SIGMUND FREUD AND OSKAR PFISTER ON RELIGION

The Beginning of an Endless Dialogue

Carlos Domínguez-Morano

Translated by Francisco Javier Montero

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Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister on Religion examines the dialogue between psychoanalysis and religion through the encounters of two men: the "unfaithful Jew" who founded psychoanalysis, and a pastor of profound religious faith and proven psychoanalytic conviction.

Carlos Domínguez-Morano analyses the original encounters between Freud and Pfister and their respective positions, noting the incidences, impasses and progress of their discussions. The complex interactions between psychoanalysis and religion over time are considered, and Domínguez-Morano assesses the fundamental parameters of each perspective, with reference to Catholicism. The book explores the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion as a rich, on-going, and unending dialogue and sheds new light on the origins of psychoanalysis.

Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister on Religion will be of great interest to academics and scholars of psychoanalytic studies, religion, the history of psychology, and the history of ideas.

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To my friends María José Úbeda and Juan Piñero,
companions in thought, work, and heart.

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PREFACE

My work on Oskar Pfister, *Psicoanálisis y religión: diálogo interminable,* published by Trotta in Spain (2000) and presented here in English, became possible only after the fall of solid inner resistances. My psychoanalytical training in Paris with Louis Beirnaert, Jacques Pohier, Philippe Julien, and Jacques Sedat marked me with a distinct position when approaching the dialogue between Freud's work and the Christian faith. Staying clear of any concordist temptation, the aim was to examine critically what the unconscious could mean for religious belief. From this position, Oskar Pfister looked to me particularly suspicious of a defensive concordism to be avoided at all costs.

However, having later found myself under suspicion from my own ecclesial institution because of my Freudian allegiance (for example, I was denied by Rome access to the chair at the Faculty of Theology for "problematic assertions" in the Spanish original of my *Belief after Freud,* Routledge, 2017), and, with the feeling that I was also under suspicion from certain psychoanalytical circles as a priest and a believer, I became interested in Oskar Pfister, who, we know, was also the subject of similar mistrust as much from the ecclesial part as from the emerging psychoanalytic movement. Little by little, an unexpected identification with the pastor from Zurich made its way once the suspicions of concordism melted away along with my resistances. From there, the question was in what terms the dialogue between psychoanalysis and any religious belonging should be established.

The critical study of the first confrontation between psychoanalysis and faith, as shown in Pfister's relationship with Freud, underlines the excessive dependency both parties kept on the rationalist principles of the Enlightenment. They seemed to fail to find a more psychoanalytic sense when approaching religious matters. At least the way these are shown in Freud's *The future of an Illusion* and Pfister's reply, *The Illusion of a Future*. The atheist position of the first and the second's

conciliatory efforts swept away the more decisive matters to tackle. Among them, still felt today, is the need that psychoanalysts cease to be *particularly blind to the theme of religion,* as Bion said. And the need for the believers to shred their unconscious resistances and allow that dialogue to proceed satisfactorily.

The present work, in two parts, tries to give an account of that initial exchange between Freud and Pfister, then, in the second part, takes a panoramic look at what the debate between psychoanalysis and faith has brought until today. The conclusion tries to formulate the most favourable conditions for that dialogue, overcoming sterile attack and defence positions, to leave space for courageous questioning of what the unconscious poses to any subject holding religious beliefs. It does not correspond to psychoanalysis to take a stand on the content of any belief, but only, not least, to ask what each subject means when saying "I believe" or "I do not believe". In this light, the dialogue between psychoanalysis and religion will never have an end. It will always be endless, not by chance, but by its essence, as long as a subject says "I believe". And, as Jean Baptiste Pontalis noted, only the dead do not believe ("*il n'y a que les morts pour ne croire à rien*").

The interminable character of the psychoanalysis and faith dialogue is duly shown in the immense literature on the theme, which still flows today. Therefore, when reviewing the work for the present English edition, the need to account for the most significant of the published contributions, in English and in Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, German… Finally, a Bibliography Subject Index is offered to guide the reader in such a vast bibliographic wood.

