

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion

Erich Fromm: Psychoanalysis and Religion: A Symbiotic Relationship?

Introduction:

Erich Fromm, a towering figure in 20th-century psychoanalysis, carved a unique path by blending Freudian theory with profound insights into religion, society, and the human condition. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Fromm didn't view religion solely as a neurotic symptom or a societal opiate. Instead, he saw it as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon capable of both fostering human growth and hindering individual liberation. This article delves into Fromm's complex relationship with psychoanalysis and religion, exploring his nuanced perspective on the interplay between these seemingly disparate fields. We'll examine his critique of traditional religious dogma, his concept of "humanistic religion," and the enduring relevance of his work for understanding the psychological and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Prepare for a journey into the fascinating mind of Erich Fromm, where psychoanalysis and religion intertwine in unexpected and insightful ways.

1. Fromm's Critical Analysis of Traditional Religion:

Fromm, while acknowledging the historical significance and social function of traditional religions, was highly critical of their authoritarian and dogmatic aspects. He saw many organized religious systems as promoting unquestioning obedience and conformity, fostering a sense of dependence rather than autonomy. His critique focused on the tendency of these religions to:

Promote passive acceptance: He argued that blind faith, without critical inquiry, could stifle individual growth and self-awareness. The acceptance of divine authority without questioning, Fromm believed, hindered the development of critical thinking and independent judgment.

Encourage fear and guilt: The emphasis on sin, punishment, and divine judgment, he argued, could generate excessive guilt and fear, leading to psychological distress and inhibiting self-acceptance.

Perpetuate social hierarchies: Traditional religious structures often reinforced existing power dynamics, justifying social inequalities and hindering social justice. Fromm saw this as inherently incompatible with true human liberation.

Obstruct individual freedom: The rigid doctrines and moral codes imposed by many religious institutions, he argued, restricted individual freedom and self-expression, preventing individuals from living authentically.

1. Fromm's Concept of "Humanistic Religion":

Unlike his critical stance on traditional religion, Fromm envisioned a "humanistic religion" – a non-dogmatic, ethical framework rooted in human experience and aimed at promoting human flourishing. This concept wasn't about a specific creed or belief system, but rather a set of principles focused on:

Love and compassion: Fromm emphasized the importance of love, not as a sentimental emotion, but as an active practice of caring, responsibility, respect, and knowledge. This love was to be directed towards oneself and others.

Reason and critical thinking: Fromm valued rational inquiry and critical thinking as essential tools for navigating life's complexities and making informed choices. Blind faith was replaced by a commitment to understanding and exploring the human condition.

Social justice and equality: He believed that true spirituality should be inextricably linked to social justice and equality, advocating for a society that fosters human dignity and eliminates oppression.

Self-awareness and personal growth: Humanistic religion, for Fromm, emphasized the importance of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and personal growth. It encouraged individuals to explore their own potential and develop their unique capabilities.

1. The Interplay Between Psychoanalysis and Religion in Fromm's Work:

Fromm saw psychoanalysis and religion not as opposing forces but as potentially complementary approaches to understanding the human psyche. He believed that psychoanalysis could provide valuable insights into the psychological underpinnings of religious beliefs and practices, while religion could offer ethical frameworks and spiritual guidance for personal growth. For instance, he explored how unconscious anxieties and needs could manifest as religious beliefs, highlighting the psychological roots of both faith and doubt. Conversely, he showed how religious experiences could offer profound insights into the human condition and motivate individuals towards personal transformation and social action.

1. The Relevance of Fromm's Ideas in the 21st Century:

Fromm's ideas on psychoanalysis and religion remain highly relevant today. In a world increasingly characterized by religious fundamentalism, secularization, and social fragmentation, his call for a humanistic religion, emphasizing love, reason, and social justice, continues to resonate. His critique of dogmatic religious structures provides a framework for examining the potential pitfalls of unquestioning faith and authoritarian religious institutions. His emphasis on self-awareness, personal growth, and critical thinking is particularly pertinent in an era of information overload and social media influence.

