

# Freud and the Frankfurt School

by Michael Minnicino

**Chorus:** *B'nai B'rith networks will have a devastating impact on the culture of the twentieth century. Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, will be a leading member of the B'nai B'rith lodge in Vienna, Austria, during the twilight of the Hapsburg Empire. Freud later will cordially thank the members of that lodge for their support during his arduous early years in psychoanalysis. Indeed, several members of the lodge will provide the initiating cadre who along with Freud will found the quackery of psychoanalysis. This Freud will be a charlatan and a cabbalist. The anti-Semitism of Freud and of B'nai B'rith as an organization of British intelligence at the expense of Jews will be perhaps most clearly documented in Freud's last major work Moses and Monotheism. His hatred for creativity and the human mind will be documented in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, in which he will assert, on the basis of no evidence whatsoever, that Leonardo was a homosexual.*

*Later, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research will be founded with the program of merging Marx with Freud. One of the pillars of the Frankfurt School will be Max Horkheimer. After the Second World War, Horkheimer will be instrumental in re-founding and reorganizing B'nai B'rith in Frankfurt. The Frankfurt School will provide the matrix for the youth culture and counterculture of the postwar decades in the same way that Mazzini, the high priest of romanticism, has used his youth cults to shape the first half of the nineteenth century.*

[Note to the reader: The author wishes to point out that in his conference presentation, transcribed below, he was acting out a caricature of a session with a Frankfurt School-trained psychoanalyst, and that the views he expresses are therefore by no means his own. The author also pointed out, during a later question-and-answer period, that there are many other forms of psychological aid which are of great therapeutic value.]

So, tell me: About how long have you been feeling depressed? . . .

Okay, we can come back to that later. If you are going to undergo psychoanalysis with me, perhaps it might be better if I started, and told you how I go about things. I'm not really a strict Freudian psychoanalyst, you know—almost nobody is a strict Freudian these days. But, that is not to say that the old boy doesn't have his influence. It's amazing, you know:

Sigmund Freud's scientific credibility was nearly destroyed, but right after World War II, his ideas became the most widely discussed topic in America. Do you know why he became so popular? Because he said that it was okay to be a pessimist; he proved that if you were unhappy, it was okay, and it wasn't your fault.

And, I can't help noticing that you, personally, don't appear very pessimistic; as a matter of fact, you look rather optimistic. Too much optimism is how a lot of people get depressed: They think they can solve the problems of the whole world; all they have to do is get people to act rationally. If you put too much faith in the power of reason, you are going to fail, and you are just going to make yourself depressed. Sigmund Freud understood that—that down deep, people aren't reasonable. That is why my old teacher Erich Fromm back in 1970 said that psychoanalysis was really "the science of human irrationality."

Anyway, this optimism stuff is 130 years out of date. Let me see if I can remember that poem:

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Now, that is pessimism: Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach," 1859. And you know, people didn't generally write poetry that pessimistic before 1859. That, by the way, is the same year that Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, the book that really got people to look at the human race realistically. Most people think that Darwin's book is devoted to evolution. Not really; as a matter of fact, Darwin didn't even use the word "evolution" in that first edition. The full title tells it all: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection; or, the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. Darwin got people to realize that life is not progress or development, but an endless struggle; you can't be optimistic, because how things turn out is not a question of morality, or a divine plan; it's a question of biology—over which you and I have very little control.

Thomas Huxley, Darwin's good friend, said it best: "I know of no study which is so utterly saddening as that of the evolution of humanity. Man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than other brutes, a blind prey to impulses . . . a victim to endless illusions, which make his mental existence a burden, and fill his life with barren toil and battle."

This stuff changed the world back in the 1860s and '70s; everybody had to explain the universe in terms of Darwin. Even Hermann Helmholtz, the mechanist physicist, told his

colleagues that the “struggle for existence” was “the highest principle of explanation, in the face of which not even the molecules . . . and the stars in heaven are safe.” And Sigmund Freud said that the two most important influences on him were Charles Darwin and Hermann Helmholtz. He even tried to study with Huxley in London and with Helmholtz in Berlin.