The extension of this work's reach to such a comprehensive and significant public as the English-speaking one gives me particular satisfaction, opening new possibilities of exchange and reflection. I vividly thank Routledge, their Publishers and Editors for that. I also wish to especially thank my good friend, Francisco Javier Montero, for the translation he has completed with rigour and commitment, without which the present edition would not have happened.

Granada, 4 November 2022.

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As already said in the Preface, my deep thanks go to Francisco Javier Montero, my translator and friend, for his work of translation, advice and friendly backing all along the way. I cannot forget my appreciation and gratitude to the Library of the Granada Faculty of Theology for the wealth of their bibliographic material and their willingness to provide me with any text I could be interested in throughout the development and revision of the present work.

PART I

The History of a Friendship

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1

THE ENCOUNTER OF TWO WORLD VIEWS

On Sunday, 25 April 1909, Freud's family home saw the arrival of a visitor who seemed to come from another planet in that setting. It was not usual to find a figure like Oskar Pfister, with the clothing of a Protestant Pastor, the courteous manners of a good cleric and, particularly, close and affectionate attention to every family member, especially the younger ones. As described by W. Hoffer (Hoffer, 1958, pp. 216–226), he was a tall and vigorous man with a full and thick moustache and eyes that were kind and enquiring at the same time.

The memory of that visit remained impressed on whom would later be an eminent figure in psychoanalysis, Anna Freud, then the youngest family member ("The little girl who took care of the lizards, who now writes very serious papers for the International Psycho-Analytical Association, was still on short skirts …" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 91), as recalled years later by Oskar Pfister himself). And these are Anna's words in 1962, fifty-three years later: "In the totally non-religious Freud household, Pfister, in his clerical garb, and with the manners and behaviour of a pastor, was like a visitor from another planet. In him, nothing of the almost passionately impatient enthusiasm for science caused other pioneers to regard time spent at the family table only as an unwelcome interruption of their theoretical and clinical discussions. On the contrary, his human warmth and enthusiasm, his capacity for taking a lively part in the minor events of the day, enchanted the household's children and made him at all times a most welcome guest, a uniquely human figure in his way. To them, as Freud remarked, he was not a holy man, but a kind of Pied Piper of Hamelin, who had only to play on his pipe to gather a whole host of willing young followers behind him" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 11).

For Oskar Pfister, who was also going through difficult times, it was also a day to remember. The warm emotions sparked by the visit to that house and that

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family still resonated fifteen years later: "I felt as if I were in a divine, Olympian abode, and if I had been asked what the most agreeable place in the world was, I could only have replied: 'Find out at Professor Freud's …'" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 91). As a gift, the pastor presented the family with a silver replica of the Matterhorn peak in Switzerland, which Freud fondly kept on his desk, "as homage" – he will comment a few days later – "from the only country in which I feel a man of property, knowing that the hearts and minds of good men there are well disposed towards me" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 23).

Freud already had good references for Oskar Pfister through Carl G. Jung, who a few months earlier had written to Freud about "the big propaganda campaign for your ideas", the pastor was doing in Zurich (McGuire, 1974, p. 195). Shortly after that, Jung wrote to Freud again: "Pfister is a splendid fellow …. Nothing scares him, a redoubtable champion of our cause with a powerful intelligence. He will make something of it. What? I don't know yet. Oddly enough, I find this mixture of medicine and theology to my liking (…). You will shortly receive another longish paper from him. He is feverishly busy …." (McGuire, 1974, p. 197). In effect, shortly afterwards, Pfister's paper was received by Freud, who considered it highly interesting. However, the personal encounter that April Sunday added an undoubtedly warm and close human quality. A few days later, in a letter to his Hungarian friend, psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi, Freud comments on his impressions of the pastor: he found in him, he reports, "a charming fellow who has won all our hearts, a warmhearted enthusiast, (…). We parted as good friends" (Gay, 1988, p. 191). As O. Pfister remembers (Pfister, 1993 [1927], p. 563), after the family lunch, the meeting of the two men went on, with a long walk on the sunny Belvedere Park, exchanging views on their broad intellectual and professional interests, so different and until then so foreign to one another. There were, in effect, two worlds that met for the first time on that spring Sunday. Two cultures, sensibilities, different fields of professional activity, two nationalities and, very importantly, two ethnic and religious origins.

