, but he refuses to call it postmodern. Instead, he argues that the very notion that the subject is dialectically shaped comes out of Freudian thought, and the intersubjective model that we have emphasized thus far most especially. He sees in the notions of transference and countertransference explicit recognition that the subject is permeable to and influenced by the words, thoughts, and behaviours of other individuals and by social forms. Finally, he criticizes the critique of ideology put forth in the work of postmodern anthropologists as “very selective” and failing to consider its own biases.

While both Habermas and Spiro are often seen as presenting fairly radical critiques of postmodernism and social constructionism, a number of more moderate positions exist, and it is these that I emphasize. In particular, I draw attention to the work of Ian Hacking, the renowned

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522 Ibid, pg. 126.
525 Ibid, pg. 760.
526 Ibid, pg. 763.
philosopher of science, whose *The Social Construction of What?* best locates my views in this debate. Hacking too acknowledges the social constructionist critique of knowledge and subjectivity but denies that it makes science impossible. He recognizes the popularity of social constructionist views in the humanities and social sciences in particular and attributes it to the liberatory ends to which they can be applied. Still, Hacking goes a step further than other critics by providing an important distinction between ideas and objects. Ideas, he explains unequivocally, are socially constructed products of their contexts. At the same time, these ideas represent attempts to grasp real-life, objective referents. He thus emphasizes the existence of an objective reality behind socially constructed discourse.

Hacking argues that knowledge operates through a sort of feedback loop, altering the objects that it studies with its theories. This brings in another nuanced distinction between the function of knowledge in the social sciences and that in the natural sciences. The classificatory systems of the social sciences are interactive, while those in the natural sciences are not. Members of a specific class of individual – Hacking refers to female refugees as an example - will learn to act a certain way when they become aware of or socially influenced by the forms of discourse about them. The theories ‘feed back’ to inform their self-understanding. This does not occur in the natural sciences, where objects of interest are inanimate. A quark or an electron will not change its objective state based on discourse, though the terms in which it is described might. Hacking is quick to dispel any naïve understandings of how the scientific process operates: “The standard view is of science as a discovery of facts that exist ‘in the world.’ The world comes structured into facts. That is not a scientific hypothesis. It is a metaphysical picture.” Science deals in probabilities. Although some can become so high as to approximate certainty – a true revolution in understanding and evidence would be required to overthrow Darwinian theory, for example – theories only stand until evidence to the contrary is found.

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528 Ibid, pg. 29.
529 Ibid, pg. 32.
530 Ibid, pg. 60.
What, then, does knowledge in the social sciences look like? In his view, the social sciences require both constructionist and biological forms of discourse. On the one hand, social constructionist ideas are self-evident once we acknowledge the existence of society and culture; “nobody doubts that things whose very existence requires social institutions and contracts are social products.”\(^{531}\) At the same time, the social sciences are still chasing a ‘moving target’ of objective reality. Psychiatric illnesses provide a key example. Systems of psychiatric classification clearly influence how people view themselves. At the same time, the fact that psychiatric theories have changed over time does not mean that they are scientifically irrelevant. These theories become part of the disease. Scientific explanations participate in the cultural matrix which, in turn, loops back to influence the object of study. So the process moves in both directions: society construct disorders and disorders in turn construct society.\(^{532}\) But these diseases still have physiological grounds that can be studied. Everything that is socially constructed is, at the same time, real.\(^{533}\) Social constructionism and scientific discourse are complimentary, rather than antithetical, approaches.

With respect to our investigation into space and Freud, I have demonstrated that space has a key role to play in the unconscious, that place can be receptive of affect, and that the formation of the subject, as described in the oceanic feeling and the fort-da game, is an intensely spatial process. Freud unequivocally describes the creation of the subject in terms of a partitioning of space. Similarly, I have emphasized the permeability of the Freudian subject, against those who find Cartesian notions therein. On the one hand, as Frie suggests, the poststructuralist postmodern demolition of the unitary subject is somewhat of a straw man argument, since the existence of any notion of a unitary subject beyond Cartesian philosophy can be questioned.\(^{534}\) He finds

\(^{531}\) \textit{Ibid}, pg. 67.

\(^{532}\) \textit{Ibid}, pg. 116.

\(^{533}\) \textit{Ibid}, pg. 125.

examples of fragmented subjects, along Freudian lines, as far back as the German Romantics, continuing with Hegel, Marx, and phenomenology. Equally obvious should be the fact that there is no unified or monolithic ‘postmodernism’ or ‘social constructionism,’ only a list of thinkers whose ideas more or less coalesce around a group of common themes. Nor should rationality and fragmented subjectivity be seen as antithetical ideas; Freud’s subject, who is both rational and decentred, provides a key example.

Still, I think that the political challenges that psychoanalysis poses to prevailing conceptions of subjectivity need to be understood and appreciated on their own terms. Freud’s ideas certainly are not politically irrelevant, nor do they need to be allied with contemporary modes of critique to appear in a useful light. As I have previously shown, Freud provides an important challenge to notions of political change, with his theory of the death drive, as well as a reassertion of the importance of sexuality in life, society, and culture. His formulation of the unconscious undermines the dominance of rational modes of thought, both in psychology and in philosophy. Freud’s self is divided, fragile, and constructed.
Chapter 4: Inside/Outside: Defining ‘Reality’

Freud’s positivism was fervent and unqualified; science is the only reliable route to knowledge, and the scientific Weltanschauung has Freud’s whole-hearted support as the only way of dissolving humanity’s illusions.\(^{535}\)

In this chapter, I want to expand on some of the themes developed in the previous chapter to challenge the notion of Freud’s scientism. I have suggested thus far that the psychoanalytic subject can be understood spatially as a play of boundaries that separate inside from outside. Through the investigation of both the fort-da and the oceanic feeling, it became evident that these boundaries were not erected from the outset, but rather came to exist at specific developmental moments. So, for example, the loss of the primal object – the mother, the breast – and the process of mourning that follows results in the creation of a subjective boundary that separates inside from outside. In a similar manner, the oceanic feeling points to a moment before the formation of the ego in which subjective and objective go undistinguished.

Analysis thus far, then, has highlighted specific moments at which boundaries are created. I now want to turn to the ways in which these same boundaries are blurred in Freud’s work, an argument that counters charges that Freud is consistently guilty of scientism. Both the oceanic feeling and the fort-da, as developmental processes, might give the impression that Freud holds fast to a notion of the subject in which the lines between inside and outside are fixed and impenetrable. At moments, this certainly seems to be the case. There is, however, an ambiguity on this point that I wish to highlight in this chapter. For these intimations of a stark division between subject and object are balanced by other processes that point to a fluid and permeable boundary between inside and outside. Freud’s description of both phantasy (Phantasie) and illusion (Illusion) become important in this regard. With phantasy and illusion, Freud emphasizes the way in which internal contents influence the perception of the outside world. Reality – also a term of interest here – is more than an exterior that needs to be perceived in a single, healthy way; it becomes instead a relativized phenomenon whose interpretation depends heavily on personal desires, experience, and memory.

This line of questioning brings with it a further difficulty since, as DiCenso rightly suggests, any questioning into the division of subject and object brings with it the notion of Freud’s positivism. To pursue this avenue further, I will propose the example of religion, Freud’s critique of which is often taken as a prime example of his scientism. How does the place of phantasy and illusion in matters of religion differ from that in other moments, where Freud is ready and willing to admit their positive function? Why is illusion beneficial when it comes to art, for example, but detrimental in matters of religion? As a point of comparison, I also want to review British psychoanalyst Donald Woods (D.W.) Winnicott’s theory of illusion, which is inspired by the object relations school and the work of Melanie Klein. Winnicott’s appreciation of illusion and his location of cultural matters in an ‘intermediate area’ of human experience has often been invoked by scholars of religion as a psychoanalytic appreciation of religion, a panacea to Freud’s pessimism and supposed materialism.

The critique of Freud’s alleged scientism has become commonplace and gained wide acceptance. When geographers like Steve Pile gesture toward “the dangers and critiques of psychoanalysis, which will likely lead to at most a partial and selective combination with spatial theory,” Freud’s scientism represents the sort of danger that they have in mind. But this scientism, I want to suggest, is not necessarily “fervent and unqualified,” as Gabriel suggests in the epigraph. The ubiquity of phantasy and the appreciation of illusion in the works of Klein, Winnicott, and the object relations school has seized on the germ of a notion already present in Freudian thought. They develop Freud’s ideas, yes, and take them further, but this is only possible because they first find in many of the writings of the Standard Edition an ambiguity on which to build.

More importantly, I want to emphasize the way in which this line of inquiry fits into the notion developed here of space as relationality. Notions of subjectivity can always be read spatially in themselves insofar as the subject is viewed as bounded entity. This is not a new idea; I have appealed to it in my presentation of the topographies as a set of relations of located psychic entities, as well as in the above investigation of fort-da and of the oceanic feeling. ‘Reality’

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538 See Kirby 1996, pg. 36.
raises similar questions. Where is the line between the subjective and the real drawn? How firm is the boundary between the two? As Kirby suggests, “‘Reality’ is established through a management of space, but that space is projected by the subject.” Yet this ‘projection’ is not an innocent process. It is not a simple translation; it brings with it influence, an exchange of ideas, as Freud’s treatment of phantasy and illusion suggest.

1 Phantasy and Illusion

While less ubiquitous than in the works of the object relations school, Freud’s notion of phantasy dates back to his earliest works and demonstrates how the internal workings of the psyche can influence perception of the outside world.

1.1 The Seduction Theory and Its Revision

Freud never applied his method of investigation – be it hypnosis, word association, or the developed psychoanalytic technique – to cases of psychosis. He would have been familiar with these sorts of patients, having studied under Charcot at the Salpêtrière, but Freud limited himself to the treatment of neuroses. Freud’s earliest definition of neurosis is not based on the disturbance in reality that the disease might cause – hallucinations, visions, or delusions are possible but not necessary for the label to be applied – but rather on questions of aetiology: a neurosis is a disease in which psychological changes but no pathology of the nervous system can be found. While the limitation of clinical work to neurotics may not have required that Freud deal with individuals who were obviously and persistently disconnected from reality, he nevertheless perceived a conflict of realities of sorts at the basis of neurosis, one that pits the realities of memory against the reality of the body.

The neurotic symptom arises from this conflict of realities. In most cases, there is no ‘real’ (as in ‘physical’ or ‘neurological’) explanation for the symptoms that neurotics present. In this they are distinguished from psychotics, according to the science of the day. Symptoms arise instead from another reality, one grounded in phantasy and memory. In his ‘Studies in Hysteria’ (1893-

539 Ibid, g. 89.

540 Freud, ‘Hysteria (1888),’ in CW 1, pg. 41.
1895), drafted during his time working with Breuer, Freud explains that symptoms arise from the persistence of affect that has not been discharged. This affect, Freud suggests, is linked to a real, lived traumatic event. Traumatic memories and repressed emotions are tied together. At this point in his career, ‘reality’ remains tied, in a fairly literal sense, to lived events. At the basis of traumatic memories lie biographical events.

This link plays out most famously in the theory of infantile seduction, in which Freud posits that all hysterics must have suffered through a traumatic sexual experience before the age of puberty, one consisting “of an actual irritation of the genitals (of processes resembling copulation).” On the one hand, Freud explains that it is not the event itself that results in pathology but rather the revival of the affect associated with the traumatic memory at a later point in time. The conditions of the memory’s revival are as important as the memory itself in determining whether hysteria will result or not. On the other hand, Freud is emphatic that a real event lies at the base of the traumatic memory, creating a veritable plague of child abuse cases within Viennese society. In line with the contemporary Project, the early Freud continues to think in literal and material terms.

Very quickly, however, Freud begins to doubt this original theory, writing to Fliess in 1897, “I am tormented with grave doubts about my theory of the neuroses” and again, only 5 weeks later, “I no longer believe in my neurotica.” This reversal of opinion seems to be linked to Freud’s return to a distinction put forth in the Project between factual (material) and psychic reality. As Freud explains, “there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one

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541 In CW 2.
543 See 1896 above, pg. 164.
544 “Letter 67” to Fliess, in CW 1, pg. 259.
545 “Letter 69” to Fliess, in CW 1, pg. 259.
546 As will become clear, these are obvious precursors to Freud’s conceptions of material and historical truth, which become so important in Moses and Monotheism. I will return to this topic in chapter 6.
cannot distinguish between the truth and fiction that is cathexed with affect.” In short, the psychoanalyst cannot distinguish between an actual seduction event and an imagined one because the psyche treats both in the same manner so long as they generate the same affect. The psyche does not react to realities but rather to affect. In the *Project*, reality and phantasy can only be differentiated physically, insofar as the former is capable of producing painful or pleasurable stimuli.

The question of representation is also relevant here. In the *Project*, Freud makes clear that the psyche does not react to objects themselves but rather to their mnemonic images. This becomes the basis for the notion of phantasy: in many cases, the events as they are remembered hold greater influence than events as they actually took place. He builds on this notion a few years later in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where the same holds true for the formation of dreams. Dreams, it is clear, are related to the events of waking life in some way – “in every dream it is possible to find a point of contact with the experiences of the previous day” – but in one that allows for distortion. Infantile desires also play a role here. Dreams represent a modified view of reality as it is remembered, influenced by the wishes and desires of the dreamer. For this reason, Freud can suggest that dreams, much like illusions, are formed to fulfill a wish. Like phantasies, the wishes arise from an internal economy that is related to reality but that goes beyond mere reiteration.

Again, the notion of representation is key. Dreams are visual items, perceived in the mind’s eye. The mechanism of dream formation therefore traffics in images which, Freud suggests, are more open to manipulation than thoughts. As a result, while affect and images can be separated, affect and thoughts cannot. Freud can thus explain how, in both dreams and phantasies, affective

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548 1895, pg. 373.
549 Freud 1900, *CW* 4, pg. 165.
550 *Ibid*, pg. 11.
reactions do not seem to match the dream content. This again highlights the disparity that can exist between material reality and psychic reality. Freud is emphatic, however, in maintaining that psychic reality is indeed a form of ‘reality’; he continues to cling to the word. While attention to the meaning of dreams may seem counterproductive to a scientific worldview – Freud here criticizes those psychologists and neurologists who would cast his topic of study aside as trivial – it can still teach us something about the reality of the unconscious.\textsuperscript{553} So while material and psychic reality must be distinguished, Freud speaks against those who would elevate material reality above psychic reality. Coming off the Interpretation, Freud returns to a clinical example in 1905.\textsuperscript{554} Completing the revision of his theory of seduction, he now argues that no actual trauma is required to generate a neurosis. A phantasised trauma suffices. The key instead is the affect that accompanies the thought, since the unconscious cannot distinguish between affect stemming from real events and those stemming from phantasies anyway.

Overall, then, the early Freud moves from a fixation on actual events to an appreciation of phantasy’s role in psychic life. He goes so far as to equate the influence of real events and imagined events by focusing instead on the equivalent affect that they produce. Within the psyche, there is no pure reality that exists. Phantasies work to reshape memories retrospectively, distorting actual events. The distinction between material reality and psychic reality, developed as early as the Project and maintained throughout his career, therefore becomes all the more important.

1.2 Illusion and Phantasy in Artistic Works

Freud’s first real treatment of the topic of illusion arises in the context of his study of art. In his investigation into the effect of psychopathic characters on dramatic audiences,\textsuperscript{555} Freud suggests that plays are enjoyable to watch because of the illusion of similarity that exists between the character and the audience. Here, the term ‘illusion’ takes on a less determined and more colloquial sense, without the overt shade of oneiric wish fulfillment present in, say, the analysis

\textsuperscript{553} Ibid, pg. 613. See also pg. 620.

\textsuperscript{554} ‘Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (1905),’ in CW 7, pg. 27.

\textsuperscript{555} ‘Psychopathic Characters on the Stage (1905-1906),’ in CW 7.
of religious illusion. Still, the idea here is that identification breaks down the boundary between self and other, allowing the character’s emotional turmoil to produce a cathartic effect in the psyche. So a form of wish fulfillment is present insofar as the play allows the psyche to live out its phantasies not in real life but through the characters of the play. In a line of thought that Winnicott will later develop, Freud equates theatre and child’s play,\textsuperscript{556} as each allows for the purging of emotions through fictional situations.

Here again the line between reality and fiction is blurred. The events of the play are not real; the audience member is not living them herself. Still, they are ‘real enough’ for the psyche which, through imagination and phantasy, plays along emotionally as if the events really were happening. Freud develops these ideas further in his 1907 analysis of Jensen’s \textit{Gradiva},\textsuperscript{557} a short story in which a man experiences a series of visions reminiscent of the eruption of Vesuvius at Pompeii. Here, Freud emphasizes the gap that exists between reality and phantasy; however one chooses to define the terms, they must be opposed.\textsuperscript{558} He speaks in terms of material reality: the character’s visions in \textit{Gradiva} are quite clearly visions, perceptions of an object that is not really present. Indeed, Freud lays Jensen’s character on the couch and builds on the aetiology of his symptoms. While phantasies are ubiquitous and healthy to a certain extent, delusions – by which Freud here means hallucinations and visions as much as misguided beliefs – result when “phantasies have gained the upper hand – that is, have obtained belief and have acquired influence on action.”\textsuperscript{559} He also provides his first detailed definition of phantasy:

\begin{quote}
Let us recall all that we have heard about the nature and origin of the phantasies which are the precursors of delusions. They are substitutes for and derivatives of repressed memories which a resistance will not allow to enter consciousness unaltered, but which can purchase the possibility of becoming conscious by taking account, by means of changes and distortions, of the resistance’s censorship. When this compromise has been accomplished, the memories have turned into the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[556] \textit{Ibid}, pg. 305.
\item[557] ‘Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s \textit{Gradiva} (1907),’ in \textit{CW} 9.
\item[558] \textit{Ibid}, pg. 41.
\item[559] \textit{Ibid}, pg. 44.
\end{footnotes}
Phantasies, which can easily be misunderstood by the conscious personality – that is, understood so as to fit with the dominant psychical current.\textsuperscript{560} Phantasies then are essentially ‘daydreams’ (Tagträume), as Freud sometimes calls them, formed by the same mechanisms described in the \textit{Interpretation} and similarly grounded in wish fulfillment. In this latter regard, they approach illusion. Yet, as one reads on, it becomes clear that the emphasis on psychic reality remains equally present. Freud describes the “grain of truth concealed in every delusion,”\textsuperscript{561} which both motivates and justifies belief. The valuation of phantasy appeals to psychic truth. Since each daydream contains the distorted germ of a repressed event or wish, the psychoanalyst has much to learn about the unconscious by paying attention to these expressions.

The last of Freud’s three investigations into art comes in his ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,’\textsuperscript{562} which considers the importance of phantasy for the artistic process. He begins by reiterating the comparison drawn between creative acts and child’s play, building on it by emphasizing the question of reality:

\begin{quote}
The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality; and he likes to link his imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world. This linking is all that differentiates the child’s ‘play’ from ‘phantasying’.\textsuperscript{563}
\end{quote}

So play is differentiated from phantasy only in that the former draws its inspiration more closely from the lived world. The latter, as seen previously, is more heavily influenced by repressed memories and desires. In both cases, however, the psyche is able to distinguish the activity from reality. Indeed, the unreality of the creative scene is key to its cathartic effect. Hamlet’s

\textsuperscript{560} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 58.
\textsuperscript{561} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 80.
\textsuperscript{562} 1908. In \textit{CW} 9.
\textsuperscript{563} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 144.
experience is intensely unpleasant if lived, but purgative when lived psychically, becoming instead a source of pleasure.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 144.}

It becomes very difficult, as Freud develops the ideas further, to distinguish between play, phantasy, and illusion. The difference between the first two terms seems to be only one of timing. As the child grows up, play gives way to phantasy: “instead of \textit{playing}, [the child] now \textit{phantasies}. He builds castles in the air and creates what are called \textit{daydreams}.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 145.} Furthermore, Freud insists that phantasy is a normal part of psychic life – “I believe that most people construct phantasies at times in their lives”\footnote{Ibid, pg. 145.} – and seeks to dispel some of the stigma associated with the process. It remains unclear, however, how phantasies are to be distinguished from illusions. While the latter are defined more fully in Freud’s social works in terms of wish-fulfilling beliefs, phantasies are similarly described as motivated by “unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality.”\footnote{Ibid, pg. 146.}

It is clear then that daydreams stand in opposition to material reality. They are formed to meet psychic needs, fulfilling desires that cannot be satisfied in life. Far from moralizing here, though, or enforcing a strict materialism, Freud lauds the value of a certain moderate form of phantasy that satisfies psychic needs and provides pleasure without contradicting sense perceptions or imposing false beliefs on material reality. Psychic reality and material reality, while both appreciated in their own way, must not be mixed too closely. The hysterical is he who has lost the division between the two. So, in his ‘Formulations in the Two Principles of Mental Functioning’ (1911),\footnote{In CW 12.} Freud can begin by defining neurosis as a flight from reality. Neurotics construct substitute satisfactions in their minds to compensate for the harsh nature of life.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 218-219.} The reality principle, grounded in sense perceptions, suggests that the psyche must learn to tolerate reality
even when it proves to be disagreeable. Phantasy, on the other hand, functions under the guise of the pleasure principle as an internal method of finding pleasure in a non-pathological way. Art provides an ideal compromise between the two warring factions:

Art brings about a reconciliation between the two principles in a peculiar way. An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to term with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which is at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy. He finds the way back to reality, however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality.

In these early works, art — which, in Freud’s analysis, is often typified by stage plays and creative writing — is presented as the quintessential example of a beneficial form of phantasy, one that does not lay claim to belief or seek to draw the viewer away from reality but instead leads her back to it.

1.3 Phantasy and the Ego

Freud’s Totem and Taboo extends the notion of phantasy beyond the individual to encompass the social level as well. Freud locates the group origins of totemism in the repressed memory of a traumatic event, a memory that resurfaces in a manner that influences social institutions. All those who share in totemic beliefs are under the sway of the same group phantasy and the practice gains meaning from a shared sense of repressed guilt. So, on the one hand, Totem and Taboo introduces the notion of “primal unconscious phantasies,” a category that might also include castration fears, Oedipal desires, and the like. Furthermore, Freud’s notion of the primal murder, through which symbolic forms come to create ethical norms, reinforces the permeability

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570 Ibid, pg. 222.
571 Ibid, pg. 224.
574 Perelberg’s term. See 2008, pg. 110.
of the boundary that exists between the individual and the group, with phantasies becoming both social and collective and influencing social behaviour.

On the other hand, *Totem and Taboo* introduces a developmental schema of knowledge, one that emphasizes the supremacy of the reality principle. Freud analyzes the process in terms of narcissism and omnipotence of thought. Animistic societies attribute omnipotence to themselves, believing that they can alter reality directly. Religious individuals only move a step further, attributing omnipotence to the gods but reserving for themselves influence over the gods through prayers and magic. The scientific worldview, however, requires that individuals abandon omnipotence and recognize that many things in the world are outside of their control. Freud relates these different social options to specific stages of individual development, suggesting that phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny. Totemism reflects the omnipotence of primary narcissism, religion the secondary step of object choice, and science the introduction of the reality principle. Art, significantly, is also described as a field in which the individual retains a form of omnipotence, shaping the world through his work.

