THE MAGYARIZATION OF THE MIND: NATIONALISM AND THE PSYCHOANALYSTS SÁNDOR FERENCZI AND GÉZA RÖHEIM

By

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To my parents
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This thesis contends that the Hungarian psychoanalysts Sándor Ferenczi and Géza Róheim utilized psychoanalytic theory to construct a worldview of particularized nations. Arguing from the viewpoint that nations and nationalism are a modern social constructs, it contends that through the works of these two thinkers the nation was portrayed as a natural manifestation of the mind. Through portraying the nation as the natural unit of humanity these two thinkers were part of the move from the plurality of the Habsburg Empire to the particularity of successor states during the inter-war period. Partly a result of their Jewish origins, they reacted against the dominant notions of biologically-based race psychology and degeneration theory that were often used for anti-Semitic purposes. They proposed instead a view of the mind that, though based in biology, allowed for psychic causality. This psychic space enabled them to argue that nations were based on neurotically produced culture which allowed for a more inclusive picture of what constituted the emerging national community. Therefore, psychoanalysis, despite commendations or criticisms of its universalism, both reflected and helped shape a growing understanding of a natural world of particularized national communities. Ferenczi and Róheim were at once actively constructing nations and
reflecting the assumption of the nation as a natural entity that existed at the time. They were not “chauvinist nationalists” but still helped set the stage for the “natural” world of distinct nations that exists in the contemporary world. They were not people of Jewish origins attempting to bind themselves to an existing static entity but part of the dynamic construction of that entity itself.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis is instantaneously linked with its founder Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and the city in which he lived - Vienna. Associated images the bourgeoisie, and a decadent society unaware of its impending doom follow in succession. However, psychoanalysis, a distinct paradigm of psychology, produced an international network of practitioners who were deeply involved in its birth and development. In fact, there was a second key figure and a second capital city within the same peculiar polity, the Habsburg Empire, that played a key role in the intellectual movement that was at once a therapy and a theory. This city was Budapest, and the man was Sándor Ferenczi (1873-1933). Ferenczi was Freud’s “number two,” close personal friend and confidant, and the man whom later psychoanalysts called the “mother of psychoanalysis” to Freud being the father.¹ He brought psychoanalysis to Budapest and set up his own “school” there. Ferenczi’s student and friend, Géza Róheim (1891-1953), took Ferenczi’s and Freud’s insights and applied them to anthropology thereby becoming the world’s first psychoanalytic anthropologist. This thesis is concerned with these two important public intellectuals who were “Hungarians of Jewish faith”² and how their psychoanalytic and personal lives intersected, reflecting and shaping the context from which they emerged.

Rather than attempting to be all encompassing, this thesis limits itself to a previously undertheorized axis along which Budapest psychoanalysis emerged: the


relationship between psychoanalysis and nationalism. Therefore, this thesis is above all concerned with the theory of psychoanalysis, its vision of the mind and the human condition, rather than its therapeutic aspects and practices. It will necessarily exclude other aspects of psychoanalysis that have been well covered by previous historiography, most notably gender. Nationalism was an omnipresent feature of the Budapest milieu at the time in which Ferenczi and Róheim lived and worked. Gábor Palló, a historian of science, stated, “Nationalism was a characteristic feature of Hungarian culture, literature, music and science; compared with Austrian universalism, Hungarian scientific thinking was local, practical and historical.”

Despite the commendations or criticisms of psychoanalysis as a universalist science that ignored cultural difference and the movement’s international nature, my analysis demonstrates that Ferenczi and Róheim took the tenants of psychoanalysis and utilized them for understanding, constructing, and shaping notions of a world of particularized national communities.

The nation was seen by Ferenczi and Róheim as a “natural” manifestation of human mental life that, much like a family, had deep roots in the psychological structure of the mind. Both created grand narratives of the origin and development of humanity; one of the “natural” outcomes of these visions was the “nation.” For Ferenczi, this vision manifested itself in his desire for the improvement of his national community. He contended that the nation was a sealed group of individuals who had particular types of neuroses, or particular maladjustments to reality that produced culture. Though far more

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concerned with the therapeutic aspects of psychoanalysis, in his work and correspondence with Freud, one sees the first step in the deployment of psychoanalysis to understand and construct notions of national difference. In Róheim, there is an extension of the neurotic understanding of culture. For him, the extended infantile period of humans exposes them to more trauma than animals. With more trauma, there is greater need for the creation of defense mechanisms to deal with this trauma. This results in the production of culture. Cultures, then, are shared defense mechanisms against the traumas that individuals who belong to that culture are exposed to during early childhood. Through sharing these defense mechanisms, groups of individuals are sharply demarcated into cultural units. The nation was one of these naturally occurring cultural units. They existed as nearly static entities moving through historical time based on common rearing practices. The unit of culture thereby promotes a “primordial” understanding of the nation as a natural and eternal unit of human social life.

As H. Stuart Hughes pointed out regarding this generation of thinkers, “they figured as the last in the long succession of system-builders descending from Aristotle.” For them, one of this system’s end result was the nation; it was a universal particular of the human experience. In other words, the system of psychoanalysis represented a broader trend of the scientization of the concept of nation and the related term “race.” Therefore, it was constructed as a natural feature of the world worthy of scientific inquiry. At this time, and in the thinking of Ferenczi and Róheim, the categories of “race” and “nation,” were blurred. Marius Turda has argued that in Hungary, “Racial thinking,

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Social Darwinism and nationalism are part of the same historical framework and need to be understood in relationship to each other.”⁵ Indeed, the Magyars and other groups commonly considered as a “nation,” were described as such, or alternatively as a “race” or “people.” The distinction between these terms was fluid and never clearly defined. Both, however, fall under the definition of nationalism as they were described in terms of a deep homogeneity of people. Similar to Michel Foucault’s argument that psychoanalysis did not merely explain notions of sexuality but also in fact helped create them, psychoanalysis did the same for nations or races.⁶ This “natural” unit of differentiation was a key component in explanations of individual character as well as psychoanalysis’s universal tenants.

In arguing for nations as homogenous variations of mental life reflected in culture, they were attacking the dominant notions of race psychology which argued that nations and races were solely the result of biological descent.⁷ Based in part on their Jewish heritage, Ferenczi and Róheim argued for a culturally and psychoanalytically-based understanding of the nation that allowed for a more inclusive picture of the national community. Race psychology a priori excluded Jews and others from the emerging national community. It deemed people of Jewish descent as part of an altogether different race or nation due to their biological heredity. This is not to say that all Jews necessarily reacted homogenously and negatively to this theory or that

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psychoanalysis itself was somehow a “Jewish” theory. Neither does it mean that they were “outsiders” attempting to bind themselves to a static entity. Rather Ferenczi and Róheim were part of the dynamic construction and definition of the nation. They were part of the strong and often confused debates over what constituted this emerging construct. They proposed their own definition which implied that their ancestor’s religion would not be of major consequence. This psychoanalytic conception very crudely emphasized the “psychical” instead of the predominant “physical.” However, the end result was similarly homogenous and essentialized conception of the nation or race. The nation was replaced as a hereditary-material biological entity to a cultural-psychical biological one. In many respects, it represented a return to earlier notions of the nation based on language and culture. Ferenczi and Róheim, however, brought a deeper, inward mental dimension to the constitution of a person’s nationality.

Ferenczi and Róheim argued that the nation, though a result of neuroses, was a normal, natural development. It was not on the abnormal spectrum of neurotic manifestations like homosexuality.8 Belonging to the nation was the “normal” condition of a “fully-developed” modern human. By taking these two important thinkers together, my analysis demonstrates how even psychoanalysis, an ostensibly universal science, was used, at least in Budapest, for particularistic aims. Through the work of Ferenczi and Róheim, there is an infusion of psychoanalysis with nationalism through the national community’s portrayal as natural. To be clear, this is not to say that this was the only feature of psychoanalysis. It was one of many aspects of an immensely complex

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theoretical apparatus that was constituted by a multitude of historical and cultural features. Focusing on this undertheorized aspect of psychoanalysis through these two thinkers shows the impact of a specific context on its discourse - a process of “indigenization.” Psychoanalysis is also in no way inherently nationalistic. Ranjana Khanna, in her book, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (2003), argued that psychoanalysis was dependent on colonialism for its emergence while at the same time it provided a theory in which colonials could and did utilize for critiquing colonialism. In a similar manner, psychoanalysis developed in the context of nationalism in Budapest. It could have provided the tools for a critique of nationalism in general. However, as will be shown, Ferenczi and Róheim did not escape the nationalist context and utilize the theory’s destructive tendencies but rather utilized it as tool for the legitimation of races and nations.

This view of nationalism ultimately stems from the “modernist” view on the origins of nations and nationalism. Nations, this intellectual position holds, are a socially constructed phenomenon only invented with the onset of modernity- industrialization, rationalization, mass politics, etc. There have been various approaches used to explain why this occurred. For example, Ernest Gellner, in his seminal *Nations and Nationalism*, attributed the rise of nations to the need for capitalism to have a mono-lingual and mono-cultural workforce. Benedict Anderson, in his famed *Imagined Communities*:

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Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, argued that nationalism was the result of the breakup of Latin and other cross cultural elite languages by mass “print-capitalism” which standardized dialects into languages resulting in a shared sense of community based on these languages.\textsuperscript{12} This thesis argues, like Anderson, Gellner and others, that the nation was and is an “imagined community” in this sense. It is not an eternal entity, a historical constant, or natural unit that existed unchanged throughout time as proposed by the “primordialists,” chauvinist nationalists, and Ferenczi and Róheim. Rather it only came into existence with modernity and was a socially constructed entity. The ways one could define “nation” are various, I will follow the definition of Liah Greenfeld in her Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity (1993). She argued that nationalism is fundamentally an ordering principle of society one that, Locates the source of individual identity within a ‘people,’ which is seen as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity. The ‘people,’ is the mass of a population whose boundaries and nature are defined in various ways, but which is usually perceived as larger than any concrete community and always as fundamentally homogenous, and only superficially divided by the lines of status, class, locality, and in some cases even ethnicity.\textsuperscript{13}

Therefore, this thesis understands nationalism to be the belief that a homogenous community known as a ‘people’ exists and that this is the way society naturally is composed. Ferenczi and Róheim fall under this definition as nationalists for their assertion that various “peoples” were defined by a homogenous culture produced by collective neuroses based on the structure of the human mind. “Chauvinist” nationalism and a desire for independent statehood, the “nation-state,” are included in


this umbrella definition of nationalism as well. However, these are only the most boisterous aspects of nationalism.

Further, Ferenczi and Róheim should be understood as belonging to a specific movement that participated in the construction of national communities in the late Habsburg Monarchy. This is the “nationalization of the sciences,” as proposed by Mitchell Ash, Jan Surman, and others in the edited volume *The Nationalization of Scientific Knowledge in the Habsburg Empire, 1848-1918* (2012). They argue that the nation was not just constructed by humanities scholars well known to us from the aforementioned “modernist” literature on nationalism. The sciences also contributed to its construction through their work. As Glenda Sluga, in her *The Nation, Psychology, and International Politics, 1870-1919* (2006), stated more broadly, “From its beginnings, the conception of psychology as scientific was applied to the nation question and to the cultivation of a psychological definition of the nation.”¹⁴ Psychoanalysis in Budapest belongs to both of these interrelated processes.

