Freud in Cambridge*

On 22 August 1922, Ernest Jones, the most energetic advocate of psychoanalysis in England, wrote to Sigmund Freud from his country cottage on the borders of Sussex and Hampshire:

I have just received today a letter from a Mr. Sprott telling me, to my surprise, that he arranged with you last July to lecture at Cambridge next autumn and asking me if I could arrange some public lectures for you to give in London. It would be wonderful to know that you were lecturing in England, but I must first inquire of you about the authenticity of the man, for perhaps he is nothing but a lecture agent. I know nothing about him.¹

Jones always feared that the 66-year-old Freud might make a fool of himself by acting on the trait of gullibility to which Jones also ascribed his scientific genius – Freud actually believed people! And by 1922 Freud was famous throughout Europe and America, a scientific media star on a par with Einstein and Marie Curie – and not only in Europe: psychoanalysis was soon to become a required part of the training for the police officers of Calcutta. More than anything, though, Jones was suspicious of other psychoanalytic enthusiasts taking control of the development of the young science out of his own hands. So he conjured up the scenario of his revered teacher in the hands of a lecture agent.

He need not have feared, as Freud's rapid reply, written in his eccentrically interesting English from the Pension Moritz in Berchtesgaden, indicated:

Mr. Sprott is a young man of excellent manners and good connections, a favourite of Lytton Strachey and friend of Maynard Keynes, a Cambridge student of psychology, who came to invite me for a course of lectures to be given at Eastertime (not autumn, as in your letter). I accepted for the case that I should feel so tired at Easter, that I had to give up work, and yet fresh enough for some other enterprise, which, as you see, is only a polite way of declining.²

^{*}The following is the very lightly modified text of an Inaugural Lecture delivered in Cambridge on 9 May 2002.

One might say that Freud indicated his excellent manners and good connections by bandying about the reassuring names of Lytton Strachev and Maynard Keynes - not 'John Maynard Keynes', nor 'Keynes', but 'Maynard Keynes', impeccable in his appreciation of the correct appellation for a man of his class and culture.

Freud never visited Cambridge. He had visited his relatives in Manchester in 1875 at the age of 19, and then, again with his half-brother, in 1908 he had spent a fortnight's holiday in Blackpool, Southport, Manchester and London.³ The next time he arrived in England it was in the spring of 1938, following the Anschluss - 'to die in freedom', as he put it. His daughter Anna did visit the University of Oxford on his behalf, when the International Psychoanalytic Association Congress was held there in 1929. By then, Freud was too ill to travel and instead followed her visit with elderly eagerness, filling in the gaps out of his great love of England; as he wrote to his old friend Lou Andreas-Salomé:

As to the accommodation, she telegraphed, typically enough: 'More tradition than comfort'. I expect you know that the English, having created the concept of comfort, then refused to have anything more to do with it.4

Nineteen twenty-two was the year of Cambridge in Freud's consulting room. James Strachey, King's graduate and Apostle, Bloomsbury, literary dilettante, had started analysis with Freud in October 1920 and finished at the end of June 1922; Alix Strachey, graduate of Newnham in modern languages, wife of James, had started at the same time and left in 1921. John Rickman, Quaker graduate of King's, doctor and enthusiast, fresh from a stint as a psychiatrist at Fulbourn Hospital, had begun analysis in April 1920 and completed the end of June 1922. Joan Riviere, grande dame and intellectual, niece of Arthur Verrall, Apostle and first Edward VII Professor of English Literature in the University, had moved from Jones's couch to Freud's in early 1922, returning to London in December. Arthur Tansley, University Lecturer in Botany, author of a psychoanalytic bestseller of 1920 entitled The New Psychology and its Relation to Life, began analysis with Freud on 31 March 1922, completing his first stint in June and resigning his Cambridge lectureship in 1923 to come back for a more seriously sustained second in late 1923 up to the summer of 1924. (Incidentally, it was in following up the psychoanalytic career of Tansley - the founder of British ecology, who introduced the concept of the ecosystem and was the first Chairman of the Nature Conservancy which he helped found after the Second World War – that my research into the early years of psychoanalysis

in Cambridge began in earnest, and I owe it to Laura Cameron, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on Tansley, for this stimulus and for much enjoyable and productive collaborative research since.) Another Cambridge graduate, Roger Money-Kyrle, was set to start analysis with Freud in the autumn of 1922; in the event, he remained in Vienna till June 1924 if not later. In 1979 he described the milieu into which he moved:

In Vienna, we met several people from Oxford and Cambridge, nearly all subsequently famous, who were more or less secretly in analysis. And I did not know till many years after that a half-uncle of my wife, a Fellow and Lecturer of Trinity, Cambridge, had spent one long summer vacation travelling Europe in analysis with James Glover, who was himself simultaneously in analysis with Abraham. Shades of the Peripatetic School of Athens in the third century B.C.! Incidentally, of course, I never mentioned psychoanalysis to [my doctoral supervisor Moritz] Schlick till I left, and then discovered that he himself was extremely interested in, but never spoke of it.5

So, from March to June, Riviere, Strachey, Rickman and Tansley were all in analysis with Freud, thus making up forty per cent of his patient load.⁶ What were they all doing in Vienna? Each had their own symptoms, their malaise in life, of course, but they were not ordinary patients. They and others like them were the means by which psychoanalysis became disseminated as a theory, as a vision of the world, as cocktail party chat, as a practice - and perhaps even as a form of knowledge suitable for inclusion in the teaching and research of an ancient university like Cambridge. So, by the summer of 1922, after listening for four hours a day, six days a week, for several months to a gaggle of elite Cambridge graduates, Freud must have known a lot about Tripos nerves, High Table backstabbing, and the sex lives of the English; he clearly knew what it meant to be the favourite of Lytton Strachey and an intimate of Maynard Keynes – it meant being part of refined homosexual Cambridge culture. Freud was certainly an expert on Cambridge. What of Cambridge - what did it make of Freud?