The emphasis on the ego that comes with the second topography accentuates this shift toward the primacy of the reality principle. The ego, as Freud portrays it in 1923, is trapped between two competing realities, the material reality of the outside world and the psychic reality of the id, which Freud calls a “second external world.” Neurosis, which is defined as a conflict between the ego and the id, is motivated by repressed unconscious wishes and contrasted with psychosis, which results from a conflict between the ego and the outside world and thus brings about faulty sense perceptions. The conflict between the ego and the id that occurs in neurosis allows for sense data from the outside world to continue to dominate. This is not to say that ‘disturbances in reality’ cannot occur – they do – but they prove to be less tyrannous than in cases of psychosis. As Freud writes, “In neurosis a piece of reality is avoided by a sort of flight, whereas in

575 See ‘Totem and Taboo (1913),’ in *CW* 13, pgs. 88-90.
577 In ‘The Ego and the Id,’ in *CW* 19, pg. 55.
578 See ‘Neurosis and Psychosis (1924),’ in *CW* 19, pg. 149.
psychosis it is remodeled entirely.” Or, again, expressed in yet another way: “neurosis does not disavow the reality, it only ignores it; psychoses disavows it and tries to replace it.”

What then can we say in manner of summary? Most basically, Freud oscillates between a position that appreciates phantasy and illusion – in artistic endeavours most notably – and one that demonstrates a greater tendency toward the rule of the reality principle. The boundary between inside and outside, between subjective and real, thus shows varying degrees of permeability. Importantly, we might also note Freud’s two uses of the term ‘reality’: one to represent the material outside world and another to designate the psychic reality of the unconscious and its processes. Both are given equal regard and both are repeatedly described as ‘realities’ – that is, there is no sense that the notion of ‘reality’ is more appropriate for the outside world than the inner. In a sense, as a psychoanalyst constantly arguing for the recognition of the unconscious in a medical world that remains skeptical of its importance, Freud is arguably much more concerned with psychic reality.

The oft-cited critique, repeated by Jonathan Lear among others, that “Freud had no concept of reality” thus only stands to a certain extent. Freud did, in fact, have two distinct notions of reality, though it may be true that he simply equated material reality with sensory perceptions. There is no doubt however that, taken in Lear’s context, Freud’s notion of reality differs considerably from Hans Loewald’s, for example. If “Loewald treats reality as the necessary correlate of the ego – that with which the ego is in relation – and this gives him freedom to characterize different sorts of relations to different sorts of reality,” as Lear describes, Freud only makes room for one mode of relation to the real. For Loewald, reality is only real for a given subject, making room for a variety of personal forms of meaning associated with a given object. Freud’s texts are much more ambiguous, though I do think that his treatment of phantasy opens up some options upon which psychoanalysis can build.

579 ‘The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis (1924),’ in CW 19, pg. 185.
2 Religious Illusion

Freud’s critique of religious illusion in *Future of An Illusion* and its further iteration as religious delusion in *Civilization and Its Discontents* are often taken together to represent the height of Freud’s enforcement of a strict divide between subjective experience and reality. Here, he seems to emphasize that those beliefs that do not correspond to sensory evidence are invariably harmful and need to be discarded. In this section, I want to consider Freud’s treatment of religious illusion in light of his appreciation of phantasy and artistic illusion developed earlier in his career.

Freud defends his critique of omnipotent thought and religion in *Totem and Taboo* by stating that “psycho-analysis will never reduce religion to a single source.”\(^{582}\) His explanation, he recognizes, can only be a partial one, presented from a psychoanalytic perspective. It is not meant to exclude other theories drawn from other methods of study. Those who criticize Freud’s work on religion are quick to forget this openness of spirit. While his focus will be on psychic factors, he does not deny that other elements outside the purview of his interests also influence religious beliefs and practices. Freud’s own work also stays true to this statement by approaching religion from a number of different directions, each of which highlights a different element of psychoanalytic theory.

2.1 Early Works on Religion (Before 1927)

As early as 1901, Freud links religious and superstitious beliefs to paranoia in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.\(^{583}\) The emphasis here too is on the core of truth that lies at the heart of paranoid delusions, recalling our earlier discussion of phantasy and psychic reality. Paranoid individuals, in Freud’s description, find great significance in minor or chance events, which they read as intentional threats to their person.\(^{584}\) Superstitions function in much the same way, Freud argues, by interpreting the world anthropomorphically and attributing intent to the

\(^{582}\) *CW* 13, pg. 100.

\(^{583}\) In *CW* 6.

\(^{584}\) *Ibid*, pg. 259.
natural world. The key similarity between paranoiacs and superstitions, the attribution of intent to chance events, is traced to a particular function of the mind, the tendency to phantasise and let psychic reality influence the interpretation of material reality. The delusions of persecution typical of paranoia involve unconscious fears read in the outside world, with interior truth being reflected in material reality.

Recapitulating Feuerbach, Freud extends the explanation to encompass religious belief and superstition:

In point of fact I believe that a large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way into the most modern religions, is nothing but psychology projected into the external world. The obscure recognition (the endopsychic perception, as it were) of psychical factors and relations in the unconscious is mirrored – it is difficult to express it in other terms, and here the analogy with paranoia must come to our aid – in the construction of a supernatural reality, which is destined to be changed back once more by science into the psychology of the unconscious. One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God, or good and evil, or immortality, and so on, and to transform metaphysics into metapsychology.585

The goal of psychoanalysis then is to read these cultural creations and learn through them about the functioning of the psyche.

Freud’s essay on obsessive actions and religious practices586 follows a similar vein in analyzing religious elements through an analogy with clinical pathologies. Here, Freud does little more than point to similarities that exist between the compulsive actions performed by patients with obsessional neuroses and the practices and rituals of religious observers. In both cases, seemingly insignificant details become very important. In both cases, a feeling of shame and guilt follows ritual neglect or malpractice. Both sorts of actions are governed by personal yet rigorous regulations. Finally, Freud argues that both find their aetiology, unsurprisingly, in repression.

585 Ibid, pg. 258-259. Original emphasis.
This short paper contains the germ of ideas relevant to the case of the so-called Rat Man, whose history Freud writes up in 1909. Here, we find Freud’s theories located in their living context with the case of a young man who suffered from a constant and irrational fear that harm might come to his mother or father. He also experienced recurrent compulsive desires – to cut his throat for example – and prohibitions surrounding apparently unimportant gestures. Furthermore, the Rat Man felt a measure of sexual ambivalence, greatly desiring to see women naked yet feeling shame about these desires as well. His neurosis contained a religious component. While the patient was devoutly religious until his adolescent years, he quickly outgrew these beliefs. They recurred, however, in his neurosis, as he now feared for the safety of his parents in the afterlife, especially that of his father, who he believed would be tormented in reprisal for the patient’s own sexual misdeeds.

From the beginning of this case history, Freud opposes superstition and education. Religious beliefs are expected to wane with age and the Rat Man’s superstitious behaviour is said to be all the more surprising given his level of education. Still, the patient is torn about his beliefs. He states them aloud but follows them up with a laugh, recognizing their ridiculous nature. They persist nonetheless. Freud translates this experience into the language of doubt. Neurotics are said to need doubt, which is one of the methods employed to draw individuals away from reality. Doubt makes that which is materially impossible seem possible to the psyche. Doubt fuels the compulsion, which strives to create certainty through repetition. A comparison could again be made with certain religious practices.

Freud’s psychohistorical essay on Leonardo da Vinci brings him to elaborate on the connection between belief in god and the Oedipus complex. Again, Freud returns to Feuerbach:

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587 ‘Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis (1909),’ in CW 10.
588 Ibid, pg. 169; pg. 226.
589 Ibid, pg. 229. Freud assumes here that knowledge/education and religion are antithetical.
590 Ibid, pg. 232.
“a personal God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father.”\textsuperscript{592} As such, Freud expects belief in god to wane in early adolescence, as the Rat Man demonstrated, coinciding with the disintegration of the father’s parental authority. Freud continues:

Thus we recognize that the roots of the need for religion are in the parental complex; the almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother, or rather as revivals and restorations of the young child’s ideas of them. Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child’s long-drawn-out helplessness and need of help; and when at a later date he perceives how truly forlorn and weak he is when confronted with the great forces of life, he feels his condition as he did in childhood, and attempts to deny his own despondency by a regressive revival of the forces which protected his infancy.\textsuperscript{593}

These comments on the father god again find their clinical counterpart in the case of the Wolf Man, which Freud writes up in 1918.\textsuperscript{594} While the Wolf Man’s neurosis went through a number of different stages throughout the course of his lifetime, I am most interested in his obsessional neurosis, which was built around religious ideas. During this period, from the years of 4 to 8, the Wolf Man prayed several times a day, crossed himself repeatedly, kissed holy pictures before bed, and thought blasphemous thoughts about god.\textsuperscript{595} Freud relates this behaviour to the boy’s relationship with his father, who was severely depressed and often absent during much of the patient’s early years. Having idealized his father in his early youth, the patient developed very ambivalent feeling towards him as he grew up. He eventually comes to choose his father as a love object, longing to find satisfaction yet also aware of the prohibition against incest.

In this case, Freud emphasizes the ways in which religion helped the Wolf Man alleviate many of his symptoms. As a youth, his mother introduced him to religion during a period of great anxiety, hoping that it would help him deal with his emotions. It worked. Indeed, the obsessive period of religious action replaced the previous anxiety neurosis.\textsuperscript{596} Furthermore, the Wolf

\textsuperscript{592} Ibid, pg. 123. \\
\textsuperscript{593} Ibid, pg. 123. \\
\textsuperscript{594} In CW 17. \\
\textsuperscript{595} Ibid, pg. 16. \\
\textsuperscript{596} Ibid, pg. 61.
Man’s belief in god allowed him to redirect his ambivalent feelings toward his father onto god, hating the Father for his harsh treatment of the Son. The slippage between the patient’s biological father and god the father allowed for a displacement of affect. Overall, Freud evaluates the positive influence of religion in this particular case:

Apart from the pathological phenomena, it may be said that in the present case religion achieved all the aims for the sake of which it is included in the education of the individual. It put a restraint on his sexual impulsions by affording them a sublimation and a safe mooring; it lowered the importance of his family relationships, and thus protected him from the threat of isolation by giving him access to the great of community of mankind. The untamed and fear-ridden child became social, well-behaved, and amenable to education.

2.2 ‘Future of An Illusion’

Despite illusion’s many appearances elsewhere, *Future of an Illusion* contains Freud’s most developed and sustained treatment of the psychoanalytic notion. *Future* is also one of the first texts that comes to mind when Freud’s ‘scientism’ is mentioned. As I aim to show, however, the critique of religion as illusion is only one of the avenues Freud uses to critique illusion in this text, which contains the same plurality of attack angles as do his earlier works on religion. *Future* does not replace early approaches to religion but rather seeks to compliment them.

While I have made few invocations of historical context thus far and try to keep, as a rule, from putting too much stock in the hypotheses presented in the vast historiography of psychoanalysis, a brief comment is necessary here to lay out why Freud takes such an interest in critiquing religion in *Future*. Published in 1927, many suggest that *Future of an Illusion* must be paired with Freud’s ‘The Question of Lay Analysis’ (1926) as a defense of psychoanalysis against meddling from outside forces. While the latter essay would have been written to protect the movement from medical doctors and psychologists who would seek to change it from the inside, the former sought to guard against the influence of priests and clergy members who would bring

\[597\] Ibid, pg. 65.

\[598\] Ibid, pg. 114.


\[600\] See, for example, Peter Gay’s biography *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (Toronto: Penguin, 1988), pg. 525.
to it their cures of the soul. In this light, then, Future fits into a Freudian strategy to safeguard the boundaries of the psychoanalytic movement and keep it within the hand of psychoanalysts.

*Future* begins by establishing the helplessness of the human race and seeks to demonstrate that this helplessness does not diminish as humans age but rather only changes its form. While infants are dependent upon their caregivers for food, protection, and other necessities of life, adults remain faced with other overwhelming forces that they cannot control, including the power of nature, which Freud singles out as a constant threat. While these outside forces cannot be eliminated entirely, the psyche has developed strategies through which it might better cope with the situation. The humanization and anthropomorphization of impersonal forces at least casts such threats as beings with which relation is possible and gives them a familiar and recognizable form. This is also, one might argue, a narcissistic move, one that increases the importance of the human component in the equation by opening nature up to modification. Humanity moves from a state of helplessness to one of greater influence.

The personification of natural forces, Freud hypothesizes, results in the creation of gods, who act as all-powerful protectors against that which humanity cannot control itself. Since the adult situation in the face of nature parallels the helplessness of the infant, Freud suggests that the personal form given to natural forces will resemble that of the child’s primary caregiver and protector, whom Freud calls the father: “Now that God was a single person, man’s relations to him could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child’s relation to his father.” The relationship with the gods is modeled on that with the infantile protector and includes the same sort of emotional ambivalence as well. The gods are protective and loving but can also punish or become cruel. But to Freud, their task is clear: the gods exist to assuage the human fear of nature, to reconcile humanity to the cruelty of fate, and to provide compensation for the

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601 *Ibid*, pg. 16.
renunciations that life in society requires. They do so through the creation of meaning, by giving a ‘higher purpose’ to actions that humans might not otherwise be compelled to perform.

A fact often neglected by his many critics, Freud is clear in *Future* about the limits of his analysis. He is only interested in explaining patriarchal forms of religion, taking a particular interest in Judaism and Christianity, and only wants to theorize ‘white Christian society,’ admitting that other explanations might better suit other contexts. He is also most interested here in aspects of religious belief. These beliefs take on a specific character: “Religious ideas are teachings and assertions about facts and conditions of external (or internal) reality which tell one something that has not been discovered for oneself and which lay claim to one’s belief.”

Religious teachings make unsubstantiated and counterfactual claims about external reality. While Freud does not raise his distinction between material and psychic realities here, we might easily do so. Why do people believe in religion? While religious beliefs may not reflect material reality, they tell the analyst something about psychic reality; people believe because it satisfies an inner desire – that for a loving protector. The goal of the analysis, then, is much less the questioning of veracity than the search for psychic origins. As Freud writes, “We must ask where the inner force of those doctrines lies and to what it is that they owe their efficacy, independent as it is of recognition of reason.”

Thus far, Freud has already connected notions of narcissism (increasing omnipotence), anxiety (fear of nature), sublimation (the creation of meaning to motivate action), and Oedipality (the substitute father) to his explanation of religious belief. The definition of religious illusion follows. To label something an illusion, for Freud, is above all to make a statement about its psychic origins; like dreams and phantasies, illusions arise to fulfill an unconscious wish. Religious belief is not grounded in rational thought, Freud argues, but in unconscious desires;

\[604\] Ibid, pg. 18.
\[605\] Ibid, pg. 20.
\[606\] Ibid, pg. 25.
\[607\] Ibid, pg. 29.
religions “are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes.”

Freud is careful here to distinguish illusion (*Illusion*) from delusion (*Wahn*), in a division that mirrors that between material reality and psychic reality, or psychosis and neurosis. Freud explains:

> What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes. In this respect they come near to psychiatric delusions. But they differ from them, too, apart from the more complicated structure of delusions. In the case of delusions, we emphasize as essential their being in contradiction to reality. Illusions need not necessarily be false – that is to say, unrealizable or in contradiction to reality.

Illusion is grounded primarily in a psychic reality, just as neurosis signals an internal conflict arising from a repressed wish. Delusion, on the other hand, foregrounds the conflict with reality – the contrary-to-fact nature of the conflict between belief and sensory evidence – and invites comparisons to psychosis, in which a private reality supplants the external world. So Freud gives the example of a young woman who waits for a prince to come and sweep her away. Such a thing could happen, of course. It is physically possible. Princes do exist; they do marry and stories of the sort have been heard before. But, most importantly, the woman’s waiting arises from a desire – for love and protection, for a companion or a second father, or something of the sort. These desires do not make the event any more likely to occur. In many ways, the ‘illusion or delusion’ question relies heavily on perspective, since the line between the two categories is not firm. Freud too recognizes this: “Thus we call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relations to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification.” The definition of religion as illusion simply means, in a sense, that Freud is so interested in its unconscious grounds as to bracket the reality of its claims.

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Freud is quick to balance this approach and move to the other perspective, considering the truth-value of religious claims. This is where Freud holds to a stricter definition of reality, one grounded in scientific investigation and sense perception. He seems somewhat uncomfortable with this line of questioning, however, oscillating between a number of different positions. First, religious claims about reality are deemed delusional insofar as they run counter to that which has already been discovered about the world, though Freud is careful to point out that they may not be delusions in the clinical sense of the term. Important differences likely exist between the hallucinations of the schizophrenic and religious delusion, he suggests, though he does not identify what these might be. Then, however, he goes on to mitigate this statement by highlighting the inadequacy of scientific knowledge in the face of religious statements. While some religious claims run counter to knowledge about material reality, many others go beyond the purview of scientific inquiry. Science has much more to learn before it can refute certain religious statements. He ends with his own statement of faith, that "scientific work is the only road which can lead us to a knowledge of reality outside ourselves." Here, Freud is more interested in science’s method than in its direct ability to refute religious claims. Finally, he ends the section by shying away from the topic entirely, explaining that "to assess the truth-value of religious doctrines does not lie within the scope of the present enquiry." He returns his attention, then, to the question of illusion.

The focus on illusion returns Freud to more familiar territory, as he puts forth a proposed explanation of religion, one filled with caveats and qualifications, as is often typical of his sociological works. The notion of illusion, for example, is not limited to religion. Political beliefs and faith in science, Freud readily admits, may be illusions too, although he does not intend to explore this possibility further. He too, he suggests, may be chasing an illusion with his

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611 Ibid, pg. 31: “We can now repeat that all of them [religious beliefs] are illusions and insusceptible to proof. No one can be compelled to think them true, to believe in them. Some of them are so improbable, so incompatible with everything we have laboriously discovered about the reality of the world, that we may compare them – if we pay proper regard to the psychological differences – to delusions.”

612 Ibid, pg. 31.

613 Ibid, pg. 33.

614 Ibid, pg. 34.
questioning of religion and only time will tell whether his analyzes will prove correct. But Freud makes little of the ultimate truth of his position. Rather, he focuses on the fact that his ideas, grounded in the scientific method, are open to contrary evidence and therefore to opposition. Here, it seems, Freud takes aim at a particular kind of religious faith, one that believes blindly and is free from doubt or higher reflection. The true target of his critique may well be the uncritical believer more than the believer in general. Without making this explicit, however, Freud is often read to be grouping all religious believers under the same category, though he does admit his openness to the existence of other kinds of religions and believers, ones who might be more flexible in their positions.

Freud ends his text by returning to the opposition between religion and science as he observes it grounded in empirical observation. He sees, in the Europe of his day, a decline in religious belief. He traces this to the rise of science, which has made the promises of religion less credible. Foreseeing no change in the rate of decline, Freud suggests that perhaps society could one day persist without the need for religion. He sees here a future state of affairs, not an immediate prescription. He recognizes, for example, that those raised from childhood with religious ideas will find them nearly impossible to abandon and that these individuals would not have the proper constitution to face the cold world without the consolation of religious belief. In the end, however, he recommends an “education to reality,” one in which comforting ideas face the demands of “hostile life” head-on. He identifies in this message “the sole purpose of [his] little book.”

With respect to the question of reality, I think that we can again identify two separate and conflicting strands. The first places emphasis on the concept of illusion and, in doing so, largely
brackets the question of material reality. The focus is instead on the psychic reality of religion and on its roots in unconscious desires. While Freud never demonstrates the same appreciation for religious illusion that he does for its artistic equivalent, it remains clear that religion exists as one among many different forms of illusion – political, ideological, epistemological – that populate the psyche. This is the Freud who recognizes the limits of scientific inquiry and admits that his critique may only apply to a particular kind of religious belief and a small number of believers.

The second strand contains the scientist Freud whose worldview is often the object of critique. Structurally, this appears as the stronger voice in Future, since it gains momentum as the essay moves along and dominates the concluding section. This is the Freud of delusion, whose focus is on the conflicts that exist between sense perception and material reality and who trusts that humanity can outgrow its need for religious belief as scientific knowledge progresses.

2.3 ‘Civilization’ and the Weltanschauung Essay

As early as 1911, in his ‘Formulations of Two Principles of Mental Functioning,’ Freud writes that “religions have been able to effect absolute renunciation of pleasure in this life by means of the promise of compensation in a future existence; but they have not by this means achieved a conquest of the pleasure principle.” Much of Civilization and Its Discontents can be understood as an elaboration on this early proposition, with the new element of the death drive added into the equation.

After his initial consideration of the oceanic feeling, Freud begins the analysis in Civilization in much the same vein that he ended Future – by turning his attention to the reality of religious claims. His opening words are as unequivocal as any that he has offered on the topic thus far: “The whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to

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621 CW 12, pg. 223-224.
rise above this view of life."  

He argues that religion has nothing to offer the psyche that cannot be obtained at a lower cost from science and art.  

*Civilization* sees Freud move from the motivation for religious belief, considered in *Future*, to a greater emphasis on the social role that religion plays. The notion that religion offers substitute satisfactions for the renunciations that social life requires, briefly raised in 1927, becomes a point of greater study in 1930. *Civilization*, then, with its interest in a different question, does not strive to replace the analysis presented earlier. Religious beliefs are still illusions that create a purpose for life based on the fulfillment of unconscious desires. Freud’s insistence that only religion can answer the question of life’s meaning – while perhaps too narrow a statement; could not all illusions perform a similar task? – emphasizes the continued importance of illusion.

The possibility of human happiness, perhaps the issue most central to *Civilization*, also foregrounds the importance of phantasy. We recall the close relation between phantasy and the pleasure principle. Phantasy seeks to satisfy desires that find opposition in the outside world. Illusion and phantasy, then, are both ways of avoiding suffering. Happiness, in many cases, requires moving away from reality and into phantasy; art provides the paradigmatic example. Even with his staunch new emphasis on material reality, Freud still recognizes the value of phantasy and illusion in 1930. The key factor in judging the appropriateness of illusion becomes one of timing. Illusion can make reality tolerable but it must not take the place of reality. It is a narcotic which, while necessary in small doses, can become destructive if taken too frequently. Hence the value of art. Artistic works appeal to unconscious phantasies to offer substitute satisfactions, but they pose little danger because they are exempt, according to Freud, from reality testing. Very few individuals will confuse art and reality. As such, art can prove an ideal method of satisfying unconscious phantasies. Unfortunately, having lived through the

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622 ‘Civilization and Its Discontents (1930),’ in *CW* 21, pg. 74.
623 Citing Goethe. See *ibid*, pg. 75.
624 *Ibid*, pg. 76.
625 *Ibid*, pg. 80.
626 *Ibid*, pgs. 75; 80.
recent world war, Freud recognizes that it can produce at best a “mild narcosis” and “a transient withdrawal from the pressure of vital needs,” insufficient to meet the challenge of serious human suffering.

Freud’s whole discussion about happiness in Civilization can be understood in terms of measures of distance: how far must one step from reality to find satisfaction? In the case of art, the step is short but it is also temporary, making it unsatisfactory in many serious cases. Religion, on the other hand, offers a more thorough remoulding of reality, one with greater emancipatory potential:

A special importance attaches to the case in which this attempt to procure a certainty of happiness and a protection against suffering through a delusional remoulding of reality is made by a considerable number of people in common. The religions of mankind must be classed among the mass-delusions of this kind.