Pastor Oskar Pfister came from Zurich, where he did an intense pastoral activity. Up to that moment, his biography would contain references and a socio-cultural background quite different from those we would have considered describing Professor Sigmund Freud's history.

Oskar Pfister's family background

He was born in Wiedikon, a district in the Swiss city of Zurich, on 23 February 1873, the youngest of four children of the harmonious couple formed by his father, a liberal-tempered and genuinely altruistic pastor, and his mother, an unassuming woman, somewhat strict and puritanical in her view of life and, above all, her children's religious training. In his generous devotion to pastoral work, Oskar's father was outstandingly sensible to the pains of his sick and poor parishioners, especially to the high number of children suffering from diphtheria at that

time. Hence, he wished to complete his education with the study of medicine, a desire he could not fulfil because of his premature death, worn out by the daunting mission as both doctor for the body and pastor for the soul. Oskar was then three years old, and the family moved to Baden, Black Forest, to take refuge in a communitary institution in Königsfeld. Four years later, they moved back to Zürich (Zulliger, 1966, p. 173).

When Oskar Pfister was born, Sigmund Freud, already sixteen years old, had graduated *summa cum laude* from the Sperl Gymnasium and had started studying chemistry and anatomy at the University of Vienna Medical School. He, too, had to change residence when he was three years old, from the small town of Freiberg, in Moravia, to the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, the structure and background of little Sigmund's family were quite different from those of Oskar's. His father had two sons from his first marriage, and their age was close to that of Amalie, his third wife (after a childless second marriage) and Sigmund's mother. As her first son, Sigmund was also her admired favourite. However, throughout his life, he maintains a deep ambivalence towards the head of the family, made easier by the father's empty, though pompous and vain, character, an unsuccessful wool merchant. Little Sigmund's education, typical of a Jewish home of that time, was nevertheless devoid of any attention or instruction of a religious type. His father considered himself an enlightened Jew and did not seem to follow the orthodox practices of Judaism. Of the mother, we only know in this respect that she kept "some belief in the Deity" (Jones, 1953, p. 19). As Freud himself expressed years later: "I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without any religion" (Freud, 1941e, p. 273). In the determination of Freud's atheism by his first family relationships, particularly by the ambivalent link to his father, we should underline the work by Ana-Maria Rizzuto (Rizzuto, 1998a).

These early family relationships, and the identifications coming from these familiar, cultural, and religious frames of reference, will condition, far more than they imagined and disclosed, the future debates between the two men who met on that Sunday in 1909. Moreover, the academic and intellectual environment in which they will move afterwards will undoubtedly increase their differences in their respective world views.

Academic training

At the University of Vienna, Sigmund Freud was immersed in the medical materialism of the times under positivist physiologist Ernst Brücke's teachings and direction from 1877 to 1883. Mentor of Freud, Brücke was an authentic crusader of scientism, an enthusiastic follower of Helmholtz and his materialistic and mechanicist principles applied to physiology. Freud worked as a resident under Theodor Meynert, who wanted neuro-psychiatry to follow the physics model. All these influences turned young Freud, as expressed by E. Jones, into a "radical materialist" (Jones, 1953, p. 43). As for Oskar Pfister, he studied Theology in Zürich under the

influence of Hegel, Strauss, Schleiermacher, and other critical theologians such as Hermann Kutter or Leonhard Ragaz, who were introducing socialist ideas in the theological and pastoral areas.