The currents of interest in psychoanalysis in Britain were several, ranging from sexology and medical psychology, to a literary strand, including not only Bloomsbury but also the efflorescence of the psychological novel during the First World War, to progressive education and to a more general philosophical interest. Many of these came together in Cambridge, particularly with the First World War: Bertrand Russell's students in logic, such as Susan Isaacs, Dorothy Wrinch and Karin Stephen; the enormous impetus given to psychoanalysis in Britain on account of the experience of

'shell-shock' during the war, including the influential adaptation of Freud's concept of repression, trauma and the cathartic cure by W. H. R. Rivers, physiologist, anthropologist and psychologist, Director of Studies in Natural Sciences at St John's College, Cambridge after the war. In this lecture I want to focus on a specific group for whom psychoanalysis became of fundamental importance in the period immediately after the First World War up until the end of 1925. In early 1925, this group – James Strachey, John Rickman, Arthur Tansley, Harold Jeffreys, Lionel Penrose and Frank Ramsey - took to meeting to present papers to one another. Half of them were Apostles - members of the exclusive secret discussion society - with a distinctly Bloomsbury set of connections and lifestyle – including the now famous liberal attitudes to sex in both word and action which was such a contrast to conventional Cambridge, in which adultery might lose you your post (this was true into the 1950s: a senior colleague recently told me he owed his job to the forced departure of a divorcing don). This group was not principally medical or even biological in orientation, nor literary, but natural scientific. And the distinctive and principal condition of belonging to this informal Society was entirely novel: having been analysed oneself. What is striking is that these mainly young practical experts on psychoanalysis had none of the compunction concerning Freud's emphasis on sexuality that was characteristic of the reception of psychoanalysis elsewhere in England.

Alongside this distinctive Freudian group was another Cambridge novelty: the Malting House School, founded in September 1924 in the hall opposite the Granta pub near present-day Darwin College. The school was designed by the speculator, inventor and psychoanalytic enthusiast Geoffrey Pyke for the children of dons, aged 2½ to 7, and its first Director was Susan Isaacs, psychologist and logician, already a full member of the British Psycho-Analytic Society. The children of progressive-minded dons such as G. E. Moore's became her charges, and others such as J. B. S. Haldane, Ernest Rutherford and Percy Nunn sat on its Board. This school was probably unique in the world in its psychoanalytic inspirationalongside the Children's Home founded in May 1921 by the Moscow Institute of Psychoneurology, which had Stalin's son as one of its charges, and was run by Vera Schmidt with advice from Sabina Spielrein (Piaget's analyst) and Alexander Luria, under the direct patronage of Leon Trotsky, who fancied himself a Freudian. Isaacs ran the Cambridge school from 1924 till 1927, and the observations she made of the children formed the basis of a series of books she published over the next twenty years. The guiding thread of the school's progressive non-disciplinarian approach was to allow the children to discover the natural world like little scientists, through the

medium of fantasy and play. Such a vision was pretty close, as we will see, to the dominant ethos of some Cambridge scientists of the time.

It was, then, in this experimental psychoanalytic atmosphere that the Cambridge Psychoanalytic Group formed and met. The psychoanalytic careers of each member of the group could fill a lecture. Today, I will single out two for discussion, partly on the grounds that they left behind materials that help us understand how young scientific intellectuals of the era made use of psychoanalysis. The two men are Lionel Penrose and Frank Ramsey. Having surveyed the part that psychoanalysis played in their lives, I will turn to consider what Maynard Keynes made of Freud. Out of this will emerge a picture of the place of psychoanalysis in everyday Cambridge life.

Born in 1898, Lionel Penrose was the eldest of four sons of a comfortable Quaker family. A conscientious objector in the First World War, he joined an Ambulance Unit in France in 1916. In an unpublished memoir written in the 1960s, he wrote:

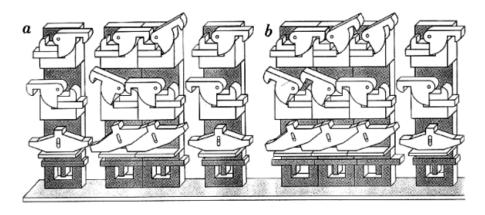
I think that my interest in psychiatry began very suddenly when, during the First World War, one evening I heard a short lecture on Freud's theory of dreams, given by a lecturer at Manchester University. The occasion was an informal one when there was a break in the routine on the Ambulance Train in Northern France on which I was then working. I was astonished to hear that some fairly reasonable explanation could be given of the apparently disordered sequence of ideas in the nocturnal theatre with an audience of one. And I decided then, if possible, to give up mathematics and to study something more exciting. When the war ended and I went to Cambridge, I tried to study in this new field but it had not penetrated into the University curriculum. The nearest possibility was psychology and this was linked to philosophy and mathematical logic in the cumbersome academic configuration known as the Moral Sciences Tripos.⁷

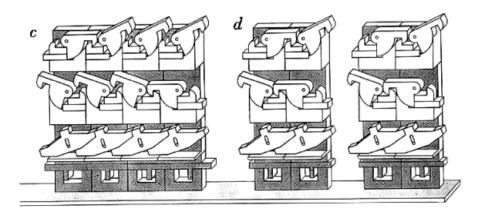
Deprived of the possibility of taking Part I or Part II in the nonexistent Psychoanalytic Tripos, Penrose acquired expertise and enthusiasm for logic and psychology, while giving talks to undergraduate societies, and to the Apostles, on Freud's dream theory. Later in 1919, he ran into his fellow Quaker John Rickman on King's Parade, who was already embarked on his course to become a psychoanalyst while working at Fulbourn; Rickman imparted his enthusiasm to Penrose:

So it came about that, after learning nothing at Cambridge except a little mathematical logic of the kind expounded by Russell & Whitehead's Principia Mathematica, I set off ... to Vienna with the vague idea of following in Rickman's footsteps.

Penrose still had a tie to Cambridge; officially, he was working on a higher degree in the psychology of mathematics with Frederic Bartlett. He was also, as ever, tinkering with electrical circuits, mechanical models of neurones representing logical and mathematical operations. He worked in Karl Bühler's laboratory in Vienna, but spent most of his time with the psychoanalysts, embarking on his own analysis with Siegfried Bernfeld. Naturally, he fell in with the other Cambridge folk – with Tansley and with Strachev, also an Apostle. On his return, following Tansley's advice, he decided to train as a doctor, beginning in the summer of 1925. He also began to take on patients at the newly opened Institute of Psycho-Analysis as a Clinical Assistant, supervised by Jones - who told him he had too many interests to be a psychoanalyst. Penrose agreed, especially after he had married Margaret Leathes in 1928, and he took up a position as a psychiatrist in Cardiff, soon becoming a father - his sons Oliver, Roger and Jonathan were born in quick succession in 1929, 1931 and 1933. In 1931, he found a new métier: analysing the genetics of mental deficiency at a hospital near Colchester, on which his reputation as the founder of human genetics was based. Emigrating to Canada for the war, he returned to take up the Galton Chair at UCL, be elected FRS in 1953 and establish one of the most important laboratories for human genetics till his retirement in 1965. In Daniel Kevles's history of eugenics, In the Name of Eugenics, Penrose is the principal scientific hero of the victory over the eugenics of the early twentieth century, with his painstaking amassing of hereditary data and rigorous statistical analyses severely qualifying arguments for the transmissability of mental illness.