Religion, it seems, might offer a modicum of hope for happiness. Not so, Freud suggests. While the perpetual satisfaction of all desires, termed ‘happiness’ and sought after by the pleasure principle, is an unrealistic and impossible end, Freud deems it worthy of pursuit nonetheless. Religion, however, neglects the personal vicissitudes of the unconscious and of personality. Each individual will find happiness in different ways, depending on his or her constitution. Disregarding this, religions propose a list of stereotyped paths to happiness, narrowing the range of options and therefore inevitably excluding certain individuals. It also goes too far in its prescriptions, demanding renunciations – in sexual matters, for example – beyond those required for social happiness. As a result, it creates unnecessary guilt and suffering. As DiCenso has rightly pointed out, the question of happiness in Civilization is much more complicated than the relatively facile ‘education to reality’ proposed in Future. Instead, happiness now requires that we change the way in which we see and experience the world. It becomes a question of

627 Ibid, pg. 80.
628 Ibid, pg. 81.
629 Ibid, pg. 83.
worldview. In a gesture toward the Wolf Man, Freud admits that religion can, at best, spare many people “an individual neurosis,” but he puts little stock in its promises of happiness. Freud summarizes his position at length:

Religion restricts this play of choice and adaptation, since it imposes equally on everyone its own path to the acquisition of happiness and protection against suffering. Its technique consists in depressing the value of life and distorting the picture of the real world in a delusional manner – which presupposes an intimidation of the intelligence. At this price, by forcibly fixing them in a state of psychical infantilism and by drawing them into a mass-delusion, religion succeeds in sparing many people an individual neurosis. But hardly anything more. There are, as we have said, many paths which may lead to such happiness as is attainable by men, but there is none which does so for certain. Even religion cannot keep its promise. If the believer finally sees himself to speak of God’s ‘inscrutable decrees’, he is admitting that all that is left to him as a last possible consolation and source of pleasure in his suffering is an unconditional submission.

It is important to point out that Freud puts no greater hope in science. The many advances in scientific knowledge over the last decades have done little to make people happier, he points out, despite greater control over the threats of nature. Instead, unhappiness in endemic to social life, resulting from the instinctual sacrifices that it demands.

The individual, as Gabriel rightly suggests, is trapped between the threats of nature and the demands of culture which, while working to alleviate the former, impose new demands for renunciation. In Freud’s early works, the problem of civilization results primarily from the required sublimation of sexual energy. Society presents individuals with a conflict between their instinctual desires and the realm of possibility. Instincts must be curbed if bonds between individuals are to form. This is where religious morality, in facilitating this process, can emerge as a guarantor of civilization. The introduction of the death drive, however, adds a new dimension to the problematic. Here, civilization is understood as the battle writ large between

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631 Ibid, pg. 84.
632 Ibid, pg. 84-85.
633 Ibid, pg. 88.
634 1983, pg. 31.
Eros, the preservative instincts, as Thanatos, which constantly threatens the peace. Ideally, culture functions to sublimate Eros and redirect Thanatos inward, turning it into guilt. We will return to this treatment of civilization in the next chapter.

Freud’s thirty-fifth New Introductory Lecture on Psycho-Analysis, entitled ‘The Question of a Weltanschauung,’ reintroduces the question of wish fulfillment and once again foregrounds the conflict between material and psychic reality. _Weltanschauungen_, as Freud defines them, are systems of wish fulfillment. As “an intellectual construction which solves all the problems of existence uniformly on the basis of one overriding hypothesis, which accordingly, leaves no question unanswered and in which everything that interests us finds its fixed place,” it ranks among the greatest desires of humanity. _Weltanschauungen_ answer many of the same questions that religions do and create a sense of meaning for life, at least insofar as they tell us where to direct our energies, what to work towards, and how to deal with our emotions. Indeed, Freud includes religions within the category of the _Weltanschauung_, along with political ideologies and other sorts of illusions mentioned in _Future_. Science, he suggests, fits the category as well, but with a few notable exceptions. Most importantly, science is more flexible in its knowledge of the world than are religions and other ideologies. So while science does claim to generate uniform knowledge from a standardized method, it does not claim to answer all questions, instead limiting its scope of inquiry.

From there, Freud returns to the question of material truth, defining science as the only method of inquiry that can access it. So while all _Weltanschauungen_ are important with respect to the psychical realities that they reflect, only science can claim to generate knowledge. The key issue once again seems to be one of correspondence between sense perceptions and belief. Truth is defined along material lines as the correspondence between knowledge and “the real external

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635 1933. In _CW_ 22.
636 _Ibid_, pg. 158.
637 _Ibid_, pg. 158.
638 _Ibid_, pg. 159.
world,” “that which exists outside us and independently of us,” only accessible by scientific means. While science/psychoanalysis, religion, philosophy, and art all make truth claims, Freud finds few true competitors for this theory in the list. Art, as mentioned earlier, makes no real truth claims and “does not seek to be anything but an illusion,” while philosophy holds little influence over anyone but the elite. Were it not for this fact, Freud would likely condemn it along the same grounds that he does religion, which holds great sway over the masses and has “the greatest emotions of human beings at its service.” The possibility that science might itself be motivated by illusory hopes, a door left open in *Future*, seems to have closed. Even though the political ideology of Marxism, the second open door of 1927, is explicitly labeled as an illusion “no less questionable and unprovable” than the religious illusions it works so hard to eliminate.

### 2.4 Summary Remarks

While Freud’s early distinction between psychic and material reality holds true throughout his career, his comments on religion point to an increasing shift of the balances in favour of an emphasis on material reality. While both notions are present in *Future*, with slight preference given to the notion of material reality, *Civilization* and the ‘Weltanschauung’ essay both give material reality a much greater place. It is interesting to note then, as we will see in the final chapter, that Freud ends his career by returning to the somewhat neglected idea of psychic reality in *Moses and Monotheism*.

I do think, however, that we can safely conclude that Freud has a relatively clear concept of reality, albeit perhaps one embraced somewhat unreflectively. The notion of psychic reality will be of little interest outside the scope of psychoanalytic investigation and this is perhaps why it is often forgotten. Critics often take on Freud’s notion of material reality as having, as Ricoeur puts

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639 Ibid, pg. 170.
640 Ibid, pg. 160.
641 Ibid, pg. 160.
it, “no special philosophical meaning attached to it,” though this seems to me perfectly unremarkable for a scientific theory. Materiality becomes equated with sense perceptions and the reality principle. The degree to which this material reality can be said to be formed dialectically with the individual varies, as shown above, with the prominence given to phantasy. As DiCenso suggests:

The crucial point...which is repressed by Freud's intentional stance is that for human beings reality is itself a variable partially determined by the faculties of apprehension and the cultural worlds by which it is mediated. Freud tends to presume that reality is a self-evident referent, characterized by the force of physical necessity bearing on human existence. Yet our experience of reality occurs as a dynamic interchange between such forces of Ananke and the powers, desires, and illusions of the psychophysical organism as molded and mediated by culture and language. In light of these considerations, artistic illusion – that is, creative production – becomes a force in the manifestation of reality in cultural existence.644

These same critics have also taken on Freud’s notion of illusion, often finding in it a much more damning critique of religion than I have described above. This comes instead, I think, with the emphasis on delusion. We must first acknowledge the limited scope of Freud’s investigation; his focus lies with the patriarchal, monotheistic, organized religions of the West. His investigation also assumes that religions propose forms of knowledge, that psychoanalysis does not, as Sloterdijk has put it, take religion more seriously than it takes itself by promoting tenets of faith to matters of fact.645 The student of philosophy will also notice that much of Freud’s critique of religion cannot properly be called psychoanalytic, drawing largely on the work of Feuerbach, whom a university-aged Freud admitted that he admired greatly.646 This is especially true of Freud’s definition of religion as delusion, with which he follows in a long line of Enlightenment thinkers.

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643 Ricoeur 1970, pg. 263.
644 1991, pg. 77.
646 See Gay 1988, pg. 28.
Religion is both illusion and delusion, depending on the perspective that Freud takes, but it becomes clear that religion as illusion has much more to contribute to a properly psychoanalytic discussion. This appears to me as the most underappreciated part of Freud’s critique, the part neglected when his words are discarded as scientism. There is no doubt that Freud works at times as “master of suspicion,”\textsuperscript{647} as Ricoeur has called him, or that he takes some satisfaction in his prediction of religion’s demise. But while psychoanalysis does work to replace certain forms of illusion with a foundation in reality, the benefits of others are clearly outlined. The critique laid out in \textit{Future} is one of religion proper, not of wholesale illusion. Peter Homans’ work frames it correctly, I think, as a critique of idealized illusion:\textsuperscript{648} Freud analyzes those illusions that have come to support individual narcissism, advocating their mourning and de-idealization in favour of group needs.

The other properly psychoanalytic contribution comes from the role of the Oedipus complex in religion and the notion that unresolved Oedipal issues combine with unconscious desires for safety and protection to form the image of an omnipotent and all-loving deity.\textsuperscript{649} Psychoanalyst Hans Loewald, writing after Freud, emphasizes the link that exists between the idea of the father and notions of reality.\textsuperscript{650} Both are portrayed, for example, as figures to be fought and submitted to. Just as the infant avoids the hostile father by seeking refuge in libidinal ties with the mother, the psyche flees harsh reality into sanctuaries like religion or art. In the end, both require defense and adaptation. DiCenso similarly reads the figure of the father’s influence in later psychic life as an encounter with limit, “with the restrictions and rules of authority and culture.”\textsuperscript{651} Here too defense and adaptation become the expected response.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{647} Ricoeur 1970, pg. 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{648} \textit{The Ability to Mourn: Disillusionment and the Social Origins of Psychoanalysis} (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1989). James Jones (2002) develops a similar argument, arguing that ‘sacred’ and ‘idealized’ are essentially synonymous terms.
  \item \textsuperscript{649} See, for example, Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi (ed.), \textit{Psychoanalysis and Theism: Critical Reflections on the Grünbaum Thesis} (New York: Jason Aronson, 2010).
  \item \textsuperscript{650} See Loewald 2000, pg. 7-8.
  \item \textsuperscript{651} 1991, pg. 169.
\end{itemize}
The point of this again is to emphasize the existence of two different concepts of reality in Freud’s work, the first of which opposes the ego to reality and demands the former’s adaptation – what Freud terms ‘material reality’ – and the second which recognizes a fluid boundary between inside and outside, between the subject and the world. This is Freud’s psychic reality. It allows unconscious phantasies and illusions to play an important role in shaping the lived world and emphasizes their importance. Of the two concepts, the former has dominated, both in Freud’s later work and in that of his critics. But the latter points to the significance of spatial divisions of inside and outside and demonstrates the various forms that they take in his work.

3 An Alternative: D.W. Winnicott’s Theory of Illusion

If Freud’s critique of religious illusion is usually considered to be scientistic, relying on a fixed and inflexible definition of material reality, Winnicott’s theory of illusion is heralded and developed as a psychoanalytic counterpoint to demonstrate the way in which the psyche needs illusion in all forms of cultural life, including religion. I want to examine Winnicott’s theory here as a point of comparison and also to provide an example of how later psychoanalysts have built on and emphasized Freud’s notions of psychic reality and phantasy. As DiCenso writes, “illusion categorizes more than mere infantile wish-fulfillment; it also encapsulates representational abilities and productions, whose validity is not adequately measured by the touchstone of objective facticity.”652 This, it seems to me, is the point that Winnicott’s work brings to light.

We must be careful to distinguish appropriately between the ideas of Freud and Winnicott. Winnicott does more than recapitulate Freud, though he certainly uses Freud’s ideas – along with those of Melanie Klein – as a starting point. Object relations theorists, a category in which I locate both Klein and Winnicott, place a greater emphasis on the ubiquity of phantasy in mental life than did Freud. Phantasy requires an ego which, as we have seen with the fort-da and oceanic feeling, does not exist at birth, according to Freud. The infant must first reach the developmental stage of ego formation before phantasy can begin. Klein disagrees with Freud on this point. She suggests that the ego is present from the beginning of life and replaces Freud’s notion of hallucinatory wish fulfillment, through which infants are thought to regulate their desires. As a

result, phantasy plays a role in almost every part of mental functioning for Klein, going beyond wish fulfillment to include defense and other processes.\textsuperscript{653}

The classical Kleinian position of phantasy is perhaps best summarized in Susan Isaac’s seminal article ‘On Phantasy,’ published in the \textit{International Journal of Psycho-Analysis}.\textsuperscript{654} Looking to track the expansion of the term ‘phantasy’ in post-Freudian psychoanalysis, Isaacs finds it in the transference, in the conscious mind, in the unconscious, and almost everywhere in between. She argues that phantasy too is a mental fact whose objectivity must not be minimized, breaking down the dichotomy that often exists in theory between phantasy and reality. Phantasy, she suggests, is just as real and just as important: “A related usage, very common in patients, is to think of ‘phantasy’ as something ‘merely’ or ‘only’ imagined, as something unreal, in contrast with what is actual, what \textit{happens} to one. This kind of attitude tends towards a depreciation of psychical reality and of the significance of mental processes \textit{as such}.”\textsuperscript{655} Importantly, she credits Freud for making exactly such an argument, stating that his very creation of psychoanalysis sought to emphasize a dynamic psychic reality that differed from the external world. Phantasy is not the sign of a sick mind but is rather present in all individuals. The difference between the healthy person and the neurotic lies rather in the way that these phantasies are managed.\textsuperscript{656} As one would expect given our previous line of discussion, this emphasis on phantasy blurs the line between the objective and the subjective. ‘Reality’ is formed at the intersection of world perceptions and unconscious phantasies, blending material and psychic and influencing memory.\textsuperscript{657} It becomes not a fixed constant but a changing variable, heavily dependent upon unconscious states.

\textsuperscript{653} See David Snelling, \textit{Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and the Origins of Meaning} (London: Ashgate, 2001), pgs. 24-34. See also Isaacs below, pg. 81.


\textsuperscript{655} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 80.

\textsuperscript{656} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 81.

We find this line of thought reflected in Winnicott’s notion of transitional space, which he creates as a third realm of experience, an area of overlap between subjective and objective.\(^658\) He traces its development to a number of infantile experiences, the first involving the feeding infant.\(^659\) The baby, he suggests, has no physical control over the apparition of the breast, yet it nevertheless seems to manifest itself whenever she is hungry. As a result, the child develops a feeling of omnipotent control; he believes that he can make the breast appear. This is an illusion that blurs the line between reality and belief and goes unchallenged in early life. The mother acts as an accomplice in the process, since she is responsible for making the breast appear. Weaning, then, can be understood as a sort of disillusionment in which the infant is slowly and gradually brought to see his lack of control over the object. The breast acts as a transitional object, helping the infant to move from the strictly subjective realm into reality. This notion of omnipotent control over the breast, Winnicott argues, places the conflict between subjectivity and objectivity at the very beginning of life.

In cases such as this, the question of reality-testing, in which subjective facts are verified against an external ‘truth,’ become irrelevant. Reality still exists, but it is something that the infant must grow into; it is not a stark fact imposed from the beginning. Yet this task of accepting reality, Winnicott argues, is never completed in life. This point is also clear from Freud’s treatment of art: when the demands of reality become too difficult to bear, the psyche may require a temporary outlet. This is the task of illusion, according to Winnicott:

> I am therefore studying the substance of illusion, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes the hallmark of madness when an adult puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own. We can share a respect for illusory experience, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences.\(^660\)


\(^{659}\) See *ibid*, pg. 15ff.

\(^{660}\) *Ibid*, pg. 3-4.
Winnicott too develops a place for illusion in healthy mental life, but he also points to a role for illusion in madness. While he does not elaborate further, and the above citation makes it clear that religious belief does not automatically signal madness, he too follows Freud in linking madness and illusion.

Overall, though, the explicit tone of Winnicott’s work demonstrates appreciation for the role of illusion. Illusion is called ‘that which makes life worth living,’ a creative realm in which the psyche can act. Winnicott contrasts this with “a relationship to external reality which is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted with or demanding adaptation.” His theory of play develops the idea of a ‘potential space,’ an area that in neither strictly inside – it is an action in the world – nor strictly outside, since the child’s imaginative ideas and phantasies spill out. Here, all forms of illusion are permitted to the child. As Winnicott suggests, parents do not impose a reality upon a child at play. If she says that she can fly, then we lift her up in her arms and help her fly around the room. We do not sternly inform her that children cannot fly. All forms of cultural experience occur in this potential space, where reality and imagination cannot exist independently of each other. Winnicott describes the process:

[We] go to a concert and I hear a late Beethoven string quartet (you see I’m high brow). This quartet is not just an external fact produced by Beethoven and played by the musicians; and it is not my dream, which as a matter of fact would not have been so good. The experience, coupled with my preparation of myself for it, enables me to create a glorious fact. I enjoy it because I say I created it, I hallucinated it, and it is real and would have been there even if I had been neither conceived of nor conceived. This is mad. But in our cultural life we accept the madness, exactly as we accept the madness of the infant who claims (though in

661 Ibid, pg. 87.
662 Ibid, pg. 87.
663 Ibid, pg. 55.
665 Winnicott 1971, pg. 135.
uttered mutterings) “I hallucinated that and it is part of mother who was there long before I came along.”

Rather than mandating an ‘education to reality,’ the idea of potential space suggests that objectivity exists on a sliding scale as a variable in any given situation. The influence of the psyche is always present. Winnicott goes so far as to describe cultural endeavours as occupying a realm of socially accepted madness, yet of madness nonetheless. This madness is, in a sense, the link shared between the child at play and the artist. In each case, the psyche imposes its reality upon the world. But this is the basic process of creativity. As Winnicott writes, “Creativity is the retention throughout life of something that belongs properly to infant experience: the ability to create the world.”

The transitional object of childhood survives as the ability to be creative.

Winnicott’s own religious background differed considerably from Freud’s, he who insisted on calling himself a godless Jew. Winnicott, by contrast, was raised in a liberal Christian household in which freedom of thought was encouraged. He was told to read the bible and make up his own mind about it, his father emphasizing that the younger Winnicott need not share his views. He wrote little on the topic of religion, though I have already mentioned above that he considered it one of the socially acceptable forms of illusion, beneficial as an act of creativity but harmful if imposed upon others.

At times, he frames the notion of god as a transitional object of sorts. Transitional objects are characterized, Winnicott writes, by their dual identities: they are at once found ‘already there’ in reality and at once created by the psyche. This amounts, I would think, to simply saying that god is a cultural creation. Winnicott presents the conundrum:

[I]n theology the same appears in the interminable discussion around the question: is there a God? If God is a projection, even so is there a God who created me in

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666 *Psycho-Analytic Explorations*, Eds. Clare Winnicott, Ray Shepherd, Madeleine Davis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pg. 57-58. See also Winnicott 1957, pg. 57.


such a way that I have the material in me for such a projection? Aetiologically, if I may use a word here that usually refers to disease, the paradox must be accepted, not resolved. The important thing for me must be, have I got it in me to have the idea of God? – if not, then the idea of God is of no value to me (except superstitiously).\textsuperscript{669}

Such a paradox, both inside and outside, both there and not there, is typical of all transitional phenomena in Winnicott’s definition. Later psychoanalysts, like Ana-Maria Rizzuto\textsuperscript{670} and W.W. Meissner\textsuperscript{671} have continued this line of thought further.\textsuperscript{672} While Rizzuto begins by noting the contradiction that exists between Freud’s emphasis on the importance of parental images and his condemnation of religion as illusion, she concludes by defining god as an object relation above all else and in siding with Winnicott’s valuation of illusion. Meissner’s interest in tracking the development of psychoanalytic thought about religion after Freud similarly takes him straight to Winnicott.

Because Freud so clearly classifies religion as a form of illusion and Winnicott, while accepting Freud’s premise, argues for religion’s central role in culture, the latter theory provides an obvious avenue for those wishing to move beyond the early psychoanalytic critique of religion. It is important to note, however, the different connotations that illusion brings for both Freud and Winnicott. As Jones\textsuperscript{673} points out, Winnicott’s sense of illusion is much vaguer than Freud’s, which is clearly defined as a psychic creation grounded in wish fulfillment. While Freud’s distinction between illusion and delusion clarifies each concept’s relation to reality, Winnicott holds do a different notion of reality, one that blends subjective and objective from the outset and therefore does not require such a clear delineation between illusion and delusion. Instead, as we have seen, delusion – ‘madness’ – and illusion – ‘culture’ – invite a form of slippage with which

\textsuperscript{669} 1989, pg. 104-105.

\textsuperscript{670} The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

\textsuperscript{671} Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{672} Rachel Blass (2006) also adds Michael Eigen, James Jones, and Neville Symington to the list, similarly noting their shared reliance on Winnicott’s ideas.

Winnicott seems quite comfortable. Illusion becomes more a way of relating to the world than the satisfaction of an unconscious wish, and the clear link with wish fulfillment has disappeared.

Setting aside questions of reality and boundary for a moment, there seem to me quite important reasons for paying continued attention to the Freudian critique of religion. Of course, many have already argued for the important role that Freud’s critique might play in the spiritual development of the faithful. I have no interest in the needs of the faithful, but I do see in the global politics of the last decades a great need for a system of thought that can engage critically with various religious forms. The discarding of Freud’s critique of religion fits into a long process of reception, particular to American thought and criticized by Callard, Kingsbury, Gabriel and others, of stripping Freud’s ideas of their pessimism and political consequences to make them fit the popular zeitgeist.

Rachel Blass’s appreciation of Freud’s critique is also worth noting. She rejects claims that Freud’s account of religion is overly reductionistic, arguing instead for the necessity of reductionism in the process of explanation. She further criticizes those who draw on Winnicott – Eigen, Symington, Rizzuto, Meissner, and Jones, among others – for giving in to the postmodern trend and bracketing the question of religious truth. The conciliation of religion and psychoanalysis, she argues, requires that both be defined in very specific ways and that the focus be shifted from Freud’s Oedipal notions of maturity to a different frame in which maturity comes through creativity and self-experience. Religion, in turn, is appreciated in terms of the experiences that it facilitates. The ideal tradition becomes, as she puts it, a kind of self-determined mysticism or westernized Buddhism. This completely excludes the fact that religion does, as Freud suggests, require that followers believe specific things; it does indeed make statements about the world. Winnicott’s appreciation of illusion, then, like Rolland’s

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674 See, for example Ricoeur 1970 and his ‘second naiveté.’
675 See Gabriel 1983, 1. I have already cited Callard and Kingsbury numerous times on this point.
678 Ibid, pg. 28.
notion of the oceanic feeling, cannot replace the Freudian critique, because both strike at different targets.