Oskar Pfister's pursuance of theological studies was not easy, and certainly not for lack of interest or vocation. Schooled as a child in orthodox dogmatism, he had difficulty accepting it; he felt a strong antagonism towards traditional beliefs. His critical spirit in front of the established teachings was present from adolescence. Still in school, he worked to formulate a profound and sharp critical view of biblical stories, trying, for instance, to find a scientifically sound historical explanation for episodes such as the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea. Oskar Pfister could not forget how "he was annoyed when a conservative professor tried to ridicule his studies" (Zulliger, 1966, p. 174). In his *The illusion of a future,* he writes how at the age of twelve, after reading the biblical story of the Great Flood, he ran to the Zoological Museum "in order to compare the measurements of the ark with those of the glass cases and to base a childlike theory of evolution on this, but, at the same time, assuming a sceptical attitude toward the Bible, which later changed into frank criticism" (Pfister, 1993 [1927], p. 569). This early and deep attitude of young Pfister helps to understand the difficulties he suffered during his studies of traditional theology. His discomfort was so intense that, at a particular time, he considered abandoning his theological studies for good. However, after eight semesters, he passed his final examination and, with additional studies in Berlin, also won his title as a Doctor in Philosophy. The thesis of his choice was a problem on religious psychology and philosophy around the work of the Swiss theologian, A.E. Biedermann. This Protestant theologian was first an associate and then a full Professor of Theology at the University of Zürich. His theological work was deeply marked by the attempt to conciliate the truth of religion with the truth of reason.

Oskar Pfister felt particularly disappointed throughout his studies by the atmosphere of disquisitions and disputes between the diverse theological systems, which he described as pure quackery. He looked to philosophy to help understand the main theological problems, only to find the same atmosphere of division and dispute as in theology and a world entirely alien to what he considered the fundamental cause of human suffering. He then looked back to theology, trying to apply the religious philosophy of Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1819–1881). Thus, renewed in a certain way, he returned to theology with conviction and always remained a personal, intellectual, and apostolic requirement (Kienast, 1974).

Encounter with psychoanalysis

However, the impact of psychoanalysis on Oskar Pfister will be so strong that all his theological thought and pastoral praxis will be determined forever by the new perspective opened by his encounter with Freud. "… what a great and magnificent thing analysis is (….) It brought an unparalleled illumination into my life, and

I cannot thank you enough for all you have done for me by your discoveries and your personal kindness to me" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 90).

Oskar Pfister's interest in psychology was not new. He attended psychology classes while studying philosophy and theology at the University of Basel. His doctoral thesis on Theology centred on the psychological construction of Biedermann's work (Pfister, 1910a [1898]). Also, in 1903, when psychology ceased to belong to the theological studies *curriculum*, as had been the case for a long time, Pfister wrote a pointed article criticising that withdrawal, which he considered a grave "sin of omission" (*Unterlassungssünden*). The marginalization of psychology in theological training is going to contribute, he asserted with conviction, to the broader isolation of theology from the other human sciences (Pfister, 1903).

In any case, the treatises he had seen in his search for good psychology of religion appeared as blunt as most of the theology he had studied until then. So, in 1908, shortly before meeting Freud, he vehemently attacked the ineptitude and poverty of theology and psychology to offer help to relieve human suffering (Pfister, 1905). In the same year, he turned down the chair as Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Zürich; in the same way, he declined shortly after the chair in Philosophy at the University of Riga. The reason will always be the same: to continue the pastoral work in Wald, close to Zürich, that he had started in 1897 and that he maintained after 1902 as Pastor in Predigerkirche. He will sustain pastoral action for thirty-seven years as his life's fundamental task. At the beginning of his work in Wald, in 1897, he married Erika Wunderli. They had a son who, in time, became a psychiatrist.