Penrose, gloriously and in the end triumphantly, did have too many interests: if there is one guiding thread for them, I would call it 'pleasure in puzzles'. If he had continued with his electrical circuit building in logic, he would have produced the first computer to model the operations of the mind – he would have been Alan Turing. He was always interested in the formal properties of biological organisms, so when Watson and Crick published their double helix model of DNA, Penrose quickly produced an alternative model, built out of blocks of wood he was always fiddling with, showing how the basic building blocks of an organism could self-replicate.

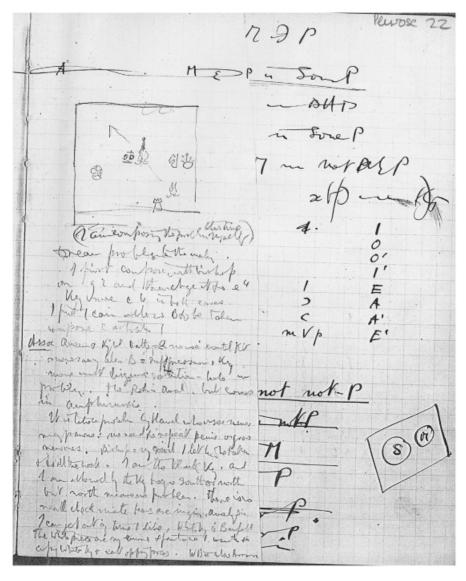




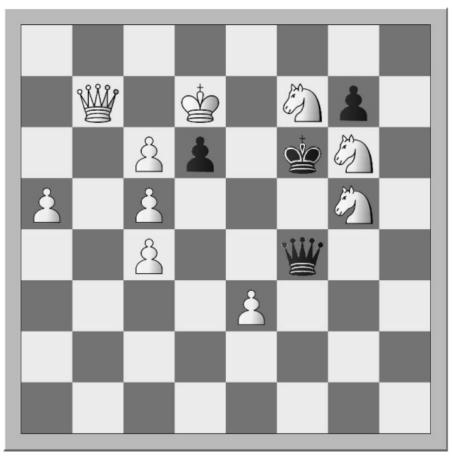
The pleasure in puzzles had begun early. As a boy, in his strict Quaker household, one of the few games allowed was chess; Lionel became an internationally known chess problematist before he entered his teens. Chess problems, electrical circuits, family lineages statistically mapped out, selfreplicating mechanical automata, the Penrose endless stair, soon taken up by M. C. Escher – all these were the variants on his penchant for puzzles. If you go on the internet looking for traces of his work, you will find him alongside John von Neumann as the builder of the first realised example of mechanical self-replication: the creator of alternatives to biological replication, and thus a founder of the hardware solution to the problem of artificial intelligence.

Soon after beginning his analysis in 1923, Penrose asked Bernfeld what could be the cause of his strong early interest in the game of chess, to which

Bernfeld had replied that 'he probably projected his infantile family conflicts onto the chessboard'.8 The analytic material is scattered throughout his lab and working notebooks - chess problems, free associations, circuit diagrams, logical proofs.



Penrose's principal response to Bernfeld's suggestion came in a dream 'whose manifest content is the attitude of the dreamer towards the position of certain pieces upon a chessboard'.9



I see before me a certain chess position. It is a problem. White is to checkmate Black in two moves. The location of the pieces is not however quite settled, and I feel as though there may be a misprint in the case of the Black Queen. The White Queen ought to be 'pinning' her, I think, in order that the White Pieces should succeed. As it is, too many moves of Black are unprovided for. But in two cases the nature of the mating move is actually known to me. If the Black Pawn (on the square d6) takes the White Pawn (on c5) I know that the White Queen can then checkmate by moving down to the square b2. If the same Black Pawn simply chooses to move on to d5, the White Queen will mate somewhere else.

Penrose interpreted his dream as representing a particular era of the family network of conflicts. On one side were the Black King (his father), the Black Queen (a governess who had taught him to read, a Miss Binny - hence 'Mis-Print' and 'pinning') and himself (a pawn); on the other side were the White King (his grandfather, Lord Peckover), the White Queen (his mother) and a series of pawns (representing his brothers) and knights (also representing himself and his brothers): 'the Black forces are composed of the unpunctual people [much criticised by the grandfather]: agreeing with the rule that White moves first'. The grandfather held power over the Black King through his wealth: 'in the action of the problem as in real life, the White Queen was to come from the White King and give "cheque" to the Black King'. 10

The most forcefully dynamic aspect of the dream's latent meaning, however, attached to the thought that 'in two cases the nature of the mating move is actually known to me'. This referred to his knowledge of the sexual relations between his father and mother, reaction against which was, in Penrose's eyes, the most powerful source of the dream. The 'mating position' in the dream depended upon the actions of the Black Pawn, himself. It was thus, he concluded, a dream of omnipotence, a dream that he could affect the 'mating' of the King and Queen, whereas in reality he had no such power. As he remarked in his notes, his youngest brother Bernard (born in 1903) was not yet born at the time of the events associated with the formation of the dream (though Roland, born 1900, was in the world). He was clearly dating the impulse to master his family constellation through chess as arising from the era when his youngest brother was conceived, when he was aged 5. So the notebook page following the outline of the dream chess problem and his associations presents a chronology of the key events in his life, from birth to 1922.