Post-Freudian psychoanalysis builds on the significance of phantasy present in Freud’s work to emphasize the vital role that illusion can play in psychic life. In this light, reality is no longer a fixed constant but instead becomes a changing variable. The boundaries separating the subject from the objective world are thus shown to be shifting and flexible. Importantly, I have emphasized that these developments can be traced back to a key tension in Freud’s work, one that should serve to challenge the routine allegation of scientism. On the one hand, there is little doubt that the later Freud, the Freud of *Civilization* and the ‘Weltanschauung’ essay in particular, places great emphasis on scientific inquiry as the only possible path to knowledge. This is the same Freud who condemns religion as delusional. There is another face to this discussion, however: a Freud who appreciates the value of art and demonstrates a greater tendency toward the pleasure principle, suggesting that temporary refuge in illusion can provide a crucial exit for those overwhelmed by the demands of the world. Here, Freud’s notion of psychic reality allows unconscious phantasies to play an important role in shaping the manner in which the world is perceived. Taking the two positions into consideration, we can appreciate an unresolved tension concerning the spatiality – represented here by questions surrounding the locations of boundaries separating inside from outside, subject from object, and their permeability – of the Freudian subject.
Chapter 5: Social Space

To take Freud and psychoanalysis seriously is to conclude that much of what passes for liberation in contemporary society is empty – individualism run riot, as it were. Psychoanalysis is in fact one of the gravest moral indictments our culture has known.\(^{679}\)

A great deal of the explicitly political literature on space focuses on notions of social space, by which are understood the social structures resulting from the deployment of power relations between individuals. This chapter thus begins by proposing another shift in our definition of space – a different vector of approach to Freud’s work, as it were. If we began with a focus on metaphorical space in the second chapter, the next two were grounded in a conception of shared, relational or interpersonal space, through which the barriers dividing individuals were laid out. Here, we move our attention to another form of shared space, the space of society. While social space has obvious shared dimensions – and therefore may not lead us too far afoot from our earlier investigations – its formulation draws our focus to other, previously unconsidered relational dynamics, namely those that govern collective life. In particular, this chapter will investigate Freud’s works on group dynamics and on culture more closely and will make clear the political implications of these works.

I will proceed in three steps. First, I want to briefly recall some of the ways in which geographers have theorized notions of social space, since these, by setting the definition, will provide the springboard from which the investigation will proceed. In particular, I want to consider the ways in which spatial theory links the individual to society at large through this notion of social space. We will see how social space brings political concerns to the fore of spatial theory. With these political concerns in mind, I then want to consider how Freud’s work has been criticized on political grounds relevant to theories of social space, especially class and power relations. The considerable size of this body of literature will make but a cursory investigation possible, but I intend to touch on the major categories of critique. Finally, the bulk of the chapter will ask how

Freud understands shared, collective space in his works, with the intention of demonstrating how we can capitalize on tensions to address issues of contemporary political concern.

I have already made clear that most of today’s spatial theory is resolutely non-psychoanalytic. I do not therefore expect contemporary notions of social space and Freud’s work to line up directly. If Freud is often forgotten in spatial circles, it is specifically because his work disturbs key assumptions, as I have already shown. In this vein, I want to make clear from the outset that I do not consider it my task to distort Freud’s ideas to make them compatible with dominant regimes in the social sciences. Rather, my interest is in reading Freud on his own terms and allowing room to think about how he might both fit in with and challenge popular modes of thinking through social issues. If theorists often leave Freud aside when thinking through social space, it is because he is not unambiguously sympathetic to their political concerns. This need not, I say, be considered a failing on Freud’s part. We must resist the temptation to label Freud’s ideas as entirely useless simply because they do not perfectly mirror the academic zeitgeist. As I have sought to demonstrate thus far in this project, Freud often has his own way of tackling issues of similar concern and can often aid us in questioning those dominant theoretical regimes that have become programmatic. This line of thought must not, however, be taken too far and used in turn to make Freud immune to critique. There is no doubt, for example, that Freud’s social evolutionary paradigm, shared with Durkheim, Eliade, and a number of other theorists of his day, creates a view of the ‘primitive’ that is both colonizing and Eurocentric, just as Freud put forth largely problematic notions of femininity and homosexuality. He, like all theorists, makes his own series of assumptions that need to be challenged. But these shortfalls do not condemn Freudian thought as a whole, and it becomes useful to pay attention to those subsequent theorists who have taken Freud beyond these obstacles.

Closely related to notions of social space and political thought is the possibility of revolution or political change. This leads us to inquire into the revolutionary potential of psychoanalytic thought where, unsurprisingly, we find another point of ambiguity. On the one hand, while Freud was hardly the only theorist – or even the only medical professional – to put forth a critique of his society’s sexual mores and call for a ‘proto-sexual-revolution’ of sorts, the extent to which this call to change can be extended beyond the sexual realm is put into question by works like
*Future* and *Civilization*, where Freud’s ideas appear at their most deterministic as he emphasizes the psyche’s responsibility for social ills. 680 This question takes us beyond Freud’s work to the history of psychoanalysis as a whole, where several scholars with revolutionary sympathies find in post-Freudian theory – especially in its ‘American’ formulation as ego psychology – little more than a tool of the upper classes. So Russell Jacoby, for example, writes in 1983 that “The specter of psychoanalysis continues to haunt society; few, however, are frightened… It has traded a threatening, sometimes revolutionary, mien for an affable comportment.” 681 Interestingly, however, he writes much the same indictment of Marxism a few years earlier, criticizing it for losing its revolutionary aspirations and ‘selling out’ to those it should oppose. 682 Jacoby’s position, then, is less a critique of psychoanalysis specifically than a general bemoaning of contemporary society’s lack of political alternatives to the status quo.

I find this whole line of interrogation of particular interest given Sloterdijk’s condemnation of contemporary political culture as one grounded in cynicism. In many ways, Sloterdijk agrees with Jacoby’s critique both in terms of society’s lack of revolutionary options and in terms of his view of psychoanalysis as a once-revolutionary system that has become domesticated by the medical establishment. Sloterdijk, though, goes beyond this assessment and at least proposes a solution. Focusing of the German political climate in the 1970s and 1980s – though his diagnosis can be extended, with some nuance, into later decades as well – Sloterdijk identifies cynicism as the dominant operating mode of contemporary culture, as the preferred alternative following the broken promises of the ideology critique of Western Marxism. 683 The political landscape

680 These more deterministic moments have their counterpoints, as one might expect, in the same texts. See, for example, Freud’s discussion of the social influences on the psyche in ‘Civilization’, *CW* 21, pg. 94ff.


683 See Sloterdijk, *The Critique of Cynical Reason*, 1987. If Sloterdijk is critical of psychoanalysis, he is even moreso of Marxism, to which he devotes considerable space in a number of his works. In light of the atrocities committed in its name in the West and the failure of the May 68 revolts, Sloterdijk advises that hopes for a Marxist revolution be abandoned completely and that another option with a less bloody history be sought.
becomes dominated by “the pained feeling of a lack of political and social alternatives,”⁶⁸⁴ one against which ideology critique is entirely useless. Sloterdijk describes this cynicism as a form of “enlightened false consciousness,”⁶⁸⁵ one that has learned the lessons of the Enlightenment but has been unable or unwilling to put them into practice. Take the example of Wal-Mart, the large American department store. The company is well known for using illegal forms of foreign labour, such as child labour, in violation of international law. Its domestic treatment of labour unions, and the lengths to which it has gone to avoid their formation among its workers, are equally well documented. So too is the harm that its stores do to local family businesses in small urban areas. These facts are well known to many – including those who regularly shop at Wal-Mart. This is the sense in which Sloterdijk speaks of a “reflexively buffered”⁶⁸⁶ false consciousness. Cynicism explains the gap between knowledge and practice, Sloterdijk argues, such that the knowledge that a given action is harmful, as imparted by critical theorists, is no longer sufficient to change behaviours. The limits of enlightenment, of progress through knowledge, are clearly drawn.

Sloterdijk’s political evaluation of psychoanalysis reflects the ambiguities identified thus far. On the one hand, he finds in psychoanalysis an example of a form of ideology critique that sought refuge in science rather than staying true to its irrational, unconscious roots.⁶⁸⁷ False consciousness instead became psychopathology. But on the other hand, the psychoanalytic repudiation of sexual mores is praiseworthy as a form of ideology critique that refuses to let cultural mores stand unanalyzed. Regardless of its level of success, the very notion of building a psychological theory on sexuality in a society that shunned discussion of the sexual is politically noteworthy in itself.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid, pg. xi.
⁶⁸⁵ Ibid, pg. 5.
⁶⁸⁶ Ibid, pg. 5.
⁶⁸⁷ Ibid, pg. 19.
1 Geographical Preamble

With this short introduction to some of the political issues that will become relevant in this chapter, I want to backtrack and consider the notion of social space, central to this chapter, as developed in the literature on space. While I have already touched on many of these scholars’ works in my first chapter, a brief refresher will afford me the opportunity to frame their thoughts within our specific sphere of concern. In particular, I want to ask not only how social space has been defined but also, more specifically, how the notion of social space has been used to link individual and collective and how political concerns fit into the equation.

The central figure in this investigation will be French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre. He did for social space what Freud did for the notion of the unconscious: while the idea had been formulated long before he took hold of it, Lefebvre’s work is known for giving ‘social space’ depth and formulation as a concept. Importantly, Lefebvre begins by suggesting, contra the Platonic tradition, that space is not in fact an empty backdrop or passive container but is rather a social product, the very fabric of society created by the relationships between individuals. We thus return to the interpersonal notion of space that we discussed earlier in Freud’s work but we extend its scope beyond the dyad to encompass society as a whole. Lefebvre is highly critical of conceptions of mental space – by which he largely refers to abstract conceptions of spatiality – for forgetting the ways in which actual human processes create spaces and, more importantly, for placing the creation of space outside the realm of ideological influence. In his *The Production of Space* (2007), Lefebvre argues that the creation of social space is accomplished through political processes that are designed to conceal their own ideological motivations. In short, since capital and capitalism have substantial roles to play in influencing practical matters relating to space, the production of space often works to serve the continued hegemony of the class creating the space.\(^{688}\) By examining how the actual production of spaces occurs, the ideologies behind their creation might be unearthed as well. And while Lefebvre is more interested in developing this theoretical point in the *Production* than he is in taking examples and actually making these links explicit, his work begins a tradition of thinking about space as a social product and of considering the role that Marxist theory can play in understanding the creation of space.

\(^{688}\) See Lefebvre, 2007, pg. 8ff.
The production of space is thus not only a political and economical process; it is also one that varies as greatly as do modes of production. So each society will create spaces based on its own economic model. The roles of space as scientists, architects, and other theorists conceive it abstractly similarly influence production. As Lefebvre writes, summarizing his position:

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products; rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. At the same time there is nothing imagined, unreal or ‘ideal’ about it as compared, for example, with science, representations, ideas or dreams. Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.

In political terms, Lefebvre suggests, the ultimate goal of any revolution must be the creation of a space of its own, for only then can it trust that it has acquired the ability to secure its own survival. The notion of social space, which in this appellation perhaps suggests all-too-readily a reified object, is better described as social spatiality. The very fact that social practices and processes must take place in a given space means that they all involve an inherently spatial dimension, that they are conditioned and limited by the locations in which they occur. Lefebvre’s Marxist leanings lead him to focus on the economic side of these limitations, though he does acknowledge a variety of other social factors that would influence this same process. In the end, social space emerges, above all, as a product of societal relations and processes.

Later theorists, often equally though differently Marxist as Lefebvre, have picked up on his general idea and expanded on it using specific economic examples. David Harvey, for example, considers the social production of space in postmodernity. In particular, he links the development of global capitalism to the popular feelings of ‘being short on time’ or that the world is getting smaller, termed together ‘space-time compression.’ Interested in postmodernism

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689 Ibid, pg. 31.
690 Ibid, pg. 73.
691 Ibid, pg. 54.
692 Harvey 1990.
as a historical condition rather than a specific set of ideas, Harvey demonstrates the continuity that exists between modernity and the postmodern, dispelling the notion that the latter entailed a radical break from the former. He especially castigates those postmodern theorists who decry thinkers like Marx, Freud, and (even) Althusser as being ‘too modern’ without appreciating the nuance and sophistication of their works.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 115.} He finally settles on an understanding of postmodernism as a crisis within modernism, one that “emphasizes the fragmentary, the ephemeral, and the chaotic … while expressing a deep skepticism as to any particular prescriptions as to how the eternal and immutable should be conceived of, represented, or expressed.”\footnote{Ibid, pg. 116.}

With respect to social space, Harvey emphasizes the role that human practices and social processes play in the creation of space, thereby making space a culturally relative category.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 203.} As Lefebvre suggested, each society will create its own form of space. Notions of abstract or absolute space are discarded entirely and, following Marx, material processes become paramount. Like Lefebvre, then, Harvey agrees that space is a fundamental and pervasive form of social power. His particular focus is on applying Lefebvre’s ideas to demonstrate how capital functions to impose this power.

The notion of social space as it will prove relevant to Freud is perhaps best summarized by geographer Edward Soja who aims, like Lefebvre, to demonstrate how spatial theory can contribute to contemporary social analysis.\footnote{See Soja 1989.} Echoing Foucault, he argues that space is the primary means through which ideology hides consequences from individuals in the modern world, passing itself off as an innocent product when it is in fact loaded with consequences.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 1.} The task of the theorist, then, is to “be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently
innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology." With this in mind, he seeks to dispel two ‘illusions’ that ideology propagates in the hopes of concealing spatial processes. The first, ‘the illusion of opaqueness,’ suggests that space contains “only a superficial materiality,” open to measurement but little else. This results from, we might argue, the prolonged dominance of Platonic notions of absolute space. The second illusion, that of transparency, similarly implies that everything that happens in space is plain and visible to see, defining space itself as a concrete abstraction, a passive background. His empirical work, which looks at transformations in the urban layout of the city of Los Angeles, considers how economic changes that took place in the 1980s led to the restructuring of the city and the redistribution of its population along racial, economic, and class lines.

The works of these authors establish social space as the dynamic product of the practices that take place within it and, perhaps most importantly, of the relations that occur within it. It is these social relations that I wish to consider through a Freudian lens. Freud’s works on group psychology, with its focus on the place of the leader and the psychic dynamic of idealization, as well as his broader works on politics and culture, thus become quite relevant. At the same time, I remain aware of the dangers of using psychoanalysis to consider power relations. Filtering for Freud’s own bias, any attempt to consider power relations will be selective at best, an ambiguity that I will recognize as I proceed.

2 The Critique of Freud

Geographer Derek Gregory points to the desk in Freud’s study, covered as it was with artifacts from around the world, and to his repeated allusions to psychoanalysis as a project of archaeology, which was at its heights in Freud’s day, to signal some of the colonialist trappings of psychoanalysis. The postcolonial critique of Freud has been repeated over and over again in recent decades, so it bears only brief attention here. In many ways, I wish to set this critique

698 Ibid, pg. 6.
699 Ibid, pg. 7.
700 For a summary of this project, see ‘It All Comes Together in Los Angeles’ in Soja 1989.
aside and move beyond it in my investigation of Freud, which refuses to see the power dynamics of Freud’s work as an obstacle to the study of psychoanalysis and, instead, highlights tensions upon which an emancipatory project can be built.

To begin, Kelly Oliver criticizes Freud’s lexicon as being charged with the language of colonization. She focuses in particular on his model of psychic defense and on his notions of cathexis (Besetzung, lit. ‘occupation’) and repression (Abwehr, lit. ‘defense,’ or, more literally, ‘fending off’), suggesting that these two terms clearly present the mind as a colonized territory, liberated by the interventions of the analyst. While Freud’s choice of terms may well point to some sort of warfare metaphor, I see no reason to attribute to it the specifics of colonization over and against one of the many other generic situations in which similar terms are routinely employed. Oliver’s reading appears rather overdetermined in its conclusions. Besetzung can also mean, for example, ‘to fill up’, a fairly benign translation, or ‘to charge’, as with electricity. Freud’s language could just as easily be traced to the influence of immunological theory, which precedes Freud in borrowing similar warfare metaphors and would have been much closer to his immediate medical environment. Does not the body fend off bacteria and viruses in much the same way the mind does disease in Freud’s model? I see little evidence to accept Oliver’s specific conclusion, though she does draw attention to a relevant metaphor pervading Freud’s work.

The final point I want to address is that, more generally, of Freud’s colonizing tendencies. For many of his critics, Freud buys into a social evolutionary paradigm popular in his day and similarly espoused by Durkheim, Eliade, and others – and which, interestingly, is making a return in certain works of evolutionary psychology – which depicts the ‘primitive’ as backwards and condemns non-Western non-European peoples as deficient. To the extent to which Freud’s work propagates these notions, intentionally or not, it is indeed problematic. The unfortunate

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702 See Oliver 2004, pg. 47.
703 Strachey suggests ‘to fend off’ as a more literal translation of abwehren in his introduction to CW 1. See pg. xxiii.
704 Making a similar observation, Brunner (1995, 49ff) argues that Freud’s metaphors are drawn from the imperial court proceedings and political practices of his day.
tendency, however, is to generalize specific shortcomings into a wholesale condemnation of Freud’s work and ignore the tensions contained therein. We must instead carefully consider the extent to which these critiques are valid. For example, while psychoanalysis may, as some critics argue, present an unfortunate portrait of the non-European Other, it also contains its own corrective. The Other, according to psychoanalytic theory, is as much a product of mental states as it is of reality; it exists as much within us as outside us. The result, it would seem, is an imperative to interact with the Other and correct faulty perceptions.

Edward Said identifies this fear of the Other as a form of paranoia, an irrational construct of the mind. He also emphasizes the spatial element of the equation: the Other is the product of an imaginative geography, the social and psychic construction of a place and its people. The Other becomes no different than the primal horde in Freud’s speculative anthropology. As with the primal horde, however, the real difficulty arises when knowledge is constructed based on these geographies, when biases and psychic influences are taken as fact. This is the process of orientalism in which Said is so interested. With this in mind, Said’s evaluation of Freud’s work is remarkably gentle. While Freud’s work clearly bears a Western stamp, with his understanding of other cultures having been highly influenced by his own Judaeo-Christian education, Said does not see this as a limitation. Instead, he argues that it only identifies Freud as the product of a time and place that had yet to be disturbed by the postmodern problem of the Other. As he writes, “I believe it is true to say that Freud’s was a Eurocentric view of culture – and why should it not be?”

While this certainly places Freud’s work in its context, it does little to resolve the issue for those who wish to continue using his ideas today, where such ‘postmodern concerns,’ as Said describes them, are very much at the fore of discussion. The question instead becomes whether Freud’s less palatable ideas – his view on female sexuality and homosexuality, his views on the

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705 Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 2003), pg. 72.
707 See ibid, pgs. 13-15.
708 Ibid, pg. 16. Said goes much further than this in his assessment. See my next chapter on ‘Moses and Monotheism’, where I deal with Said in greater detail.
‘primitive’ – are descriptive or normative and whether they can be overcome in later psychoanalytic theory. As geographer Derek Gregory points out, the proximity of celebrated theorists like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha to psychoanalytic theory would suggest that it can indeed be enlisted for emancipatory endeavours. 709

3 Freud and Social Space

3.1 Sexual Morality

With respect to Freud’s work, this chapter asks how Freud understands shared, collective space and the psychic relations between individuals that take place within it. Aside from the political aspect, the importance of which I have already alluded to, the role of culture (Kultur) becomes central here as an insulating force that protects the individual against a threatening outside, an ‘immune system’ in Sloterdijk’s terms and the result of the collective relations of a society’s individuals.

From the earliest moments in his career, Freud connects the prominence of psychic disease to imbalances in social relations, particularly those involving women. Despite the repeated – and often valid – feminist critiques of psychoanalytic theory, we must nevertheless remember that, from the Studies in Hysteria onwards, Freud traces the source of the disease in question to “the powerlessness and forced passivity of women and to a society that forces them to suffer quietly and alone.”710 Social relations are placed at the fore of the investigation from the outset, although the scope is often narrowed to concentrate on relations within the individual’s immediate environment, the family. I want to emphasize that social concerns are not an afterthought for Freud but are very much central to his investigations from the beginning, a fact that he readily admits in the Studies:

| It follows from the nature of the facts which form the material of psycho-analysis that we are obliged to pay as much attention in our case histories to the purely |

709 See Gregory 1995, pg. 475.

710 Jose Brunner, Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 17. The other side of this equation, of course, is that women are unable to meet society’s expectations not only because of the high demands it places on them, but also because they are constitutionally weaker, according to Freud, and less capable of sublimation. See Freud’s ‘Civilized Morality and Modern Nervous Illness (1908),’ in CW 9, pg. 195ff.
human and social circumstances of our patients as to the somatic data and the symptoms of the disorder. 711

Along with Freud’s focus on social circumstances comes his first prescription for social change. While Freud may not have been much of a political revolutionary, he did at least propose a two-pronged ‘sexual revolution’ of sorts, one that both challenged social sexual mores by blaming them for neurotic illnesses and similarly incited doctors to the frank discussion of sexual issues in medical treatment. The two suggestions are obviously closely related, in a manner that Freud makes clear from the outset:

The best way of speaking about such things is to be dry and direct; and that is at the same time the method furthest removed from the prurience with which the same subjects are handled in ‘society’, and to which girls and women alike are so thoroughly accustomed. 712

Social change is to begin in medical circles, with doctors being the first to repudiate the excesses of society. Going further, Freud challenges the notion of sexual normality, suggesting that instead of condemning certain acts as perversions, medical professionals should keep in mind the variety of practices considered ‘normal’ across time and space and be humbled in their judgments. 713

Freud’s other early works continue in a similar vein, challenging his society’s notion of acceptable sexual discourse. His 1905 ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ 714 traces the influence of social sexual mores on infantile development and considers the ways in which they shape personality from the outset. So Freud concludes that social mores not only distort female sexuality in adulthood but do so from the beginning. Even in childhood, sexual mores are much more demanding of little girls than they are boys. 715 This in addition to the notion of infantile

711 CW 7, pg. 18.
712 Ibid, pg. 48.
713 Ibid, pg. 50: “The uncertainty in regard to the boundaries of what is called normal sexual life, when we take different races and different epochs into account, should in itself be enough to cool the zealot’s ardour.”
714 See CW 7.
715 Ibid, pg. 219.
sexuality, which was scandalous in itself and proposed in the same text, added to Freud’s social critique.

The final element of Freud’s early critique took the form of his critique of education, which he views as a formalized indoctrination to social acceptability. If children learn what is right and wrong from their parents, family, and friends, education becomes a safety net that reinforces that which has already been learned. So, on the one hand, Freud encourages educators to speak as frankly of sexual issues as doctors must, suggesting that the danger in timidity or distortion lies in the phantasies the child will invent to replace the truth that is withheld from him. At the same time, however, education becomes dangerous when it teaches the restricted views on sexuality that society embraces:

To be sure, if it is the purpose of educators to stifle the child’s power of independent thought as early as possible, in favour of the ‘goodness’ which they think so much of, they cannot see about this better than by deceiving him in sexual matters and intimidating him in matters of religion. 716

The important role of authority figures, religious, educational or otherwise, is thus made clear from the outset. As the helplessness of the child is emphasized, so too is the power of the educator, who will provide the framework within which the child will come to think and view the world. The possibility that the child might resist or reject the authority figure does not seem to exist, at least not at this early stage of life. The power and responsibility of the authority thus becomes all pervasive, with little outside resistance to prevent abuse.

The many dimensions of Freud’s social investigation – the critique of sexual mores, infantile sexuality, and the discussion of education – find their specificity and their theory in perhaps one of his most openly political works, ‘Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,’ an essay published in 1908. 717 Freud begins by reiterating the double standard that the sexual norms of his day put forth, placing much higher demands on women than on men, here specifically with respect to monogamy. He also repeats the link that he observes between social demands and the prevalence of mental illness. Where Freud goes further, however, is in his new assessment that

717 See CW 9.
‘civilized sexual morality,’ as he now calls it, not only poses a threat to the individual but to civilization as a whole. As he writes:

> It is not difficult to suppose that under the domination of civilized sexual morality the health and efficiency of single individuals may be liable to impairment and that ultimately this injury to them, caused by the sacrifices imposed on them, may reach such a pitch that, by this indirect path, the cultural aim in view will be endangered as well.  

