

Freud , Sigmund

Last days

Freud 's final major work, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* (1938; [Moses and Monotheism](#)), was more than just the “historical novel” he had initially thought to subtitle it. Moses had long been a figure of capital importance for Freud ; indeed Michelangelo 's famous statue of Moses had been the subject of an essay written in 1914. The book itself sought to solve the mystery of Moses' origins by claiming that he was actually an aristocratic Egyptian by birth who had chosen the Jewish people to keep alive an earlier monotheistic religion .Too stern and demanding a taskmaster , Moses was slain in a Jewish revolt , and a second, more pliant leader , also called Moses , rose in his place. The guilt engendered by the parricidal act was, however, too much to endure , and the Jews ultimately returned to the religion given them by the original Moses as the two figures were merged into one in their memories . Here Freud 's ambivalence about his religious roots and his father's authority was allowed to pervade a highly fanciful story that reveals more about its author than its ostensible subject .

Moses and Monotheism was published in the year Hitler invaded Austria . Freud was forced to flee to England . His books were among the first to be burned , as the fruits of a “Jewish science ,” when the Nazis took over Germany. Although psychotherapy was not banned in the Third Reich , where Field Marshall Hermann Göring's cousin headed an official institute , psychoanalysis essentially went into exile , most notably to North America and England . Freud himself died only a few weeks after World War II broke out , at a time when his worst fears about the irrationality lurking behind the facade of civilization were being realized . Freud 's death did not , however, hinder the reception and dissemination of his ideas . A plethora of Freud ian schools emerged to develop psychoanalysis in different directions . In fact , despite the relentless and often compelling challenges mounted against virtually all of his ideas , Freud has remained one of the most potent figures in the intellectual landscape of the 20th century .

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