When Penrose returned to Cambridge to begin his medical training, he joined the psychoanalytic group and gave a paper based on his own analysis to its first meeting, in February 1925 – the other paper given that day was by Harold Jeffreys the geophysicist, on the baffling topic of 'Psychoanalysis and the Death Duties'. By 1928 his other interests were taking him away from psychoanalysis, though he continued to publish regularly in that area until the mid 1930s. He never gave up his attachment to psychoanalysis, though he grew increasingly critical of its distance from his kind of science. In 1948 he declared:

Freud's greatest contribution to psychological medicine has practically nothing to do with theories of mental energy, mental philosophy and metapsychology. It was a revolution in thought comparable in its effects to the discoveries of Darwin or Copernicus ... it was the realization (1) that the phenomena of hypnosis, suggestion and so on were fundamentally sexual, in a word, that the patient obeys because he is in love with the doctor, and (2) that this neurotic love is itself a morbid symptom, which can be subjected to psychological analysis in terms of conditioned associations and ultimately resolved by a process of re-education. The analysis of transference is the key to Freud's contribution to therapeutics ... It is perhaps unfortunate that the discipline was named psycho-analysis and not transference analysis. Much misunderstanding would thereby have been avoided. 11

In the 1930s Penrose had given a considerable sum of money to establish a Clinical Essay Prize at the Society - though the Society has itself forgotten this fact, while the prize still survives. He remained a member of the British Psycho-Analytic Society to his death in 1972. Some sense of the enduring effect of psychoanalysis in his life can be gained from the following story. In 1968, his old friend Frances Partridge recorded in her diary a visit to Vienna with Lionel to hear him lecture:

After his lecture we went to look in vain for Freud's house in the Berggasse. Later, an enormous walk in the dark to places connected with Lionel's early life in Vienna, all round the old town through streets of portentously tall houses, under bridges, up steps. Lionel was being psychoanalysed at that time for bed-wetting, so Margaret told me later. Having heard this I naturally saw the course on which he led us in symbolical terms. Down a deep sunken street called Tief Graben (Deep Trench) under a bridge and towards the Hohe Markt. 'I'm always dreaming about Vienna,' he said as we walked along, 'and in my dream there's always somewhere I'm trying to get to. Now I realize that it's here.' When we found a large fountain in full operation in the middle of the marketplace, it seemed too good to be true.¹²

I now turn to another of the group who met in 1925 to discuss psychoanalysis – Frank Ramsey. In his tragically short life – he was born in 1903 and died just short of his 27th birthday in 1930 - Ramsey made major contributions to logic, to mathematics, to philosophy and to economics. While reading mathematics as an undergraduate at Trinity, he had a significant hand in translating Wittgenstein's Tractatus into English and he published an effectively demolishing review of Keynes's newly published Treatise on Probability. In the same year, 1921, on an undergraduate summer holiday in Austria, he wrote home to his mother: 'We talked long to an interesting Austrian who spoke English excellently and his sister; they knew Shakespeare Bernard Shaw etc well but had never heard of Freud who lives in Vienna.' Clearly, he, along with his good friends Sprott, Penrose (to whom he had been introduced by Richard Braithwaite in February 1921), Keynes and the other Apostles, thought that Austria was principally renowned for being the home of Freud - not a view many Austrians would have taken.

By 1923, Ramsey had fallen in love - the object of his affections was Margaret Pyke, wife of Geoffrey Pyke. The Pykes took Ramsey into their family, taking him on holiday, asking him to be the godfather of their young son. Ramsey made overtures to Margaret in his inimitably honest and straightforward, absurdly gauche style:

One afternoon I went out alone with her on Lake Orta and became filled with desire and we came back and lay on two beds side by side she reading, I pretending to, but with an awful conflict in my mind. After about an hour I said (she was wearing her horn spectacles and looking superlatively beautiful in the Burne Jones style) 'Margaret will you fuck with me?' 14

Margaret wanted time to consider his proposition - 'Do you think once would make any difference?', she asked – and thus began an uncomfortable dance between them which, along with his brooding over masturbation, made Ramsey exceedingly unhappy – though this did not prevent him from achieving a remarkable First in his Finals in 1923. Continuing in Cambridge with hopes of gaining a Fellowship and doing some teaching for Girton and King's, he had been sporadically taking advice from psychoanalyst Edward Glover in London, who was alternately Margaret's and Geoffrey Pyke's psychoanalyst. In December 1923, Ramsey wrote in his diary:

I went to see Glover about being analysed myself (and decided not to; he said incidentally M[argaret] was subject to a certain amount of strain because of her analysis and I must realise there were times when even good friendships seemed insignificant); also he said I did things no one else would dream of[,] having no sense of situation, and he thought not only when in love but with my friends. 15

Further insight into his state of mind can be gained from a paper he delivered to the Apostles in January 1924, which was an imaginary conversation with John Stuart Mill. Drawn to the topic when Dick Pyke, Geoffrey's younger brother, observed that Mill never once mentioned his mother in his autobiography, 16 he found in Mill a kindred soul: a precociously gifted philosopher who entered a deep depression at exactly Ramsey's age. Playing the amateur psychoanalyst in his account of Mill's early life, Ramsey was asking whether Freud's discoveries represent a decisive advance - and thus a satisfactory account of and answer to mental depression - when compared with Mill's own associationist psychology ruled by the pleasure–pain principle.¹⁷

Three weeks later he wrote to Wittgenstein:

if I live in Vienna I can learn German, and come and see you often (unless you object) and discuss my work with you, which would be most helpful. Also I have been very depressed and done little work, and have symptoms so closely resembling some of those described by Freud that I shall probably try to be psychoanalysed, for which Vienna would be very convenient, and which would make me stay there the whole six months. But I'm afraid you won't agree with this. Keynes still means to write to you; it really is a disease – his procrastination; but he doesn't (unlike me) take such disabilities so seriously as to go to Freud!¹⁸

This was the plan he put into effect – Ramsey set off for Vienna once the Lent Term was over and began analysis with Theodor Reik in mid March. Living with Lionel Penrose, he reported back to his mother, writing on the train:

Deonest Mother Sunday 3 am writing This going down to Puckberg by & 6.40 am traix. well , I like my unafer though he is a sew (but ill the good ones are; But long analyed is different from what 9 x 8 (20 cled in soils at any mais set first much more exhausting and unpleasant. But yesterday if did , 1-9 cen so bad e) have settled in with

Everything is going very well. I like my analyst though he is a Jew (but all the good ones are). But being analysed is different from what I expected in being at any rate at first much more exhausting and unpleasant. But yesterday it didn't seem so bad.