This passage foreshadows Freud’s social theory of the 1920s, in which the demands for instincutal renunciation placed upon the individual are seen to be too heavy to guarantee the future of civilization. Even at this early time, Freud conceives of a civilization built on the suppression of instincts, in which individuals must surrender part of their psychic desires for the greater good of the whole. This act of renunciation was facilitated by religions, which offered compensation for the abandoned items, but each individual still has a limit beyond which she can no longer comply with civilization’s demands. When that limit is surpassed, neurosis can result. And the extent to which a group of individuals share a given set of renounced items also corresponds to the extent to which they share a common culture. Present in greater detail in *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Future of an Illusion*, these ideas central to Freud’s social theory are presented in seminal form in 1908, earlier even than the anthropological musings of *Totem and Taboo*.

Most importantly for our purposes, the relation of the individual to culture is presented as one of domination, in which the latter controls the former to such an extent as to be capable of inducing sickness, death, or even total social destruction. The project of civilization is threatened here not by individual urges but by culture itself. The individual becomes the agent of destruction, of course, but the responsibility lies with the dominating force, the excessive social demands enacted upon the psyche. The variable on the individual level becomes one of constitution. Freud obviously needs to avoid suggesting that every individual is made sick by the sexual morality of modern society and he does so by pointing to differing aptitudes at sublimation, sexual energy’s ability to exchange its sexual aim for another, non-sexual one that remains nevertheless related to

Sublimation thus allows the individual to de-sexualize sexual energy and subvert the relationship of domination by stepping outside of it and finding another aim.

While part of the proclivity for sublimation is innate, part of it is also learned through “experience and intellectual influences.” Those “classes” more prone to intellectual activity are also more likely to sublimate. Freud makes clear, at this point, the differences that can exist between groups of individuals, not only in terms of their ability to sublimate but also with respect to the development of their social mores. He proposes a developmental scheme of sexual mores which parallels that of the sexual instinct. The first stage, corresponding to auto-eroticism, involves the free exercise of the sexual instinct. The second, corresponding to object love, demands the repression of sexuality except for the purposes of reproduction while the third, corresponding to perversion, is civilized sexual morality, which only permits sex for reproduction under marriage. While the condemnation of civilized morality is made clear not only from the essay’s argument but also from its equation with perversion, it is interesting to note that Freud does not clearly endorse either one of the two other stages either. While free sexuality might seem too unregulated to be friendly to the social contract, the second stage is surely also too limiting for some individuals. The value judgments associated with the schema are thus not entirely clear. It is helpful, however, that the exact scope of Freud’s ‘civilized sexual morality’ becomes defined and comes to closely resemble some of the more restrictive religious teachings put forth in his day – those of the Catholic church, for example. Freud recognizes here that sexual ethics depend heavily on class and that his critique is thus directed at the more

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719 See ibid., 187, for Freud’s definition of sublimation along these lines. Freud similarly suggests (CW 11, 150) that certain individuals experience a gain from illness. Since the illness results from a compromise between the unconscious and social demands, it can provide a healthy middle position for those who are constitutionally too weak to bear the full brunt of instinctual renunciation. Here we are reminded that neurosis is indeed a form of defense. Freud does not use this to advocate that psychoanalysis cease its efforts. Instead, he suggests that, in the majority of cases, the benefits of therapy outweigh the risks.

720 Ibid, pg. 188.

721 Ibid, pg. 189. Freud here uses Reihen (‘ranks’ or even ‘groups’), which Strachey translates as ‘classes.’

722 Ibid, pg. 189.
restrictive mores on the upper-middle class of Viennese society. The lower classes, he suggests, have yet to move beyond even the first stage of free love.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 189.}

While it remains unclear exactly which form of sexual morality Freud wishes to endorse in the essay, the great injustice lies in the standardization of expectations across groups and constitutions:

> It is one of the obvious social injustices that the standard of civilization should demand from everyone the same conduct of sexual life – conduct which can be followed without any difficulty by some people, thanks to their organization, but which imposes the heaviest physical sacrifices on others.\footnote{Ibid, pg. 192.}

### 3.2 The Group and Social Structure

In one of his wittier moments reminiscent of Castoriadis, Taylor and the ‘social imaginary,’ Sloterdijk quips that the true paradox of humanity lies in the fact that we are asked to form a community with those with whom we have almost nothing in common.\footnote{Dans le même bateau (Paris: Rivages, 2003), pg. 11-12.} Politics thus becomes an attempt to untangle this paradox, to create a group sentiment where there was none previously, and thus a harmonious common space. The question of the group thus becomes a prime topic of political investigation, and one on which Freud wrote extensively. For Steve Pile, the properly spatial dimension of Freud’s group psychology lies in its formulation of the dialectic between the individual and the group and in the interplay between the psychic and social registers.\footnote{Pile 1996, pg. 98-99.} As a result, Pile is specifically interested in asking how Freud represents the reciprocal relationship between the social and the individual and how spatial imaginaries are formed. Since groups are created through a process of othering, a definition of who, what, and where is both inside and outside the group, it becomes properly spatial in its emphasis on how object relations play out across space.

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\footnote{Ibid, pg. 189.} \footnote{Ibid, pg. 192.} \footnote{Dans le même bateau (Paris: Rivages, 2003), pg. 11-12.} \footnote{Pile 1996, pg. 98-99.}
We might say that Freud’s writings on group psychology begin with the primal horde of *Totem and Taboo*.\(^{727}\) Drawing from the evolutionary social psychology of his day, Freud suggests that Australian aboriginals, with whom he is particularly concerned in this text, bear a greater resemblance to primitive humans than does European society and he suggests that, in light of this assumption, conclusions can be drawn about the infantile psyche by observing these peoples. He is especially concerned with the similarities that might exist between these aboriginals and neurotics who, he suggests, demonstrate some elements of regression to an infantile state. Speaking socially, he focuses on yet another internalized form of authority, that of the taboo. Like the sexual mores of his society, taboos are prohibitions that clearly aim to bring about some form of instinctual renunciation, from the proscription of murder and lying to incest. They bear great resemblance to the obsessive ceremonials of neurotics, especially in their unknown origins and their apparent meaningless. Freud’s eventual point, of course, will be that psychoanalysis can clarify both the question of their origin and meaning with reference to the unconscious. Importantly, however, Freud also posits an actual historical origin to these social manifestations:

Taboos, we must suppose, are prohibitions of primaeval antiquity which were at some time externally imposed upon a generation of primitive men; they must, that is to say, no doubt have been impressed on them violently by the previous generation. These prohibitions must have concerned activities towards which there was a strong inclination. They must then have persisted from generation to generation, perhaps merely as a result of tradition transmitted through parental and social authority. Possibly, however, in later generations they may have become ‘organized’ as in inherited psychical endowment.\(^{728}\)

A number of points are worth noting here. First, we observe that an actual event in an imagined historical past lies at the foundation of the social regulation, one that precedes the internalization of the law over time. Here, we can imagine a process of social transmission, in which laws are passed on to progeny as tradition while the foundational moment is lost or forgotten at some point. Furthermore, the law persists so long as the desire to commit the illegal acts does,

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\(^{727}\) 1913. See *CW* 13.

\(^{728}\) Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in *CW* 13, pg. 31.
presumably indefinitely since the repression of an instinct is never total. But taboos only prohibit actions for which there already exists a strong unconscious inclination.  

Finally, and most importantly, Freud conceives of the original imposition of the taboo as an act of violence. Freud’s theory is far from being antinomian. Social regulations perform an important function in protecting civilization against antisocial actions and instincts. Punishments ensure that transgressions are kept to a minimum. The ideal situation is one in which the taboo becomes internalized, making punishment automatic through guilt and very little external enforcement necessary. At the beginning, however, new laws can only be imposed from the outside, and since one is combating an unconscious inclination, some coaxing will be required. Freud suggests that social regulations can only be imposed by a powerful external authority upon an unwilling populace.

Freud imagines how such a scenario might play out by drawing on Darwin’s postulate of the primal horde. In a situation where humans lived in small roaming groups, the oldest and most powerful male would have jealously controlled the sexual options of the other males. To mate, younger males would either have had to defeat the leader and steal his alpha position or leave the group and find a partner elsewhere. This requirement, internalized over time, could explain the imperative for exogamy among the aboriginals. To elaborate further, Freud introduces another psychic dynamic involving the leader: the notion of identification. Basing himself on earlier psychoanalytic evidence, including his own study of Little Hans which suggested that the fear of authority figures is often displaced onto animals, Freud draws a link between the leader of the primal horde and the totem animal. Ambivalent emotions are common to both relationships, with leader and animal both being revered and feared. He turns next to the totemic meal, described by Robertson Smith, in which the totem animal is killed – an act normally forbidden – eaten, and ritually mourned. Freud reads this as an act of identification, a way for group members to reinforce their relation with the totem animal. Freud assumes a historical equivalent with Darwin’s horde, suggesting that the tribe members who had been driven out to search for mates

729 Ibid, pg. 32.
730 See pg. 125ff.
could have banded together and returned to slay their leader, eating his corpse afterwards. The totem meal stands as a commemoration of these events.  

I set aside the obvious objection here, which would request an explanation for Freud’s insistence on historical origins. While he may have moved away from his seduction theory, and similarly from a call for historical causes, towards an emphasis on phantasy, a similar shift does not seem to have taken place in his social theory. But, as I said, I leave this much-discussed – if still unresolved – question aside. Instead, I wish to note the failure of the brothers’ revolution. If the group leader proved to be harsh and violent, his reign of terror does not diminish his psychic influence but rather serves only to intensify it. Freud suggests that the leader’s death was not followed by a glorious utopia under different rules but rather by the continuation of the same. The dead father, Freud writes, was stronger than the living one.

The brothers, feeling guilt for their actions reinforced by their emotional ambivalence toward the leader, forbade their own actions in the future, allowing for the prohibitions against murder and incest to persist into posterity. The exact dynamics of this guilt will become clearer in 1921 with Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. Instead, I draw attention to the fate of the brothers’ rule. Freud explains that without a system of internalized social prohibitions the brothers’ “new organization would have collapsed in a war of all against all” as the brothers lost control of their sexual desires and in-fighting began over the choice of mates.

The moral of Freud’s parable is clear. Social regulations are painful to endure and their imposition is unpleasant at best. They represent, however, an inevitable part of social life. In the primal horde situation, the possibility of a group of individuals banding together without a clear, rule-making leader does not seem to exist. The choice of leader thus becomes all the more important. Of course, ‘choice of leader’ is only a manner of speaking, since might appears to make right in this context. And after the leader’s death, his influence only gains strength through the internalization of symbolically expressed social regulations, surpassing even the brute force

\footnote{Ibid, pg. 141.}
\footnote{Ibid, pg. 143.}
\footnote{Ibid, pg. 144. A direct reference to Hobbes’ ‘state of nature’.}
of the living father. Rules and authority figures, be they internal or external, thus govern social life in either case.

The English title of Freud’s essay on ‘group psychology’ is misleading, in that the original German term, Massen, implies something much more amorphous than the primal horde. ‘Crowd’ or ‘mass’ would provide a more accurate translation. Still, the psychic dynamics of the encounter remain much the same and a clear line is never drawn between group psychology and individual psychology. In a sense, Freud uses group psychology to refer to the individual in her relation with objects and, as he readily admits, “only rarely and under certain exceptional conditions is individual psychology in a position to disregard the relations of the individual to others.”734 Even relations between only two individuals – within the family, for example – can be called social when they are contrasted with intrapsychic or narcissistic relations. Yet many would consider these sorts of relations to fall under individual psychology. So the boundary between individual and group psychology is a shifting one.

Still, Freud has something fairly specific in mind when he refers to group psychology in this particular essay and the original German term is helpful in identifying that. Group psychology is properly invoked when we begin speaking of the individual’s relation to a group of strangers and the corresponding psychic reactions that occur in such a situation:

> Group psychology is therefore concerned with the individual as a member of a race, of a nation, of a caste, of a profession, of an institution, or as a component part of a crowd of people who have been organized into a group at some particular time for some definite purpose.735

This situation, Freud suggests, allows for the expression of a herd instinct that is not otherwise observable. Furthermore, he seeks to determine how the group acquires an influence over the individual’s behaviour.

Freud’s literature review, which begins the text and draws largely from Gustave Le Bon’s *La psychologie des foules*, presents an overwhelmingly negative assessment of the crowd’s

734 Freud, ‘Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921),’ in CW 18, pg. 69.

735 *Ibid*, pg. 70.
influence on the individual.\textsuperscript{736} For Le Bon, crowds are open to suggestion and contagion of emotion. They react on instinct – in psychoanalytic terms, they are led almost entirely by the unconscious – and they have a feeling of omnipotence that forces them to pursue the satisfaction of their desires at any cost. Individuals in crowds lose their critical ability and “descend several rungs on the ladder of civilization.”\textsuperscript{737} Le Bon explains these changes by referring to a racial unconscious consisting of “the innumerable common characteristics handed down from generation to generation, which constitute the genius of a race” and come to the fore when the group erases individual differences.\textsuperscript{738} While Freud is careful to note the overwhelmingly negative tone of group psychologies that precede his, he does not directly disagree with their assessment. He does mention, however, that crowds are not necessarily immoral. Rather, they are simply open to the influence of the leader. A great leader can move a crowd to great morals just as easily as an evil one might bring a group to destruction.\textsuperscript{739} So the role of the leader is once again paramount and so too is that of power. Since crowds lose their intellectual and critical faculties, according to Freud, it becomes impossible to reason with them. Freud explains:

> Since a group is in no doubt as to what constitutes truth or error, and is conscious, moreover, of its own great strength, it is as intolerant as it is obedient to authority. It respects force and can only be slightly influenced by kindness, which it regards merely as a form of weakness. What it demands of its heroes is strength, or even violence. It wants to be ruled and oppressed and to fear its masters. Fundamentally it is entirely conservative, and it has a deep aversion to all innovations and advances and an unbounded respect for tradition.\textsuperscript{740}

Freud’s investigation is especially concerned with those groups that fit the format of the primal horde – specifically, groups with leaders. While he does run through the typology of possible groups – transitory or permanent, with or without a leader – he focuses on highly organized groups like the military or the churches to demonstrate the important role that leaders play and the contrast that exists between led and leaderless groups. For this same reason does the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{736} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 74ff.
  \item \textsuperscript{737} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 77.
  \item \textsuperscript{738} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 74.
  \item \textsuperscript{739} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{740} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 78.
\end{itemize}
distinction between groups and crowds or masses begin to slip.\textsuperscript{741} Since his literature review says nothing of leaders, Freud considers this extra element to be his original contribution to group psychology. At the same time, he focuses on the role of leaders to such an extent that it becomes difficult to conceive of what he might have to say about leaderless groups.

While the father in the primal horde was presented as a despotic ruler, Freud emphasizes the group leader’s love for group members as the method through which individuals are held together. The leader binds group members together through the illusion that he has an equal love for them all.\textsuperscript{742} This tendency to form libidinal ties with others will exist without the presence of a leader, as a natural instinct in social situations, but the presence of a leader strengthens them all the more. These libidinal ties, Freud argues, are necessary to explain why group members will disregard their own well being to act in conjunction with others: “Love for oneself knows only one barrier – love for others, love for objects.”\textsuperscript{743}

Interestingly, Freud emphasizes that the leader need not be an actual individual; a common idea or abstraction will suffice. While he does not go any further, explaining that such cases are not his primary focus, this brief reference works to remind us that it is the psychic function that is key to the process, not the individual herself. This returns us to the role of identification. “Identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person”\textsuperscript{744}: little boys identify with their fathers and little girls with their mothers. As a libidinal tie, identification is inherently ambivalent, with the object being both adored and despised. If the Freudian psyche normally wants to possess the objects of its affection, it instead

\textsuperscript{741} If we take the crowd to represent something more amorphous than a group, then the notion of a ‘highly organized crowd’ becomes difficult to fathom. The church and army, Freud’s two main examples, are clearly groups with complex institutional structures. They may have ‘crowd moments’ – the army that has just lost its leader on the battlefield and sounds a frenzied retreat, for example – but they remain groups overall.

\textsuperscript{742} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 94.

\textsuperscript{743} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 102.

\textsuperscript{744} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 105.
strives to be like those objects with which it identifies. Identification can arise anytime a common, shared quality is identified.\textsuperscript{745} Such is the case with group ties to the leader.

The leader’s control over the group, a kind of fascination born of its own susceptibility to external influence, arises from idealization, the term Freud gives to the individual’s overestimation of his love object.\textsuperscript{746} An idealized object is seen as perfect and therefore never questioned. As a result, the object comes to replace the individual’s own ego ideal as the gold standard according to which life should be lived. Because the leader is seen to be perfect, group members similarly identify with him and want to be like him. Nearing his conclusion, Freud defines a group with a leader as “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideals and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.”\textsuperscript{747} Idealization is thus vital to group cohesion.

The echoes between this picture and that of the primal horde are obvious and Freud does indeed view the group as a revival of the primal horde. Between the two situations we also observe the two sides of the ambivalent relationship with the leader: the brothers’ desire to kill the leader out of jealousy and envy, as well as the group members’ positive identification and idealization of the leader. The two are obviously not mutually exclusive but are closely linked.

In light of this discussion, it is also interesting to note that Freud carefully considered the repercussions of himself and his fellow psychoanalysts becoming leaders, or gaining authority, in the medical world.\textsuperscript{748} Here, authority is again portrayed as an essential element of social life, one that compensates for the differing intellectual abilities of individuals:

\begin{quote}
I need not say much to you about the importance of authority. Only very few civilized people are capable of existing without reliance on others or are even
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{745} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 108.

\textsuperscript{746} See \textit{ibid}, pg. 112ff for the discussion of idealization.

\textsuperscript{747} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 116.

\textsuperscript{748} ‘The Future Prospects on Psycho-Analytic Therapy (1910),’ in \textit{CW} 11.
capable of coming to an independent opinion. You cannot exaggerate the intensity of people’s inner lack of resolution and craving for authority.\textsuperscript{749}

Freud’s tone here foreshadows the conclusions in \textit{Group Psychology} and portrays the general population much like Le Bon’s unintelligent and gullible mob. Freud foresees a moment in the near future where psychoanalysts will have to move from fighting authority to holding it. In terms that once again recall the language of his 1921 essay, Freud refers to the “enormous weight of suggestion”\textsuperscript{750} with which the medical authority sought to discredit psychoanalytic theory. Read allegorically, however, Freud’s passage might also refer to the weight of social mores, another ‘authority,’ which psychoanalysis similarly combats. Indeed, he goes on shortly thereafter to warn psychoanalysts of the difficult path ahead and the resistance that society will demonstrate against a theory that upsets the status quo and destroys the very illusions upon which group sentiment is based. “Just as we make an individual our enemy by uncovering what is repressed in him,” Freud writes, “so society cannot respond with sympathy to a relentless exposure of its injurious effects and deficiencies. Because we destroy illusions we are accused of endangering ideals.”\textsuperscript{751}

The Great War similarly provided Freud with another opportunity to meditate upon the nature of authority in his ‘Thoughts for the Times on War and Death.’\textsuperscript{752} The dominant tone of the article is one of disappointment and disbelief that “the great world-dominating nations of white race upon whom the leadership of the human species has fallen” would wage war in the way that they did between 1914 and 1919.\textsuperscript{753} The theme is again one of leadership and authority, with the European nations having failed in their duties, leaving Freud wondering how the world can persist without its leaders. The civilization that they built upon high moral standards and requiring great renunciation of instinct is now threatened by the state’s transgression of its own rules.

\textsuperscript{749} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 146.
\textsuperscript{750} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 146.
\textsuperscript{751} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 147.
\textsuperscript{752} 1915, \textit{CW} 14.
\textsuperscript{753} Freud, ‘Thoughts for the Times on War and Death (1915),’ in \textit{CW} 14, pg. 276.
The exact point of Freud’s critique here is important to note. He is not scandalized by the outbreak of war itself or even by the loss of life that it brought. The great cause of disillusionment is the suspension of the rules of war, that the war has “interrupted the development of ethical relations between the collective individuals of mankind – the people and states.” This is above all a socio-political breakdown. Freud frames the problem in terms of travel – and, in geographical terms, in terms of space-time compression. Before the outbreak of the war, a common acknowledgement of certain rules led to the elimination of political barriers. Individuals began to move between countries, traveling and immigrating, with the understanding that they could be safe among strangers who shared certain key social values. The world opened up. For Freud, “This new fatherland was a museum for him [the European], too, filled with all the treasures which the artists of civilized humanity had in the successive centuries created and left behind,” an achievement to be celebrated. The European world became smaller. But the war eliminated this perception and set the world back decades, erecting firm boundaries between states and making enemies of friends. The discussion also leads Freud to consider the problem of democracy, in which the state fails to represent its people by failing to behave as a good leader. It permits itself the very transgressions – violence, lying, treachery – that it forbids individuals, risking the moral character of its citizens. The state becomes excessively patronizing, demanding unfailing obedience yet failing to justify its actions, keeping secrets and censoring opinions.

At the same time, the disillusionment that the war provoked pointed to an important truth: that civilization will always be fragile and that high moral standards do little to eliminate the existence of evil inclinations. So while the state may ensure its psychic existence by imposing instinctual demands upon the individual, it maintains its political survival by creating illusions of its own efficacy.

754 Ibid.
756 Ibid, pg. 280. Freud fears, specifically, that the depravity of the international community will trickle down and influence individuals.
757 Ibid, pg. 281.
3.3 Culture and Authority, Revolution and Pessimism

In this section, I want to consider the possibility of revolution or political change within Freud’s social theory. Is it possible to subvert the social order or is the psyche inescapably colonized by certain power structures? How does Freud make room for change? Certainly, the brothers of the primal horde found their escape through cooperation. The power of the father was overcome through the safety of numbers, a greater might created through collaboration. However, Freud also demonstrates that the brothers’ victory proved to be none at all, as the destruction of the father’s physical strength did little to break his psychic hold over them.\textsuperscript{758} For this reason among others does George Cavalletto argue that Freud advances a social determinism of the psyche, one in which seminal experiences in childhood cannot be escaped. But Cavalletto’s statement requires mitigation, in my reading, because Freud’s tendency toward determinism is hardly unequivocal. The tale in \textit{Totem} does narrate a profound change, for example, from physical forms of violence to the leader’s psychic influence through symbolically represented morals and values. Cavalletto’s critique only tells part of the story, as a close reading of \textit{Future} and \textit{Civilization} will demonstrate.

Freud begins \textit{Future of an Illusion}\textsuperscript{759} by refusing to make a distinction between civilization and culture, both terms representing that which raises humans above animals, including:

\begin{quote}
[O]n the one hand all the knowledge and capacity that men have acquired in order to control the forces of nature and extract its wealth for the satisfaction of human needs, and, on the other hand, all the regulations necessary in order to adjust the relations of men to one another and especially the distribution of the available wealth.\textsuperscript{760}
\end{quote}

The control over nature and the regulation of social relations are thus paramount. The first is related to science and intellectual pursuits while the second relates to politics, social organization and law. Civilization is here presented as the antithesis of human instinct, the two being opposed

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{758} While Freud’s work in \textit{Totem} does indeed point to a change in form of the power structures – from direct force to the psychic influence of internalized power – my focus is simply on the strength of these power structures themselves, which only grows with this transition.