Hans Zulliger, who would later be one of his closest and best-known friends, encounters psychoanalysis when reading Oskar Pfister's book *The Psychoanalytic Method*. At Pfister's suggestion, he goes on to make use of psychoanalysis with children and education (Pfister, 1913). Hans Zulliger transmits Pfister's words on what pastoral action meant for him at the time: "I loved to preach from the pulpit. I loved the pastoral care of the sick and the suffering, of the lost and of the poor. Most of all I loved teaching religion. I never had the slightest difficulty keeping order among the 400 children between the ages of 12 and 16 years who came from seven different school districts. They came from many mountains to my school. The most effective method of discipline was a lively way of reaching, which described religion as salvation, as a source of joy and support in times of danger" (Zulliger, 1966, pp. 174–175).

A few weeks after having turned down the chair of Theology in order to keep his engagement with pastoral action, Pfister came across some texts by Freud. They reach him through Carl G. Jung, already well known internationally, the son of a Protestant pastor like Pfister himself, when he visits him to get advice on the case of a mother tortured by paranoid delirium. As he read through these Freudian texts, he felt "as if an old premonition had become true (…) there were no endless speculations on the metaphysics of the soul, no experimentation with minimal trivialities while the great problems of life remained untouched … with

Freud the highest functions in life were placed under the microscope and gave evidence of their origins and connections, of their development laws and their deepest sense in the totality of psychical life" (Hahn, 1927, pp. 168–170) [translated for this edition].

Years later, in 1931, during a round table with other Swiss Reformed pastors, Pfister resumes his account of what psychoanalysis meant in his personal and professional itinerary: "How did I come to psychoanalysis? Because I simply could not do anything with the age-old methods. With psychoanalysis one can achieve success that previously would just not have been possible. One can re-activate such a lot of human destinies that previously had no way out but to go to the insane asylum, or the poorhouse or otherwise into misery. The unconscious is a powerful force and is able to cause serious aberrations. Psychoanalysis can only plough, naturally, and not plant. It is a matter of course that a positive pastoral care must augment it. That is the point that most people overlook. It is true that Freud views religion as an illusion. Therefore, it is up to us pastors to do analysis. We must enter upon these new tasks with all reverence, and we shall become *Seelsorger* (pastoral 'carers', spiritual shepherds) only when we bring people out into the sunlight – a concept given us by Jesus" (Kienast, 1974).

After his encounter with psychoanalysis, Oskar Pfister became the *Analysenpfarrer*, the *pastor of analysis* and a good friend of Freud. He used to sign his contributions to psychoanalysis as *Oskar Pfister, pastor in Zürich*. Even if inspired with hope, the task was not easy at all. On the one side, being a cleric, to obtain recognition and respect in the psychoanalytic environment. On the other side, being an optimist, passionate Christian, to conquer the sincere and even affectionate friendship of the pessimist, the destructor of illusions, who bragged as well that he was an *unfaithful Jew*. They came from two very different cultures, two very different ethnic and religious groups, so often confronted with violence to each other in the past and, in all likelihood, also in the future. They had familiar, educational, and relational stories that were very far for each of them in behaviour and style. The two schools of thought they belonged to, one in the school of science and the other in religion, confronted each other since the Age of Enlightenment. Everything was giving shape to two personal dispositions of markedly different profiles. Perhaps for this very reason – we should think – they were able to find in each other the interlocutor that, more or less inhibited, pulsed inside each of them.

Personal profile

It should not be too risky, far from any wild psychoanalysis, to draw up a kind of psychodynamic profile of Oskar Pfister from the available documents. From his letters and publications, and the comments by Freud and other pioneers of psychoanalysis on our man, we can describe the predominant traits that marked his personality. From that basis, the significant differences in character that set him apart from Freud, his mentor, appear evident.

Pfister's history drove him naturally to become what we usually call a "good man". As Freud says: "It reminds me of a remarkable man who came to see me one day, a true servant of God, a man in the very idea of whom I should have had difficulty in believing, in that he feels the need to do spiritual good to everyone he meets. You did good in this way even to me" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 24). There is no doubt that this distinctive trait in his personality was the basis for the unique relationship he succeeded in creating, not only with Freud but, quite unlike others among psychoanalysis pioneers, also with all the other members of the founder's family and, in a unique way, with the younger ones. At a given point, Freud wonders what pastor Pfister sets in motion with the former's children to get them so enthusiastic about the latter's person. He writes: "I do not know what promises you left behind with my children, because I keep hearing things like next year I am going with Dr Pfister, I am going climbing with him, and so on and so forth" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 28).