This view of the sciences in the late Habsburg Monarchy also follows in the footsteps of a broader historiographic trend. Two key works, Aviel Roshwald’s *Ethnic Nationalism and The Fall of Empires* (2000) and Pieter Judson’s *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (2016), argued that the Habsburg Empire was not a “prison of nations.” It was not a state apparatus laid over already formed nations that were inevitably pulling for independence from its clutches. Rather nations were an emerging and amorphous phenomenon. The populations claimed by nationalist thinkers and administrators were

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in fact still in the process of nationalizing. World War I activated their latent but in no way inevitable desire for sovereignty. Ferenczi and Róheim, then, should be seen as part of a vertical deepening, an *introduction*, to use the psychoanalytic term, of nationalism into the structure of the mind itself. In contrast to the horizontal but uneven spread of nationalism based mostly on language and outward characteristics that occurred earlier among elites, Ferenczi and Róheim proposed that the nation was an inescapable result of the mind itself, thereby helping to fully nationalize the entire population. They did this, however, without resorting to the crude biology of many of their contemporaries. This deepening conception of the roots of the nation reflected and helped shape the dynamic process of nation and nation-state formation. In short, at a bird’s eye level of analysis, Ferenczi and Róheim should be viewed as representing part of the prolonged process from “empire to nation.”¹⁵ In Ferenczi’s work there is a somewhat softer demarcation of the notion that occurred during the Empire. In the work of Róheim, which was produced mostly during the successor state period, there is a sharper delineation. This reflects and shapes the ever growing importance of national homogeneity and the move from plurality to particularity.

This brand of nationalism, however, should not be understood to represent a strain of chauvinist nationalism that was partly responsible for the calamities of the first half of the twentieth century in Central Europe. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Rather, this brand of nationalism represented what Michael Billig has called “banal

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nationalism.”¹⁶ This nationalism was “in the air” of the times. It was constructed consciously by arguing for nations’ naturalness. At the same time, the unconscious assumptions that penetrated the thinking of Ferenczi and Róheim allowed them to argue in this manner. These national ideas penetrated almost every aspect of discursive production, even those that contemporaries berated as “universalist” or even “Jewish,” pejoratively meaning modernist, cosmopolitan, and against the particularistic national spirit. This picture of a world broken up into individual homogenous nations and races was one of the foundations that opened the space for chauvinist nationalism to exist. At the same time, however, it represents the way in which the nation became seen as the only way to view the structure of the world. In other words, Ferenczi’s and Róheim’s nationalism helped set the stage for the “world of nations” we see today. A world in which scholars and layman alike have a hard time methodologically and intuitively seeing past. One in which culture based on the psyche rather than biology is the chief determining factor in one’s nationality. As psychoanalysis helped usher in the modern conception of mind, it helped shape and construct the modern phenomenon of the nation that was seen as a result of this mind.

To demonstrate how both Ferenczi and Róheim represented and helped create this growing world of nationalism through their psychoanalytic world view and grand narratives, this thesis explores both their writings as well as the correspondence of Ferenczi with Freud. Since the focus is on these two thinkers’ grand narratives that shows through in their works, this essay will take their works in sum rather than as biographically rooted progression of intellectual development. Though there are pitfalls

to this method, it enables a clear picture of the remarkably consistent discourse which Ferenczi and Róheim created to emerge. To get here though psychoanalysis as a whole must be understood. It is the foundational theoretical system that both these thinkers utilized.
CHAPTER 2
THE ORIGINS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Psychoanalysis remains one of the most contested intellectual developments of the twentieth century. Many of the original and current debates about psychoanalysis are over its status as a “true” science. Its proponents saw Freud as having unlocked the key structures of the mind that dominated all of human experience. Its detractors saw Freud as having done little more than project his own particular conception of the mind onto the whole of humanity. This debate, however, is outside the scope of this thesis. Instead, I treat psychoanalysis neutrally as a specific paradigm within psychology. This notion is borrowed from Thomas Kuhn’s famous work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn argues that science does not operate on a unilinear path of progression. Instead, scientific discoveries revolve around specific “paradigms” or methods, assumptions, and conceptions that are used to investigate and interrogate various facets of the world. This notion can also be applied to the humanities and social sciences. Therefore, this paper will treat psychoanalysis as merely a “paradigm,” and whether it represents a “pseudo-scientific” or “scientific” one will be left for the reader to decide.

I treat psychoanalysis as a historically rooted paradigm. In order to gain an understanding of how Ferenczi and Róheim utilized this, the works that have engaged in the contextualization of psychoanalysis as a whole must be considered. This will demonstrate how the originally Viennese paradigm emerged and then changed when exported to the different historical context of Budapest. The literature on Freud and the origins of psychoanalysis is overwhelmingly vast. Many different approaches have been
taken to contextualize him. He was the nodal point and originator of the movement and any discussion of it must begin with him.

In general, the approaches to a historical account of Freud can be divided into two camps: the intellectual and the social. Of course these are not mutually exclusive positions and all works comment on both. However, the intellectual approaches tend to emphasize Freud’s place within the broader intellectual currents of the day. The social approaches, in contrast, argue for the importance of Freud’s social context, immediate or broad, in the creation of psychoanalysis. First, this thesis will engage with the intellectual approaches and then the social ones.

No scholar disparages the notion that Freud was part of the larger trend of the reassessment of humanity’s place in nature that started in the nineteenth century. The key figure in this development was Charles Darwin (1809-1882). Frank J. Sulloway, in his seminal work, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (1979), emphasized the biological aspects of Freud’s thinking. In fact, he went so far as to argue that he was nothing more than a “crypto-biologist.” For Sulloway, Freud appropriated Darwinian and many other now discredited biological theories crafting them into a theory of mind.¹ Freud’s emphasis on sex was a direct result of Darwin’s notion that humans were animals whose main goal was to survive and reproduce. However, Freud also utilized outdated theories such as Lamarckism and recapitulation (discussed below). Freud created a vision of human psychological processes that stemmed from these new and often fantastical visions of humans as biological animals.

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Sulloway’s work is an important contribution to understanding Freud and psychoanalysis as a whole. It correctly points out the huge debt both owed to biology. Peter Gay, in his *Freud: A Life for Our Times* (1988), also emphasizes Freud as a scientist. However, Gay believed that portraying Freud as a “crypto-biologist” fails to explain him in his entirety. For Gay, Freud is part of the broader intellectual development of the Enlightenment thinkers. He is portrayed as a direct descendent of scientists such as Francis Bacon. Freud was a revolutionary scientific discoverer of the inner workings of the mind. Psychoanalysis then, for Gay, is indeed a “true” science of the mind. Freud was the embattled scientist who unlocked its secrets, allowing his followers to understand and heal the mind.

However, both Sulloway and Gay through their emphasis on Freud as scientist, successful or otherwise, neglect the ways in which Freudian psychoanalysis reflected broader philosophic influences of the time. Ernest Gellner in his largely critical assessment, *The Psychoanalytic Movement: The Cunning of Unreason* (1996), argues that psychoanalysis merely gave us a scientific-sounding language for the “pays reel” nature of the mind put forward by many German-speaking philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Freud created a scientific-sounding language of the German metaphysics of the nineteenth century that challenged man as a rational animal and emphasized instinct, passion, and irrationality instead. This work, however, is equally myopic in that it neglects Freud’s place within the scientific world that also placed humans into the irrational animal kingdom.

George Makari, in his *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (2008), synthesizes Sulloway, Gellner, and Gay. He argues that Freud owed a huge
debt to both the scientific and philosophical trends of the day. The value, for Makari, that Freud added was combining them in a unique, compelling, and concise manner. For Makari, the interactions with the other members of the psychoanalytic movement were crucial as well.

Yet all the aforementioned authors, in emphasizing the intellectual origins of Freud’s thought, scientific, philosophical or both, tend to neglect the specific cultural and social context in which psychoanalysis emerged. Sulloway does this through an almost exclusive focus on intellectual(biological) heritage, Gay through relegating the social context as only a backdrop for the life of a revolutionary scientist. Gellner does this through his focus on philosophy. Makari, though synthetic and interactive in his approach, nonetheless places psychoanalysis as a sealed network largely outside the specific historical contexts in which it developed.

In contrast to these works, the social approaches emphasize psychoanalysis’s place in its immediate social context. The most famous and influential of these works is Carl Schorske’s *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1980). In this work, Schorske contends that the political chaos of Vienna propelled Freud (and others) to become disillusioned with classic liberalism. Therefore, he created a semi anti-liberal vision of mind, “psychological man,” that portrayed humans as irrational animals driven by dark impulses, not solely liberal reason. Following this vein, John Murray Cuddihy’s *The Ordeal of Civility: Freud, Marx, Levi-Strauss and the Jewish Struggle with Modernity* (1974), Jose Brunner’s *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (2001), and William McGrath’s *The Politics of Hysteria: Freud’s Discovery of Psychoanalysis* (1987), and Eli Zaretsky’s *The Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of*
Psychoanalysis (2005) all argue for the importance of the context in influencing Freud’s thought. For Cuddihy, Freud’s structural theory of mind (the id, the ego, and the super-ego) in essence was a projection of the Jewish struggle with assimilation to Western culture. The id was the uncivilized Jew, the super-ego the civilized Western “Protestant Ethic”, and the ego the (semi-) assimilated Jew attempting to balance between them. For Brunner and McGrath, Freud’s vision of mind reflected the political struggles of the Habsburg Monarchy and Europe more generally. It was full of metaphors of competing forces with political notions such as “censorship.” Zaretsky places psychoanalysis in the broader trend of what he terms the “Second Industrial Revolution.” The “Second Industrial Revolution” was the shift from heavy, classic industrialism to a consumer based society. Through psychoanalysis’s emphasis on the individual’s needs and desires, Zaretsky argued it at once reflected and shaped this new economic structure becoming the “Protestant Ethic” of this economic “revolution.” Psychoanalysis promoted the individual, in contrast to the family, as the economic unit of society allowing consumer driven capitalism to develop.

What all of these works point to however, is that psychoanalysis was deeply embedded in the context in which it emerged. It at once reflected, created, and shaped the world from which it came. It was a philosophically, biologically, and socially rooted paradigm. The question this thesis seeks to address, however, is how this deeply embedded paradigm was modified as it was exported to a new context, Budapest, among thinkers who emerged from this context that still utilized psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalysis absorbed one of the dominant features of this new context- nationalism.
This is reflected in Ferenczi’s and Róheim’s work in addition to the previously mentioned influences on psychoanalysis as a whole.