\textsuperscript{759} 1927, \textit{CW} 21, pg. 6.

\textsuperscript{760} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 6.
\end{footnotesize}
in their ends. A choice exists between the free satisfaction of instinctual desires and the maintenance of civilization. Freud obviously comes down in favour of the latter, suggesting that “civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task.” From the outset, there is a sense in which social institutions are necessary to prevent a regression into the state of nature. At the same time, because these social institutions are so contrary to instinct, Freud reiterates his suggestion that they were imposed upon the populace by a cultural elite, one that saw the benefits that such systems would bring. This could only have been done by coercive means, after this minority had secured power. At the same time, Freud is unclear at this point as to how exactly such a cultural elite would have formed, and why they would happen to see the benefits of these social institutions while living in a state that knew nothing of them. In short, how this cultural elite became cultured and learned to renounce their own instincts remains a mystery.

Freud does seem to view this cultural elite as a largely benevolent force, however, working for the good of all rather than simply for its own advantage. Commenting on the many flaws in the social institutions of his day, Freud explains that it is “natural to assume that these difficulties are not inherent in the nature of civilization itself but are determined by the imperfections of the cultural forms which have so far been developed.” While advances in humanity’s ability to control nature have not been matched by similar advances in the management of human affairs, there is a feeling that changing cultural forms can improve social institutions. The renunciation of instinct is indeed, as DiCenso suggests, a process of transformation resulting from acculturation. The reach of culture, however, is uneven across society, so Freud does not rely on acculturation to make individuals universally friendly to society. Since human behaviour in society is instead governed by anti-social trends, some level of coercion will always be required. For this reason, the primary question in *Future* will ask how the psychic burden of

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763 1999, pg. 31.
764 Imagining a golden age in which individuals are reconciled to society without internal discord, Freud is in doubt whether such a state of affairs can ever be achieved. See *ibid*, pg. 7.
renunciation can be lessened, either through reconciliation or compensation. Religion figures prominently in the discussion.

Freud’s discussion of the masses in the early pages of *Future* repeats the negative evaluation in *Group Psychology*, suggesting that Freud endorses the control of the masses by the cultured few. Again, authority seems a necessary evil as guarantor of civilization. Freud writes:

> It is just as impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of civilization. For masses are lazy and unintelligent; they have no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability;… It is only through the influence of individuals who can set an example and whom masses recognize as their leaders that they can be induced to perform the work and undergo the renunciations on which the existence of civilization depends.  

The theory of group psychology is thus imported wholesale, including the importance of the leader. Two points are worthy of note, however. First of all, Freud not only emphasizes the role of the leader but also the fact that the leader must be recognized by the masses to be effective. Certainly in *Group Psychology* this seemed a formality stemming from the psychic gullibility of individuals in group situations and their collective yearning to be led. We might consider, however, whether a society as a whole can truly be considered to constitute such a form of group or whether the leader’s task of making herself accepted must also be discussed. The second point involves Freud’s use of ‘work’ (*Arbeit*). Freud repeatedly states that the masses must be reconciled to the need to work, that they are not fond of work,\(^{766}\) and that work is the task of civilization. The cited passage specifies Freud’s use of the term, pointing not to remunerated labour but rather to the work of civilization. ‘Work’ represents psychic work, renunciation, not physical employment.

It seems clear, then, that in *Future* Freud sees authority, internalized or external, as a necessary evil required to impose and enforce renunciation upon those who are unable or unwilling to do so on their own. While cultural forms, like the internalized leader of *Totem*, can aid in this process, the limited reach of culture across society will always imply the need for some enforcement of

\(^{765}\) *Ibid*, pg. 7.

\(^{766}\) *Ibid*, pg. 8.
regulations. Coercion compensates for the internal conflicts that prevent autonomous action. On this point, a clear categorical distinction exists. On the one hand stand the few, the cultured leaders of civilization, who are capable of renunciation and participate in culture, and on the other the masses that, with only limited access to symbolic cultural forms, either follow the examples of the leaders or are coerced into obedience. Freud translates this description into a class argument.\footnote{767} The lower classes envy the abundance of the upper and seek to escape their privation. For Freud, it is key that society make ascension possible. If the lower classes cannot escape privation, they will only learn to resent the upper, making the internalization of cultural prohibitions impossible. Instead, the preservation of society requires that lower classes identify with the upper, thereby striving to be like them by behaving like them and adopting their mores. This emotional attachment also neutralizes the hostility of the masses, which are instead satisfied by their identification.\footnote{768} This narrative creates, we might argue, a great responsibility for the upper classes to make cultural forms accessible to everyone in society. It also makes clear that an intransigent class society is doomed to failure. As Freud writes, “a civilization which leaves so large a number of its participants unsatisfied and drives them into revolt neither has nor deserves the prospect of a lasting existence.”\footnote{769}

The introduction of the death drive in \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents}\footnote{770} shifts the focus away from the group discussion presented in \textit{Future} and thereby moves further from the notions in \textit{Group Psychology} as well. Freud sets the tone with the discussion of the oceanic feeling,\footnote{771} a notion that posits an intuitive connection between individuals – the feeling of oneness Rolland finds characteristic of mystical experiences. Freud’s introduction of the death drive points to an opposite phenomenon: an innate antipathy between beings. Happiness, the essay’s primary topic,\footnote{772}
becomes almost impossible since other individuals constantly act to limit our will. Furthermore, civilization bears much of the responsibility for our unhappiness since, in the name of protecting us from our neighbours, it requires that we renounce instincts. Unrestricted individual liberty and instinctual satisfaction are abandoned in the trade-off of civilization. 772

Civilization adds little to the discussion of the leader as developed in Totem and Group Psychology. Instead, it focuses on the need for renunciation and culture’s role in the process. Civilization controls aggression by forcing its internalization and its transformation into guilt. 773

The processes described in Group Psychology thus remain relevant. The fear of authority, internalized as a fear of conscience, results in the renunciation of instinct. Freud also returns to his discussion of work, which is here framed in material terms. Work not only represents the psychic work of renunciation but also the physical work required to build civilization or, more specifically, to keep nature at bay. The first acts of civilization, Freud suggests, were forms of work. 774 The creation and use of tools, the taming of fire, the building of dwellings – survival required labour. Work becomes one of the primary ways in which humanity improves its chances against nature. Freud never generalizes this statement to address contemporary forms of work, though his critique of communism is not unrelated.

Communism’s main contention, in Freud’s opinion, is that humans could live harmoniously together if only those problematic institutions were eliminated: “[communism claims that] man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbour; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature.” 775 Disregarding its economic premises, 776 Freud argues that communism’s psychological foundations are untenable because human aggressiveness predates the institution of private property. Here, the problems of civilizations go beyond social institutions to constitution and instinct. As Freud explains, “men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved,

772 Ibid, pg. 95.
773 Ibid, pg. 123.
774 Ibid, pg. 90.
775 Ibid, pg. 113.
776 In the New Introductory Lectures (1932, CW 22), Freud similarly criticizes Marx’s historical theses, calling them little more than a precipitate of Hegelian philosophy (177).
and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. The extent to which Freud leaves room for political change is thus questionable. While his early works do seem to suggest that civilization’s shortcomings are the result of its cultural institutions and that renunciation encouraged through symbolic forms can bring about ethically valuable modifications of the drives, the increasingly pessimistic tone of Civilization presents aggressiveness as the product of human instinct, which can be modified and controlled but never eliminated entirely. Whether this is a pessimistic or simply a realistic assessment of human nature will remain, I suspect, a matter of opinion. Both of these narratives must also be contrasted with Freud’s schema of ontogenic development. As Abramson notes, while Freud opposes the individual’s instincts to society, he also presents us with an infant who is essentially sociable, who requires support from his environment and internalizes authority in the resolution of the Oedipus complex.  

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777 Ibid, pg. 111.
778 New Introductory Lectures (1932, CW 22, pg. 180); Why War? (1933, CW 22, pg. 212).
779 New Introductory Lectures, pg. 178.
780 1984, pg. 8.
4 Post-Freudian Theory: Reading Freud and Marx

With these comments in mind, the task of reading Freud and Marx together becomes a complex one. The close relation between Marxism and analyses of social space has already been established, but Marx and psychoanalysis have simultaneously been both allies and enemies. For some Marxists, psychoanalysis is understood to be little more than “an expression of capitalist cultural decadence.”\(^{781}\) Certainly, Freud placed little hope in the promise of a class revolution which, should it occur, would likely be framed in terms of the failure of the upper classes rather than the assertion of the lower classes. Furthermore, as with the brothers in the horde, Freud would likely expect the revolution to degenerate into chaos, soon reproducing a new order of internalized domination stronger than the first. Other Marxists, like Terry Eagleton, however, have found in Freud’s theories a useful way of understanding authority in capitalist societies.\(^{782}\) For Eagleton as for Freud, the very fact that morality is learned means that it inevitably reflects a colonization of the individual by a foreign master. Eagleton sees in this a similar explanation as to how repressive regimes make themselves appealing to a populace, by tapping into unconscious wishes that social mores leave unsatisfied. “Late capitalist society,” Eagleton writes, “sustains its rule not only by police forces and ideological apparatuses, but by raiding the resources of the death drive, the Oedipus complex and primal aggressivity.”\(^{783}\) If we understand Freud’s project to be largely descriptive, then the last century of history – including the rise of totalitarianism, a topic which figures prominently in extensions of Freudian theory – provides a number of opportunities for building on Freud’s ideas.

Eagleton exploits an important similarity between Freudian and Marxian theory: both are highly critical of the societies in which they were formed. While Freud’s tone is often taken to be increasingly pessimistic as his career progresses, Marx was overall an optimist, a characteristic that his successors did not always maintain. He remained convinced that the working class would eventually rise up, assert its rights, and free itself from oppression. As Lichtman explains, “Marx grasped ideology as the condition under which the men and women could be made to accept as


\(^{783}\) *Ibid*, pg. 273.
natural, and therefore unalterable, a society in which their human condition was continuously diminished.”

His task was to reveal this ideology for what it was, thereby motivating social change. Marx never considered, according to Lichtman, that individuals would willingly seek out such a dehumanizing condition. This is where Freud can complement Marx. The death drive helps explain why individuals sometimes move beyond mere passivity to outright self-destruction. While Freud’s primary focus may be on the individual psyche and Marx’s may be on the individual as a product of social conditions, both acknowledge that the individual and society stand in some sort of dialectical relationship. But Marx’s focus on ideology critique extends psychoanalytic thought about the social, asking how internalized identifications and symbolic forms can be challenged: “Marxism understood the irrationality, wastefulness, violence and self-destruction of the external social system. Freud promised an understanding of how this process had become deeply rooted in the psyche of men and women.”

Much more could be said on the topic of similarities. Philip Rieff criticizes Freud for “eliminating the challenge of history” with his “traditional positivist eagerness” to find laws in nature. The more things appear to change, the more they remain the same at the psychic level. Marx’s dialectical system is better equipped to recognize transformation. Habermas, on the other hand, points to the fact that both Marx and Freud ultimately see civilization as a creation to be preserved, an escape from the state of nature. Despite the many differences, though, there are some key points upon which Marx and Freud can build on each other. Without seeking to unite Freudian and Marxian ideas, common themes for discussion do appear and it is on these

785 Ibid, pg. 10.
787 1972, pg. 276.
788 Lichtman lists a number of antagonistic points: i) Marx’s theory is dialectical while Freud’s is dualistic; ii) For Freud, sociology is often little more than applied psychology, while the Marxian system is more complex; iii) The Freudian system is timeless, especially with respect to the psyche, while Marx is more focused on social and historical transformation; iv) For Marx, it is the social system which causes aggression, while Freud sees the individual as inherently aggressive; v) While Marx is a revolutionary, Freud sees revolution as illusory and conflict as inevitable.
that I want to focus. I am interested here in how post-Freudian theorists, often drawing on Marx, extended the scope of Freud’s social thought.

The missing link in this discussion is often critical theory. While often selective readers of Freud, thinkers such as Marcuse, Fromm, Adorno, and Horkheimer offered their own brand of social thought that often selectively borrowed some of Freud’s original ideas. In particular, the Frankfurt School was interested in analyzing both the structure and development of authority, along with the emergence and spread of mass culture. To do so, it needed a theory of the human psyche, which it often found in Freud. Marcuse justifies his use of psychology by arguing that, in a world where the distinctions between public and private are erased, so too must the barriers between psychology and political science be broken down:

The traditional borderlines between psychology on the one side and political and social philosophy on the other have been made obsolete by the condition of man in the present era: formerly autonomous and identifiable psychical processes are being absorbed by the function of the individual in the state – by his public existence. Psychological problems therefore turn into political problems: private disorder reflects more directly than before the disorder of the whole, and the cure of personal disorder depends more directly than before on the cure of the general disorder.\footnote{Herbert Marcuse, \textit{Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud} (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1974), pg. xxvii.}

Martin Jay, describing the combination of Freud and Marx before the Frankfurt School, points to a tacit understanding that Freud’s pessimism about the possibility of social change simply could not be reconciled with Marxian sensibilities.\footnote{\textit{The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923-1950} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), pg. 86.} The degree of a particular theorist’s pessimism did much to determine the way in which he would use Freud’s work, which appealed particularly to those pessimistic thinkers for whom revolution was seen as an impossibility. So Marcuse’s work, according to Jay, is motivated largely by a desire to reverse Freud’s conservative image.\footnote{I have argued previously that, even taken on their own, Freud’s ideas need not be considered conservative. Still, Marcuse was speaking here of the popular perception of Freudian psychoanalysis in his day, which he will also attempt to overturn in his own way.} To do so, he draws closely from drive theory. Fromm, on the other hand, while one of the first to...
attempt a reconciliation of Marx and Freud, eventually moved away from Freud, rejecting the Oedipus complex, drive theory, and the notion of libido.\footnote{For detailed treatments of Marcuse (78ff) and Fromm (88ff), see Jay 1973.} At the same time, he would acknowledge that Freud’s theory of internalized authority and of group psychology provide the best way in which to approach the critique of authority.\footnote{See Jay 1973, pg. 127.} Marx too was treated selectively, with the focus often being placed on his critique of ideology. Writing in 1975, Castoriadis argues that Marxists should abandon Marx’s notion of historical materialism, for example, without abandoning his insight into modern society.\footnote{Cornelius Castoriadis, \textit{L’institution imaginaire de la société} (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pg. 42.} He goes on to argue that while much of Marxism might appear unacceptably outdated to his colleagues, the ideas retained their creative productivity. Much the same could be said of Freud.

The basic controversy that emerges in the post-Freudian consideration of psychoanalytic social theory asks to what extent Freud was a conformist and to what extent he was a social critic. Those who adopt the latter position often focus on Freud’s later forays into the death drive, the very idea that much of the psychoanalytic community considered unscientific and reactionary.\footnote{See Paul Robinson, \textit{The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse} (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 149ff. for a discussion of the death drive’s reception.} Others, like Paul Robinson’s Freudian Left, a term which he uses to describe ‘radical Freudian’ thinkers such as Reich, Marcuse, and Roheim, focus on the psychoanalytic critique of sexuality and its political implications, which view sexuality as a form of political domination.

An appreciation of social space requires that we analyze social relations and power structures as they are understood in psychoanalytic theory. This turns our attention to topics as diverse as the primal horde, the internalization of authority, the psychology of the group, the role of the leader, and of identification. Freud’s notion of social space represents human relations as grounded in a dialectic of authority and submission. The degree to which his work is read as conservative will depend largely on the texts that are read and, more importantly, on how seriously one reads the
texts. Again, Freud is ambiguous on this point, but there are important tensions upon which a careful reader can build to understand the psychoanalytic notion of social change. While the pessimism of *Civilization* depicts unhappiness and oppression as a necessary constant resulting from the instinctual renunciation that social stability demands, works like *Group Psychology* or *Future*, which focus instead on the role of the leader in group dynamics, can be read in a more positive light. The process of internalizing authority described in *Totem* also points to the possibility of modifying the drives through the influence of symbolic forms.

The methodological point to be made here asks to what extent Freud can be understood to address contemporary political concerns. This line of interrogation betrays more than a simplistic attempt to redeem Freudian theory – though it certainly does that as well – but rather comes with the very notion of social space. Such a focus requires that we outline the realm of possibility within Freud’s own social theory, understanding not only oppression but also liberation, not only conservation but also change and revolution. In either case, there in much to be said for tensions in Freud’s work that create a social theory than emphasize the malleability of the drives and the possibility of emancipation. In doing so, we can fill many of the gaps that exist in Freud’s theories and update his ideas to address contemporary concerns, clearly demonstrating that psychoanalysis is not irretrievably fixed in its view of social space.
Chapter 6: Freud’s Moses and the Stranger Within

“In the beginning was the Deed.”\textsuperscript{796}

Published in 1938 as the last of Freud’s major works, Moses and Monotheism remains one of his most infamous. The story, by now, is well known. Moses, the biblical leader of the Jewish people in their escape from Egypt, was never a Jew but was rather an Egyptian. A priest of Aten during the reign of the proto-monotheist pharaoh Akhenaton, Moses negotiated his way to a position of leadership among the wandering Hebrew tribes as a way of preserving his faith after the pharaoh’s death. Making their way to Canaan and gathering more followers as they went, the Jews were taught Akhenaton’s highly spiritualized – \textit{geistig}, an important term – religion. Unable to stand the psychic demands of Moses’ rigorous faith, the Hebrew people murder Moses in a re-enactment of the primal horde situation. Only generations later, after the traumatic nature of the Mosaic imposition of monotheism has forced the repression of his teachings, does Akhenaton’s monotheism resurface as the Jewish faith. Read spatially, the tale is one of migration and colonial expansion that demonstrates how the influence of places and locations can persist to shape the psyche.

The purpose or intention of Freud’s text is far from clear. His various biographers have read into the split between Canaan and Egypt a reflection of Freud’s own divided background, half-German and half-Jewish, torn intellectually between Rome and Jerusalem. For Lydia Flem, for example, Moses shows that “Freud never resolves these tensions in which he is simultaneously the son of a humiliated Jew and the father of a Western oeuvre.”\textsuperscript{797} The form of the investigation, framed as a search for the root cause of some of the predominant culturally informed Jewish personality traits, takes its cue from the obsession with origins and genealogies typical of the early half of the century. Still others, like historian Yosef Yerushalmi\textsuperscript{798} have read

\textsuperscript{796} From Goethe’s \textit{Faust}, Act 1 Scene 3. Quoted by Freud in \textit{Totem & Taboo}, 1913, \textit{CW} 13, pg. 161.

\textsuperscript{797} 2003, pg. 52.

\textsuperscript{798} \textit{Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).
into \textit{Moses} a demonstration of Freud’s ambivalence towards his own Jewishness. Yerushalmi considers the public self-image that Freud created for himself – one that was intentionally non-Jewish in many ways – and argues against the biographical truth of this portrait. The three main elements of Freud’s self-presentation – that he received only the most basic Jewish religious education, that his family performed only the most basic religious rituals while he was growing up, and that he never learned Yiddish or Hebrew – are all questionable, if not demonstrably false. Writing at almost the same time as Yerushalmi, Emanuel Rice\textsuperscript{799} makes a similar point, considering Freud’s relationship with his parents and his culture to demonstrate that traditional Judaism would have played a significant part in Freud’s life growing up. His parents would have stayed true to their strict Orthodox background, resisting assimilation, with his father Jacob having even attended Yeshiva and studied the Talmud.

At its best, this biographical line of inquiry has shed some light on the historical construction of ‘the man Freud.’ At its worst, however, it frequently degenerates into \textit{ad hominem} attempts to attack psychoanalysis by psychoanalyzing Freud himself, often quite poorly. In either case, it is worth noting that a disproportionate number of books about \textit{Moses and Monotheism} use Freud’s text \textit{only} as a foil for considering its author, leaving aside the book’s argument altogether. Granted, Freud’s arguments require some intellectual generosity to engage. Even a sympathetic reader like Richard Bernstein is wont to label them “manifestly outrageous.”\textsuperscript{800} But the judgmental reader misses an important opportunity to engage with \textit{Moses} productively. The biographical readers take Freud’s discussion of Judaism as license to open the history books and locate Freud in his context – how was he Jewish, how was he not. But the Freud of \textit{Moses} is already answering these questions himself by investigating the formation of the Jewish personality. On the one hand, as Yerushalmi points out, \textit{Moses} is meant to deal another psychological blow to humanity, à la Copernicus.\textsuperscript{801} To this extent, religion remains an illusion


\textsuperscript{800} Consider \textit{Freud and the Legacy of Moses} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pg. ix: “Because Freud’s ‘arguments’ were so manifestly outrageous, commentators tended to focus on the search for Freud’s hidden or unconscious motives, what the book revealed about his personal conflicts, rather than on a careful analysis of what he actually says.”

\textsuperscript{801} Yerushalmi 1991, pg. 5.
that must be unmasked. Naïve notions of Moses as a historical figure who did everything the scriptures say he did must be complicated. The biblical texts must be read and analyzed like dreams, the unconscious meaning of their symbols spelled out before their deeper meaning can be found.\textsuperscript{802} On the other hand, however, Freud never seems to entertain the idea that the entire notion of ‘Judaism’ will be eliminated. In \textit{Future}, Freud the secularist phantasizes about the complete end of religion before admitting that it likely will not happen. In \textit{Moses}, however, Freud seeks to alter the popular understanding of Judaism rather than eliminating it. \textit{Moses} obviously asks a number of different questions, some about the reading and interpretation of scripture, some about personality, and some about the dynamics of tradition. But, as Bernstein again suggests,\textsuperscript{803} there seems little doubt that one of the questions Freud needs to answer is the one posed in the Hebrew preface to \textit{Totem & Taboo}: “Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?”\textsuperscript{804}

In this closing chapter, I consciously change my approach to the topic of space somewhat. Rather than approaching Freud’s text using a particular conception of space, as I have done previously, I take as my starting point the text, \textit{Moses and Monotheism}, and demonstrate that \textit{Moses} is a text ripe for spatial commentary. In this sense, I adopt an approach more typical of literary studies, reading \textit{Moses} as a travel story of sorts and teasing out the spatial implications of this. The motivation for this shifting approach is twofold. First, while \textit{Moses} does indeed return to many of the themes central to Freud’s other works – notions of material and historical reality most

\textsuperscript{802} DiCenso (1999, 84) suggests that Freud reads biblical texts as he does symptoms, seeing both as subject to the same kinds of distortions.
\textsuperscript{803} 1998, pg. ix.
\textsuperscript{804} Freud 1913, pg. xv. Preface dated to 1930. “No reader of [the Hebrew version of] this book will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers— as well as from every other religion—and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him: ‘Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?’ he would reply: ‘A very great deal, and probably its very essence.’ He could not now express that essence clearly in words; but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind. Thus it is an experience of a quite special kind for such an author when a book of his is translated into the Hebrew language and put into the hands of readers for whom that historic idiom is a living tongue: a book, moreover, which deals with the origin of religion and morality, though it adopts no Jewish standpoint and makes no exceptions in favour of Jewry. The author hopes, however, that he will be at one with his readers in the conviction that unprejudiced science cannot remain a stranger to the spirit of the new Jewry.”
notably – the text also raises a number of issues unique to it, a product largely of the insular format (a closed story) that it adopts. A stand-alone chapter on the text thus seems the logical choice, since my preferred method of tracking the evolution of ideas through Freud’s works no longer remains a possibility. My second reason is intellectually selfish, and stems from my conviction that no product that attempts to develop a comprehensive appreciation of space in Freud would be complete without dealing extensively with a text at once as fascinating and perplexing as Moses. In this sense, I focus on the text because I really wanted to write about it. I beg the reader’s generosity to indulge me in this regard.