1. Fromm's Legacy and Enduring Influence:

Erich Fromm's work continues to influence scholars, theologians, and psychotherapists alike. His exploration of the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between psychological and spiritual dimensions of human experience. He challenged traditional religious dogma, while at the same time highlighting the potential for religion to

promote personal growth and social justice. His humanistic approach encourages critical thinking, individual autonomy, and a commitment to creating a more just and compassionate world. His legacy lies in his persistent pursuit of understanding the human condition and his belief in the transformative power of love, reason, and social responsibility.

Book Outline: "Erich Fromm: Bridging Psychoanalysis and Religion"

Introduction: A brief overview of Fromm's life and work, establishing the context for his unique perspective on psychoanalysis and religion.

Chapter 1: A Critical Examination of Traditional Religion: An in-depth analysis of Fromm's critique of traditional religious dogma and its potential negative psychological consequences.

Chapter 2: The Emergence of Humanistic Religion: A detailed exploration of Fromm's concept of humanistic religion, including its key principles and ethical implications.

Chapter 3: Psychoanalysis and Religion in Dialogue: An examination of the interplay between psychoanalysis and religion in Fromm's work, focusing on his insights into the psychological roots of religious beliefs and practices.

Chapter 4: Fromm's Societal Critique and Social Justice: Exploring the connection between Fromm's social criticism and his vision for a just and equitable society.

Chapter 5: The Enduring Relevance of Fromm's Ideas: A discussion of the continued relevance of Fromm's work for understanding contemporary challenges and promoting personal and social transformation.

Conclusion: A summary of Fromm's key contributions and their lasting impact on the fields of psychoanalysis and religion.

(Detailed explanation of each chapter would require a separate, much longer document.)

FAQs:

1. What is the main difference between Fromm's perspective on religion and that of traditional psychoanalytic thinkers? Fromm viewed religion not just as a neurotic symptom but also as a potential source of personal growth and social justice, unlike many of his contemporaries who saw it primarily as a societal crutch or a mechanism for repression.
1. How does Fromm's concept of "humanistic religion" differ from traditional religious beliefs? Humanistic religion, according to Fromm, emphasizes reason, critical thinking, love, and social justice, as opposed to dogma, blind faith, and potentially oppressive hierarchies.
1. What is the role of love in Fromm's humanistic religion? Love, for Fromm, isn't a mere feeling but an active commitment to caring, responsibility, respect, and knowledge directed towards oneself and others.

1. How does Fromm's work contribute to our understanding of religious experience? He explores the psychological roots of religious beliefs, offering a nuanced perspective on both faith and doubt.
1. What are some criticisms of Fromm's work? Some critics argue that his humanistic religion is too vague and lacks specific tenets or practices.
1. How can Fromm's ideas be applied to contemporary social issues? His emphasis on social justice and equality makes his work highly relevant to contemporary issues like inequality, oppression, and social unrest.
1. What is the relationship between Fromm's psychoanalysis and his social theory? His psychoanalysis informs his understanding of the human condition and individual motivations, which directly relate to his social and political critiques.
1. How has Fromm's work influenced modern psychotherapy? His focus on the importance of self-awareness and personal growth has influenced many approaches to psychotherapy, emphasizing the importance of understanding the individual's lived experience.
1. Is Fromm's work still relevant today? Absolutely. His insights on the interplay of psychology, religion, and society remain remarkably insightful and relevant in addressing contemporary challenges.

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erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Dogma of Christ Erich Fromm, 2023-12-19 "Fromm's developing thought merits the critical attention of all concerned with the human condition and its future." —The Washington Post The essays in this fascinating volume examine present-day psychological and cultural problems with the keen insight and humanistic sympathies characteristic of Erich Fromm's work. *The Dogma of Christ* provides some of the sharpest critical insights into how the contemporary world of human destructiveness and violence can no longer separate religion,

psychology, and politics. The book brilliantly summarizes Fromm's ideas on how culture and society shape our behavior. "It's the new post-religious theme song. The Fromm exhortations are imaginative and he has a definite audience." —Kirkus Reviews "Of all the psychological theorists who have tried to formulate a system better than Freud's to approach problems of contemporary life, no one has been more creative or influential than Erich Fromm. He is the most articulate advocate on the role of social forces in molding our character and on our manner of relating to others. This volume is an expansion of his systematic doctrine." —Louis L. Lunskey, MD, Archives of Internal Medicine