This ability to fuse with the nationalist context, however, was based on an earlier feature of Freudian theory. This unique psychology was also a reaction, at least in part, to the dominant psychological theories of the day. Most psychologists’ view of the mind at this time was heavily materialistic. They saw mental disorders as a result of either localized brain based trauma such as lesions or a result of biological heredity degeneration. In other words, mental phenomenon in general and mental disorders in particular were seen as the result of biological and thereby material causes. Degeneration theory held that mental disorders were a result of a malfunctioning line of descent that would be deemed bad genetics today. These disorders then were indicators of the individual’s lack of evolutionary fitness. The individual’s personal lack of fitness was understood to be based on the broader evolutionary line of descent from which it derived. Therefore, entire human groups, especially races, nations, classes, etc. could be deemed evolutionarily “unfit.” These groups were capable, just as entire species, of losing in the Darwinian struggle of “nature red in tooth and claw.” These theories were easily used to justify many kinds of racism, classism, and social Darwinism.²

Freud encountered many of these theories during his time studying in Paris under the famous French psychiatrist and hypnotist, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893). In his famous article, “Freud before Oedipus: Race and Heredity in the Origins of

Psychoanalysis” (1976), Larry Stewart argued that Freud created psychoanalysis as a reaction to race psychology/degeneration theory because he was Jewish.\(^3\) Clearly the nexus of race psychology and degeneration theory could be used to attack Jews. Freud, sensitive to this, created his own paradigm of psychology, psychoanalysis, that would counteract this potential anti-Semitic vision and its implications. His psychology, though biologically rooted, emphasized the psychical rather than physical causes of neuroses and mental functioning. This key tenant cast doubt on the entire validity of the race psychology and degeneration paradigm. Rather than faulty heredity, it was specific personal and psychic traumas that caused neurosis. Mental faculties were thereby largely divorced from heredity, rendering psychology unable to be used discriminate against Jews because of their ancestry.\(^4\)

Regardless of whether Freud severed with hereditary degeneration theory because he was Jewish, the psychoanalytic rejection of it handed down by Freud at least served a key intellectual function for Ferenczi and Róheim. If neurosis was conceptually detached from notions of heredity, then the mind, healthy or abnormal, was not a simple result of descent. As Makari summarized, “By merging dynamic French notions of the psyche with sexology, Freud created a biologically rooted model of the mind that allowed for psychic causes and intentions.”\(^5\) These “psychic causes and

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\(^3\) Stewart, “Freud Before Oedipus,” 215-228.

\(^4\) However, there is some disagreement on this point. Both Brunner and Sulloway attribute it rather to Freud’s general intellectual iconoclasm. Despite this Stewart’s position remains dominant one within the historiography of psychoanalysis.

intentions” then left open a conceptual space for defining nation and race differently.\(^6\)

Rather than being solely based on ancestry, nation or race were rather based on an acquired, non-biological mental structure. At the deepest level, this was still rooted in biology but in a less direct and deterministic mechanism. With this semi-detachment from biology, Jews and others could see themselves not as existing in a “host” nation but rather as an equal part of it. Róheim, in his article “Racial Differences in the Neuroses and Psychoses” (1939), clearly reacted to the biological-hereditary notion of race and psychology that became a chief feature of the Nazi ideology. He stated,

> For one thing it must be made quite clear that the ‘race’ concept of real anthropology has nothing to do with the ‘race’ concept of the Nazi or of politics in general... On the whole, it can be stated that if race exercises any influence on the choice of certain types of psychical reactions, this influence is exercised through the type of culture evolved or assimilated by that race.\(^7\)

It is clear here then that Róheim rejected the Nazi vision of genetically determined race and racial characteristics in favor of a cultural origin. This is the closest thing that there is to a “smoking-gun” that demonstrated Róheim rejected degeneration and race theory due to his Jewish heritage. However, based on the totality of the evidence, along with the compelling arguments mentioned above for Freud, and simply the common sense understanding that a Jewish psychoanalyst would be likely to favor a psychological vision which did not discriminate against Jews, this thesis contends that

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\(^6\) Psychic causality also enabled psychoanalysts to be among the first to describe “shell shock” that afflicted soldiers during World War I as a result of psychic trauma. Most contemporaries, as implied by the name, “shell shock,” understood it to be a result of physical damage to the brain caused the shockwaves produced by the explosion of artillery rounds. See Sándor Ferenczi, “Two Types of War Neuroses” (1916), in Further Contributions to the Theory and Technique of Psycho-Analysis, ed. John Rickman (New York: Basic Books, 1953), 124-141.

Ferenczi and Róheim did indeed reject the dominant race and degeneration psychology in favor of psychoanalysis at least in part because of their Jewish origins. That they were both assimilated and patriotic likely made them more sensitive to the potential abuses of the theory. This is not to say the Jews automatically wanted to assimilate nor that Jews necessarily had to reject something that could be used for discriminatory ends. Rather, for these two men, secular Jews who were deeply patriotic, the proposition of psychoanalysis enabled the creation of a vision which undercut the exclusion and persecution of Jews for their heritage. Once again, this is not to say that psychoanalysis itself is somehow “Jewish” but rather was used for assimilationist ends in this particular case. However, Ferenczi and Róheim did not reject the existence of races and nations as such. Rather, they proposed their own vision of what constituted them in a way that allowed for their equal belonging in the emerging nation. If psychoanalysis is deeply intertwined with its historical context, then when exported to the highly nationalistic Budapest it absorbed this omnipotent indigenous cultural feature into its theory through Ferenczi and Róheim. The earlier, “psychic space” Freud had opened with his rejection of degeneration theory, and its continued rejection by Ferenczi and Róheim, allowed this to occur.

Despite their Jewish heritage Ferenczi and Róheim’s involvement with the construction of nations is not at all surprising. In fact, it is well in line with the history and historiography of the period. From the Ausgleich, the compromise which established semi-autonomy for Hungary, until the end of World War I, Hungarian-speaking Jews were seen as an integral and important part of the national community by many, though certainly not all, Hungarian speaking Christians. Many scholars point to the fact that
Jewish assimilation to the Hungarian nation was encouraged by Hungarian-speakers in order to give demographic weight to the Hungarian-speaking community who otherwise would have been outnumbered by the Slavic and Romanian speaking minorities. As Andrew C. Janos, in his *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945* (1982), has pointed out, assimilation was also promoted because Jews were the chief drivers of the modern sectors of the economy and often the outposts of Magyar culture in the largely non-Hungarian speaking areas.⁸ Therefore, Jewish Hungarians thought of themselves as fully Hungarian. Many non-Jewish Hungarians thought in the same way. Therefore, Rapheal Patai, in his *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (1996), contends that in the Fin-de siècle,

> In no period in their long history did Hungarian Jews feel as much at home in the haza (the fatherland), as much at one with their Christian Magyar compatriots, as much part of the great national endeavor to modernize, to forge ahead, and to become an important cultural entity in Europe, as in the half-century between their emancipation and the end of World War I...They felt they were an integral part of the Magyar nation, as Magyar as any of the other confessional groups and that the only difference between them and the Christians was denominational, no greater than between, say, Catholic and Protestant Hungarians.⁹

Hungarian speaking Jews thus thought of themselves as an equal part of the Hungarian nation and were deeply involved with the quest to modernize. Their religion, as it was for the various Christian denominations, was just that, only a difference in faith, not national or racial identity.

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In the interwar period, despite the rising anti-Semitism associated with the Horthy regime which sought to exclude them, many Jews still felt deeply loyal to the Magyar nation. Vera Ranki, in her *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (1999), stated, “In the face of increasingly vocal accusations of shallow assimilation and of not being truly Hungarians, most Jews chose to try to prove their fervent and true Hungarianess.”

Róheim, writing mostly in this period, belonged to this trend. He had to be convinced to leave his homeland he felt so dearly attached by his wife even with the passage of the 1938 anti-Jewish laws. His friends always commented on his pervasive and exaggerated “Hungarianess.” Most importantly, shown in his psychoanalytic work is a deep belief in the veracity of nation and his attempt to shape the portrayal of “Hungarian national character.”

To feel a part of the national community and advocate a psychology that would de facto exclude them from this would seem to be a great contradiction. Therefore, much like Freud, Ferenczi and Róheim rejected the biologically-based degeneration theory in favor of psychoanalytically based conceptions at least in part because of their Jewish origins. Psychoanalysis, being a historically rooted paradigm, was modified by these thinkers based on the context in which they were writing. This context was infused with nationalism and thus they too infused psychoanalysis with nationalism. They argued for the naturalness of nations and races thereby promoting its construction. At

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the same time, they shaped this construction in such a way that would de facto include Jews. As argued in the introduction, this should not be seen as a process by which they proposed these notions to bind themselves to an existing static nation. Rather it belongs to the dynamic construction of the notion of nation and national identity itself in which Hungarian speakers of Jewish origins played an important role.
Sándor Ferenczi was born in Miskolc, Hungary, a small industrial city east of Budapest, in 1873. His father came from Galicia during the 1848 revolution to participate in the uprising against the Habsburgs. As was common, he became a “Magyarized Jew” through his adoption of Hungarian language and culture. Afterwards, he opened a bookstore that was a popular hangout for nationalist poets in the town. As a result, “Sándor was exposed as a young man to political and revolutionary ideas, identifying with his father’s freethinking spirit.” Along with many other Jews of the period, Ferenczi found the medical profession, un-dominated by the nobility, an open avenue for social advancement and further assimilation. Ferenczi attended medical school at the University of Vienna and upon graduation in 1894 served his two years of compulsory military service in the Austro-Hungarian army as a physician. He then moved to Budapest where he became a practicing physician at the city’s Szent Rókus Kórház (hospital). After initially rejecting Freud’s Interpretation of Dreams (1900), he met Freud through psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961). He adopted the psychoanalytic worldview shortly thereafter in 1908. He became a private clinician and one of the most


2 Ibid., 4.


sought after psychoanalysts in the world for his mastery of the therapeutic technique. Freud would often send him the toughest cases. He received patients from abroad, especially America, which helped him remain financially stable despite the economic crises that affected Hungary after World War I. He was part of the world of “Budapest 1900” with its café culture and outpouring of cultural and intellectual production. He was a public intellectual. He published, gave many lectures, and tried to diagnose medically, that is psychoanalytically, his society's ills.

Besides being one of the key players in the development of mainstream Freudianism, he is known for his independent development of “mutual analysis.” Psychoanalytic therapy, in this technique, was conceived of as a dynamic interplay between analyst and analysand (the psychoanalytic term for patient). Rather than a simple process of free association by the analysand and interpretation by the analyst, in mutual analysis, analysis cut both ways. Related to mutual analysis was his famous notion of “active therapy.” Using the techniques of active therapy, the analyst could guide the analysand to productive thought areas, i.e. repressed ones, using “active intervention.” Furthermore, he put greater emphasis on the role of the mother in an individual’s development than Freud did. Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris in their article, “Sandor Ferenczi: Discovery and Rediscovery,” in their edited volume The Legacy of Sandor Ferenczi (1993), summarized Ferenczi’s influence succinctly when they stated, “Ferenczi shifted the theory of psychoanalysis form one that focused on the unfolding of libidinal drives, with objects as the most accidental factor, to a relational theory in which

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the character of the parents and the actual interpersonal functioning of the family system were the most central for the development of the child’s character structure.”  

