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Harvey Schwartz (ed.) *The Jewish Thought and Psychoanalysis Lectures*

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This book can be encapsulated with a syllogism:

1) Sigmund Freud was Jewish.

2) Sigmund Freud created psychoanalysis.

Therefore, psychoanalysis is Jewish.

The rest, as Rabbi Hillel said, is commentary.

Much of the commentary is provided by the volume's editor, Harvey Schwartz, who works hard to provide a common core of meaning to a collection made up of very disparate parts. Five of the six chapters are transcribed versions of scholarly lectures given at the Jewish Thought and Psychoanalysis series organized by Schwartz in Philadelphia, beginning in 2013. Two of them deal directly with the connection between Freud's work and his Judaism, a third engages in Biblical exegesis with the intent of highlighting the parallels between psychoanalytic and traditional Jewish thought, a fourth explores the alleged phenomenon of telepathic communication between psychoanalyst and their patients and (not very convincingly) relates it to the Jewish mystical tradition, while a fifth explores the attractions of psychoanalytic thought among some of the founders of the State of Israel. The sixth chapter is a transcription of a conversation between Schwartz and the Israeli writer Ruth Calderon, around a short story of Calderon's that is informed by her understanding of psychoanalysis.

As a group, Schwartz explains in a short preface, the lectures (and subsequently the chapters in the volume) were intended "to introduce to the public both the similarities and differences between the psychoanalytic and the Jewish world views," though the similarities, "the Jewishness of psychoanalysis" (p. xiii), undoubtedly occupy center stage. Schwartz adds that he conceived of the lecture series as a way to bring to light the "historically high percentage of psychoanalysts who have been Jewish," a topic he suggests has "long been latent" because of "fears we associate with speaking freely of such matters" (p. xiv). What these fears are or who experiences them is not spelled out, but Schwartz's extended introductory remarks to each lecture/chapter make it clear that he sees the perennial Jewish trepidation about anti-Semitic persecution and violence to be fundamental to its kinship with psychoanalytic thought.

Given that Schwartz is a clinician and not an academic scholar, and that the lecture series was geared towards a lay, mostly Jewish audience, it is not surprising that the questions he raises regarding the Jewishness of psychoanalysis are not answered in a coherent or systematic way. (This should not be taken as an assessment of the scholarly merit of individual chapters, which include works by some major names in Jewish studies such as Sander Gilman and Eli Zaretsky). Does it matter to

our understanding of the theory of General Relativity that Albert Einstein was Jewish? “Would we care,” Schwartz asks, “what kind of Jew Einstein felt himself to be in trying to understand his contribution to science and to the world?” (pp. 1-2). Schwartz does not say so, but he clearly believes the answer to be no (indeed, Schwartz is quite fond of rhetorical questions). The case of Freud, in his view, is different. Though an atheist, Freud was openly and proudly Jewish, and he keenly understood that his Jewishness was significant in how his work was viewed by the gentile academic mainstream. Schwartz asserts that the main reason Freud befriended Carl Jung was “to find a gentile leader who would talisman-like be able to protect [Freud’s early work] from the attacks of the anti-Semites” and that the two parted ways because “the very gentile-ness that Freud sought in Jung” precluded the latter from really “getting” what psychoanalysis was about (p. 3). And what it was, and is, about, as Schwartz would have it, and what makes it Jewish, is that both Judaism and psychoanalysis “challenge us to engage [...] with our deepest authenticity” (p. 6), that they “always consider the deepest levels of meaning” (p. 119). Would that description apply also to Jung? Schwartz does not pause to consider the question.

It bears mentioning that Schwartz and his contributors are working with a fairly narrow understanding of Judaism. From reading this book one would get the impression that the Jewish experience can be boiled down to the Torah (the Five Books of Moses), the history of Jews in central and eastern Europe culminating in the epochal catastrophe of the Holocaust, and the renewed centers of Jewish life in the United States and Israel: “Freud, Moses, or post-Holocaust modernity” (p. 6), “Vienna, Jerusalem, and Philadelphia” (p. 103). There are passing mentions of, but no real engagement with, the Talmud and the Kabbalah (except in the Calderon short story), nary a nod to non-European Jewry, no discussion of the different sects or movements within Judaism (except for a short mention of Orthodox Jews as opposed to secular Israeli psychoanalysts by Eran Rolnik in chapter 5).

Within this narrow frame of reference the mood is ecumenical and intellectually permissive. Contributors sometimes undermine the basic premise of the lecture series. Zaretsky, for example, affirms in Chapter 1 that the “affinity” between Judaism and psychoanalysis was limited to their both being “ascetic practices subject to vulgarization and distortion,” and in no way to the notion that “Freud incorporated ‘Jewish ideas’ into analysis” (p. 8). Likewise, in Chapter 2, Stephen Frosh notes interesting parallels between Biblical and Freudian notions of forgiveness, but notes that “similar parallels can be found with many other traditions, as studies of Christianity, Buddhism, and so on all testify” (p. 53). There is also a hint, though glazed over, of political controversy when the subject of Israel comes up. Rolnik uses his historical discussion of psychoanalysis in Palestine/Israel to warn that Israel’s inability to reach a “political settlement” with the Palestinians “undermine[s] its democratic and liberal character” (p. 115). This in the same volume in which Schwartz strongly implies that Hamas militants during the 2014 Gaza war behaved comparably to the Nazis, because “there were adults who handed out candy to children to teach them to celebrate the murder of other children” (p. 42).

The Nazis, indeed, are a prominent presence throughout the volume. Schwartz and several of his contributors seem to agree that the European Holocaust is

the primary frame through which both Judaism and psychoanalysis should be understood. Zaretsky concludes his extended discussion of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* by asserting the book is essentially about the coming war (Freud died just about three weeks after the German invasion of Poland in September of 1939). That book, for Zaretsky, is "a product of the persecution of the Jews on the eve of World War II" and "a seminal text for understanding the war, comparable to works by exiles such as Eric Auerbach and Hannah Arendt and survivors like Primo Levi and Paul Celan" (p. 29). In his analysis of forgiveness in the Biblical story of Miriam, Frosh uses as his paradigmatic example a 1950 congress of the German Psychoanalytic Association. Frosh praises the event for introducing "an account of psychoanalysis as one of the *victims* of Nazism" (emphasis in the original) but criticizes that "there was little that examined the German psychoanalysts' culpability" (p. 47). Sander Gilman (chapter 3) does not mention the Holocaust directly, but his overview of Freud's work on hysteria seeks to establish its connection to Freud's fear of "the virulent 'scientific' anti-Semitism of the Viennese University" (p. 67). There is no doubt that anti-Semitism and the rise of Hitler to power were crucial in Freud's life, his intellectual development, and how he went about publicizing his work. Yet one senses that Schwartz intends for his public to extrapolate from this the idea that resistance to anti-Semitism is at the core of psychoanalytic practice into the present day. This attitude, needless to say, is much more controversial.

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