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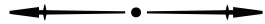
"Among the most formative influences on my development as a philosopher has been Peter Kreeft. When I first encountered his work when I was in college I could not believe that someone could make philosophy so accessible and so alive. Although I never took a formal class from Professor Kreeft, I have been a student of his for many decades. Through *The Unaborted Socrates* I was persuaded to embrace a sanctity of life ethic; through *The Best Things In Life* I was taught how to think about virtue, vice, intrinsic goodness, and practical Thomism (though the genius of Kreeft is that he never explicitly tells you he's doing that). Later, when I was journeying back to the Church, it was Kreeft's explication of the *Catechism* and his commentary on Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* that helped me to see how Catholicism made sense and that much of what I believed as a lapsed-Catholic Evangelical was an inheritance from Rome and not something I had discovered by exercising my rational powers on Scripture alone. I thought I had hit a triple, but Kreeft showed me that I had been born at third base. What you will encounter in this series of cross-examinations of the world's most important modern philosophers is Kreeft at his best. Through the character of Socrates and his famous interlocutors, you are introduced to some of the most influential and difficult thought in the history of philosophy, but in a way that requires no prior philosophical background. In the hands of this master teacher, you will come to appreciate both the strengths and the weaknesses of these towering figures and how the intellectual tradition of the Church ought to engage them."

—**Francis J. Beckwith**, Professor of Philosophy and Associate Director of Graduate Studies in Philosophy, Baylor University

SOCRATES MEETS FREUD

SOCRATES MEETS FREUD



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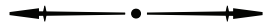

PETER KREEFT

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Contents

Preface

This book is one in a series of Socratic explorations of some of the Great Books. Books in this series are intended to be short, clear, and nontechnical, thus fully understandable by beginners. They also introduce (or review) the basic questions in the fundamental divisions of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, anthropology, ethics, logic, and method. They are designed both for classroom use and for educational do-it-yourselfers. The *Socrates Meets* books can be read and understood completely on their own, but each is best appreciated after reading the little classic it engages in dialogue.

The setting—Socrates and the author of the Great Book meeting in the afterlife—need not deter readers who do not believe there is an afterlife. For although the two characters and their philosophies are historically real, their conversation, of course, is not and requires a "willing suspension of disbelief." There is no reason the skeptic cannot extend this literary belief also to the setting.

Introduction

Probably no single thinker since Jesus has influenced the thoughts and lives of more people living in the Western world today than Sigmund Freud.

Even agnostics like William Barrett, in *Irrational Man*, and atheists like Nietzsche agree that the single most radical change in the last thousand years of Western civilization has been the decline of religion. And the four most influential critics of religion have certainly been Nietzsche, Marx, Darwin, and Freud. Of the four, Freud is by far the most popular. Computer-generated name searches reveal that his name appears more than twice as often as any of the other three, in both published books and private letters.

No name is more associated with, and in fact responsible for, "the sexual revolution" than Freud. And no revolution in history, at least none since the one around a cross and an empty tomb, has been more life-changing, and has more potential to continue to be more radically life-changing in the future, than the sexual revolution. To see this, just read Huxley's *Brave New World.* (And remember that Huxley was far from being a theist.)

Freud wore three hats. Freud was (1) a practicing psychoanalyst (indeed, the *inventor* of psychoanalysis), (2) a professional theoretical psychologist, and (3) an amateur philosopher. To do justice to Freud, we must always distinguish these three dimensions of his thought when evaluating him (though they are obviously connected). For it is quite possible to accept the practical power of psychoanalysis without embracing the theoretical psychological principles behind it (indeed, most psychologists and psychiatrists today describe themselves this way), and equally possible to embrace many of the principles of his psychology

without the philosophy, the world-and-life-view, behind it (or, for that matter, vice versa).

This book explores only his philosophy, for that is the point of his intersection with Socrates. If Socrates is right in his deepest convictions about the importance of philosophy, Freud's *philosophy* is the ultimate source, foundation, explanation, and justification for his psychology.

Readers of this book, therefore, should not expect direct evaluations of the famous "Freudian" details of these other two dimensions of Freud's work—not because they are not important, and not because they are unrelated to his philosophy, but because one cannot do everything at once (unless one's proper name is "I Am Who I Am"), and certainly cannot do *justice* to everything at once.