As will be shown below, the emphasis on familial development was one of the key legacies Ferenczi handed down to Róheim. Because of this shift in emphasis, Ferenczi is remembered today as one of the founders of the Object Relations school of psychoanalysis which is held as an alternative to orthodox Freudianism in the psychoanalytic movement. Peter Rudnytsky, a psychoanalytic literary critic and psychoanalytic therapist, stated that “apart from Freud, he is the first generation pioneer who continues to be studied most closely by contemporary analysts; and, for those in the relational tradition, he has come to embody not simply a complement but a powerful alternative to Freud as well.”

Ferenczi’s legacy was revived during the 1980s with the publication of his correspondence with Freud as well as his Clinical Diary (1933). Ferenczi’s reputation had previously been tarnished by Ernest Jones (1879-1958) in his official biography of Freud. Jones was a trainee of Ferenczi and key player in the development of the movement, especially the “English” school. Due to their rivalry within the psychoanalytic community, he deemed Ferenczi insane at the end of his life. He attempted to downplay his importance to the movement in the aforementioned authorized biography of Freud. Ferenczi, a self-admitted hypochondriac, would die of pernicious anemia in 1933.

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Ferenczi’s life and work can be roughly divided into four periods: the pre-analytic period before 1908, the one before and during World War I from 1908-1919, the one after the Soviet Revolution of 1919, and the one after his increasing distance from Freud around 1930. In the second period, Ferenczi was far more active in the social and political realms. In the latter two, with the rise of anti-Semitism in Hungary, he moved away from politics and social commentary and retreated into clinical therapy and technique. He produced many of his most famous contributions to the psychoanalytic technique during this time. However, the focus in this thesis will be mostly on the second period in which he was at once a fairly orthodox Freudian and more overtly political. Through his work in this period, Ferenczi utilized psychoanalysis to portray the nation as a result of a deep structure of the mind. At the same time, he deployed psychoanalysis to try to influence its development. His grand view of the growth of life played into the concept of the nation as a natural grouping of humanity. These notions are reflected in both his works and in his correspondence with Freud. These will be combined, seeing as for Ferenczi, there was no “…clear and protective line between his professional and his private life.” Also, much of the scaffolding of psychoanalytic theory was produced at this time through such correspondence.9 Through the combination of his works, he crafted a picture of the “naturalness” of national community and thereby helped construct the world of nations as a whole.

Ferenczi’s only monograph, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*, was published in 1924. However, he developed most of the ideas for this work during the war and

therefore is representative of the first period of Ferenczi’s life more so than the second.\textsuperscript{10} He was reluctant to publish the work until Freud urged him to do so.\textsuperscript{11} This work can be seen as a biological foundation for the psychoanalytic worldview. It went far deeper into the history of humanity and even life than, for example, Freud went in his famous \textit{Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics} (1913). However, it is not anti-Freudian but rather was more of an auxiliary and deeper explanation for key foundational concepts in psychoanalysis such as the Oedipus complex. Through its emphasis on the mother, however, it does point in the direction of Ferenczi’s later deviation from Freudian orthodoxy.

This work shows the foundations of his worldview and demonstrates how nations were a natural result of his narrative. Ferenczi argued that the first step to life on Earth was a process of individuation. Though it is not entirely clear how inorganic matter became organic matter, he contends that through inorganic matter’s separation from the grand cosmic oneness, its individuation, it became organic matter or life. This separation occurred in the primordial sea. Shortly after achieving its separateness, this new life strove through its will, its élan vital, its libido to be once again joined with the cosmic totality. This longing resulted in the drive for connection with other similarly individualized life through fertilization and reproduction. As the primordial sea environment changed and dried up, it forced this aquatic life to the land. The trauma of being ripped from the primordial seas resulted in new yearning for return back to the seas and was layered on top of the original drive for cosmic oneness. As a result, the

\textsuperscript{10} Rudnytsky, \textit{Reading Psychoanalysis}, 114.

\textsuperscript{11} Rachman, \textit{Sándor Ferenczi}, 33.
manner of reproduction was changed through Lamarckian and not Darwinian evolution. The now land based organism changed its mode of sexual reproduction via its longing for the sea. No longer would the fertilization of eggs occur outside the body as with fishes in the primordial sea. Now fertilization occurred inside the body in the newly developed womb. The development of the womb and sex act that would fertilize it enabled the newly land based creatures to feel again as if they were part of the primordial sea. The subsequent birth of a new organism then recapitulated the trauma of organisms leaving the ocean. An organism exited from the substitute oneness of the cosmic totality and the primordial sea, the womb, into an individuated land based life. However, the organism always wished to “return to the womb,” or oneness. This then demonstrated the biological foundation of Freud’s Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex was Freud’s most famous theory which held that the child wished to kill the father and sleep with the mother. Freud called it “the nuclear complex” of all neurosis. For Ferenczi, this desire to enter the womb was reason for the development and universality of the Oedipal conflict. However, the requirements of the world, the reality principle, did not allow for this incestuous return. Thereby, this created the necessities of transference of this desire to other love-objects. This transference of desire for reconnection resulted in the perpetuation of progress and evolution via sexual reproduction.

Sexuality, then, for Ferenczi, as for Darwin, was the key to life. In the case of psychoanalysis, this was called the libido and Freud would later call it “Eros.” It was the

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force that set in motion the evolution of life and therefore humanity as well. Ferenczi defended this point, in his article, “Actual- and Psycho-Neuroses in the Light of Freud’s Investigations and Psycho-analysis” (1908), when he argued, “The apparent strangeness of this fact disappears, however, when one considers that the sexual instinct is one of the most powerful instincts in all living creatures and urges imperatively to action…”\textsuperscript{13} The result of this drive was a unilineal model of progression that was a key concept to both Ferenczi and psychoanalysis at large. It understood that evolutionary development propelled by sexuality resulted in a singular progression from the primordial to the prehistoric to the modern. The modern human, specifically the modern Western male, was the pinnacle of this development that extended all the way back to the very origins of life on Earth. Every other form of life could be arranged somewhere on this hierarchy of life. For example, sea based life was on a lower rung of the evolutionary ladder being more primitive because it had not even progressed out of the primordial sea. Other life, including the varieties of the human kind, such as races and nations as will be shown, were arranged on this scale as well.

In fact, this mono-linear process of development also occurred via Ernst Haeckel’s Law that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.”\textsuperscript{14} Haeckel’s Law argues that in each organism, including humans, the entire evolutionary development of its species was recapitulated within the life cycle of each individual. For example, since humans evolutionarily developed from primitive amoebas to primates and then culminated in an

\textsuperscript{13} Sándor Ferenczi, “Actual- and Psycho-Neuroses in the Light of Freud’s Investigations and Psycho-analysis,” \textit{Further Contributions}, 42.

\textsuperscript{14} Sulloway, \textit{Freud, Biologist of the Mind}, 199.
adult human, each individual human’s life goes through these stages, or as we will see some part of them, as well. Humans goes through the trauma of birth as earlier creatures went through the trauma of moving to land. After this, the individual develops into a primitive creature, a child, then a “savage” etc.

This cycle, however, was not fully realized in each individual and/or species or in the case of humans, race. Each “race” or “nation” is categorized based on their level of development in this spectrum just as each species of life can be arranged on it. Once again, this spectrum is arranged from “primitive,” belonging closer to animals, to “modern,” belonging to civilized Western man. In his “Medical Jurisprudence and Religion: A Lecture for Judges and Barristers” (1913), Ferenczi argued, “The study of the mind of present-day ‘savages’ made it possible for psycho-analysis to reconstruct the first state of cultural adaptation, and to demonstrate in detail the parallelism between this phase of human development and the development of the individual child mind.”

The “savages” were so backward in terms of “culture,” and the adaptation to the world this implied, that they represented a lower stage of being on the evolutionary scale. They were more akin to children who because of the phylogenetic nature of life were closer to the animals from which humans first emerged. The encounter with the “savages” enabled psychoanalysts to see what the “primitive” or archaic man looked like. The importance of the context of the “heyday of European colonialism,” as Celia Brickman has contended it was for Freud, made itself evident in Ferenczi’s work. As

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for many Europeans at this time, the encounter with non-European cultures produced the understanding of what it meant to be “civilized.” Many Europeans contrasted themselves to such peoples who they saw as representatives of the archaic state of humanity— the “people without history.”\(^\text{17}\) As it was for Ferenczi, this enabled the construction of an evolutionist hierarchy of culture with races and nations as the measured unit.

Furthermore, these “lower” beings had not yet adjusted to reality because they had not yet successfully evolved. They were still dominated by the pleasure principle, the instinctual desire for all things that feel good. They had not yet learned to tame themselves via encounter with the reality principle. They were infantile and dominated by irrational emotions. In one of his most famous essays, “Stages in the Development of Sense Reality” (1913), Ferenczi stated,

The development of the mental forms of activity in the individual consists, as Freud has shewn, in the resolution of the originally prevailing pleasure-principle, and the repression peculiar to it, by the adjustment to reality, i.e. by the testing of reality that is based on judgement. Thus arises out of the “primary” psychical stage, such as displayed in the mental activities of primitive beings (animals, savages, children), and in primitive mental states (dreams neurosis, phantasy), the secondary stage of the normal man is waking thought.\(^\text{18}\)

Just as in children, “savages” display a maladjustment to reality of the world resulting in a “primitive” mental state of neuroticism and fantasy. Implied, then, is that only Westerners have successfully adjusted to reality.


However, for psychoanalysis in general, and Ferenczi too, neurosis was not qualitatively distinct from the normal functioning of individuals. Rather pathological neuroses were a particular form of repression and transference that reflected a mal-adjustment to reality. “Normal” functioning individuals engaged in transference and repression but did so in concert with reality. He argued, in “Introjection and Transference” (1909), “we come to the conclusion that the paranoiac projection and the neurotic introjection are merely extreme cases of psychical processes the primary forms of which are to be demonstrated in every normal being.” In fact, the repression, transference, and eventually sublimation of instinctual sexual desire resulted in all human cultural productions. In other words, through transferring instinctual sexual desire, particularly that for the mother, to other things such as art or social movements, culture, broadly speaking, was produced. Therefore, culture was itself something qualitatively yet not quantitatively similar to neuroses. Culture was neurotic if it had not yet reached a particular stage of development and adaptation. He stated,

It is to be assumed that we shall someday succeed in bringing the individual stages in the development of the ego, and the neurotic regression-types of these, into a parallel with the stages in the racial history of mankind, just as, for instance, Freud found again in the mental life of the savage the characters of obsessional neurosis.

The “racial” history of humanity could be outlined by tracing the development of neurosis. Ferenczi is at once commenting on the “human race” and the various “races” of humanity. The “savage races” inhabit a lower position on this scale and still had the characteristics of a mental disorder while those at the top had achieved sublimation.


20 Ferenczi, “Stages in the Development of the Sense of Reality,” Sex, 236.
Each “race’s” particular neurosis resulted in them falling somewhere in between these two measures.