I have settled in with Lionel. He is quite industrious and out a good deal and so I ought to be able to work without him stopping me. He has found an absorbing vocation; he is being analysed, goes to lectures, classes in psychiatry (lunacy), and experiments in a lab. But he won't ever do for an analyst as he has no critical capacity or common sense. 19

A week later, he had somewhat sharper things to say about Lionel: 'I have the idea of not going on living with Lionel, as he is impossible to talk to. Psychoanalysis has destroyed his brain altogether.'20

During his analysis, he would make the odd request of his mother concerning the identity of early figures from his childhood, or the book from his childhood, Peter Pan, that his analyst wanted to physically handle. And he would report on the importance of psychoanalysis, aware that he might be criticised for devoting himself to psychoanalysis rather than mathematics:

Psycho-analysis is very important even I think to one's work. You see obscure unconscious things may decide your attitude about certain things, especially personal factors in a controversial subject. Lots of work on the Foundation of Mathematics is emotionally determined by such things as

- (1) *love* of mathematics and a desire to save it from those (villainous and silly) philosophers
- (2) whether your interest in mathematics is like that in a game, a science, or
- (3) General Bolshevism towards authority
- (4) The opposite, timidity
- (5) Laziness or the desire to get rid of difficulties by not mentioning them. If you can see these in other people you must be careful and take stock of yourself.²¹

Always modest, never sure if he was working quite the right way, his speed and range are clear in this July survey of his intellectual interests:

I haven't been working very hard but I've solved some things I thought almost impossible. I just can't keep on thinking about it more than a few hours a day it is so immensely difficult. I read a good deal of psychoanalytic literature, but am thinking of going back to relativity. I'm becoming rather an enthusiast for psychoanalysis. I've been reading a book by Reik on the psychology of religion which is most awfully good. That is his special subject but he isn't a good writer, but rather heavy. We really live in a great time for thinking, with Einstein Freud and Wittgenstein all alive (and all in Germany or Austria, those foes of civilization!).²²

And the tone of the next sentence is equally inimitably Ramsey:

My trousers are doing rather badly; the ones of my old summer suit developed a great hole in the seat ...

Ramsey followed Reik to his summer resorts, taking off only one week until the beginning of October; over the summer he was joined by another of Reik's patients, Lewis Namier from Balliol, whose culture and erudition he appreciated: 'sub-editor for central Europe of Keynes' Manchester Guardian Supplements ... writing an immense book called "The Imperial Problem in the American Revolution". He is a very clever Jew, amusing and interesting, knowing all Slav languages besides the ordinary ones like French German Italian and perhaps Spanish.'23 Ramsey returned at the last minute to take up his Fellowship at King's in the Michaelmas term. Within a few weeks, he had summoned up the courage to have tea with Lettice Baker, engaged in psychological research. Within two weeks they had become lovers, as Lettice, far more experienced and worldly than Frank, recounted in a memoir, written with true Bloomsbury frankness to which she added her inimitable down-to-earth style:

The following Thursday I again went to dine [in King's] ... We decided to go to bed together that evening. I saw no particular reason to put it off longer & Frank was very impatient to do so. He was far too nervous to copulate in King's so we went round to my rooms in Trinity St. With little or no preliminaries we undressed, I shyly in the little bedroom & he in the sitting room. I slipped into bed but he came in quite naked & put on a French letter – completely unabashed. I was surprised at his absolute lack of physical shyness & ceased to be shy myself. After this I think we were never at all shy about anything to do with our bodies, though for some months I was occasionally shy or self conscious in conversation.²⁴

Cambridge being Cambridge, the bush telegraph was soon working and James Strachey was able to write to his wife on 22 December 1924:

Incidentally, he [Sprott] said that Ramsey has been cured. He's abandoned Mrs. P[yke]; has taken on a new lady with whom (though, before, the idea had filled him with repulsion) he proceeds to the furthest limits ... Perhaps we'd better all go on to Reik.25

And the same day Frank wrote to Lettice:

I wrote a long letter to my psychoanalyst saying how happy I was and how grateful I felt to him. Because he did make it possible though you may not see how. Darling it is very wonderful.²⁶

The affair between Ramsey and Lettice grew in intensity, with Ramsey petrified of discovery of their fornication - it is not clear whether he was more afraid of discovery by his mother or by King's College. Certainly it was realistic to be afraid: Keynes had earlier told Ramsey that there might be opposition to his being elected a Fellow of King's on account of his relationship with Margaret Pyke; in 1929 William Empson, Research Fellow at Magdalene College, the college where Ramsey's father was President, was expelled from the college, with his name expunged from all college records, when condoms were discovered beside his bed; as a result he spent the next ten years in China. In the end, it was Ramsey's mother who discovered the affair and this may have hastened their engagement. They were married in August 1925 - as a wedding present, Lionel Penrose offered them a machine he had invented for solving quadratic equations.

Three months after his marriage, on 24 November 1925, Ramsey again spoke to the Apostles, this time on 'Civilisation and Happiness'. It was only twenty-two months since his debate with J. S. Mill, but the tone was significantly weightier, more sombre but less stricken:

I have only lately begun to feel that civilisation is opposed to happiness; I feel it as a burden which I am forced to carry and cannot throw off, and I should be interested to discover whether we all suffer under it or whether I am merely objectifying the heaviness of my heart.²⁷

In this inquiry, so akin to Freud's Civilization and its Discontents, which had yet to be written, Ramsey was at his most Freudian: happiness comes from the satisfaction of instincts, but civilisation, which induces the sublimation of those instincts, deprives us of happiness: 'I think that it is just because they are the products of sublimated and not of primitive instincts, that our pursuits so often seem not really worth while ... it is not the truth which will make us happy, but the satisfaction of those other repressed desires which our conscience will not allow us'. Then Ramsey hit a new note, a more personal note, clearly the fruit of his time spent in analysis:

In my own case I think that my interest in philosophy and all kinds of criticism, which is much greater than my interest in constructive thought, is derived from a fairly well repressed infantile rivalry with my father and my wish to kill him.

This means that I can never get any great satisfaction from philosophising, never anything like the pleasure I should have got from killing my father, which my conscience or rather my love for him forbade me to do when I was small.