Civilization and Its Discontents is Freud's most philosophical work (as well as his last one), for its question, announced in its very first sentence, is nothing but the first and most important question of all great philosophers, the question of "the meaning of life," the ultimate end, greatest good, *summum bonum*, highest value, point and purpose of living—the answer to the ultimate "why?"

As with the other books in this series, a "willing suspension of disbelief" is requested of the reader when it is discovered, at the beginning of the conversation, that Freud has died, has met Socrates in the next world, and is required to undergo a Socratic examination on this book. The locale is something like the purgatorial porch of heaven.

Cross-examining other philosophers was the heaven Socrates most devoutly hoped for; and being cross-examined by him is the purgatory that most other philosophers most devoutly fear. God is economical: the same setup suffices for one's heaven and the other's purgatory. (C.S. Lewis, in another context—the issue of animal immortality and whether it extends to insects—suggests

that the same divine efficiency could also combine a heaven for mosquitoes and a hell for men.)

1

The Meeting

FREUD: I exist! I still exist. I thought I just died. But I must be dreaming.

SOCRATES: You did die. And you are not dreaming.

FREUD: That cannot be.

SOCRATES: You can see for yourself that it is. Here you are.

FREUD: But where is "here"?

SOCRATES: It is where you are now. Wherever you are, that's "here."

FREUD: And what is this "I" that is here?

SOCRATES: Ah, now that's the great question, isn't it? "Know thyself," and all that kind of thing. It was your "thing" all your life, as it was mine too, though in exploring our common question we used different methods and came to different conclusions.

FREUD: Why are you impersonating Socrates?

SOCRATES: I am no more impersonating Socrates than you are impersonating Freud.

FREUD: Socrates is dead. You are a fraud.

SOCRATES: I am no more a fraud than you are, Freud. In fact, to assume a bad British accent for the sake of a bad pun, I'm a Freud you're a Freud, not a fraud.

FREUD: Am I then in the Hell of Horrible Puns? No, this must be a dream.

SOCRATES: If it is a dream, who is dreaming it?

FREUD: I am, of course.

SOCRATES: But you died.

FREUD: I must have only dreamed that I died.

SOCRATES: But in your psychological works you said that that was the one thing no one could ever dream.

FREUD: Perhaps I was mistaken about that.

SOCRATES: And also about the *I* who made the mistake? I mean about the real existence of the ego? You thought it was only a facade for the id.

FREUD: Perhaps I am just part of an ongoing dream.

SOCRATES: In which case, who is the dreamer? A real *you* can dream of imaginary places, but if the *you* is itself a dream, who is *its* dreamer?

FREUD: The id. The "it." That is the real self, not the conscious ego. Descartes was wrong.

SOCRATES: But this *it* that you say you really are is not an *I*, it is less than an *I*—isn't that what you say?

FREUD: Yes.

SOCRATES: But how can anything *less* than a self, dream a self? How can the effect be greater than the cause?

FREUD: You should be arrested for imitating a philosopher.

SOCRATES: It is not a crime to imitate oneself.

FREUD: I know you cannot be Socrates. But, then, I also know that I can't be Freud. Because I no longer exist. I *did* die. I distinctly felt my body fall away from me.

SOCRATES: In that case, it logically follows that you are more than your body; you are a self that survives the death of your body. So you were wrong about *that*.

FREUD: It certainly looks like I was wrong about *something*.

SOCRATES: Would you like to find out what some of those somethings were?

FREUD: Of course. Any honest scientist pursues the truth at all costs, even costs to his own self-image. But who are you, really? Or, perhaps I should say *what* are you? Are you my own subconscious? Are you playing the part of a demon from hell?

SOCRATES: That would indeed be hell for me, if I were merely your subconscious! No, I am as real as you are, I assure you.

FREUD: And what is that costume you are wearing? You look like

I imagine Socrates would look, so I imagine you are a figment of my own imagination. Appearances are deceiving, as you philosophers well know.

SOCRATES: Sometimes appearances are *not* deceiving.

FREUD: What am I doing here? Where is the bed I was dying in, or lying in? I am utterly confused.

SOCRATES: And I am here to help to un-confuse you, about many things more important than where you are.

FREUD: No, I think it is more likely that you are here to *confuse* me, to make me think that you are the real Socrates, and that this place is something like heaven.