These mass neuroses were reflected by the culture of specific groups. Each “nation” or “race” then had a particular and essential set of neuroses or “culture” that defined them. He commented to Freud in July 1915 that,

It struck me that in the Zurich mental hospitals dementia praecox was so much more prevalent that(sic) in Hungarian ones. This illness is evidently the natural condition, as it were, of Nordic man, who has not yet completely overcome the last period of the Ice Age.21

The “Nordic” peoples thus have an essential schizoid nature that stems from their inability to progress past the stage of human development that existed in the Ice Age. This defined their particularistic features as a homogenous entity. The Hungarian nation or race did not suffer from such problems. Each group, however, could unquestionably be characterized by their particular neuroses. The “Nordic Race” had not yet overcome the phylogenetically recapitulated neuroses of the Ice Age. Therefore, via this inability to overcome this they had a differing neuroses. When writing about how underdevelopment was reflected in the use of “obscene words,” in his article, “On Obscene Words: Contribution to the Psychology of the Latent Period” (1911), he argued,

an important support for my supposition that obscene words remain “infantile” as the result of inhibited development, and on this account have an abnormal motor and regressive character, would be the ethnographic confirmation. Unfortunately, I have not sufficient experience on this point. What I know of the life of the lower classes, and especially of the gypsies, seems to indicate that among uncultivated people obscene words are perhaps more markedly invested with pleasure, and do not differ so

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21 Ferenczi, “552,” in The Correspondence, 67.
essentially from the rest of the vocabulary, as compared with the state of affairs among the cultivated.\textsuperscript{22}

According to Ferenczi, the Roma, like the lower classes, had an essential “retardation” in development that makes them use “uncultivated” obscene words. They are still dominated by primitive desires based on impulses for pleasure that had not been constrained by the reality principle. Nation, like class, was a natural grouping. Each group was defined by their particular neurosis and the stage of development that this group obtained. They were homogenous entities defined by these neuroses that could be traced back to the grand psychoanalytic view of the origins of life on Earth. The nation was a natural structure which could be explained by the sharing of common neurotic features.

An understanding of humanity divided up into “races” and “nations” was combined with an understanding that whole groups of people as well as individuals are selected for their evolutionary “fitness.” Ferenczi argued, echoing the famous intellectual Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), in his article, “The Analytic Conception of the Psycho-Neuroses” (1908), “that since the beginning of time ‘hunger and love’ have ruled the world, that the impulses for self- and race- preservation are equally powerful in every living creature.”\textsuperscript{23} It is clear that he was speaking of both the “human race” at large and individual “races” in general. He stated earlier in the same essay that “No person, however, can exist for himself alone, but must adapt himself to a complicated, almost unmodifiable milieu…culture requires of him that he should even regard self-sacrifice for


the community as something beautiful, good and worth striving for.”24 Each individual is engaged in a struggle of “survival of the fittest” and each “race,” his naturally occurring “unmodifiable” cultural community, as well. In his article, the “Ontogenesis of the Interest in Money” (1914), he argued that money was a natural outgrowth of the anal type character who began his “savings” through pleasure in retention of his excrement. As the anal character developed through life, this pleasure was repressed and transferred to the retention of money as a substitution. He also stated this repressed fascination with one’s own excrement was not applicable to others. It was natural that one was not fascinated by others’ excrement but rather abhorred it. In much the same manner, it was natural that “Foreign peoples and races, as is well known, cannot ‘riechen’ (stand to smell) each other.”25 Just as it is natural to be abhorred by others excrement, xenophobia is natural in peoples, races, or nations. When commenting on the outbreak of World War I, in his article “A Veszedelmek Jégkorszaka” (The Perils of the Ice Age) (1914), he argued, that the conflict had ripped off the mask of Europe’s notion of being non-animals. The start of the war revealed its natural group struggle tendencies which had formed during the Ice Age. Therefore, he stated, “This is the naturalness with which we go to kill, maybe to be killed ourselves, it does not differ from primitive nations’ instinct-manifestations.”26 Therefore, the struggle among the discreet “unmodifiable” mutually exclusive and naturally xenophobic cultural races is natural.

24 Ibid., 19.
For races/nations to remain effective in this natural Darwinian struggle of competing units, they must make themselves become more “fit.” They must become stronger and more well-adapted. In addition to more control over nature and more material well-being, he contended, in his article, “Exploring the Unconscious” (1912), that science offers “a third possibility which is at least as promising, and this is the hope of developing man’s physical and mental powers and his adaptability. This is the aim of individual and social hygiene, and of eugenics, that ever-expanding movement which has its aim the improvement of the race.”

Each “race” is seen as a unit of selection, that in order to be “fit” in the naturally occurring Darwinian struggle, must be “cleansed” through eugenics. This reflects the nationalism of the day in that each race and nation was seen as distinct, naturally xenophobic, and competitive. Each unit had to be cleansed and healthy in order to survive in a world of conflicting, distinct, and homogenous nations. In fact, Ferenczi was involved in the Society of Social Sciences and published in the popular social sciences journal the *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century). Marius Turda, in his “Nationalizing Eugenics: The Hungarian Public Debate of 1910-1911” (2012), argued that both these organizations were key organs for the eugenics movement. He argued, “Eugenics, in this context, was seen as a mechanism capable of decoding particular social and national predicaments, an expression of the ideal of a healthy nation in the face of dramatic demographic and social changes.”

With the advent of mass participation in society via urbanization, industrialization and mass communication, it was clear to Ferenczi and like-minded thinkers that many of the

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people in the naturally occurring nations or races were not up to par. They were harming the position of the nation/race as a whole in this evolutionist hierarchy.

As has already been demonstrated, Ferenczi’s understanding of culture was based on neurosis. His version of “unhealthiness” stemmed from malfunctioning neurosis rather than biological “degeneration.” Nonetheless, his flirtation with eugenics shows an inability to escape the national and racial health paradigms of his day. At the same time, it shows the ability for psychoanalysis to participate in the national and racial understandings despite its abandonment of degeneration theory and biological material causality. Ferenczi wished to improve the Hungarian nation to prevent it from falling behind in the Darwinian struggle among races. It is important to note here that Ferenczi should not be seen as a precursor to the Nazis, as the discussion of eugenics often entails. Rather this reflects more of a concern with social health of the nation and race. It was the result of the interplay between his status as a mental health physician and his belief that a race and/or nation comprised of sealed group of humans engaged in a Darwinian struggle. It could, and probably would, be seen as a precursor to the interventionist “racial hygiene” health programs in the Nordic welfare states if history had taken a different course. 29

Related to this, psychoanalysis itself fit into this ideal of the improvement of the nation with less radical ideas. With his friend, Hugo Ignotus (1869-1949), who was also editor of the journal Nyugat, Michelle Moreau-Ricard argued, “We may suppose that both men had the same intention- to open the mind, to awaken Hungary, and to build a

synergy for a revolution of ideas.” Her assertion is supported by Ferenczi’s argument in his article “Psychoanalysis and Education” (1908). He stated that “clinging to meaningless religious superstitions, to traditional cult of authorities, to obsolete social institutions, are pathological phenomena of the folk-mind- so to speak, obsessive acts and ideas of the collective mind- their motivating forces being repressed wish-impulses which have been made rampant by erroneous education.” Psychanalysis then would bring education the tools it needed to reform society out of peasant backwardness, spare it “the burden of unnecessary repression” and modernize its obsolete institutions. Indeed, as Alice Freifeld, in her Nationalism and Crowd in Liberal Hungary (2000) has shown, nationalism and liberalism went hand in hand in the Hungarian context, at least in this period. Liberalism and nationalism, stemming from the failed revolution of 1848, were brought into association with one another as ideological tools against the domination of the Habsburgs, which was seen as the antithesis of both. Though this intersection was beginning to change into a less liberally minded conception, Ferenczi belongs to the long tradition of national liberalism in Hungary. This national-liberal impulse led him to comment to Freud on the “bourgeois revolution” in Hungary in 1918. In 1918, an amalgam of left-wing democratic parties gained power after political turmoil erupted in Budapest because of the war. They proclaimed the Hungarian Republic and its independence from the Habsburg Empire. The newly

31 Ferenczi, “Psycho-Analysis and Education,” in Final Contributions, 282.
32 Ibid., 282.
independent government instituted democratic social and politic reforms. Ferenczi commented to Freud that after the “bourgeois revolution” “certainly, a free, - but dirt-poor Hungary has arisen out of the proud- but feudal- Hungary in the few months since we last saw each other.” The revolution had brought this natural entity, Hungary, out from the backwardness of repressive feudalism and Habsburg domination. It was brought into a free and modern condition yet remained impoverished. Further he stated,

Hardly have I begun to adapt painfully to the imminent dismemberment of the country of Hungary and commenced to seek a substitute for the lost ideal in the promised social upheaval and the liberal development….. which is mostly directed against Jews who have become rich and village notaries (because they mistreated the people), caused the ground under my feet to shake. Hardly had order been restored when the news came of the demeaning treatment of my co-nationals on all the country’s borders- and the patriotic mourning was rekindled.

Despite his ambivalence which stemmed from the anti-Semitism associated with the chaos of the revolution, here is a clear explication of the relationship between his desire for the improvement of his country and his nationalism. His reformism and desire for progress were a result of his concern for his particular nation- in other words, his nationalism. He was perceptive enough to see the potential adverse effects of the radical change. However, he still believed in marching forward in a liberal path with what remained of his nation. He saw this nation as natural and as an object deserving passionate loyalty. He was distressed by the soon to be enacted truncation of his country by the victorious powers which reignited his “patriotic mourning.”

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34 Ferenczi, “778,” in *Correspondence Vol. II*, 319.

35 Ferenczi, “770”, Ibid., 308.
This revolutionary liberal impulse was part of the reason for his fateful participation in the next revolution that occurred in Hungary. This was the Communist Revolution of 1919 led by Béla Kun. Economic disaster, dissatisfaction with the Entente imposed new borders of Hungary, and general insecurity led to a Communist takeover in the capital. Many social democrats joined this new cause that promised border revision and social equality. Ferenczi was not a communist but was rather more in line with the social democrats. He favored what he would later term an "individualist-socialist direction."^36 William McCagg, in his article, “Jews in Revolution: The Hungarian Experience” (1972), has argued convincingly that, “Jews who figured as revolutionaries in Modern Central and Eastern Europe were basically modernizers…. they were a function of the tensions between modern city and traditional agrarianism.”^37 In other words, many Jewish revolutionaries were involved with the Communist revolution and regime not to spawn an internationalist overturn of the bourgeois order, but rather to aid in the modernization process of their particular nation. They sought to overturn the stagnant noble agrarian corporatism in favor of a more equal and modern society. It was nonetheless national and in fact associated with border revision that intended to make the nation “whole” again. Though one does not have to take McCagg’s argument that Kun was part of this trend, Ferenczi, because he was in a less central position in the regime, was clearly not an internationalist for reasons discussed above. Rather his

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association with the revolution should be seen as part of an urban and national modernizing tradition.

In fact, only after the petitioning of many university students was Ferenczi offered a position as a professor of psychoanalysis from the revolutionary government. Upon his acceptance, he became the first professor of psychoanalysis in the world. His tenure, however, was short lived. With the fall of the Communist regime after the successful invasion of the Romanian army, former Habsburg naval Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868-1957) led a band of right-wing military officers from the southern Hungarian city of Szeged, where they had organized, into Budapest to establish a new regime. The violent and lethal summary justice perpetrated by this group against those associated with the Communist revolution, especially the Jews, became known as the “White Terror.” Other means of punishment were also meted out. Ferenczi was stripped of his professorship and membership in the Royal Medical Society. The rise of anti-Semitism that accompanied Horthy’s ascension to power lead to a shift in Ferenczi’s work. He was no longer so prone to comment on social and political issues. Rather, he would let psychoanalysis speak for itself, confident that it “offered more views for solutions of individual and social problems.”