(Incidentally, the death of the father was a theme in the store of Ramsey family memories: after Ramsey's death, his father recorded the following interchange with Michael, Frank's younger brother and future Archbishop of Canterbury: 'One day in the nursery Michael in a burst of affection clung to Agnes [their mother] and exclaimed "I'm going to marry mummie". Frank looked on with scorn and then with a great assumption of superior knowledge said "How can you be so silly Michael? Don't you know that you can't marry your mother until she is a widow?""28 A real analytic philosopher in the making!) To continue with Ramsey's paper:

This has incidentally another unfortunate consequence, namely that my philosophical criticisms should always be regarded with suspicion, as I am probably identifying the man I am criticising with my father, generally in his hostile aspect, so that I am biased against the philosopher who in my unconscious mind represents my father. I am also liable to identify someone like Wittgenstein with my beloved father and attach a most exaggerated importance to his every word.29

Returning to 20 August, the day before he was to marry Lettice Baker: Ramsey had gone down to Keynes's summer cottage to meet up with Wittgenstein, who was returning to England for the first time since before the war. He wrote in a letter:

Keynes and Wittgenstein are awfully nice together but I can't get a word in, they both talk such a lot. I got slightly heated because W said that Freud was morally deficient though very clever.30

It appears that this spat over Freud is what led to Ramsey's estrangement from Wittgenstein - they refused to talk to one another for two years. But the argument over Freud provided good copy for their host. The next week, on 29 August, Keynes published a pseudonymous letter in his own weekly journal, the Nation and Athenæum, intervening in a virulent controversy over the validity of psychoanalysis that Tansley's favourable review of Strachey's translation of Freud had provoked.

Professor Freud seems to me to be endowed, to the degree of genius, with the scientific imagination which can body forth an abundance of innovating ideas, shattering possibilities, working hypotheses, which have sufficient foundation in intuition and common experience to deserve the most patient and unprejudiced examination ... [However,] at the present stage the argument in favour of Freudian theories would be very little weakened if it were to be admitted that every case published hitherto had been wholly invented by Professor Freud in order to illustrate his ideas and to make them more vivid in the minds of his readers. That is to say, the case for considering them seriously mainly depends at present on the appeal which they make to our own intuitions as containing something new and true about the way in which human psychology works, and very little indeed upon the so-called inductive verifications, so far as the latter have been published up-to-date.

I suggest that Freud's partisans might do well to admit this, and, on the other hand, his critics should, without abating their criticism, allow that he deserves exceptionally serious and entirely unpartisan consideration, if only because he does seem to present himself to us, whether we like him or not, as one of the great disturbing, innovating geniuses of our age, that is to say as a sort of devil.³¹

In the war over Freud - a war that is as long and as bitter as Freud's enduring influence - Keynes positioned himself as a patrician neutral observer, no doubt just as he had watched the sharp exchange between Wittgenstein and Ramsey the week before. Keynes cautioned the advocate of Freud - Ramsey - against banking too much on the evidence that had hitherto been made public - it was clearly insufficient. But to the critic -Wittgenstein - he pointed out that Freud speaks too directly and too truthfully to our intuitions to be easily discounted. The twist in the tail, of course, is that this is a devil, a disturber of the peace of the world, whom we have to take seriously.

Thus Keynes has inserted a different kind of figure between the two invoked by Freud's partisans and critics: instead of the great scientist, discoverer of new truths to place alongside those of Copernicus and Darwin, and instead of the unscientific purveyor of fantasies that are the product of his own feverish imagination, Keynes's Freud is a hybrid of the two, and thus something beyond both. Yes, Freud is a great scientist akin to Darwin; yes, Freud is a man of unmatched fantasy and great speculative leaps. In addition, the little phrase 'whether we like him or not' introduces the notion of some kind of objective measure of Freud's cultural standing. Freud, Keynes intimates, stands above personal likes and dislikes, since he is a genius of the age, perhaps its very own Zeitgeist. What difference would it make if one liked or disliked Freud? – That is not the point, not at all the point.

What general attraction did Freudian ideas have for Keynes within his own special areas of interest: the economics and politics of post-war Europe? With the publication in December 1919 of The Economic Consequences of the Peace, Keynes had become an international figure at exactly the same time as Einstein and Freud. That polemical indictment of the Versailles Treaty included a number of different elements, from his excoriation of the blindnesses and character defects of Woodrow Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George, to an audit of the ruinous state of world capitalism. Throughout Keynes's writings – from his early work on probability, through the Economic Consequences of 1919, into his busy political manoeuvring and polemicising of the 1920s, when his opposition to Britain's return to the gold standard and his attempts to stave off the economic, political and eventually military consequences of the reparations exacted on Germany were his principal concerns, then into the 1930s with the publication of his magnum opus The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money in 1936 – there is a fundamental vision of economics as grounded on psychology. Keynes was fundamentally critical of a foundational Victorian value: that of saving and fear of the future. His account of the Great Depression, then, would point to the underperformance of the economies of the West as due to too great account being given to uncertainty and fear, and too little to present desires to consume. Keynes was the 'sort of devil' that would undermine the Victorian virtues of thrift, hoarding and miserliness with any means he had to hand. From a certain point of view, saving was a rational means to secure a more prosperous future; Keynes, however, emphasised that the excessive desire to save stemmed from general anxiety about the future and an inability to enjoy the present.

Freudianism thus could help supply Keynes with a general psychology of the cultural unconscious. In 1919, he had described capitalism as

a double bluff or deception. On the one hand the labouring classes accepted from ignorance or powerlessness, or were compelled, persuaded or cajoled by custom, convention, authority and the well-established order of society into accepting, a situation in which they could call their own very little of the cake that they and nature and the capitalists were co-operating to produce. And on the other hand the capitalist classes were allowed to call the best part of the cake theirs and were theoretically free to consume it, on the tacit underlying condition that they consumed very little of it in practice.

The 'psychology' of the capitalist classes was thus of crucial importance to the functioning of the system. In his Treatise on Money (1930), a diatribe against those who would reintroduce the gold standard, freely employing the language of pleasure postponed or indulged in, a language that stemmed from its utilitarian and now Freudian versions of the reality principle, he depicted those conservative forces who saw in gold the 'sole prophylactic against the plague of fiat moneys' as throwing over themselves 'a furtive Freudian cloak' - the unconscious attachment to gold that Freud's essay on anal erotism had described.³² Money Keynes described as a 'subtle device for linking the present to the future'.³³ But if money were held for long out of circulation, it ceased to be money, it de-monetises - in the Freudian dialect that Keynes appreciated, gold turned back into faeces. Excessive anxiety about the future based on an inability to enjoy the present provoked regression back to a past fixation, that of the anal stage, in which pleasure was gained in hoarding faeces; money is thus a device 'through which the fear of the future takes its revenge on the hopes of the present'.34