SOCRATES: Well, there are only a few logical possibilities. Shall we go through them, to try to un-confuse you? That's my thing, after all, as a philosopher.

FREUD: Philosophize away, demon or angel or ghost or subconscious dream or purgatorial spirit or Socrates—or whatever you are.

SOCRATES: You have already very nicely set out the six possibilities.

FREUD: And I'm sure you have logical arguments disproving all five other possibilities, so that the only one left is that you are the real Socrates, as you will try to convince me by pure reason. No, I think not. I am suspicious of your tricks, and of your reliance on reason.

SOCRATES: How could reliance on reason be a trick? Reason is the only way to see *through* tricks and refute them.

FREUD: Whoever or whatever you are, you are at least an authentic fake, a good Socrates imitation. But you are wrong about reason. If there is any one truth I have discovered in a long lifetime devoted to the study of the mind, it is this: that reason is the servant of desire, not the other way round, as *you* thought, "Socrates." What you call reasoning is really rationalizing. There is a far more powerful unconscious and subconscious mind behind your conscious, rational thinking, like a puppeteer behind a puppet.

SOCRATES: Really?

FREUD: Really.

SOCRATES: Let me be your student in this matter, for you have indeed devoted an entire lifetime to the study of the mind, and if there is anyone who is a world-famous authority on the ways it works, it must be you—especially the subconscious and unconscious mind. So let us assume that your primary discovery is true. Now, I, too, have spent a lifetime studying the mind—not the unconscious and irrational mind but the conscious and rational mind. And if there is one thing my lifetime of study has shown me, it is that the principles of logic never have any exceptions. If all A is B and all B is C, then all A must always be C. If B necessarily follows A and if A is true, then B must always be true. Now let us assume that your great discovery is true: that all reasoning is really only rationalizing. Let us see what B follows from this assumption A.

FREUD: Why should I play your little logic game with you? You will win. You always do. Because it's *your* game.

SOCRATES: Perhaps it is only my "game," as *you* say, and perhaps, on the other hand, it is *not* only my game but the most basic law of everything that is real and true, as *I* say. But I played your little

illogic game with you: I accepted your primary discovery, that all reasoning is only rationalizing. So we are now thinking in terms of *your* world, the world in which your primary discovery is true, not *my* world, in which it is false. Surely you have no objection to exploring your own world?

FREUD: No.

SOCRATES: Then let us see what this primary discovery of yours actually means. You say that *all* reasoning is rationalizing, is that right?

FREUD: Yes.

SOCRATES: No exceptions?

FREUD: No exceptions.

SOCRATES: Just like my principles of logic in that way: no exceptions.

FREUD: No exceptions.

SOCRATES: So the reasoning by which you arrived at that discovery—that must also have been merely rationalizing, then. And the reasoning by which you affirm it and defend it and argue for it now—that, too, must be merely rationalizing.

FREUD: Indeed.

SOCRATES: Why, then, should I subject my mind to your private desires? Why should I let myself be a puppet in your puppet theater? Why should I consent to be a character in your dreams or fantasies? And why did you support your principle with so much

reasoning and scientific evidence, then, if such reasoning never really proved anything true?

FREUD: You are playing *your* game with me now, Socrates. You are subjecting my psychology to your logic. I could equally well subject your logic to my psychology.

SOCRATES: You could indeed—and the result would be nothing but a personal power struggle, a struggle of wills, my fantasy versus yours, my desires versus yours, my game versus yours. Now, that is certainly not the scientific method, is it?

FREUD: No.

SOCRATES: And you are the one who claimed to have applied the scientific method to psychology for the first time, to have turned psychology into a science for the first time. You are that Sigmund Freud, aren't you? Or do I have a case of mistaken identity here?

FREUD: I am that Freud.

SOCRATES: So shouldn't you be playing the scientific game?—if you insist on calling it a "game."

FREUD: I have no objection to being scientific.

SOCRATES: But being scientific means at least being logical, doesn't it?

FREUD: It means much more than that, Socrates. That is what you ancients failed to see. That's why your science was so primitive and unsuccessful.

SOCRATES: Science may indeed mean much more than logic,

something more specific; but it certainly can't mean anything less, can it? Can something that is simply illogical be scientific? For instance, if a tiny blue rabbit suddenly appeared on your head, would it be scientific for you to say, "Oh well, tiny blue rabbits just happen," and not look for a scientific explanation of it?