### **Below-the-belt identity**

You see, what Freud did, was take the blind, mechanical forces of biology described by Darwin, and show that they operated on the mind. For instance, some people get the idea that they can help the whole human race; but, Freud told everybody that this was an illusion, like religion. Freud realized that, if you get the idea that you can help all humanity survive and grow, that this idea is actually your own desire to survive and reproduce—your own individual sexual urges—channeled (what we call “sublimated”) into a more socially acceptable form.

Look at Freud’s case history of Leonardo da Vinci—maybe the greatest combination of artist and scientist of all time. You think Leonardo was moved by some higher purpose? No way—it’s sex! It’s always sex. Freud said: Sex starts even before you’re born; right from the start, you are biologically impelled to explore the physical world; that’s where you get your ideas, from groping around in the world of the senses.

For centuries people thought that this erotic groping around was a bad thing. Freud helped us understand that this was natural—that you have these erotic instinctual drives, these irrational little demons inside you, and you can’t do that much about it. For most people, this eroticism becomes totally inhibited by religion, or by some other cultural problem; or it gets repressed by childhood experiences and transformed into various kinds of neuroses.

But Freud said that the reason why Leonardo was such a genius, was that he was one of those rare individuals whose erotic drives became perfectly sublimated; according to Freud, Leonardo effectively never grew up (somewhat like Michael Jackson); and scientific and artistic investigation became Leonardo’s substitute for sexual activity. As old Sigmund said, Leonardo became a complete narcissist, “the ideal homosexual type.”

Homosexual? No, psychoanalysis understands that homosexuality is not really a perversion; it is just one of the healthy ways of dealing with the irrational drives within us all. Anyway, Freud said that all human beings are naturally bisexual.

I see that you are somewhat afraid of this subject; perhaps you have never dealt with your own homosexual urges. Don’t worry: We can deal with that problem later on in your therapy.

You have got to be realistic. It is absurd to worry about universal truths; the only universals are these mechanical forces in your brain and in your pants. And, each person



*Long before the Frankfurt School opened its doors, the Spanish painter Francisco Goya accurately depicted the destruction of human creativity resulting from abandoning reason and natural law. Goya titled the picture “The sleep of reason produces monsters,” and provided this caption: “Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters: United with her [i.e., with reason], she is the mother of arts and the source of their wonders.”*

comes up with his or her own, more or less successful way of reconciling these forces with the experiences that you receive in the course of growing up. Why, the whole history of social science—from Freud and almost every psychologist, plus almost all of sociology, and almost all of anthropology—is one great effort to prove that you can’t judge a truth in terms of all mankind; truth is all relative to the individual. And what is more, you have to accept that your mind is not truly free: Biology means that you can never completely control those erotic little demons inside you. So, don’t set your sights unrealistically high: The only thing you can hope to discover—with the help of professionals like me—is how to be well-adjusted.

### **Origins of the Frankfurt School**

Well, of course, I can’t prove it!

Psychoanalysis cannot clinically prove that the unconscious, the id, dream analysis, the Oedipus complex, or any important Freudian concept really exists. Freud said that psychoanalysis is like a religion: You can’t prove it, but you accept it on faith. As a matter of fact, Carl Jung once wrote Freud a letter, suggesting that psychoanalysis start acting as a formal religion; Freud thought that was a bit too premature.

Actually, I think it was this religious aspect which attracted the Frankfurt School to Freud in the 1930s. I probably

should tell you that, like many psychoanalysts today, I came to Freud by way of the Frankfurt School—you know: Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno.

A Hungarian fellow named Georg Lukacs founded the Frankfurt School because he was trying to determine how to cause massive social changes. Lukacs was specifically interested in developing Bolshevism, but the technique works for any ideology. Lukacs said that you had to make people completely pessimistic; you had to make them believe that they lived in “a world abandoned by God,” as he put it. At the same time, the new social movement that you were trying to create had to have certain key similarities to a religion—but, of course, without a concept of a Supreme Being. In fact, Lukacs seriously investigated the Baal Shem cult, a Jewish cabbalistic sect, as well as several medieval Christian heresies, in order to find what he called the “messianic” ideas which could be incorporated into Bolshevik organizing.