Thus Keynes's economics required a psychological underpinning for its portraval of those economic virtues which, under changed circumstances, would become vices leading to the disaster of the Great Depression. Keynes was a psychologist of economics before he became a Freudian; but Freud was ideally suited to the kind of portrait of the bourgeoisie and its unconscious character-traits that Keynes's economics required. When he spoke in 1925 of 'the appeal which [Freud's theories] make to our own intuitions as containing something new and true about the way in which human psychology works', he meant not only our intuitions about, for example, why he himself was bisexual, or why his friends' character-traits were the way they were, but also intuitions about what are the principal motors of world economic history: is it the entrepreneurial buccaneers or the prudent savers who have created wealth? This economic-historical question was also, for Keynes, a question about psychology. No wonder that, in October 1919, when he was completing the Economic Consequences, he met up with the new King's College undergraduates and spent an hour talking about Freud with one of them, Richard Braithwaite, remarking in a letter afterwards: 'Thank God, there's an intelligent man in College.'35

*

What should we conclude from this episode of psychoanalytic enthusiasm in Cambridge? I have concentrated on a few brief years, from the 1920s, when it is clear the psychoanalytic field was open to any scientist or philosopher with enthusiasm and commitment and when psychoanalysis was viewed as a potentially life-transforming experience. Geophysicist, logician, all-purpose tinkerer, worldly economist - discipline was no bar to engagement and innovation in psychoanalytic matters. Freud was undoubtedly the presiding spirit for these men, and Keynes judged him 'a sort of devil' for the times, just as Auden would in 1939 name him as a whole climate of opinion. But the enthusiasm did not lead to the founding of the Psychoanalytic Tripos which Lionel Penrose had assumed he would find when he came up to St John's College in 1919. At every moment throughout the short twentieth century, a visitor to Cambridge might have had similar expectations and would always have been disappointed. After all, where would Cambridge fit psychoanalysis? Would it go with the natural sciences, with the social sciences, or, after 1970, with the humanities? This, of course, is the wrong way to think about disciplineformation. When the English Tripos was being formed as an offshoot of the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos, or when Anthropology was being created - and these bursts of discipline formation were taking place at exactly this time, after the Great War – the very idea of these upstart non-academic subjects finding a place in the university was ridiculed by many. Finding them a disciplinary name and niche was a matter of compromise, opportunism and sheer bloody-minded obstinacy.

Perhaps this is the way Freud's legacy of psychoanalysis should always be - interstitial. Everywhere and nowhere. If I had selected a different era for this lecture, say the 1970s, rather than the 1920s, the complexion would have been different, with a very different set of enthusiasts, but it might have been as intense and productive - I would have got caught up in the structuralist controversies, as did my former co-reading seminar leader Colin MacCabe, and I could have traced the intriguing line that led the late and much lamented Ernest Gellner to write a polemical anthropology of psychoanalysis viewed as a discipline that had made a more accurate diagnosis of the malaises of modernity than any other science or religion, but offered itself falsely as the means of redemption from the fall from grace of modernity. Following in the line of economists that began with Keynes, what of my old squash partner Wynne Godley, whose intensely ambivalent but immensely engaged relationship to psychoanalysis is now a matter of public record - I can assure you there were and are others like him, usually more private in their enthusiasms and preoccupation? And if I had made more of Wittgenstein in my story today, it would have led me to the disputed question of the extent to which modern philosophy is modelled on psychoanalysis, as Keynes thought on reading an early draft of the *Investigations*, ³⁶ and the extent to which philosophy and psychoanalysis can overlap. After all, the philosopher who Wittgenstein thought in 1939 would be preferred to him as the next Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge, John Wisdom, consistently combined philosophy and psychoanalysis in a career of more than six decades – he was attending meetings of the Heretics Club with Penrose and Ramsey in 1925 and was writing till his death in 1993. In an irony of history I only recognise now, he devoted much time, as Sir Frank Kermode, his co-Examiner can also testify, in the oral examination of my doctoral dissertation in 1979, to the question of what Wittgenstein might have thought of my thesis.

Philosophy, anthropology, biology - even psychology: these are amongst the plausible locations for psychoanalysis within Cambridge. An essential part of the modern education, but with nowhere in Cambridge that it calls a home: this is something I am acutely aware of, because since 1974 I have taught for fourteen out of the twenty-one faculties in this university. How appropriate and generous, then, that I take up this personal Chair in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, which is the glorious institution in this university most open to varied currents of thought and enquiry, extending from the Ancient Greeks to the philosophy

of mathematics, from the architecture and geography of the laboratory to the contemporary use of placebos in medicine. And there is even a mysterious history of Freud in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science - the story from the 1960s and 1970s of how two radical Americans, my one-time Director of Studies and supervisor Bob Young, together with Karl Figlio, left their imprint on the history of the life sciences and medicine in this university before moving on to become analysts, publishers, inspirers and then founders of psychoanalytic studies in a number of universities in this country.

I cannot resist closing with the principal scene in the delightful poster announcing this lecture, prepared with such skill and panache by Tamara Hug and David Thompson, the office staff of my department: Einstein on Freud's couch.



In 1936, as an 80th birthday present, Einstein wrote the following letter to Freud:

Until recently I could only apprehend the speculative power of your train of thought, together with its enormous influence on the Weltanschauung of the present era, without being in a position to form a definite opinion about the amount of truth it contains. Not long ago, however, I had the opportunity of hearing about a few instances, not very important in themselves, which in my judgement exclude any other interpretation than that provided by the theory of repression. I was delighted to come across them, since it is always delightful when a great and beautiful conception proves to be consonant with reality.³⁷

Like all history, this letter conceals more than it reveals. We do not know what the few instances were, nor are we ever likely to know. It is part of the charm and interest of the documents I've presented here today that they reveal the sorts of hidden connections one doesn't usually find recorded the sort of things that make psychoanalysis work. Freud's reply certainly put Einstein on the spot:

I really must tell you how glad I was to hear of the change in your judgement – or at least the beginning of one. Of course I always knew that you 'admired' me only out of politeness and believed very little of any of my doctrines, although I have often asked myself what indeed there is to be admired in them if they are not true, i.e. if they do not contain a large measure of truth. By the way, don't you think that I should have been better treated if my doctrines had contained a greater percentage of error and craziness?³⁸

Perhaps the last word on the question Freud throws back to Einstein should go to that other strange visitor from Vienna to Cambridge, Wittgenstein whose preoccupation with Freud was pretty much a lifelong affair - writing to Norman Malcolm in 1945:

I, too, was greatly impressed when I first read Freud. He's extraordinary. – Of course, he is full of fishy thinking & his charm & the charm of his subject is so great that you may be easily fooled. He always stresses what great forces in the mind, what strong prejudices work against the idea of psycho-analysis. But he never says what an enormous charm that idea has for people, just as it has for Freud himself. There may be strong prejudices against uncovering something nasty, but sometimes it is infinitely more attractive than it is repulsive.