FREUD: Of course not.

SOCRATES: So you agree that even if science is more than logic, it is not less?

FREUD: Yes, I suppose I must agree with that.

SOCRATES: So let us look at what the two of us mean by logic. I think it is pretty much the same thing. In fact, I think everyone in the world means essentially the same thing by it. Let me see if I am right in thinking that. Suppose I told you that I believed that all A is B and all B is C, but I did not believe that all A is C simply because I did not *want* to believe that. You would not call that scientific, would you? And you would say it is unscientific because it is illogical, wouldn't you?

FREUD: Give me a concrete example.

SOCRATES: Gladly. Suppose I believed that all humans must die and that I was a human, but I did not believe that I would ever die, because I did not *want* to believe that. Would you call my state of mind either scientific or logical?

FREUD: Of course not.

SOCRATES: How would you explain it?

FREUD: I would call it fantasizing, or wishful thinking. You are rationalizing your desires. None of us desires to die, but to live.

SOCRATES: I would agree with that. So you *are* playing my "game" of science and logic with me, as you put it.

FREUD: I have no objection to logic.

SOCRATES: Good. So let us look at the logical consequence of your principle that all reasoning is only rationalizing. Since that principle is a matter of reasoning, and was reached by reasoning, and is defended by reasoning, it logically follows that it, too, is nothing but rationalizing.

FREUD: I accept that logical conclusion.

SOCRATES: Thank you. When I drew that logical conclusion a little while ago, along with its consequences, you objected that I was trying to get you to play "my game." Now it seems that "my" game is your game too, and that you have no objection to playing it with me. And I have no objection to playing "your game" of psychology with you. So it seems that both our "games," as you put it, are at least shareable in principle, and in fact are here and now being shared by both of us. Am I right about that, or am I being too optimistic?

FREUD: You are right about that, though I do *not* believe you are right about there being a single objective and universal and timeless truth behind your logic. I will obey the rules of logic not because I claim to know that it mirrors things-in-themselves or objective reality, as you believe, but because we all agree to play by its rules. But even though our reasons for accepting the rules of logic are different, we can agree to play by them wherever we are, even here—wherever "here" is.

SOCRATES: That is sufficient for now. Then let us turn to your book, which is to be the subject of our discussion.

2

The Question

FREUD: As soon as you mentioned it, the book appeared in my hand! This *must* be a dream. Things like that do not happen in the real world.

SOCRATES: Not in that other world, the world you once lived in. But you live in that world no longer, Sigmund.

FREUD: And yet I live.

SOCRATES: Yes. Does it not follow, then, that this is another world?

FREUD: Yes, but it does not follow that that other world is a real one. It may be only the world of my dreams and fantasies, or of someone else's.

SOCRATES: I will not try to prove you wrong there, for that would be a diversion and distraction from our purpose, which is to explore your book. Let's just suspend judgment about that question and proceed *as if* we were both equally real persons in a commonly real world. Can you do that?

FREUD: I can. But why should I?

SOCRATES: Because it would be profitable for you.

FREUD: Why?

SOCRATES: Because the subject of our discussion is to be *Civilization and Its Discontents*, your most philosophical book, your last complete book, and your most important one.

FREUD: A book is only a product of the mind behind it. So what you really want to investigate is my mind—in fact me, and not just my book. Isn't that right, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Actually, it is *both*, and each is a means to the other: understanding your book will help both of us to understand yourself better, and understanding yourself will help both of us to understand your book better.

FREUD: That is a sound psychological principle. In fact, it is a good way of doing what you yourself claimed to do, Socrates—or Socrates-imitator, whoever you are—when you said that you took the oracle's first commandment, "Know thyself," as your life's motto.

SOCRATES: In a sense the two of us were doing two different aspects of that very same thing with our lives—the thing I called philosophy and the thing you called psychology.

FREUD: Yes.

SOCRATES: But these two things differed in many important ways.

FREUD: What ways? How do you see their differences?

SOCRATES: Well, for one thing, my philosophy sought a knowledge that was more universal, that *included* psychology as well as many other things.

FREUD: Yes. And I was suspicious of that claim to universal knowledge.