In this shift, his frustration with the success of new definition of Hungarian nation, one that he had so enthusiastically argued against earlier, became evident. This new conception was a “Christian Hungary.” Paul A. Hannebrink has argued, in his In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944

39 Sándor Ferenczi, “Pszichoanalízis és Társadalompolitik.”
(2006), that “‘Christian Hungary’ had become a slogan embracing a variety of responses to Hungary’s national emergency, a fusion of secular political concerns and religious rhetoric that suggested a politics of national redemption. In the emerging ‘Christian-nationalism’ Christianity represented an antidemocratic moral vision.” It also represented a unified nation against its enemies in which Jews were perceived as “inchoate but menacing threat to national security that transcended the internal and external theaters of war.” Jews were blamed for the calamity of the period, especially the Revolution. Despite their earlier assimilation, acceptance, and nationalism, Jews were now being ostracized from the tightening bounds of the now independent Hungarian nation by its new definition as Christian, anti-liberal, and anti-Semitic. When commenting on the rise of the “Christian-nationalism,” the “ruthless clerical-anti-Semitic spirit,” Ferenczi commented to Freud mournfully,

> If everything does not deceive, we Hungarian Jews are now facing a period of brutal persecution of Jews. They will, I think, have cured us in a very short time of the illusion with which we were brought up, namely, that we are ‘Hungarians of Jewish Faith.’ I picture Hungarian anti-Semitism-commensurate with the national character- to be more brutal than the petty-hateful type of the Austrians. It will very soon become evident how one can live and work here. It is naturally the best thing for psychoanalysis to continue working in complete withdrawal and without noise. Personally one will have to take this trauma as an occasion to abandon certain prejudices brought along from the nursery and to come to terms with the bitter truth of being, as a Jew, really without a country. One must distribute the libido which become free in that way between the few friends whom one has rescued from this debacle, the only true soul that accompanies one through thick and thin, and science.\(^{42}\)


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 59

\(^{42}\) Ferenczi, “819,” Ibid., 366.
His previous commitment to Hungary was challenged by the rising tide of anti-Semitism. He very much thought of himself as a “Hungarian of the Jewish faith” and only with the rise of an anti-Semitic definition of national community would he detach himself and his “libido” from the national project he had previously held so dear. He thus retreated into psychoanalysis. Here it is also clear that he understood each individual nation as having particular national characters that defined it as a whole. Nations and the character of the people who constituted them were seen as deeply homogenous entities. He also commented that in these uncertain times, “It is a good thing one has a Jewish and a psychoanalytic ego along with the Hungarian, which remain untouched by these events.”

As Ferenc Erős would succinctly summarize, it was a result of the anti-Semitism that “the ‘psychoanalytic ego’ came to the forefront.” He had to retreat from his participation in the national project that was reflected in his psychoanalytic world-view and into pure psychoanalysis. The ego, however, was partly a national one, a result of the deep structures of the mind as proposed by psychoanalysis. Luckily for Ferenczi, these deep structures also produced a psychoanalytic, a scientific, ego that he could retreat into.

In conclusion, even though psychoanalysis styled itself as a universally applicable science, for Ferenczi, it also implied the naturalness, the universality, of the national community. Owing to the grand evolutionary course of life on Earth each individual eventually became seen as belonging to a national/racial community that had

43 Ferenczi, “760,” Ibid., 297.

a homogenous and essential neurosis that defined it. These communities could be arranged on an evolutionist hierarchy from barbarity to civilization. Each of these entities could then be selected for their evolutionary fitness just as different species could. Therefore, Ferenczi wished to improve this national “organism.” He argued for the application of eugenics for overall societal improvement. This demonstrates his psychoanalysis’s inability to escape the national and racial discourse of the contemporary scientific community. He further participated and was in favor of the 1919 Revolution for his commitment to both liberalism and the Hungarian nation, which for him were deeply intertwined. He moved away from his outward participation in this national community when a definition of national community based on heredity came to power and de facto excluded him as a Jew from this national community.
CHAPTER 4
THE NATION IN THE TRIBE: RÓHEIM

Géza Róheim was the founder of psychoanalytic anthropology as a distinct
discipline. He was born into a wealthy middle class Jewish family in Budapest in 1891.
One scholar has called him a “child prodigy” because even as child he was keenly
academic and a prolific writer.¹ His father opened him an account at a local bookstore
and he used it to read books mostly on folklore and anthropology. While still in
gymnasium, he was invited to present a paper to the Hungarian Ethnological Society.
Seeing that there was no avenue for formal study of anthropology at this time in
Budapest, he went to Leipzig and Berlin for his university studies. Here too he could
only manage to get a minor in anthropology, in fact, completing his PhD in Geography.²
He subsequently returned to Budapest and became further compelled by the
psychoanalytic worldview. Therefore, he was analyzed by Ferenczi in 1915. He then
joined the Ethnological department of the Hungarian National Museum until the
takeover of the Horthy regime which forced him from this position.³ Afterwards he
became a professor of anthropology at the University of Budapest.⁴ He was a prolific
and multi-lingual writer. He wrote in Hungarian, German, English and French. He also
knew Latin and several aboriginal languages. From his adoption of psychoanalysis until
his field expedition in 1928, he engaged in what was called “armchair anthropology” a

¹ Christopher Brian Nichols, “The History of Psychoanalytic Anthropology: From Freud to Róheim” (PhD
diss., Brandeis University, 1975), 302.

435.

³ Weston La Barre, “Géza Róheim,” 273.

⁴ Ibid., 273.
common methodology of the era. “Armchair anthropology” used the field reports of other scholars as the basis for drawing anthropological conclusions. Acknowledging the limits of this method and the criticisms of his work derived from this, he sought to go into the field himself. He received financing from Maria Bonaparte, the same person who later paid for Freud’s escape from Nazi controlled Vienna. His trip from 1928-1931 took him not only to Australia, his main objective, but also to America to study the Yumi Indians, as well as to Somalia and Melanesia. In 1938 due to the increasing persecution of Jews in Hungary he was forced to flee Budapest. He went to America and join the Worcester State Hospital staff in Massachusetts. He later opened a private practice in New York City where he lived and worked until the end of his life. He was, as a friend and fellow psychoanalyst Rene Spitz, called him “fiercely Hungarian.” At his request, a Hungarian flag was placed over his coffin at his funeral.

Paul A. Robinson, in his book the *Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Géza, Róheim, Herbert Marcuse* (1969), called a Róheim a “radical Freudian” because he was a “ruthless leveler, subjecting all cultural artifacts to the most uncompromising sort of psychoanalytic reductionism.” Indeed, Róheim was a radical in this manner. Much of his work can be seen as an inventory of various myths, folklore, and cultural tropes and

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6 Ibid., xv.
7 Spitz, “Géza Róheim,” 326.
an attempt to explain them based on a universalist psychoanalytic framework. In classic psychoanalytic therapy, a patient’s dreams are used to understand the desires of the unconscious that are repressed by the conscious mind. Róheim did much of the same in a vastly different situation. He analyzed his aboriginal informants’ dreams and at the same time proposed that myths were near equivalents of dreams. Myths, for Róheim, expressed the underlying universal complexes of particular groups and therefore could be explained in psychoanalytic terms. This garnered him fierce criticism from other anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict who argued from a more cultural relativistic standpoint. Anthropologists in this vein thought that utilizing psychoanalytic precepts ripped myths, dreams, etc. from their specific context in which they functioned with immediate, particular meanings and uses. Róheim, however, was unfazed and argued in his article, “Freud and Anthropology. Freud’s 80th Birthday” (1936), that “if we admit its (psychoanalysis’s) validity in Europe we must believe a priori that as a method of investigation it is at least applicable to the individual savage. Of course, in this statement, the fundamental psychological unity of mankind is taken for granted.” If psychoanalysis is applicable to Europeans, it is also applicable to all of humanity. Therefore, because psychoanalysis can universally portray the workings of the mind, then these underlying structures that it is capable of explaining must also be universal. Thereby, there is a “psychological unity of mankind” or an underlying commonality of mental make-up that defines humanity as a whole.

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Despite this unity, for Róheim, the universals of mankind produced “natural” particulars. Much like Ferenczi, one of the culminations of Róheim’s universal vision of the development of humanity was a natural particular- the nation. As Joy Damousi, in her article “Géza Róheim and the Australian Aborigine: Psychoanalytic Anthropology during the Interwar Years” (2011), summarized succinctly, “the question that underlines his work is one that is at the heart of psychoanalysis: How universal is the psychoanalytic self? Is the unconscious universal, or is it bound by cultural determinants? For Róheim, the answer is paradoxically yes to both questions.”\(^{11}\) One of the most important of these “cultural determinants” was the nation. To get here his grand narrative must be understood as a whole in order to demonstrate how it culminated in the nation. Róheim was a prolific writer and wrote many monographs and essays even after his emigration to America. However, based on the primary considerations of this thesis, that is psychoanalysis in Budapest, the focus will be limited to his time in Budapest which lasted until 1938. One notable exception is his work *The Origin and Function of Culture*, which was published in 1943. Though it falls outside the period in question, the work can be viewed as a culmination of all of the work in the Budapest period. It is also one of the clearest expositions of his theoretical contentions.

Róheim in some ways fills the gaps between Ferenczi’s grand biological narrative in *Thalassa* and his commentary on the contemporary world. Róheim often focused on the transition of humanity from “animal” to “man.” “Man’s” earliest stages, for Róheim, were reflected by the Australian aborigines. For Róheim, humans differentiated

themselves from animals through a delayed period of infancy or what evolutionary psychologists call today neoteny. The delayed period of infancy allowed humanity to be exposed to more trauma than his anthropoid ape brethren. In his essay, “Primitive High Gods” (1934) he contended that, “The long period in which the immature human infant is subjected to series of libidinal traumata for which it is not prepared biologically would explain the necessity and the origin of psychical defense mechanisms. These mechanisms give rise to all our conquests over nature but also to all our troubles.”

Humans have the primal impulses of a mature animal. However, because of their delayed psychic maturity, they are unprepared mentally for the trauma that these instincts propel them to encounter. Thus, unlike animals, humans are exposed to more psychic trauma before they are fully biologically (physically) developed. This exposure to trauma results in in the need for defense mechanisms such as projection, repression and sublimation. These mechanisms, though seemingly negative, are in fact what gives us the ability to “conquer” nature. They also give humans culture which distinguishes them from the animals. In the same work, he stated, “If there were no anxiety there would be no reason for repression and hence no projection and no symbol-formation and this anxiety is rooted in the infantile situation.” Thus anxiety produced by infantile trauma results in the defense mechanisms which produce culture, and thereby results in humanity’s dominance over nature and other animals.