As shown by Freud's correspondence with him and other psychoanalysts, Pfister was seen on many occasions as a vehement, exalted, and even rapturous person. However, he was able to appear with perfect dominion over himself when circumstances required. In this respect, Freud's words about how Pfister can undertake criticism in his publications are significant. The difference with himself is manifest, as he writes in his letter dated 24 January 1910: "Well, I admire your ability to write like that, in such moderate, affable, considerate manner so factually and so much more for the reader than against your opponent …. I could not write like that … I could only write to free my soul, to release my affect and, as the letter would not emerge in an edifying manner, and as our opponents would be only too delighted to see me roused, I prefer not answering at all (…) as I am incapable of artistically modifying my indignation, of giving it an aura pleasurable to others, I hold my peace. I could not lower the temperature in dealing with him" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 33).

In sum, Pfister was what we could call, with all the ambiguity the term may hold, a "virtuous man"; in a way which, otherwise, could even turn into difficult to undertake his work as a psychoanalyst. From his essentially superego-based disposition, he seemed to face particular difficulty in interpreting and bringing the patient's defensive systems to consciousness, with the risk of becoming the ally of those defences. That is what Freud reproaches him for, with a provocative tone, when reviewing a work that Pfister had just published (Pfister, 1910b): "I think your analysis suffers from the hereditary vice of – virtue; it is the work of too decent a man who feels himself bound to discretion (…) Thus, discretion is incompatible with a satisfactory description of an analysis". Somehow, Freud went on, the analyst "would have to be unscrupulous, give away, betray, behave like an artist who buys paints with his wives housekeeping money or uses the furniture as firewood to warm the studio for his model. Without a trace of that kind of unscrupulousness the job cannot be done" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 38).

Freud saw himself as very different from that highly virtuous Pfister. This seemed to cause in him a hidden but relevant ambivalence. Even though sometimes, as we have seen, he took pleasure in the provocation, on other occasions he seemed to manifest his admiration and even a kind of envy of the virtuous frame of mind of his good friend, the pastor. "This Pfister, I said to myself, is a man to whom any kind of unfairness is totally alien, you cannot compare yourself to him …" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 77). The difference, which very well could have been the cause of the impossibility of maintaining the friendship, seemed not to have been strong enough for that, either because, in a latent way, there was admiration and the wish to keep the link or because, along with the difference, other conditions existed to keep the relationship strength. In any case, Freud appeared happy with the outcome: "… all I can do is belatedly express the satisfaction that a holy man like you has not allowed himself to be scared of such a heretical relationship", he says on one occasion (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 83).

However, in all probability, it is not on the grounds of "holiness" or "heresy" (there are some play and mutual complicity in the underlining that both of them mark in this respect) where we find the basic differences between the personal tempers of Freud and Pfister, or where we could fit the eventual complementarity in their relationship. It is, essentially, in the optimistic attitude of the pastor and in the pessimistic one of the physician where we notice the main difference between the two personal profiles. In depth, there are two world views, undoubtedly determined by the individual positions of each one of them in front of religious belief, that face each other at the time of perceiving any aspect of reality.

There is no doubt it is there where they are farther from each other. "Your tendency to resignation distresses me", Oskar Pfister confesses one day. Like Freud sometimes seems to do, he cannot believe that the power of unconscious forces comes to stand as the fundamental engine of the whole existence. "If I took you literally, I should object that you had handed over to your id full power over life and death, good fortune and ill fortune, and, in the name of your charming daughter, your delightful wife, your whole family, science, and the whole pantheon of supreme powers, I should protest" …. (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 99).