SOCRATES: And there was a second difference: you explored the subjective and I explored the objective.

FREUD: Yet we overlapped here, in the "self," and the "know thyself."

SOCRATES: That is true. And there was a third difference, in our *methods*: philosophy, or at least my brand of it, was more a matter of deductive logical reasoning, while psychology, or at least your brand of it, was more a matter of induction and scientific method, testing hypotheses by empirical data.

FREUD: Indeed. That is a great difference. That is why there was more progress in psychology than in philosophy.

SOCRATES: I think that is not as great a difference as you think. I, too, tested hypotheses by data, but my data were not merely empirical.

FREUD: That's why your theories were not objectively verifiable or falsifiable, as mine were.

SOCRATES: I would dispute both parts of that opinion.

I think you would have to admit that my theories were objectively verifiable just as yours were, if only you broadened your notion of what is "objective" to include anything beyond the empirical—that is, if only you did not make a very questionable philosophical assumption called materialism.

And not only was my work as verifiable as yours, but yours was at least as unverifiable as mine. Many of your theories will be criticized by many scientists as unscientific precisely because they

were not conclusively falsifiable in principle. For instance, *any* psychological data that you discovered by experience, in therapy or anywhere else, would be classified according to your *a priori* categories of id, ego, and superego, so that these categories could not in principle be falsifiable, and therefore could not in principle be conclusively verifiable either.

FREUD: That is a severe challenge to my claim to be scientific. It demands a thorough and careful investigation.

SOCRATES: It does. But not now. We are here to discuss your book, which is about something much more practical than the correct theory of scientific method. It is about what people usually call "the meaning of life," or values. May I begin questioning you about it now?

FREUD: You may. Where will you begin?

SOCRATES: Where *you* begin, of course. Here is your first sentence, which asks the great question, the question all the great philosophers ask: "It is impossible to escape the impression that people commonly use false standards of measurement—that they seek power, success, and wealth for themselves and admire them in others, and that they underestimate what is of true value in life."

Am I correct in assuming that this is the question of the book, the question of "what is of true value in life"?

FREUD: That is correct.

SOCRATES: And that this involves what you call "measurement," or judgment—value judgment?

FREUD: Yes.

SOCRATES: And you criticize those who "seek power, success, and wealth as their values." Thus you assume that such value judgments can be false as well as true, as judgments of empirical facts can be false or true.

FREUD: Yes. But the methods used are very different.

SOCRATES: Evidently. We cannot use merely empirical methods, such as statistics or cameras, for judging values.

FREUD: That is true. But I would not totally separate empirical facts from values. Facts are certainly relevant to values, and values to facts.

SOCRATES: I agree.

FREUD: In fact, everything is relevant to everything.

SOCRATES: I agree with that too. And since values are *qualities* while mathematics deals only with *quantities*, we cannot use merely mathematical standards for judging values either, isn't that right? For instance, we cannot say that wealth and power are greater values than knowledge and understanding simply because a greater number of people prefer them, can we? Or that a man with two million dollars is twice as great a *man* as someone with only one million?

FREUD: No, of course not.

SOCRATES: Then you are, in this book, at least, asking a profoundly *philosophical* question.

FREUD: Let it be so, then. But since everything is relevant to everything, my psychology is relevant to this philosophical

question, and empirical science is relevant to my psychology, and therefore even to this philosophical question.

SOCRATES: I do not deny your logic there.

But I have another question for you now. Why, after raising this great question in your very first sentence, did you not directly answer it, or try to answer it, or even mention it, but instead you spent the rest of chapter 1 investigating an apparently different question—namely, the psychological origin of religion?

FREUD: That is an easy question to answer. Do you remember agreeing, just a moment ago, with my principle that everything is relevant to everything?

SOCRATES: I do.

FREUD: Then these two questions are relevant to each other.

SOCRATES: I do not doubt that, but I wonder just *how* they are connected in your mind.

FREUD: Isn't it obvious? How do the vast majority of people in all times, places, and cultures, answer this great question? By their religion, of course. Isn't that an observable fact?

SOCRATES: It is.

FREUD: So if we can understand the true origin of religious beliefs, we can evaluate this most popular of all answers first, before proceeding to explore more scientific answers.

SOCRATES: I see. So that is why you do a psychology of religion first?

FREUD: Yes.