Of course, as for any classic psychoanalysts, the chief trauma is that of the Oedipus complex. This complex was the prime driver of the trauma that produced

13 Ibid., 88.
culture. However, for Róheim, though the complex itself was universal, it manifested itself in different ways. These differences caused varieties of repression, projections, and sublimations. In other words, they caused differences in culture as well as producing civilization. In his essay, “Psycho-analysis of Primitive Cultural Types” (1932), he contended,

Civilization in general is evolved from the process of defense against the primal instinctual demands and takes the shape of a specific culture as a mode of defense against a typical infantile trauma. The universal fundamental psychic material consists of the Oedipus complex and castration-anxiety. The transition to the various specific traumata is supplied by the child’s observation of the primal scene. In itself this is indeed an experience common to all mankind, but it may already be regarded as more or less specific trauma according to the varying behavior of the parents.14

Civilization, culture, all that defines humans as such, was a “reaction formation” against the trauma that a child experienced during infancy. This trauma was produced by the human commonalities of the Oedipus complex and castration anxiety. Especially important was the way in which the child observed and subsequently repressed his observation of the “primal scene” or intercourse between his or her two parents. The “primal scene” was especially important because it activated jealousy for the father for having intercourse with the mother, thus generating resentment and anxiety. However, these fundamental complexes, though universal, manifested themselves in the individual particularly “according to the varying behavior of the parents.” The particular development of these complexes was determined by the way in which the parents exposed the child to the “primal scene.” More generally, we might say, the variations in

the culture resulting from the varieties of the Oedipus complex were due to variations in “child-rearing practices.”

The parents “behavior” was in turn determined by their own parent’s behavior. In his magnum opus, *The Riddle of the Sphinx or Human Origins* (1934), he stated “In our relations with our children we live again our own childhood, and satisfy the libidinal impulses that have not been otherwise fulfilled.”¹⁵ The parents recapitulate their own infantile situations because of their own unfulfilled “libidinal impulses.” Thereby they raise their children in the same situation in which they were raised. Once again, though these complexes themselves are universal, the way in which they are unresolved and subsequently transmitted remain particular. The passing down of these universals though particularly unresolved complexes results in “a vicious circle from a typical trauma to a typical super-ego structure, and from this to a repetition of the same trauma.”¹⁶ The “super-ego structure” is the voice of others wishes, especially the parents, inside the individual. In other words, it is socially determined values, or the conscience, inside the mind. This “vicious cycle,” for Róheim, explains how the universal experiences of the Oedipus complex were passed down without resorting to the Lamarckism utilized by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. For Freud, the primal crime, the slaying of the father by the “band of brothers,” was placed via Lamarckian evolution into the collective unconscious of man. Freud blatantly acknowledges that he “presupposes” this collective unconscious in which subsequent generations “have had no knowledge of

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¹⁶ Ibid., 156.
that action (the primal crime).”¹⁷ Róheim, in his article, “The Study of Character Development and the Ontogenetic Theory of Culture” (1934), disagreed,

I think we ought to be able to understand culture first in the psychology of the present bearers of culture, as the collective neurosis of a group, before we can correlate it with the process of psychical transformation which took place at the dawn of humanity. I do not mean to say that we should give up all hopes of psychological reconstruction of the past, but it seems obvious that a culture, like a neurosis, should be traced to its ontogenetic roots before we invoke the shades of phylogensis.¹⁸

For Róheim, the Oedipus complex need not be explained by phylogeny, the history of the species. In contrast to Freud, there was no need to presuppose that the primal crime had modified the collective unconscious of humanity and thereby was transmitted through the generations. It could more directly and simply be explained by child rearing practices and the way they are passed down through the generations. Oedipal conflicts were inevitable, and the varied ways in which they occurred were recapitulated through culture not biology. The varying ways of dealing with the ever recapitulating primal conflict resulted in variations of culture. He summarized,

The revolt against the father leads to unconscious guilt and provokes analogous actions. This periodicity between trauma and super-ego structure is the true cause of cultural stability. In any one culture, for example the Melanesian, the growing generation is always consciously offered the same traditional structure, the same possibilities of sublimation, and in virtue of the typical infantile traumata, this framework is always filled with the same unconscious content.¹⁹

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¹⁷ Freud, Totem and Taboo, 195.


¹⁹ Róheim, The Riddle of the Sphinx, 156.
The various ways in which “revolt against the father,” or the manifestation of the recapitulation of the primal crime, occurs produces variations in culture which are stable entities. It produces structures which are passed down from generation to generation and then define the cultural unit as a whole. The demons, myths, culture, etc. that are produced by this are then all unique projections, transferences, and sublimations. The unique features produced by this process are different than those produced by other cultures. The collective commonalities resulting from this situation define the culture as a whole. Róheim understands,

By culture we shall understand the sum of all sublimations, all substitutes or reaction formations, in short everything in society that inhibits impulses or permits their distorted satisfaction. Thus we are led logically to assume that individual cultures can be derived from typical infantile traumata, and that culture in general (everything which differentiates man from the lower animals) is a consequence of infantile experience.20

Cultural character can be determined by its infantile situation because culture is the sum of all the trauma that occurred during the infantile situation. Therefore, he contended that,

Just as the analyst in clinical analysis will be able through analyzing the transference to construe the original infantile libido-situation, the analyst in the field will be in possession of a reliable clue that helps him to understand the original libido-situation and the character of a people.21

According to Róheim, the psychoanalyst can determine the development of an individual based on the way he was raised. Therefore, the anthropological analyst can also determine the “character” of a whole people in the same way. Transferences in the clinical situation reveal repressed complexes of the infantile situation. Through

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21 Róheim, “Primitive Cultural Types,” 12.
analyzing the individual dreams of an informant and their collective ones, i.e. myths, the psychoanalytic anthropologist can determine the infantile situation of the whole group. He puts it in other words when he stated, "If analysis discloses the connection between infantile experience and the fate of individuals, it is self-evident that the insight gained can be applied to the fate of peoples."\textsuperscript{22}

The logical corollary to this contention is that there is such a thing as "group character." This means that individuals in groups have essential features in common. They all have similar character traits that define the group as a whole. Indeed, Róheim explicitly stated his belief in this when he explained, "What I believe is that there is such a thing as a group character, and that it is based on the collective sublimation of customary traumata, although, of course, not without individual deviations from the standard type."\textsuperscript{23} Group character then is a real thing. It is based on the deep history of the psychoanalytically conceived mind. It results in a homogenized view of cultural units. Unlike Freud or Jung, he does not presuppose a collective unconscious. Rather "cultural stability" derives from ontogenetic recapitulation based on the stable transmission of variations of manifestations of Oedipal conflicts from generation to generation. Therefore, he deems his theory, his main intellectual contribution, the "ontogenetic theory of culture." Furthermore, these cultural units are not determined by contact with other groups, but rather act as sealed entities revolving around their own particular situation. In contrast to other anthropologists, who emphasize cultural contact as a chief determinant of cultural features, for Róheim, this is not the case. He stated

\textsuperscript{22} Róheim, \textit{The Riddle of the Sphinx}, 152.

\textsuperscript{23} Róheim, "The Study of Character Development," 290.
that, “A new development in the character of a people with a corresponding change in their culture has not been observed to result from contact with other races.”\textsuperscript{24} Therefore cultural units are static entities. They exist in a sealed unit in a historical but unchanging chain of continuity. They pass down their cultural features through transmission of common Oedipal situations. Culture is not created by contact with other groups but rather the perpetuation of these unique and particular complexes based on the infantile situation.

So far it has been established that, for Róheim, culture is produced by the trauma experienced in the infantile situation. Trauma produces culture. Variations of culture are produced by variations of (Oedipal) trauma. Cultural variations are sealed groups that, although not without deviation, are generally homogenous. Róheim produces a picture of sharply delineated, nearly unchanging, and continuous cultural units. The question then still remains did Róheim conceive of the nation as one of these eternal cultural units? The answer is a resounding yes. His notion of “culture” and “cultural units” is perfectly in line with the nationalist image of nation as a homogenous group of people that exists almost statically throughout time. Further, Róheim explicitly contends that the nation was one of these natural cultural units produced by the variations in the universal Oedipal situation. In his “second” magnum opus, \textit{The Origin and Function of Culture} (1943), he stated that “having learnt to accept substitute objects Eros. Without giving up the desire to regain the original it is ever in search of new substitutes, on its eternal search the family, the tribe, and the nation are formed.”\textsuperscript{25} Here, Róheim is building from

\textsuperscript{24} Róheim, \textit{The Riddle of the Sphinx}, 154.

\textsuperscript{25} Géza Róheim, \textit{The Origin and Function of Culture} (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, 1943), 99.
Ferenczi’s “return to the womb” thesis outlined in *Thalassa*. For Róheim, the family, tribe, and the nation were all substitutes for the ability to return to the womb through the mother. They were substitute objects that were produced by the separation from the mother. Being ripped away from the mother at birth resulted in the desire for the return to the womb. The impossibility of this and the conflict with the father led to the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex led to trauma which produced substitutions or culture. One of these substitutions was the nation. The nation was one of these units of cultural production that was in turn produced by trauma. The nation or race is therefore natural based on the naturally occurring infantile situation. By portraying it as natural, he is also constructing it.

Furthermore, in one the aforementioned essays, Róheim already provided his answer to the question of whether “group character” does exist at all. The answer that he proposed was a definitive “yes.” However, the guiding consideration that started this essay must be considered. He stated,

> There are, of course, very great differences in the opinions nations form about themselves and in the views held by others regarding their neighbors. We shall have to inquire into the question as to how far this idea of a collective or group character is justified, by which I do not mean to ask whether the French or the Germans are really what they are alleged to be, but whether and how such a thing as a group character can exist.\(^{26}\)

Here, he is not attempting to explain whether or not common stereotypes of national character were accurate. Rather he wishes to determine if attempting to characterize nations as entities based on their collective “character” was possible. Therefore, by answering the group character question in the affirmative, he was also

\(^{26}\) Róheim, “The Study of Character Development,” 281.
affirming the existence of national characters regardless if the common portrayal of them was indeed accurate. His belief in “national character” was an outcome of his general belief in the static nature of cultural units and their naturalness as a product of the psychoanalytically conceived mind. Katherine Verdery, in her introductory essay to the edited volume, *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (1995), contended that “the notion of national character is one of the basic building blocks of a national ideology.”27 National character in this period then was key to nationalism. She also stated that, “Whereas other ways of identifying the nation emphasized externalities and behavior—language use, religious practice, dress customs like group-specific life-cycle rituals, and so forth, discussions in terms of character and essence brought in an inner dimension.”28 This served to “sharpen a national self-definition.”29 Therefore, as has been stated previously, Róheim should be seen as part of this “sharpening” of the notions of nation through bringing to them an “inner dimension” or a psychological one. In his case, it is one that stretches all the way back to origin of the human mind. In participating in the debate over the veracity of national characters and their natures, he was well in line with the nationalist debates of the interwar period. Despite the universalism of psychoanalysis, it produced particularistic variations of “group character.” It helped understand and construct national character that was a common and important trope of the nationalism of the period.