The view of the future and the possibilities it may hold is also conditioned by the acceptance or denial of the power given to *ananké.* That is why Pfister is pleased when he reads *The Ego and the Id* (Freud, 1923b), in the belief that the work, especially in its reflections on the *super-ego,* offers possibilities to elaborate as well a psychology of the highest values concerning the person and culture. But even at that point, when it is a matter of interpretation of the world of values and ideals, Pfister diverges from Freud, finding him too conservative. In his more optimistic and hopeful vision, Pfister considers we are not only in debt with what has been introjected from the parental identifications. There is also a tendency to the future, to achieve, to go further ahead of what we received from our parents. The *ego-ideal* cannot then be understood as a crude imitation of the parents. Moreover, it is precisely in that longing for improvement that we could find the

essential difference between the animal world and the human world: "… in the fact that we aspire to climb higher, over the dead and the images of our parents, while the ape, in so far as he is not urged forward by the not completely conservative nature of his phylogenesis, is content to go on hanging to his father's tail?" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 136).

This aspect of Oskar Pfister's personality does not respond (as some profiles of hagiographic tones would pretend, including H. Zullinger's) to what we could call a desirable achievement of extraordinary maturity. It is a psychodynamic structure that allows us to see problematic elements from what we could consider a psychodiagnosis point of view. At certain times, Pfister gives us the impression of being marked by hypomanic traits. His excessive optimism on some occasions, his almost endless enthusiasm, his many times near messianic attitude, his predominant exaltation, his both spoken and written verbosity (the number of his publications was near three hundred), and his hyperactivity that gives ever-working Freud a complex: "Your productivity is beginning to put mine to shame, and I have not been in the least lazy in my time" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 96), lead the thoughts on that direction and at the same time force us to think that, along with many other intellectual or religious conditions, we find here an essential element of his difference with Freud, whom we manifestly should place on the opposite depressive pole.

Certainly, Pfister's life was not free from psychical conflicts, even though they did not seem to be serious ones. "Pfister is a splendid fellow" – Jung tells Freud on one of the first occasions he mentions him – "a neurotic himself of course, although not a severe one" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 197). Indeed, we do not find in the analysis of the correspondence between the first analysts (where it is not unusual to find a malicious exchange of clinical diagnosis) any other reference to neurosis or conflict of the pastor. Admittedly it does not seem any more significant than the rest of the psychoanalysis pioneers. However, it is also true that, at least at a particular time in Pfister's life, the conflicts reached enough importance for him to undertake his own analysis finally. "Pfister" – Jung tells Freud in a confidential tone – "is presently on analysis with Riklin. He has obviously had enough of being roasted over a slow fire by his complexes" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 421).

In sum, Pfister comes up as a good man, a natural enthusiast, with a good intellectual capacity and personal conflicts at the average level of most human beings. In any case, his relationship with Freud certainly meant the encounter of two quite opposed world views, two different ethical temperaments and two somewhat antagonistic psychodynamic structures. "Of all Freud's friendships …." – Peter Gay comments – "it was distinctly the least expectable …." (Gay, 1987, p. 75). But if the Christian cleric and the unfaithful Jew, the good and virtuous man and the inveterate and heterodox provoker, or the natural optimist and the on-going pessimist, were able to establish a profound and sincere link of friendship, it was due, without any doubt, besides their complementary mutual oppositions, to the fact that they coincided at being, and seeing each other, as passionate and courageous

men in search of truth. Truth searched even at the cost of personal sacrifices, not at all negligible. It is said that Oskar Pfister noted once that he preferred to go to hell rather than to heaven at the price of lying. A truly shared passion in both men enabled them to surpass the relevant differences they met in other fundamental aspects of their lives.

From this joint search for truth, they could live a friendly relationship that benefited and enriched both. As can be seen in their correspondence, their mutual trust and personal engagement grew progressively as the years went by. So did their loyalty at difficult times, either due to external circumstances in the life of one or the other or from the difficulties born of their relationship from the deep divergence in their respective world views.