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: Zen Buddhism & Psychoanalysis Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, Erich Fromm, Richard De Martino, 1974 The key book in our quest for understanding of ourselves and our lives. What differences are there in Eastern and Western thought regarding the nature of the human mind and our role in the cosmos? How can Zen and psychoanalysis help us in our struggle to realise our full potential as human beings and members of society? Erich Fromm's seminal work among contemporary efforts to resolve our spiritual crisis results here in the great achievement of a language to reveal the contributions of Zen and psychoanalysis to our 'struggle to be fully born'. He shows how both can teach us in their different ways to live our lives rather than be 'lived by them'. D.T. Suzuki explains with profound and gentle wisdom how Western materialism and intellectualism contrast with the Eastern concept of acceptance as the basis of well-being for the 'whole man'. His illuminating discussion of the unconscious and the self shed fresh light on our understanding of our own nature. Combined with Richard De Martino's clear account of the psychology of Zen, these writings make up a work of brilliance and value that has much to help us in our quest for understanding.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Dogma of Christ Erich Fromm, 1992-01-01 When he was 26, the great psychoanalyst and philosopher Erich Fromm abandoned Judaism, though he himself was descended from a long line of rabbis and the product of a devout Jewish upbringing. The title essay of this collection was first published in 1930, just four years after he made that first, decisive split. It was to point towards the future Fromm's work, presenting the view that an understanding of basic human needs is essential to the understanding of society and mankind itself. The following essays too, show a man who would eventually establish himself as a major thinker, producing some of that era's most influential and astute political works.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Heart of Man Erich Fromm, 2023-02-28 The acclaimed social psychologist and New York Times–bestselling author of *The Art of Loving* discusses the nature of evil and humanity's capacity for it. Originally published in 1964, *The Heart of Man* was influenced by turbulent times. Average Americans were suffering from different forms of evil, including a rise in juvenile delinquency. On a grander scale, the threat of nuclear war loomed over the nation, and President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. What could drive humanity to do things such as these? In *The Heart of Man*, renowned humanist philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm investigates man's capacity to destroy, his narcissism, and his incestuous fixation. He expands upon ideas he presented in *Escape from Freedom*, *Man for Himself*, and *The Art of Loving*, and examines the essence of evil, as well as the choice between good and evil. He also explores man's ability to destroy and further considers freedom, aggression, destructiveness, and violence. "The Heart of Man questions human nature itself, from the forms of violence that plague it to individual and social narcissism to how the positive value of "love of life" can potentially outweigh the destructive "syndrome of decay" caused by the love of death and other harmful tendencies of thought." —Midwest Book Review