Freud’s theory of Jewishness suggests a link between places and character, one in which places in memory help guide the formation of personality. With this, the relation between the individual and the national group again comes to the fore, both through the figure of Moses as the leader of an ethnic group – one who, importantly, claims a different ethnicity than those that he leads – and also through the return to the primal horde situation, first laid out in 1913.

1  Moses and Monotheism: The Two Historical Essays

Originally titled Der Mann Moses, ein historischer Roman, Freud settled on Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion for the German title of his Moses book and approved its English translation as Moses and Monotheism. The original title, with its emphasis on history rather than monotheism and by extension Jewish character demonstrates the evolution of Freud’s plan for the work. It is doubtful, both from Freud’s own statements in the first two essays as well as from the preface to the third essay, whether the final part of the work, which extends the theoretical implications of the largely historical first two essays, would ever have been published had it not been for the advent of National Socialism. I want to carefully consider the content of Moses and Monotheism – the first two essays here and the third essay in the following section – before moving on to its implications for Freudian theory.

Freud begins the first essay with a word of warning, one that recalls both his commitment to furthering psychoanalytic knowledge as well as his general aim of unmasking illusions:

To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them. But we cannot allow any such reflection to induce us to put the truth aside in favour of what are supposed to be national interests.
On the one hand, the progress of science cannot bend to the risk of personal offense. On the other, Freud is careful to locate himself among the offended, if only potentially – a Jew, albeit one looking to reflect upon the meaning of his heritage (or, here, ‘nationality’).

In everyday terms, we might say that the figure of Moses is presented here as a founding figure or mythic hero. He is recognized as the liberator of the Jews, as the giver of laws and religion. His influence, in those respects, persists among his people today. In psychoanalytic terms, however, Moses is presented as a group leader, playing the same role as the military general in *Group Psychology* or the primal father in *Totem & Taboo*. But the implications of this reading do not become clear until the final essay. Instead, Freud returns to his historical line of questioning. There is little doubt in his mind that ‘Moses’ is an Egyptian name. Would it not therefore be logical, albeit heretical, to conclude that Moses himself was an Egyptian? Freud presents himself as the psychoanalyst who draws obvious conclusions from clear facts, unimpeded by personal biases and restraints.

The historical portion of the text is about nationality. From the outset, Freud’s analysis makes clear that nationality is important. “If the question of this great man’s nationality [Nationalität] is regarded as important,” Freud writes, “it would seem to be desirable to bring forward fresh material that would help towards answering it.”

This is the goal of the first essay. Spatially, geographically, this is worthy of note. Moses is a foreigner, at least in the eyes of the Jews-to-be. He is not one of them. Worse still, by his Egyptian nationality, he is participating in their oppression. Yet Freud’s contemporaries take Moses to be one of their own. His influence remains seminal, his importance central. The Jews were – shockingly, heretically – created by a foreigner. The notion that Moses was a Jew rather than an Egyptian aristocrat is only a construction of legend. Freud’s argument is based on two points. First, the Egyptian origins of Moses’ name, an argument that predates Freud, although hardly a popular one and, second, Freud’s original contribution, the reversal of the hero legend of the exposed infant. Here Freud

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805 Freud, ‘Moses and Monotheism (1938),’ in *CW* 23, pg. 7.
806 *Ibid*, pg. 10.
notes that while myths about exposed infants are prevalent in many cultures across the ancient Near East, the infant is usually born a wealthy aristocrat and raised in poverty. Religious texts reverse this in the Moses story; he is born to poverty and raised an aristocrat. Only the Jews, Freud argues, would stand to gain by reversing the legend and glorifying Moses so.  

While the third essay differs greatly from the first two, the second picks up directly from where the first left off. Again, Freud begins by addressing the epistemological status of his claims, this time expressing uncertainty and stating that his arguments “were based only on psychological probabilities and lacked any objective proof.” The confidence that opened the first essay seems to have waned somewhat, and this vacillation between confidence and doubt will persist throughout the essay. At the same time, the resolution to strike to the heart of sensitive issues remains. The second essay, then, addresses a separate question: if Moses was a foreigner, why would he lead a backward, uncivilized people on their exodus, especially given the Egyptians’ usual contempt for outsiders? Moses’ motivation, Freud hypothesizes, may have been based on his choice of religion.

If Moses were an Egyptian polytheist, why would he have taught the Jews a monotheistic faith? The answer, Freud suggests, is simple – Moses was never an Egyptian polytheist. Instead, he could have professed the Aten religion of the monotheist pharaoh Akhenaton. Freud is careful to point to a number of similarities between the Aten religion and Judaism: both have little to say about death or the nature of life thereafter, both reject myth and magic, and neither depicts divine forces using images. Freud’s conclusion: “If Moses was an Egyptian and if he communicated his own religion to the Jews, it must have been Akhenaten’s, the Aten religion.” Moses may

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808 Ibid, pg. 17.
809 In Freud’s words.
810 Ibid, pg. 18.
811 The Egyptian depiction of Aten as the sun disc with emanating rays does not count as an image in Freud’s estimation, though he does admit that Judaism will go further in this respect, proscribing idolatry altogether. See ibid pg. 26.
have been an aristocratic companion of Akhenaton’s and a follower of his religion. After the pharaoh’s death, as Egypt began to shift back to its traditional myths, Moses may have sought to preserve his friend’s religion among the Hebrews. He may even have been governor of an Egyptian frontier province in which Semitic tribes had begun to settle. He would have chosen them as his people, negotiated an agreement to become their leader, and led them away to Canaan.

As they traveled, the group would have grown in size as it picked up other tribes, and Moses would have taught them his religion. In a reprise of the primal horde tale, however, the group leader would have met an unfortunate end. Just as the tribal sons were unable to stand the renunciation of sexual instincts that their father’s rule demanded, so too would the Hebrews have been unable to meet the psychic demands of Moses’ abstract, spiritualized faith. Drawing on biblical scholar Ernst Sellin’s work, Freud suggests that the Hebrews murdered Moses, signaling the (temporary) end of his religion as well.⁸¹³ Freud makes explicit the analogy between the Moses story and the primal horde:

Moses, like Akhenaten, met with the same fate that awaits all enlightened despots. The Jewish people under Moses was just as little able to tolerate such a highly spiritualized [vergeistigte] religion and find satisfaction of their needs in what it had to offer as had been the Egyptians of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The same thing happened in both cases: those who had been dominated and kept in want rose and threw off the burden of the religion that had been imposed on them.⁸¹⁴

If the first essay highlights the mixing of Egypt and Israel through the figure of ‘Moses the Egyptian,’ the second brings two conceptions of god together through two locations – Egypt and Kadesh. After the suppression of the Moses religion, the Hebrews would presumably have returned to the ways of their ancestors. A need arises thereafter to explain how the Yahweh religion of the Hebrew bible would have arisen. Freud draws on the work of Eduard Meyer to suggest a solution. A group of wandering Midianites who would have joined the Hebrew group at Kadesh could have brought their volcano god Yahweh with them. His personality – violent, angry, vengeful – was more typical of the Near Eastern deities of the time. Only over time, as the

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 47.
repressed memory of the Moses religion began to return and modify the Yahweh religion, would Judaism as Freud knew it come to exist.

Freud concludes this second essay by laying bare the ‘religion of contrasts’ that is Judaism:

And here, it seems, I have reached the conclusion of my study, which was directed to the single aim of introducing the figure of an Egyptian Moses into the nexus of Jewish history. Our findings may be thus expressed in the most concise formula. Jewish history is familiar to us for its dualities: two groups of people who came together to form the nation, two kingdoms into which this nation fell apart, two gods' names in the documentary sources of the Bible. To these we add two fresh ones: the foundation of two religions – the first repressed by the second but nevertheless later emerging victoriously behind it, and two religious founders, who are both called by the same name of Moses and whose personalities we have to distinguish from each other. All of these dualities are the necessary consequences of the first one: the fact that one portion of the people had an experience which must be regarded as traumatic and which the other portion escaped.  

Freud’s conclusion is somewhat misleading in that its emphasis on the traumatic nature of the Moses murder neglects the fact that the consequences of this murder are never fully explored until the third essay, which has yet to be read. Nevertheless, his notion of ‘dualities’ is well taken, though it only hints at the duality that I will return to emphasize – that between opposing places.

2 The Third Essay: The Uniqueness of Jewish Character

The final essay of Moses and Monotheism stands out in a number of different ways. It is considerably longer than the first two. It has two prefaces that explain the particular circumstances of its creation, most especially Freud’s decision to publish the text only after leaving the ‘protection’ of the Catholic Church in Austria for London as the intentions of the National Socialist party became clear. And the topic of discussion shifts considerably from the previous historical argument to the origins of anti-Semitism and the quality of the Jewish character.

\[815\] Ibid, pg. 52.
Interestingly, Freud begins the essay with a consideration of empire. In particular, he makes explicit the link that he sees between a person’s character, religion, and a society’s mode of governance. Initially, Freud links the rise of the Aten religion in Egypt to its newfound status as a world-empire following the conquests of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Close contact and interaction with new civilizations would have created an environment in which new ideas, including new theologies, could prosper. Freud is not speaking here of the importation of existing ideas from elsewhere – remember that Akhenaton is the first monotheist, as far as Freud is concerned – but rather a general opening of the mind to new ideas among the aristocratic intelligentsia that would have accompanied the opening to the world. Power and leisure, it would seem, breed creativity. The Hebrews would have faced a similar situation, albeit one suited to their minor political role in the area. They were not in a position of power, much less of empire, so the Egyptian explanation does not apply. Rather, Freud suggests, the turn to the Yahweh religion would have prepared them to enter Canaan as conquerors. Aten, a peaceful and abstract god, could not motivate his people to battle. His life is one of contemplation, fit for the leisurely intellectual. Yahweh, by contrast a violent volcano god, was better suited to the task of the Hebrews. In either case, Freud argues that modes of governance are reflected in religious types – the abstract god for the intellectuals, the violent god for the conquerors. In the former situation, Freud presents the psyche as that which attracts the religion; the intellectual is free before she finds a god who suits her lifestyle and way of thinking. With Judaism, however, the inverse seems to take place: the religion builds the necessary character, as we will see. This also explains why the Aten religion was traumatic for the Hebrews but not for the Egyptians. In the latter case, monotheism, again portrayed as a religion of empire, fit the political system of thought. God and pharaoh were analogous, both rulers of vast empires. The Jews, however, found themselves with different psychic needs, left unsatisfied by abstract monotheistic teachings. Freud presents Moses as the only reason the Jews developed monotheism, considering how unsuited it was to their lifestyle. They would not have become monotheists without his influence.

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816 Ibid, pg. 59.
817 Ibid, pg. 61.
818 Ibid, pg. 65.
The third essay also returns to properly psychoanalytic material by emphasizing the role of the traumatic death of Moses and the return of the repressed in the psychic formation of the Jewish religion. While Freud touches on the topic in the previous essay, only here does he expand on it in clinical terms. Moses was killed because his religion placed ethical and psychic demands on the Hebrews that were beyond their level of possibility. Yet Moses’ death did not mean the end of his teachings; it ensured their eventual victory. The forgetting and resurfacing of the monotheistic idea is attributed to the latency period following the traumatic murder. After the merge at Kadesh and the adoption of Yahweh, Freud sees a lengthy and progressive transformation of the Hebrew conception of the volcano god into the Mosaic Aten. He may have been called Yahweh in form, but the content was that of Egyptian monotheism. So Yahweh became stricter in his ethical demands and harsher in his rejection of magic, for example. In this sense, the tradition does not weaken but grows stronger over time. More importantly, religions are no longer simply illusions but are also seen to contain incomplete and blurred images of the past. Religions contain historical truth, if not material truth.

Freud extends this analysis in the third essay to trace the return of the Mosaic repressed into the origin of Christianity. Paul of Tarsus, a Jew, owes his notion of original sin to his Jewish psyche and a recollection of the guilt associated with the murder of Moses. The resolution of this guilt in the absolution provided by the death of Jesus is a phantasy, one only possible because Paul could not remember the true crime. Christian doctrine would have taken quite a different shape had Paul undergone psychoanalysis, it seems. Freud is also clear that, because Christianity was born among the lower classes of society, it represents a cultural regression as compared to Judaism, the product of an aristocratic mind. As a result, it is less spiritualized, less geistig; on

819 The schematic “‘Early trauma – defence – latency – outbreak of a neurotic illness – partial return of the repressed’” presented in ibid, pg. 85.
820 See ibid, pgs. 63-65.
821 Ibid, pg. 85.
822 Ibid, pg. 86.
823 Ibid, pg. 88.
Freud’s estimation, its rejection of strict monotheism in the persons of the trinity and its inability to completely eschew magic with the rituals of the mass and eucharist support this conclusion.

Freud’s last point of interest in the third essay is the “common character of the people of Israel” and its derivation from the Moses tale. In short, Freud suggests that the entirety of Jewish character – including their high opinion of themselves, their sense of superiority, their confidence in life and their trust in god – all stem from the teachings of Moses, especially his insistence that they were his chosen people. The effect of the ‘great man’ on his companions is almost absolute in the Freudian view. In addition to the notion of chosenness, these personality traits are strengthened by the instinctual demands of the religion. The proscriptions against graven images and idol worship, for example, require an abstract notion of god and bring about the triumph of the intellect over the senses, a form of renunciation. Once accomplished, it too breeds a feeling of self-satisfaction and brings about an interest in intellectual affairs.

This notion of intellectuality or spirituality – Geistigkeit – occupies an important place in Freud’s final analysis. The term first appears in the first essay as part of an evolutionary scheme. When monotheism and polytheism are contrasted, the former emerges as being more geistig, “since one of these religions is very close to primitive phases [of development], while the other has risen to the heights of sublime abstraction.” This passage recalls the evolutionary view of science presented in Totem and Taboo, which moves from omnipotence of thought to religion to science. In this case, science is distinguished by its ability to locate causes outside the self and imagine how abstract and unseen forces might be at work. Similar notions seem to function here, with Geistigkeit being linked both to abstraction (or spirituality, as compared to concreteness) and intellectuality (as compared to sensuality). It is the ability “to recognize ‘intellectual’ [geistige] forces – forces, that is, which cannot be grasped by the senses (particularly by the sight) but which none the less produce undoubted and indeed extremely powerful effects.” The

824 Ibid, pg. 105. “We should be glad to understand more of the source of this viability of the Jews and of how their characteristics are connected with their history.”

825 Ibid, pg. 112.

826 Ibid, pg. 19.

827 Ibid, pg. 114.
sublimation that this form of thought has required has also helped control “the brutality and the
tendency to violence which are apt to appear where the development of muscular strength is the
popular ideal.”828

In Freud’s analysis, then, one original renunciation, that of graven images, came to form over
time a religion of renunciations, and the Jewish character, resulting from the compounded effect
of these psychic demands, is the product of Moses and his religion.829 Despite the shifting view
of religion from illusion/delusion to bearer of historical truth, Freud’s assessment of the Moses
tale continues to emphasize intellectuality and rational thought. The figure of Moses is presented
as the embodiment of scientific authority, one who leads his people away from superstition and
 teaches them to sublimate their instinctual desires – a task that, we will recall, remains outside
the realm of possibility for the vast majority of Freud’s contemporaries, in his estimation.

3 The Other Within

It is difficult to argue against the notion that, at some level, Moses and Monotheism looks to
uncover the essence of Jewishness. Without using this as license to psychoanalyze Freud, the
author does seem to be wrestling with his Jewish identity. This struggle in itself reveals spatial
themes. This would be true of any form of identity since, as the geographers would argue, place
always plays a significant role in mediating how we understand ourselves. Previous chapters
have shown that place plays a similar role in Freud’s work too, although in more subtle ways.
But the role of place in identity takes on a whole new dimension when speaking of Judaism,
especially as Freud defines it. Question of nationalism and nationality are raised.

In his autobiographical study, Freud readily identifies with his Jewish roots – “My parents were
Jews, and I have remained a Jew myself”830 – and admits the influence that his Jewish heritage,
including its religious texts, had on his way of thinking.831 Yet we have seen that he defines this

828 Ibid, pg. 115.
829 Ibid, pg. 123.
830 ‘An Autobiographical Study (1925),’ in CW 20, pg. 7.
831 “My deep engrossment in the Bible story (almost as soon as I had learnt the art of reading) had, as I recognized
much later, an enduring effect upon the direction of my interest.” Ibid, pg. 7.
Jewishness, in the preface to *Totem & Taboo* at least, as something that transcends religious affiliation. One can be Jewish without Judaism, it seems. His constant warnings against nationalist sentiment – in the opening page of the first essay of *Moses and Monotheism*, for example – also point to his ambivalence toward the nascent Zionist movement, which sought to define Jewishness in terms of land. In Freud’s address to the Viennese members of B’Nai B’Rith in 1926, we already see hints of the characteristic definition of Jewishness that will emerge in *Moses*. Writing of the negative reaction in the academic community to his first psychoanalytic ideas, Freud describes how he yearned to find solace in “a circle of picked men of high character who would receive me in a friendly spirit in spite of my temerity.” A friend suggested that he might try the B’Nai B’Rith lodge in Vienna. Freud was particularly pleased that his new colleagues were Jews. He continues:

That you were Jews could only be agreeable to me; for I was myself a Jew, and it had always seemed to me not only unworthy but positively senseless to deny the fact. What bound me to Jewry was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without a religion though not without a respect for what we call the ‘ethical’ standards of human civilization.

Instead, his link to his fellow Jews is described as an unconscious, emotional force. Even at this early date, Freud’s words foreshadow the conclusions of the Moses work:

But plenty of other things remained over to make the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible – many obscure emotional forces, which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words… And beyond this there was a perception that it was to my Jewish nature alone that I owed two characteristics that had become indispensable to me in the difficult course of my life. Because I was a Jew I found myself free from many prejudices which restricted others in the use of their intellect; and as a Jew I was prepared to join the Opposition and to do without agreement with the ’compact majority’.

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832 ‘Address to the Society of B’Nai B’Rith (1941),’ in *CW* 20.
834 Ibid, pg. 273.
835 Ibid, pg. 273-274.
On the one hand, then, Jewishness is defined fairly narrowly in terms of belonging to a group of individuals who share the same character derived from a common prehistoric memory. On the other, however, I want to emphasize the spatial openness of the definition, one that looks at the many ‘Jewish Others’ who play a role in the Moses story. For this reason can Barbara Johnson suggests, for example, that “the story of Moses is at once the most nationalist and the most multiculturalist of all foundation narratives.” Moses is born Hebrew, raised Egyptian, marries a Midianite, all before returning to Egypt to free the Jews. The figure of Moses represents, in the final analysis, a foreign founder. Jewishness as Geistigkeit is not a Hebrew trait, but an imported Egyptian quality. Most importantly, this fact does nothing to diminish its value in Freud’s estimation.

Egyptologist Jan Assman’s work on the mosaic distinction, the emerging definition in the ancient Near East between true and false religion derived from the birth of exclusivist monotheism, considers Freud’s work in detail as perhaps the only text that has seriously considered the psychic shift that must have accompanied monotheistic thought: “the shift to monotheism, with its ethical postulates, its emphasis on the inner self, and its character as ‘patriarchal religion’, brings with it a new mentality and a new spirituality, which have decisively shaped the Western image of man.” In contrast to Freud, however, Assmann draws an important distinction between history and memory. Despite the psychoanalytic insistence that the unconscious does not distinguish between historic and remembered affect, Freud makes certain to ground his notion of Jewishness, like his primal horde tale, in an actual event. Regardless, Assmann finds in the Mosaic distinction a revolution in the history of religion. Its net result, in the Jewish case at least, is Geistigkeit – the ‘progress in intellectuality,’ as Assmann translates it. He understands Geistigkeit in much the same terms I proposed earlier, as a facility at sublimation that made possible the cultural feats of Jews and Judaism. Despite his deconstruction of the Moses story and his refutation of biblical narrative, then, this is Freud’s way of announcing his allegiance to Judaism: by hailing Jewish Geistigkeit as the cultural engine of human civilization. “If it is the

836 Moses & Multiculturalism (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), pg. 1.
destiny of humankind to advance in intellectuality,” as Freud seems to suggest in Future, Civilization, and Moses, “then the Jews are the ones who lead the way.”

Assmann agrees emphatically with Bernstein here in finding in Moses an ultimate valorization of Jewishness at a time of prejudice and hatred.\(^{839}\) Considering the prevalence of racial definitions of Judaism at the time, Gilman suggests that Freud’s definition of Jewishness as memory would have provided an alternative to popular conceptions put forth not only in anti-Semitic pamphlets but also in the medicine and pathology of the day.\(^{840}\) Slavet too notes the care with which Freud uses the term ‘race’ when referring to Jewishness, avoiding it at all costs.\(^{841}\) At the same time, Freud sees a certain level of inevitability in the hatred that Jews attract, in that Geistigkeit and anti-Semitism are grounded in the same affective sources. Anti-Semitism amounts to anti-intelectuality.

Finally, Edward Said’s short lecture Freud and the Non-Europeans\(^{842}\) provides the best avenue, I think, for understanding Freud’s Jewishness in terms of the Other. In this case, Moses, like Freud, is both an insider, as a figure of European culture, and an outsider, as a Semite, a Jew, and a non-European.\(^{843}\) As such, he bridges the gap between the two worlds. The same is true of monotheism which, while Egyptian in its origins, is historically Jewish, having survived through the voices of great Jewish men. The content is Egyptian but the form is Jewish. Importantly, this does not detract from the force of the idea in the Jewish mind, nor are Jews any lesser for having popularized an idea that was not theirs. As Freud writes, “it is honour enough for the Jewish people that it kept alive such a tradition and produced men who lent it their voice, even if the

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\(^{838}\) Assmann 2010, pg. 89.

\(^{839}\) See Bernstein 1998, pg. 21.


\(^{842}\) 2003.

\(^{843}\) Ibid, pg. 16.
stimulus had first come from the outside, from a great stranger."
Freud’s efforts to undercut Jewish originality do not work to defame his people. Instead, Said concludes, Freud’s work speaks to the polyvalence of identity by showing the variety of ways in which one can be Jewish, as demonstrated by the fact that the group was founded by an outsider who is taken to be one of their own. So, while Jewishness may be defined in terms of the character that results from a shared memory, this does not work to crystallize the group in Said’s view but to open it up.

Finally, Lydia Flem’s intellectual biography of Freud contrasts the ways in which Freud and his contemporary Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, sought to resolve the question of Jewish identity. While Herzl found his solution is emigration, Freud opted instead for a deeper immigration into to the commonalities of the Jewish psyche:

Theodor Herzl and Sigmund Freud, each in his own way, imagine an answer to this crisis of Jewish identity. And, for each of them, this answer takes a geographical form. The Zionism set forth by Herzl in The Jewish State offers an essentially spatial suggestion, the geographical concentration of the Jewish people in a single territory and an autonomous entity, whether it be called Uganda, Argentina, or Palestine. And Freud’s psychoanalytic hypothesis, too, is formulated as a spatial theory: in each one of us there is an ‘elsewhere,’ another kingdom, the unconscious. The psychic apparatus is a space, a topography.