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THE INS AND OUTS OF A FRIENDSHIP

To go deep into the links that made up the relationship between our two men, we rely on the basic information contained in the correspondence they maintained for thirty years, published in 1961. We find there new, direct, and ample information, even if it reaches us mutilated for several reasons (Heinrich Meng was in charge of editing the correspondence, which appeared with a preface by Ernst L. Freud and the cooperation of Anna Freud). For one thing, it was Oskar Pfister himself who asked Freud to shred part of it, probably the one where he gave an account of a close affective story which we will refer to later on. "I have just finished the hangman's job you asked me to do via Frau H", Freud writes, "The letters of 1912 have been destroyed; a few of impersonal content still remain. I have done what you asked me to do but did not do so gladly" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 108).

Another part of the correspondence was lost because of the incidents of Freud's exile. We find a long gap from March 1913 to October 1918. Five years for which we have to look elsewhere for the information. All this has an unfortunate effect since the information about Pfister we can get from his own letters is considerably less than what we could obtain about Freud. The direct information we get on the Swiss pastor is just the one that could be reconstructed from his shorthand notes. After having first lost and recovered Freud's letters, Pfister kept them as a treasure and approved their publication on the condition of doing so without the paragraphs that could hurt living persons.

My dear Man of God...

> … there is a special value in personal relations which shared work and interests cannot completely make good; and we two, at this moment when we have become aware of the ultimate, fundamental differences between us, have

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> particular occasion- and, I hope, inclination- to foster such relations". These words from Freud to Pfister are significant to what the Swiss pastor meant to him. Neither professional interests nor any convergence in their views on life was the support of that friendship. A personal, affective bond marked the relationship and gave it that singular character compared to other friendly links maintained by Freud. This friendship, as E. Jones asserts, "it lasted without a cloud to the end of his life"
>
> (Jones, 1955, p. 46).

One element that stands out when reviewing the correspondence is the beneficial impact that Pfister's figure seems to have had on the person of Freud (more than in his ideas). As the latter writes, "We have all grown very fond of Pfister. He is really an acceptable priest, and he has even helped me by exerting a modulating influence on my father complex. We were like old friends in no time; he is a little fulsome in his enthusiasm, but there is nothing false or exaggerated in his warmth" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 222). We will find time and again the "he has helped me" expression – not a straightforward acknowledgement for Freud about the relationship with a priest. But, as we have seen, "an acceptable priest". They are not all acceptable, in particular considering that "father complex" that Freud mentions and that Pfister successfully dealt with by "exerting a modulating influence".

Not long after having met Pfister for the first time, Freud tells him, "It reminds me of a remarkable man who came to see me one day, a true servant of God, a man in the very idea of whom I should have had difficulty in believing, in that he feels the need to do spiritual good to everyone he meets. You did good in this way even to me" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 24). Once again, the expression of the good that Pfister does to him. In addition, this time Freud points explicitly to the altruistic decision he took, without any doubt on his part, because of the pastor's influence. In effect, shortly after the meeting with Pfister, Freud gave up his fees in favour of some patients who were in difficult circumstances "But for you and your influence I should never have managed it; my own father complex, as Jung would call it, that is to say, the need to correct my father, would never have permitted it" (Meng & Freud, 1963, p. 24).

The letters Pfister sends him also stir positive feelings and emotions on himself and on life.: "You always make one cheerful (…) I always read your letters with pleasure, they are always so full of life, warmth and success (…) You have the gift of throwing a rosy sheen over the everyday life one takes part in so colourlessly" (Meng & Freud, 1963, pp. 27, 83, 91). Expressions like these are repeated over the years, always revealing the same beneficial influence that the idealistic and enthusiastic man projects on the one who tried to resign himself to the hard designs of *ananke*.

One day he writes to Jung: "On my arrival I found a letter from Pfister, which affected me as his letters always do. At first I believe everything, I tend to be credulous about good news – everything looks wonderful. Then after a while,