Freudian theory fit this bill precisely; it was just like going back to the Gnostic cults of the Middle Ages: The demons were back, the evil was being generated in your own mind, and you needed a new priesthood to save you. The Frankfurt School’s extension of Freud was the major reason why psychoanalysis became so influential in American life after World War II. The Frankfurt School helped us all to discover how bad our mental health really was—how we had to liberate ourselves from the authoritarian constraints that made us neurotic; that we must resist the imposition of universal values, and embrace a healthy personal hedonism.

## Fixing up Freud

Now, as your psychoanalyst, I hate to admit it, but, even though he had a great model for the individual mind, Freud’s social psychology was a disaster. But, the Frankfurt School solved that. Freud had said that the individual human identity was based on the interaction of biology—that is, the instinctual drives embedded in man’s hereditary structure—with the experiences of growing to maturity within the structure of the family. Freud thought all people were more or less the same, because the instinctual drives were the same, and the family structures were more or less the same. The Frankfurt School corrected this by emphasizing that each culture, each people, each race, have important differences in their psychologies, because their differing family structures transmit the ideas of authority, value, morality, in different ways.

So, if you want to liberate your *eros* and become healthy, the most important thing is to find what separates one culture, one people, one race, from the other ones. The differences don’t have to be in the genes—I mean, today, very few people will admit publicly that black people are biologically different from white people. But, the Frankfurt School emphasized what Freud only hinted at: Cultural differences transmitted through the family can be as rigid and as powerful as biological differences, and thus they proved that black people are fundamentally different from white people be-

cause their cultures are different.

And a lot of people in this country supported and sponsored the Frankfurt School, because they were able to use Freud’s psychoanalytic theory to demonstrate scientifically that all values must be relative. And this is why, today, everybody—everybody except for a few extremists and religious fanatics—understands that universal values are really authoritarian, and that the family structure has to be changed—maybe even destroyed—to stop imposing these obsolete values on the young.

## The ‘Jewish identity’ project

Anyway, in the modern world, in the post-industrial society, we can no longer afford this authoritarian sense of power over nature which the patriarchal family transmits; today, the most important aspect of mental health is giving people an identity that will make them happy and erotically satisfied. This was the great original contribution of the Frankfurt School after World War II, when they worked with several Jewish organizations to create a new identity for American Jews. The Frankfurt School said that henceforth, Jewish identity would be defined, not by religious belief, not by the ideas through which Jews contributed to the rest of humanity, but by the Holocaust: Jews would be trained to see themselves primarily as victims of genocide. This has worked fantastically; even today, Jews who think that the B’nai B’rith are a bunch of crooks still give money to that organization because they have been trained to believe that they are profoundly different from everybody else, and that anti-Semites are ready to start a new Holocaust at any moment.

The Jewish identity project worked so well that we Frankfurt School Freudians asked to do the same thing for black people. In the 1960s, many black people were successfully re-trained to believe that what really defined their identity was how their African ancestors had been enslaved by white people. We did the same thing for women: The feminist movement used Frankfurt School theory and Freud to help millions of women realize that what really defined their identity was male chauvinism.

You see how successful we have been? Today, we give everybody the identity they need. We even teach it in the schools—it’s called multiculturalism. Everybody gets an identity based on who raped whom: The Latin Americans understand that the most important thing is to get back at the Spanish colonialists; the Native Americans understand that the most important thing is to get back at the whites—everyone separated from everyone else. Fear? hatred? revenge? Sure! We give them that—but we also give them an identity, and they are happy.

But, we have spent too much time talking about what I think. We should be talking about what *you* think. But, I see that our time is about up. I think that I can fit you in next week; shall we say Tuesday? A short session is usually \$75; you can pay as you leave.