How are we to arm ourselves against the attractions of the repulsive? Did Freud offer us an account of why we are attracted by the repulsive, or did he just allow us to indulge in that mysterious vice, by performing it for us, and giving us permission to perform it for and in ourselves? Shouldn't we recognise that Freud's version of enlightenment is that of the candle to which we respond in the manner of moths?

His warning tone did not prevent Wittgenstein adding:

All this, of course, doesn't detract from Freud's extraordinary scientific achievement. Only, extraordinary scientific achievements have a way these days of being used for the destruction of human beings ... So hold on to your brains.³⁹

'Hold on to your brains'. That, if you think about it, is a very Cambridge response to Freud.

Notes

I would like to thank the Librarian, Manuscripts & Rare Books Library Services, University College London for permission to quote from the unpublished Penrose Papers and Mrs Jane Burch for permission to quote from her father Frank Ramsey's unpublished papers.

- 1 R. Andrew Paskauskas (ed.), *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, 1908–1939 (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 498.
- 2 Paskauskas (ed.), Correspondence of Freud and Jones, 500–501; 3 September 1922.
- 3 Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. 2, p. 58.
- ⁴ Ernst Pfeiffer (ed.), *Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé: Letters*, trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1972), 182; 28 July 1929.
- 5 R. Money-Kyrle, 'Looking Backwards and Forwards', *International Review of Psycho-Analysis*, 6 (1979), 265–72; this passage from p. 266.
- 6 From the beginning of the decade, Americans and English were making the pilgrimage to Vienna to be analysed by Freud. In the American cohort of roughly 1920–22 were Albert Polan, Clarence Oberndorf, Leonard Blumgart, Monroe Meyer and Abram Kardiner.
- 7 Penrose Papers, University College London Manuscript and Rare Books Room, Box 20/2 'Memoirs Lunacy', pp. 100/4–101/5.
- 8 Penrose Papers 5/1, 'Psycho-Analysis and Chess', March 1925, 18 f., f. 2.
- 9 Ibid., 18 f., f. 1.
- 10 Ibid., 18 f., f. 4.
- 11 Lionel Penrose, 'Psycho-Analysis and Experimental Science', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 34 (1953), 74–82; this passage from p. 75.
- 12 Frances Partridge, Diaries. 1939–1972 (London: Phoenix, 2001), 568.
- 13 Frank Ramsey Papers, Part II, King's College Modern Archives Centre, King's College, Cambridge, A. S. Ramsey (Frank's father), 'Memoir, Part II', including excerpts from correspondence; letter written August 1921.

- 14 Ramsey Papers, Diary, 1924, dated 13 January 1923, but internal evidence makes it certain that the date is incorrect and should be 13 January 1924.
- Ramsey Papers, Diary, early 1924, referring probably to a visit to Glover in December 1923.
- Ramsey Papers, Diary, 14 January 1924, referring to conversation on previous 16
- 17 Frank Ramsey, 'An imaginary conversation with John Stuart Mill' (1924), in Frank Plumpton Ramsey, Notes on Philosophy, Probability and Mathematics, ed. Maria Carla Galavotti (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1991), 302–12.
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, Letters to C. K. Ogden, with Comments on the English Translation of 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus', ed. with an introduction by G. H. von Wright, and an Appendix of letters by Frank Plumpton Ramsey (Oxford: Blackwell; London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 84; letter dated 20 February 1924.
- 19 Ramsey Papers, letter to mother, probably 23 March 1924.
- 20 Ramsey Papers, letter to mother, 30 March 1924.
- 21 Ramsey Papers, letter to mother, 4 June 1924.
- 22 Ramsey Papers, letter to mother, 22 July 1924.
- 23 Ramsey Papers, letter to mother, August 1924.
- 24 Lettice Ramsey, Mss. In Lettice's hand on p. 4 it states: 'Charleston Jan. 1932'; King's College Modern Archive, Ramsey Papers. Pages are numbered 1 on, but some pages are in the 89, 90s range as well, so this looks like a chapter from Lettice's autobiography written in Charleston in 1932, when Lettice was involved with Julian Bell.
- 25 James Strachey and Alix Strachey, Bloomsbury/Freud, The Letters of James and Alix Strachey 1924-1925, ed. P. Meisel and W. Kendrick (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 157; letter dated 22 December 1924.
- 26 Ramsey Papers, Ramsey to Lettice Baker, headed 'King's College, Cambridge, Monday Dec 22nd-24th [1924]'.
- Frank Ramsey, 'Civilisation and Happiness' (24 November 1925), in 27 Frank Plumpton Ramsey, Notes on Philosophy, Probability and Mathematics, ed. Maria Carla Galavotti (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1991), pp. 320-4, this passage from p. 320.
- 28 Frank Ramsey Papers, A. S. Ramsey (Frank's father), 'Memoir, Part II'.
- Frank Ramsey, 'Civilisation and Happiness' (24 November 1925). In Frank Plumpton Ramsey, Notes on Philosophy, Probability and Mathematics, ed. Maria Carla Galavotti (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1991), 320-24; this passage from pp. 321-2.
- 30 Ramsey Papers, Ramsey to Lettice Baker, 20 August 1925.
- 'Siela' (John Maynard Keynes), 'Freudian Psycho-Analysis' Nation and Athenæum, 29 August 1925, 643–4.
- 32 John Maynard Keynes, 'A Treatise on Money' (1930), in The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keyne, vols 5 and 6 (London: Macmillan for the Royal Economic Society, 1971), 258.

- 33 John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (London: Macmillan, 1936), 293. See Thomas Crump, *The Phenomenon of Money* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 3ff.
 - 34 Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes*, vol. 2, *The Economist as Saviour*, 1920–1937 (London: Macmillan, 1992), 543.
 - 35 Skidelsky, Keynes, vol. 2, p. 4.
 - Jacques Bouveresse, Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious, trans. Carol Cosman, with a Foreword by Vincent Descombes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9; quoting O. K. Bouwsma.
 - 37 Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), vol. 3, p. 217; Einstein to Freud, 21 April 1936.
- 38 Jones, Sigmund Freud, vol. 3, p. 217; Freud to Einstein, 3 May 1936.
- 39 Cited in Bouveresse, Wittgenstein Reads Freud, xix.