28 Ibid., xviii.

29 Ibid., xviii.
Further, much as in Ferenczi, and Freud for that matter, these various natural units of nations or races were arranged on the same evolutionist hierarchy from barbarity to civilization. For Róheim, the amount of sublimation determined the position on this hierarchy just as for Ferenczi. However, for Róheim, this was based on the amount of the infantile experience found in any given race or nation. He argued that, “The theory of retardation contributes largely to the problem of the differential psychology of different peoples. The northern races are the most retarded and, in certain respects, the most foetalized, though they are without certain forms of foetalization displayed by other races, especially the Mongols. Negroes are less retarded; development and decay are quicker.”

The same evolutionist hierarchy exists for Róheim as for Ferenczi and Freud, yet, Róheim inverts it. Rather than the infantile, the more “foetalized” or being closer to the womb, being more backwards, the more infantile was more advanced. Infantilism, as has already been established, was the key to a high culture because of a longer exposure to Oedipal trauma. The more infantile, the more trauma, the more trauma the collective cultural unit endured, the more culture it would be compelled to produce by its reaction formations or repressions, sublimations, and substitutions.

This cultural hierarchy and his belief in national character enabled Róheim to have a particular notion of where Hungarians and their national characters fit on this scale. In his essay, “Biopolitical Mythologies: Róheim, Freud, (Homo)phobia, and the Sexual Science of Eastern European Otherness” (2016), anthropologist and professor at Central European University, Hadley Z. Renkin argues that Róheim’s work was

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30 Róheim, *Riddle of the Sphinx*, 239.
“functioning to render Hungarians and Eastern European people and non-European “primitive” cultures ethnologically and psychologically equivalent—coeval—while at the same time denying their coevalness with the people and cultures of the modern European West.” For Renkin, Róheim portrays the Hungarians and East Europeans as backwards and as “savages.” Renkin is indeed right in this. For Róheim, Hungarians and other East Europeans were more in line with the primitive traditional subjects of anthropology than the modern Western “man.” Eastern Europe was a site of psychologically “backward” people due to their lack of infantilism. However, what Renkin neglects to mention is that for Róheim this was not necessarily negative. Róheim, following in a long tradition of European intellectual history that stems from Rousseau, romanticizes the noble savage. He argues that the “savages,” despite being more backwards, have something that the modern world has lost. In his article, “The Evolution of Culture” (1934), he argued that “In primitive society there are no individuals who are oppressed or despised, nobody whose will is not in harmony with the public will, none who live a life under the compulsion of an endopsychic ‘need for punishment.’ They are “easy-going” and not prone to the inclination to “exalt suffering into a national institution.” They are happier and more in touch with each other and themselves and have no need for guilt-ridden institutions. Therefore, by portraying the Hungarians as part of this backwardness he is not necessarily “orientalizing” them in the

32 See Róheim, Animism, Magic and the Divine King, 105.
34 Ibid., 400.
classic Saidian sense. Rather Hungarians and East-Europeans because of their backwardness have something to offer that the modern world has lost.

In conclusion, Róheim argued that cultural units are homogenous entities that are stable throughout time based on a “viscous circle” of ontogenetic recapitulation passed down through the generations. One of the natural units of cultural that resulted from this vision, like the family, was the nation or race. These cultural units, could and indeed have “group characters.” They were conceived of as deeply homogenous. They were not a result of cultural contact between groups but rather were self-contained and sharply delineated eternally existing entities. Further, these nations and races could be categorized on a unilineal hierarchy. Unlike Ferenczi, this was not a hierarchy which placed infantile at the bottom to adult at the top but rather the opposite. However, the neo-colonial evolutionist paradigm that created so much of European notions of cultural superiority and nationalism still rang true. He portrayed his own nation and its national character as backward. For Róheim, however, this meant Hungarians had not fully lost what full modernity had taken away; they were less repressed than more modern nations. Therefore, by creating a narrative of harsh and sharply delineated cultural units conceived of as natural and national, Róheim then was part of the construction of the idea of a world of national communities where each nation was a sealed entity with a homogenous culture and character.

However, like Ferenczi before him, this psychoanalytical conception of nation was not based on the idea of genetic or physical characteristics but was conceived of as determined by the psyche and culture. For Róheim, this culture was solely based on the infantile situation. His rejection of the dominant understandings of the nation based on
biology, as for Ferenczi, was likely due at least in part to his Jewish heritage. By creating a vision of nation that was based solely on the infantile situation, Jews could not be excluded from the national community. They were born into any given nation and thereby had the same infantile situation that would lead to the development of the same national character. By having the same national character, they belonged to the national community just as everyone else. Despite the ever-increasing anti-Semitism of interwar Hungary, many Jews, such as Róheim, remained deeply attached to the Hungarian nation they helped create and shape. This is demonstrated by Róheim’s decision to be buried with the Hungarian flag as well as the testimony of many of his friends who stated that he deeply missed his homeland and always observed Hungarian customs.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore, Róheim in his own peculiar way, was part of the deepening of the concept of national community during the interwar period and their continued construction.

\textsuperscript{35} This exaggerated “Hungarianess” could have been a result of the need to overcompensate and prove loyalty to the nation in the context of ever growing anti-Semitism which questioned Jewish loyalty to the growing sense of national community.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Sándor Ferenczi and Géza Róheim were both adherents of a peculiar vision of mind: psychoanalysis. This vision of mind was created by its famous founder, Sigmund Freud. Despite contestations over psychoanalysis’s validity as a true science of mind, the historiography of psychoanalysis agrees that Freud himself and the intellectual movement that he spawned were deeply rooted in the time and context in which they emerged. It reflected the immediate social and cultural milieu of the day. At the same time, it was rooted in broader philosophical and scientific trends and assumptions. Especially important was the Darwinian revolution which formed the foundation of psychoanalytic theory. Though deeply dependent on biology, psychoanalysis itself was in many ways a reaction to the dominant biological psychology of the day. Biological psychology was heavily materialistic, determinist, and infused with national and racial assumptions. Perhaps owing to his Jewish heritage, Freud rejected these assumptions due to their penchant for aggravating and legitimating anti-Semitism. Therefore, he created his own vision that, though rooted in biology, had space for idealistic or psychological causality.

He handed down his theoretical apparatus to one of his most important followers: Sándor Ferenczi. Ferenczi lived in the same peculiar polity of the Habsburg Empire in its second capital of Budapest. Here Ferenczi emerged as a great innovator in psychoanalytic theory, especially in its therapeutic methods. However, through Ferenczi’s work there was also a reflection of one the key cultural trends existing in Budapest at the time. This trend was nationalism. Through his work, Ferenczi utilized the psychoanalytic vision of mind to construct the nation as a natural feature of the
human condition. As was common for Hungarian speaking Jews in this era, Ferenczi was an ardent Hungarian nationalist. He would utilize the “psychic space” opened up by Freud to portray the nation not as a result of biological heredity, the dominant conception of the time, but instead of one of culture that had separate casual mechanisms despite being rooted in biological Darwinism. This allowed for an inclusive picture of the nation to be constructed that could not on principle exclude Jews. Ferenczi, however, was not attempting to bind himself to an existing entity. Rather he was part of the dynamic construction of the nation itself. Each nation was determined by its specific neurosis that would categorize it as a whole. Ferenczi’s universal narrative and understanding of the mind culminated in the nation as one of its natural particular outcomes. These natural units were engaged in a natural struggle among themselves that was akin to the struggle among species. As for many intellectuals at the time writing in the during the high point of European imperialism, these nations could be arranged on a hierarchy that began with primitivity, more animal like, and culminated at its peak with “civilized Western man.” His belief in this hierarchy led him to attempt to bring his nation out from the trappings of feudalism and revolutionize it. This was part of the reason for his fateful participation in the 1919 Revolution. Modernizing the mental make-up of his “natural” nation could be enacted through the application of psychoanalysis, eugenics, and liberalism. He subsequently retreated into practicing therapy after the end of World War I when rising anti-Semitism ostracized him from his perceived “natural” nation.

His student, Géza Róheim, took up his insights and applied them to anthropology. Though concerned with the universal aspects of the human experience,
especially myths, he too argued for the nation as natural outcome of the mind. He contended that culture, cultural difference, and all that separated humanity from the animals was a result of the delayed period of infancy. This delayed period of infancy exposed humans to more trauma thus creating the need for substitutions which resulted in culture. This culture was based on universal complexes that separated animals from humans. At the same time, these universal complexes manifested themselves differently based on the passing down of certain and particular practices from generation to generation. The varying manifestations of these units produced varying cultural units that were homogenous entities that existed almost statically throughout time. One of these homogenous entities was the nation. The nation for Róheim was as natural as the family. This resulted in his belief in the notion of national and group character which was a key feature of the nationalists debates in the interwar period. Róheim portrayed the Hungarian nation as backwards. At the same time, he argued that, as “primitive” as his nation might be, it still had something important to offer to the world due to its lack of unnecessary repression. His notion of the nation then, as for Ferenczi, was based on the culture in which an individual was born. A person could not be excluded from the nation because of their heritage, in particular, one’s Jewish origins. Instead because of the importance of the infantile situation, any individual who was raised in that particular nation had equal membership in it.

Through the psychoanalytic works of these two important figures, Ferenczi and Róheim, we get a picture of the deepening nationalism from the end of the Habsburg Empire through the interwar period. They should not be understood as part of a redefinition of already static national communities, but rather as part of the dynamic
construction of these entities. Both men portrayed the nation as a result of the deep structure of the human mind and in so doing vertically deepened the ever-growing veracity of the nation as a natural community. The earlier emphasis on language, culture, and outward features as characteristics of national community were augmented in part through the works of these men, as well as other psychologists, by a deeper vision of what constituted a person’s national identity. In contrast to other deepening notions of nation through psychology based on biology, Ferenczi and Róheim remained primarily in the cultural realm. However, this counter-paradigm, rather than destroying the scientific categories of race and nation, substituted its own vision of what constituted them. In the work of Ferenczi there is an early propagation of the nation as natural outcome of mind, and in Róheim a deeper vision is evident. This reflected and helped shape the increasing importance of the definition of national character and mind during the transition from the late Habsburg to the interwar period. It is clear through the work of Ferenczi and Róheim that Hungarian speakers of Jewish origins were deeply involved in the process of the construction of the Hungarian nation. They were not attempting to construct a psychoanalytically-based vision of nation to foster their assimilation to a static entity. Rather, they were part of the emerging concept of the nation itself and attempted to construct a vision of this emerging nation that would de facto include Jews. Simply put, they equally as “Hungarian” as anyone else participating in the construction of the Hungarian nation and should not be seen as “outsiders.”

Psychoanalysis, and all psychology for that matter, then, is deeply rooted in the historical context in which it emerged. Ferenczi and Róheim were men of their times. In this time, nationalism was the totem around which almost every debate about society
and the mind revolved. Nationalism could be found in nearly all discursive production, even in the ostensibly universal discipline of psychoanalysis. This omnipotence of national ideas helps us to explain how the nation, a solely modern concept, came to be such an important aspect of human self-conception. What is so often perceived as the “natural” composition of the human mind, then, is deeply intertwined with the perceived social architecture of the context in which it emerged.
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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