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and two very specific forms of destructiveness that can only be found in human beings: sadism and necrophilic destructiveness. His case studies span zoo animals, necrophiliacs, and the psychobiographies of notorious figures such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. Through his broad scholarship, Fromm offers a comprehensive exploration of the human impulse for violence. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Erich Fromm including rare images and never-before-seen documents from the author's estate.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Lives of Erich Fromm Lawrence J. Friedman, 2014-11-04 Erich Fromm was a political activist, psychologist, psychoanalyst, philosopher, and one of the most important intellectuals of the twentieth century. Known for his theories of personality and political insight, Fromm dissected the sadomasochistic appeal of brutal dictators while also eloquently championing love—which, he insisted, was nothing if it did not involve joyful contact with others and humanity at large. Admired all over the world, Fromm continues to inspire with his message of universal brotherhood and quest for lasting peace. The first systematic study of Fromm's influences and achievements, this biography revisits the thinker's most important works, especially *Escape from Freedom* and *The Art of Loving*, which conveyed important and complex ideas to millions of readers. The volume recounts Fromm's political activism as a founder and major funder of Amnesty International, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, and other peace groups. Consulting rare archival materials across the globe, Lawrence J. Friedman reveals Fromm's support for anti-Stalinist democratic movements in Central and Eastern Europe and his efforts to revitalize American democracy. For the first time, readers learn about Fromm's direct contact with high officials in the American government on matters of war and peace while accessing a deeper understanding of his conceptual differences with Freud, his rapport with Neo-Freudians like Karen Horney and Harry Stack Sullivan, and his association with innovative artists, public intellectuals, and world leaders. Friedman elucidates Fromm's key intellectual contributions, especially his innovative concept of "social character," in which social institutions and practices shape the inner psyche, and he clarifies Fromm's conception of love as an acquired skill. Taking full stock of the thinker's historical and global accomplishments, Friedman portrays a man of immense authenticity and spirituality who made life in the twentieth century more humane than it might have been.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: Erich Fromm's Critical Theory Kieran Durkin, Joan Braune, 2020-04-16 Interest in Fromm is increasing: as a prominent Marxist, sociologist, psychoanalytic theorist, and public intellectual, the unique normative-humanist thrust of his writings provides a crucial critical reference point for those seeking to understand and transcend the societal pathologies of our age. The essays in this volume retrieve, revive, and expand upon Fromm's central insights and contributions. They offer a critical theory of culture, the self, psychology and society that goes beyond what is typical of the narrower concerns of the fragmented and isolated disciplines of today, demonstrating the pan-disciplinary potential of Fromm's work. But this book does not simply reassert Fromm's ideas and rehash his theories, but rather reconstructs them to bring them into meaningful dialogue with contemporary ideas and cultural, political and economic developments. Providing new approaches to Fromm's ideas and work brings them up-to-date with contemporary problems and debates in theory and society and helps us understand the challenges of our times.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: For the Love of Life Erich Fromm, 2024-04-16 This poignant philosophy about the human capacity for love in the face of tragedy from the New York Times–bestselling author is as relevant today as it was when it was first broadcast. Transcribed from a series of recorded conversations streamed over German public radio in 1970, the profound ideas and thoughts collected in this volume represent a lifetime of the renowned psychoanalyst and social philosopher's explorations into human emotion and behavior throughout the twentieth century. Insightful and provocative, Erich Fromm meditates on the preoccupations that drive human action or inaction, interweaving related ideas from such profound thinkers as Sigmund Freud, Albert Camus, and Karl Marx. Here, Fromm recognizes the links between rising contemptuous boredom and

overwhelming overabundance. He unravels the confusing mysteries of religious doctrines by examining the causes and motives behind our aggressive tendencies and revealing how dreams connect us all as a universal language. Fromm's perspective offers a vivid portrait of our ever-evolving social history and the difficulty of experiencing personal growth in a world driven by "manufactured needs." Despite all of modern life's trials, *For the Love of Life* celebrates Fromm's belief in the human spirit to rise above tragedy and trauma through the bonds of family, friendship, and the transcendent power of love. Includes a preface by Hans Jürgen Schultz.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Erich Fromm Reader Erich Fromm, 2014-12-09 Fromm's basic idea was to look at the individual as a social being and to look at society as an ensemble of many individuals who have not only common ideas and convictions based on a common practice of life but also a common psychic structure. With his concept of "social character" he created a new interdisciplinary thinking presented in this reader. The Erich Fromm Reader exhibits the true genius of an original thinker in seeing the connections between overlapping knowledge from many different fields. Here interdisciplinarity is not only a lip service but the impact of Erich Fromm's unique social psychological notion.