In this regard, not only does Moses strive to answer the question of Jewish identity, but psychoanalysis as a whole pursues a similar aim.

4 Unconscious Transmission

I have not sought to address the actual validity of Freud’s theory; I am more interested in how Freud is thinking and the resources that he is drawing on than in the truth of his ideas. I do wish to pause, however, and consider one last point. Slavet, like most of Freud’s critics, finds two major difficulties with his theory of Jewishness in Moses. First, Freud insists that the murder events must actually have occurred historically, an issue that I have already discussed. Here, Freud returns to the emphasis placed on the actual events upon which the seduction theory is built. Second, Freud relies on a model of unconscious inheritance that requires the literal and

844 ‘Moses and Monotheism,’ in CW 23, pg. 31.
845 Flem 2003, pg. 78.
biological transmission of inherited memory traces through memory, apparently siding with Lamarckian rather than Darwinian theory.\textsuperscript{846} This is the debate that I wish to address briefly in this final section.

The question over Freud’s theory of inheritance extends back to his first phylogenetic writings in \textit{Totem and Taboo}. To some extent, the transmission of acquired traits allows Freud to bridge the gap between the individual and humanity, making developmental and psychic processes for the two analogous. While he seldom addresses the issue directly in \textit{Moses}, it is constantly in the background of his writing. In the third essay, he writes:

> On further reflection I must admit that I have behaved for a long time as though the inheritance of memory-traces of the experience of our ancestors, independently of direct communication and of the influence of education by the setting of an example, were established beyond question. When I spoke of the survival of a tradition among a people or of the formation of a people’s character, I had mostly in mind an inherited tradition of this kind and not one transmitted by communication. Or at least I made no distinction between the two and was not clearly aware of my audacity in neglecting to do so. My position, no doubt, is made more difficult by the present attitude of biological science, which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characters by succeeding generations. I must, however, in all modesty confess that nevertheless I cannot do without this biological evolution.\textsuperscript{847}

Freud begins with his characteristic humility, expressing the uncertainty of his ideas and admitting the challenges that current scientific thought provides. He emphasizes nonetheless the need that he has in his theories for a notion of acquired transmission. Whether this is meant to express an acknowledged limitation of his ideas or a challenge to the scientific \textit{zeitgeist} is unclear.

The two principle actors in the secondary literature on this question are Yosef Yerushalmi and Richard Bernstein.\textsuperscript{848} Yerushalmi’s expressed interest in the “various modalities of modern

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\textsuperscript{846} See Slavet 2009, pg. 26, for her evaluation of \textit{Moses} and her estimation of Freud’s Lamarckism.

\textsuperscript{847} Freud, ‘\textit{Moses and Monotheism},’ in \textit{CW} 23, pg. 99-100.

Jewish historicism brings him directly to Freud’s notion of acquired transmission, which he is forced to reject outright, like many of Freud’s contemporaries did, as running contrary to scientific knowledge. His interpretation of the Moses essays as a bronze statue – the third essay – built on feet of clay – the first two – leads him to dismiss the historical claims made in the early essays as a means to an end, the notion of Judaism expressed in essay three. The question at the heart of Moses, he suggests, is that of the dynamics of tradition. As such, the notion of acquired transmission is necessary to explain the latency period that the Moses religion faced as well as the compulsive character of religion, referenced in Future but especially in Freud’s early work on religion as obsessive action. Simple oral transmission could not account for this latency period since the religion could not survive Moses’ death. As a result, Yerushalmi refers to Freud’s theory of acquired transmission as Lamarckism, after Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, an 18th century French scientist who argued for the transmission of acquired biological traits and whose theories were eventually replaced with Darwinian evolution and Mendelian genetics.

Bernstein agrees with Yerushalmi that the dynamics of tradition are one of Freud’s primary concerns in Moses. He also emphasizes the problem that the period of latency creates for Freud’s notion of transmission: “Without the appeal to this psychoanalytic understanding of latency it would not be possible to explain the ‘remarkable fact’ of the gap in a religious tradition – how a tradition instead of becoming weaker with time, became more and more powerful in the course of centuries.” The analogy with the individual is essential if Freud is to explain the period of latency using his clinical observations, but the comparison cannot be drawn without a notion of acquired transmission. On the one hand, Bernstein does not find the latency explanation essential to the survival of Judaism after Moses’ death – could it not have survived orally within a small portion of the group, the Levites for example, much as Akhenaton’s religion survived in Moses? The gaining strength of the religion could then be explained sociologically in terms of

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850 See ibid, pg. 22.
851 Ibid, pg. 43.
852 Ibid, pg. 43.
increasing Levitic power. But on the other, Bernstein also cautions against the oft-repeated charge of Lamarckism. He writes:

I am convinced, however, that the entire question of Freud’s ‘Lamarckism’ needs to be re-opened. It has become a virtual dogma of most commentators on Freud that he was a Lamarckian. But very few have taken the trouble to clarify what precisely is meant by this claim. The general formula: “acquired characteristics are phylogenetically inherited” is itself excessively vague because this formula obscures the issue of how such “acquired characteristics” are transmitted – which biological and/or psychological mechanisms are involved, especially in human beings. Furthermore, Freud never directly refers to Lamarck in any of his published psychoanalytic writings.\(^853\)

Any charge of Lamarckism will inevitably be based on a misnomer, not only because Freud never refers to Lamarck, as Bernstein mentions, but also, we might add, because Lamarckism refers to the transmission of acquired biological characteristics, whereas the memory-traces Freud is concerned with are psychic and emphatically non-biological. As Bernstein writes, the exact status of their psychic existence and the mechanisms of their transmission may remain unknown, but this provides no reason to assume their biological nature. With this in mind and conceding that Freud may be a Lamarckian of some breed, Bernstein specifically challenges Yerushalmi’s claim that Freud’s Lamarckism is “striking and radical,”\(^854\) a charge that glosses over the many nuances in Freud’s argument. In particular, Bernstein draws a distinction between strong Lamarckism – the notion that acquired characteristics are biologically or genetically passed on to later generations – and a weak Lamarckism, which suggests that “decisive experiences in the history of a people shape the psychological character of future generations.”\(^855\) To say that Freud may be a weak Lamarckian in describing the force of certain psychic events does not make him any less Darwinian or any more of a biological/strong Lamarckian.

Freud’s concern in Moses is only in the survival and transmission of unconscious memory traces, an idea that allows him to account for the urgency with which forgotten traditions can re-assert

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\(^853\) Ibid, pg. 47.
\(^854\) Ibid, pg. 47.
\(^855\) Ibid, pg. 51.
themselves. Even if we conclude that Freud is a Lamarckian, Bernstein suggests that we must then ask if such an idea is necessary for psychoanalysis. Many of Freud’s colleagues, for example, remained close associates despite considering him a Lamarckian and held to psychoanalysis despite this. The charge is not a damning one.

It is worth briefly considering the history of these ideas in Freud’s work in a search for alternatives to the notion of acquired psychic transmission. Many of Freud’s early writings discuss the role of heredity in the pathology of disease and the general conclusion seems to be that while heredity can play a part in causing hysteria, for example, it creates at best a predisposition such that specific psychic causes are still required. Individuals from healthy families still become sick, suggesting a mechanism other than heredity.

Leaving behind the clinical scene, Freud turns to the explanation of common symbols in the interpretation of dreams. Will a house always have the same meaning in different individuals’ dreams? Yes and no, Freud writes. On the one hand, certain shared stages of psychic development – the Oedipus complex, for example – create common stereotyped symbols based on recurring occurrences or affective states, such as somatic stimuli or infantile experiences, which generate similar sorts of dream types. On the other, though, idiosyncratic life events also play an important role, such that the meaning of dreams is ultimately grounded in a particular individual’s unconscious desires. There is an important difference then between shared psychic items that emerge from inherited memories and those that rely on shared development stages or a shared psychic structure.

As Freud turns to social questions in Totem and Taboo, he finds the necessity of a group mind to explain shared memories and ideas:

No one can have failed to observe, in the first place, that I have taken as the basis of my whole position the existence of a collective mind, in which mental

856 Ibid, pg. 47.
857 See, for example, ‘Studies in Hysteria (1895),’ in CW 2.
858 See CW 4.
859 1913. See CW 13.
processes occur just as they do in the mind of an individual. In particular, I have supposed that the sense of guilt for an action has persisted for many thousands of years and has remained operative in generations which can have had no knowledge of that action. I have supposed that an emotional process, such as might have developed in generations of sons who were ill-treated by their father, has extended to new generations which were exempt from such treatment for the very reason that their father had been eliminated. It must be admitted that these are grave difficulties; and any explanation that could avoid presumptions of such a kind would seem to be preferable.\textsuperscript{860}

It is important to see that Freud recognizes and understands the difficulties associated with this explanation from the outset. Social psychology as he understands it must assume some sort of collective mind, at least insofar as ideas do not die with any given individual. Direct communication and tradition provide a starting point but they cannot fully account for the continuity of mental states or something like the latency period, Freud argues.\textsuperscript{861} These inherited ideas must still be activated, of course, as with the predisposition to hysteria, but their initial presence is also necessary.

\textit{Totem & Taboo} is particularly interesting because it not only provides a starting point to this whole discussion on acquired transmission but it also can be read as providing an alternative. Robert Paul suggests that Freud’s argument in \textit{Totem & Taboo} shows that unconscious guilt for the killing of the primal father is passed on not through some cryptic form of unconscious transmission but through dominant cultural symbols such as texts, ceremonies, and rituals.\textsuperscript{862} Here, Freud argues that the notion of a memory or idea disappearing completely from the unconscious mind is unfathomable. He explains:

\begin{quote}
The problem would seem even more difficult if we had to admit that mental impulses could be so completely suppressed as to leave no trace whatever behind them. But that is not the case. Even the most ruthless suppression must leave room for distorted surrogate impulses and for reactions resulting from them. If so, however, we may safely assume that no generation is able to conceal any of its more important mental processes from its successor. For psycho-analysis has
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{860} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 157-158.

\textsuperscript{861} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 158.

shown us that everyone possesses in his unconscious mental activity an apparatus which enables him to interpret other people's reactions, that is, to undo the distortions which other people have imposed on the expression of their feelings. An unconscious understanding such as this of all the customs, ceremonies and dogmas left behind by the original relation to the father may have made it possible for later generations to take over their heritage of emotion.\textsuperscript{863}

Initially, Freud seems to be reminding his reader that the repression of an idea is always incomplete, that repression does not signify the end of its influence. But the implications are far greater. Because repression is always incomplete, unconscious ideas are transmitted between individuals in subtle ways. Texts, ceremonies, and so on reproduce the affective states in which they were created. They act like unconscious memories or phantasies to create affect. As a result, affective states need not be passed on through Lamarckian means because they can be culturally created and reproduced. Any group that shares a cultural symbol will share certain unconscious ideas. So the guilt over the death of Moses becomes a product not of acquired transmission, but of Jewish education.

At the same time, Freud’s theory in \textit{Totem} works to de-emphasize the need for an actual historical event at the base of social institutions. Just as the neurotic’s disease is based on historical truth rather than material truth, so too is the Moses story based largely on perception. This is the seduction theory debate all over again. Freud writes:

\begin{quote}
If, however, we inquire among these neurotics to discover what were the deeds which provoked these reactions, we shall be disappointed. We find no deeds, but only impulses and emotions, set upon evil ends but held back from their achievement. What lie behind the sense of guilt of neurotics are always psychical realities and never factual ones.\textsuperscript{864}
\end{quote}

Especially in the case of small-scale societies, with which Freud is interested in \textit{Totem}, the distinction between historical and material is ambiguous from the outset. Wishes and impulses can have the force of fact. Freud’s specific referent in writing this is the analogy drawn between ‘primitives’ and ‘neurotics,’ which allows him to posit the primal murder as the founding moment of totemism. The statement is based on the force of his clinical

\textsuperscript{863} Freud 1913, \textit{CW} 13, pg. 158-159.

\textsuperscript{864} \textit{Ibid}, pg. 159.
observations of neurotics, but it applies just as well to the investigations of Moses since the Jews, as religious believers, are equally neurotic in Freud’s eyes.

This investigation into the nature of group cohesion continues in Group Psychology, \(^{865}\) where it again becomes an important topic of discussion. Here the primal horde theory is not presented as dogma but as a ‘just so’ story, one that serves a heuristic purpose above all else. \(^{866}\) The group, like the Hebrew tribe, is re-imagined as a revival of the primal horde, with a group of subservient equals organized around a powerful leader. Group cohesion stems from shared affect, in this case, a sense of shared fear of and love for the group leader. The group’s prospects are thus closely tied to the quality of their leader, in which Moses again emerges as an ideal:

> All is well if these leaders are persons who possess superior insight into the necessities of life and who have risen to the height of mastering their own instinctual wishes. But there is a danger that in order not to lose their influence they may give way to the mass more than it gives way to them, and it therefore seems necessary that they shall be independent of the mass by having means to power at their disposal. \(^{867}\)

The leader’s task, as Freud explains it in Future, requires that she use her skills at sublimation to help others with the renunciation that society requires. Moses, it seems, does the opposite, imposing a higher standard upon his people beyond their psychic means. In this light, the Jews’ reaction seems understandable.

Freud begins his chapter on religion in Totem with the following passage, whose warning goes well beyond the narrow scope of that investigation:

> There are no grounds for fearing that psycho-analysis, which first discovered that psychical acts and structures are invariably overdetermined, will be tempted to trace the origin of anything so complicated as religion to a single source. If

\(^{865}\) 1921, CW 18.

\(^{866}\) Ibid, pg. 122.

\(^{867}\) Freud, ‘Future of an Illusion (1927).’ In CW 21, pg. 8.
psychoanalysis is compelled — and is, indeed, in duty bound — to lay all the emphasis upon one particular source, that does not mean it is claiming either that that source is the only one or that it occupies first place among the numerous contributory factors. Only when we can synthesize the findings in the different fields of research will it become possible to arrive at the relative importance of the part played in the genesis of religion by the mechanism discussed in these pages. Such a task lies beyond the means as well as beyond the purposes of a psycho-analyst.\textsuperscript{868}

The fact that Freud’s focus is on psychology does not mean that he rejects contributions to his investigations from other sides. The sociologist, for example, would well have something to add to the psychoanalytic dynamics of tradition, including its understanding of the latency period. This also applies, I think, to the ideas presented in Moses about which, Freud admits, he is quite uncertain. Freud never says that the influence of Moses is solely responsible for the advance in Geistigkeit or for the overall personality of the Jewish people.\textsuperscript{869}

I admit that this brief treatment of Moses and Monotheism – considerably briefer than other parts of this project – is derived in part from a personal fascination with this particular text. Freud’s tale is so captivating and its ends so unclear that much ink has already been spilled in an attempt to understand his purpose. The last of Freud’s major works, published in the first days of the Second World War as its author fled his long-time home in Vienna for the perceived safety of London where he received a veritable hero’s welcome, the kind that had eluded him in many ways at other points, Moses has confused many with its ‘heretical’ destruction of the dearest illusions of the Jewish people at one of the greatest moments of need of their history. A focus on the spatial elements of the story, however, can highlight certain important factors often omitted. The line of inquiry presented here paints a picture that emphasizes the persistence and indestructible nature of the Jewish character, formed through shared experiences of common places, and the openness of the Jewish people to the world. Moses, Freud tells us, was not only the creator of the Jews as we know them today, but he was a foreigner and indeed one of their Egyptian oppressors. Through the figure of Moses, the Jewish people are presented as a union of opposites – Egypt and Israel, the intellectual god of Akhenaton and the violent volcano god of

\textsuperscript{868} CW 13, pg. 100.

\textsuperscript{869} Bernstein echoes this warning in 1998, pg. 85.
Kadesh – and the importance of place in shaping character is brought to the fore. With this same ‘multicultural’ definition of the Jews does Freud challenge the need for nationalism and the definition of Judaism in terms of land, for the land of the Jews is not to come but is one of memory, built on a common experience in Egypt. Freud writes a multiculturalist parable: Jewishness becomes founded on the openness to the Other.

I thus cannot read *Moses* as a refutation or critique of Judaism. I find in it instead Freud’s pledge of allegiance, which hails Jewish *Geistigkeit* as the cultural engine of human civilization. *Moses* contains an ultimate valorization of Jewishness at a time of prejudice and hatred. Following Said, I have emphasized the polyvalence of identities that Judaism contains, an argument made possible by the suggestion that Moses was an Egyptian. While Jewishness may be defined in terms of the character that results from shared memories, this works not to crystallize the Jews into a closed group but to open them up to the world.
Concluding Comments

The notion of ‘spacing Freud’ that I have invoked in my title implies an active process. ‘Spacing’ is an activity that has to be done to an author. The reasons for this, as Casey’s history makes clear, are obvious – questions of space have so long been relegated to the background of philosophical inquiry that they have difficulty surfacing on their own. Often ignored entirely, those who did address them often made space contingent upon other factors – time, for example. My interpretation of ‘spacing,’ then, requires an elaboration of hidden or underappreciated elements in well-known texts which, it becomes clear, are only well-known along the oft-tread paths of philosophy.

With this method of inquiry comes a need to understand space in broad terms and to understand the sorts of questions and issues that it brings with it. In this sense, my first chapter provides essential background information, but serves only for the purposes of orientation. I do not cling to the definitions of space set forth therein, simply because I do not find in them the most productive angle for understanding spatiality in Freud. Questions of space go well beyond those of definition and, in many cases, the very word ‘space’ is not even required to bring them to mind. Boundaries, relations, society – I present each as notions with overt spatial implications. For this reason, I speak of spatial categories as often as I do space itself. In this light, the spatial implications of Freud’s work become both complex and persistent.

My strategy is one that seeks to read Freud against Freud, a hermeneutic that looks to capitalize and build on tensions already present in the text. The objective is to appreciate the complexity that is present. I do not find in Freud’s contradictions and omissions a failing or a point of critique, but rather the workings of a mind whose thoughts and ideas were constantly evolving. This approach to a text is admittedly and decidedly postmodern; I openly reject the notion that Freud’s writings ‘mean’ one thing and that the reader has the task of recovering or discovering this lost meaning. Such an approach would inevitably relegate the Collected Works to the dustbin of history. I work toward opposite ends, disturbing notions that we can ever ‘know Freud’ in any monolithic sense.

Freud’s philosophy of language, with its link between ideas, symbols, and words, is already well appreciated. It was, one might argue, one of those innovations that first helped psychoanalysis
garner philosophical interest and helped formalize the notion of the unconscious, leading to the later developments of the French psychoanalytic schools. At the same time, the focus on spatial metaphors in chapter 2 takes a seemingly innocuous topic – for truly, how might we expect to avoid using terms so ubiquitous in our daily life? – and draws out the way Freud uses them both to map the mind and to challenge the prevailing notions of science in his day. What begins to emerge, even at this early stage, is a deeply relational interpretation of psychoanalysis, one that finds spatiality in the deployment of these relations and in the formation of the boundaries that define them. As a result, psychoanalysis become spatial in its insistence that the psyche takes its structure from the relations of agencies within the mind, be it the conscious-unconscious of the first topography or the ego-id-superego of the second. Similar relations also occur outside the individual, the product of a similarly spatial process – the erection of boundaries – that Freud points to in his descriptions of the fort-da game and the oceanic feeling. Here, a spatial reading of Freud draws attention to a point of ambivalence central to his text that defines the interactions of the individual with the outside world. The psyche emerges as an entity with porous and shifting boundaries, allowing for conflicting understandings of reality and emphasizing the importance of phantasy. Freud the scientist, who clings to a stark divide between inside and outside, gives way to another Freud who sees reality as a flexible and relative phenomenon.

Finally, this reading also allows us to appreciate the central role that individual places can play in shaping the psyche. Here, we find a Freud who leaves the door open to affective bonds with places, where locations play the same psychic role as do individuals. Places, it would seem, shape identity. This line of discussion comes to a head in my reading of the enigmatic *Moses and Monotheism*, where Jewish identity is defined both in terms of its common relation to specific places but also in its openness to the world. The implications of spacing Freud are equally important for understanding social relations, which geographers term ‘social space.’ In this light, it becomes difficult to argue that Freud’s social writings are an afterthought of his psychoanalytic theory. Instead, we find theories concerning relations of domination and power, primarily in his anthropological writings and on his treatment of group psychology.

This same process of spacing could be carried out with any author of one’s choosing. Indeed, Sloterdijk’s exhortation that scholars revisit the classics and seek to understand them in spatial terms would likely have academics proceed through a long list of thinkers in the manner that I have adopted here. My choice of Freud is thus both intentional and arbitrary. On the one hand, I
write about psychoanalysis because I have a personal interest in its theories and in seeing it return to common usage in the social sciences and humanities. I see in Freud a thinker of great complexity about whom insights will never be exhausted. There are good reasons, I think, for spacing Freud in particular if we consider the needs of the spatial turn. Discussions of space frequently lack a satisfactory concept of mind. We can state, for example, how a given place might prohibit or encourage certain actions, or how a given location might inform a group’s identity. We can make observations, take notes and suggest, based on evidence, that both sides of these equations are related – but we cannot theorize them, at least not to my satisfaction. Psychoanalysis allows us to add another dimension to our discussion about space, a psychic dimension often omitted. My attempts to recover Freud from political critique thus serve the ultimate purpose, I hope, both of demonstrating the complexity of his work but also of making him relevant and useful participant in the spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences.

This larger objective also requires that I challenge common assumptions about the incompatibility of Freud’s work and the views prevalent in the social sciences. The project thus completes a methodological task as well. Keeping in mind Callard’s astute critique of the castration of psychoanalysis in geography, I highlight the importance of approaching these questions from within psychoanalysis rather than imposing popular views from without. This move again becomes possible because of the tensions in Freud’s text. So we cannot argue that psychoanalysis promotes a view of the subject who is completely closed to socio-cultural influence, nor can we rightly suggest that Freud has nothing to say about power or gender relations. The reality is much more complex.

The same becomes true of the question of Freud’s scientism which, in truth, is much more important as a treatment of Freud’s notion of reality than it is one of science proper. It also raises some legitimate issues in Freudian scholarship concerning the extent to which the ideas in the Project persist into Freud’s later works, and the tensions surrounding his scientism. To those who might ask why, in this postmodern age where some expect all truths to fall, we should still speak of science, I propose that we need to discuss science all the more because some think that we are done with it. Too often is a stark division assumed between the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities. When cognitive science and evolutionary biology take on questions of religion or of group cohesion, cries of territorial encroachment can be heard from anthropologists, sociologists, and scholars of religion, and methodological critiques abound. As a
result of this break, naïve notions of what scientific work is and what it is trying to do all too often persist unchecked. As Ian Hacking rightly reminds us, “The standard view is of science as a discovery of facts that exist ‘in the world.’ The world comes structured into facts. This is not a scientific hypothesis. It is a metaphysical picture.” In this environment, Freud emerges as a moderate voice putting forth a ‘reflexive modernism’ that embraces the role of metaphor in science and recognizes the relative nature of reality.

The spatial turn takes as its primary axiom that ‘space matters’ and plays a neglected role in a number of different facets of human and social interactions. Applying this argument, I argue further not only that ‘space matters’ in Freud, but also that Freud should matter to space, or at least to those interested in discussing it. The vitality of a movement subsists through its ability to draw in new ideas and spheres of influence. In this respect, the pairing of Freud and space is a beneficial one for both parties.

870 Hacking 1999, pg. 60.
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