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erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Fear of Freedom Erich Fromm, 1989

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erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: Escape from Freedom Erich Fromm, 2024-08-27 A New York Times bestseller about overcoming the profound ills of modern society by a legendary social psychologist, the author of *Escape from Freedom*. One of Fromm’s main interests was to analyze social systems and their impact on the mental health of the individual. In this study, he reaches further and asks: “Can a society be sick?” He finds that it can, arguing that Western culture is immersed in a “pathology of normalcy” that affects the mental health of individuals. In *The Sane Society*, Fromm examines the alienating effects of modern capitalism, and discusses historical and contemporary alternatives, particularly communitarian systems. Finally, he presents new ideas for a re-organization of economics, politics, and culture that would support the individual’s mental health and our profound human needs for love and freedom. This ebook features an illustrated biography of Erich Fromm including rare images and never-before-seen documents from the author’s estate. The pursuit of freedom has indelibly marked Western culture since Renaissance humanism and Protestantism began the fight for individualism and self-determination. This freedom, however, can make people feel unmoored, and is often accompanied by feelings of isolation, fear, and the loss of self, all leading to a desire for authoritarianism, conformity, or destructiveness. It is not only the question of freedom that makes Fromm’s debut book a timeless classic. In this examination of the roots of Nazism and fascism in Europe, Fromm also explains how economic and social constraints can also lead to authoritarianism.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: To Have or To Be? Erich Fromm, 2013-11-05 *To Have Or to Be?* is one of the seminal books of the second half of the 20th century. Nothing less than a manifesto for a new social and psychological revolution to save our threatened planet, this book is a summary of the penetrating thought of Eric Fromm. His thesis is that two modes of existence struggle for the spirit of humankind: the having mode, which concentrates on material possessions, power, and aggression, and is the basis of the universal evils of greed, envy, and violence; and the being mode, which is based on love, the pleasure of sharing, and in productive activity. *To Have Or to Be?* is a brilliant program for socioeconomic change.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: The Revolution of Hope Erich Fromm, 2023-02-28 The acclaimed social psychologist and New York Times–bestselling author examines how to maintain hope and humanity in an increasingly technological society. Life often contains events that do not have the outcomes we desire. However, many situations offer the possibility of a better outcome later. We simply need hope. But what is hope? What happens if we choose it? And what happens if we give it up? In *The Revolution of Hope*, Erich Fromm contemplates the definition of hope and what it means to be human. When the book was first published in 1968, Fromm saw society heading towards complete mechanization, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers. With this book, he poses to the reader the choice between becoming a helpless cog in the machine or embracing humanism and hope. “An uplifting exploration of the definition of hope, what it truly means to be human, and steps that should be taken to promote humanization in an

increasingly disconnected and technology-driven society.” —Midwest Book Review

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *Fight Against Idols* Svante Lundgren, 1998 Erich Fromm (1900-80) was a famous psychoanalyst, social critic and author of bestsellers like *Escape from Freedom* and *The Art of Loving*. But he was also very interested in religion. Having been brought up as an orthodox Jew he abandoned institutionalized religion as a young man. But he was influenced for life by the Talmudic studies of his childhood. Later in life he met and was enriched by Buddhism and mysticism. In this book the author analyzes what Fromm thought about religion, how he expressed his ambiguous feelings about Judaism, and his radical interpretation of the Bible. This is a book about a fascinating man with views that challenge both believers and atheists.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *Psychology and Religion* Andrew Reid Fuller, 2008 This book articulates a broad range of theoretical viewpoints, both classical and contemporary, in the field of the psychology of religion. Chapters One through Eight are overviews of such 'classical' theorists as William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Alan Watts, Erich Fromm, and Viktor Frankl. Chapters Nine through Twelve consider subsequent developments in the field, e.g., the views of object relations theorists on the God-image; empirical research on the scaling of religiousness; and modern consciousness research. Chapters Ten through Twelve are new to this edition and comprise an eclectic overview of the feminist psychology of religion, recent developments in the intersection of neuroscience and religion, and the evolutionary psychology of religion. Both wide-ranging and current, therefore, this book offers illuminating and in-depth coverage of major theorists and approaches. While its breadth makes it an excellent place to begin an exploration of the psychology of religion, its depth and detail provide the opportunity for a serious and rewarding immersion in the field.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *The Radical Humanism of Erich Fromm* K. Durkin, 2014-09-04 This book, shortlisted for the British Sociological Association's Philip Abrams Memorial Prize (2015), argues that Fromm is a vital and largely overlooked contribution to twentieth-century intellectual history, and one who offers a refreshingly reconfigured form of humanism that is capable of reintegrating explicitly humanist analytical categories and schemas back into social theoretical (and scientific) considerations.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* Albert Schweitzer, 1950 Secret of Jesus' messiahship and passion.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *The Art of Loving* , 2024-08-27 The renowned psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm has helped millions of men and women achieve rich, productive lives by developing their hidden capacities for love. In this astonishingly frank and candid book, he explores the ways in which this extraordinary emotion can alter the whole course of your life. Most of us are unable to develop our capacities for love on the only level that really counts—a love that is compounded of maturity, self-knowledge, and courage. Learning to love, like other arts, demands practice and concentration. Even more than any other art it demands genuine insight and understanding. In this classic work, Fromm explores love in all its aspects—not only romantic love, steeped in false conceptions and lofty expectations, but also love of parents, children, brotherly love, erotic love, self-love, and the love of God.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *Emotion and Spirit* Neville Symington, 2018-03-22 Psychoanalysis, with Freud as its founder, has vehemently denied the value of religious belief. In this radical book, re-issued with a new preface by the author and a foreword by Jon Stokes, Neville Symington makes the case that both traditional religion and psychoanalysis are failing because they exist apart and do not incorporate each other's values. The controversial conclusion of this fascinating study is that psychoanalysis is a spirituality-in-the-world, or a mature religion, and inseparable from acts of virtue.

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: *Freud and the Problem of God* Hans Küng, 1990-01-01 In this highly acclaimed book, one of the most prominent theologians in the world offers a theological and psychoanalytic assessment of Freud's atheism and of its implications for current psychoanalytic practice. In the original section of the book, now entitled *God--An Infantile Illusion?*,

Hans Kϙng traces Freud's views on religion and religious longing, compares Jung's and Adler's attitudes toward religion, shows that Freud's arguments against the existence of God are theologically unsound, and concludes with a frank and provocative discussion of what psychoanalysis may be able to teach the Christian Church. In a new section, Religion--The Final Taboo?," Kϙng points out that religions still plays a negligible role in the practice of psychoanalysis, despite its increasing importance in the lives of most people. Has religion replaced sex, Kϙng asks, as an integral facet of human experience ignored or repressed by the very profession that seeks to enlighten? Reviews of the first edition: This should stand as one of Dr. Kϙng's finest works."--Edmund Fuller, Wall Street Journal A balanced, thorough, and very readable discussion of Freud's critique of religion... A model of the clarity, honesty, and fairness we can always expect to find in Kϙng's writings." -John F. Haught, America An honest, sympathetic pro-and-con assessment of specific elements of Freud's critique by a well-known German Catholic theologian, easily accessible to the interested layperson and valuable for both theologians and psychologists."--Library Journal Kϙng carefully, sympathetically investigates Freud's interpretations of religion, both within his clinical theories and personal history." -Lisa Mitchell, Los Angeles Times

erich fromm psychoanalysis and religion: Moses and Monotheism Sigmund Freud, 2016-11-24 The book consists of three essays and is an extension of Freud's work on psychoanalytic theory as a means of generating hypotheses about historical events. Freud hypothesizes that Moses was not Hebrew, but actually born into Ancient Egyptian nobility and was probably a follower of Akhenaten, an ancient Egyptian monotheist. Freud contradicts the biblical story of Moses with his own retelling of events, claiming that Moses only led his close followers into freedom during an unstable period in Egyptian history after Akhenaten (ca. 1350 BCE) and that they subsequently killed Moses in rebellion and later combined with another monotheistic tribe in Midian based on a volcanic God, Jahweh. Freud explains that years after the murder of Moses, the rebels regretted their action, thus forming the concept of the Messiah as a hope for the return of Moses as the Saviour of the Israelites. Freud said that the guilt from the murder of Moses is inherited through the generations; this guilt then drives the Jews to religion to make them feel better.

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sense ideas which is merely a random arranging of material resources in an otherwise empty space filled with vibrations of these very particles. This is a rather difficult subject handled facilely by the author.

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