Freud and Religion

We live in an era that is often described as “therapeutic.” Our culture is suffused with unconscious fantasies and psychoanalytic ways of thinking about self, other, and society. Aspects of the Freudian cultural universe have also had an impact on how we think about religion. In this volume, William B. Parsons explores the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis through multiple, linked investigations. Why did Freud write about religion and what did he say? What were the multiple critiques leveled at his work? What were the post-Freudian psychoanalytic advances? How can we still apply psychoanalytic ideas going forward? In answering these and related questions, Parsons distinguishes between classic-reductive, adaptive, and transformational psychoanalytic models. He also argues that the psychoanalytic theory of religion needs to integrate reflexive, dialogical, and inclusive elements as part of its toolkit. Offering illustrations and applications of such revisions, Parsons creates new capacities for thinking psychologically and critically about religion.

William B. Parsons is Professor of Religion at Rice University. He has authored nine books, including *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling* and *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain*. 
Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society

Series Editors

Paul K. Moser, Loyola University, Chicago
Chad Meister, Bethel College, Indiana

This is a series of interdisciplinary texts devoted to major-level courses in religion, philosophy, and related fields. It includes original, current, and wide-spanning contributions by leading scholars from various disciplines that (a) focus on the central academic topics in religion and philosophy, (b) are seminal and up-to-date regarding recent developments in scholarship on the various key topics, and (c) incorporate, with needed precision and depth, the major differing perspectives and backgrounds – the central voices on the major religions and the religious, philosophical, and sociological viewpoints that cover the intellectual landscape today. Cambridge Studies in Religion, Philosophy, and Society is a direct response to this recent and widespread interest and need.

Recent Books in the Series

Roger Trigg Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions
John Cottingham Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach
William J. Wainwright Reason, Revelation, and Devotion: Inference and Argument in Religion
Harry J. Gensler Ethics and Religion
Fraser Watts Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality: Concepts and Applications
Gordon Graham Philosophy, Art, and Religion: Understanding Faith and Creativity
Keith Ward The Christian Idea of God: A Philosophical Foundation for Faith
Timothy Samuel Shah and Jack Friedman Homo Religiosus? Exploring the Roots of Religion and Religious Freedom in Human Experience
Sylvia Walsh Kierkegaard and Religion: Personality, Character, and Virtue
Roger S. Gottlieb Morality and the Environmental Crisis
J. L. Schellenberg Religion after Science: The Cultural Consequences of Religious Immaturity
Clifford Williams Religion and the Meaning of Life: An Existential Approach
Allen W. Wood Kant and Religion
Charles Taliaferro and Jil Evans Is God Invisible?
Michael McGhee Spirituality for the Godless: Buddhism, Humanism, and Religion
Freud and Religion

Advancing the Dialogue

WILLIAM B. PARSONS

Rice University
Contents

Introduction: Psychoanalysis and Religion in Context
1 Why Freud Wrote on Religion 29
2 Totem and Taboo: The Origin of Religion 51
3 Freud’s Moses: The Advent of Monotheism 80
4 Future of an Illusion: The Secular Cure of Souls 95
5 Civilization and Its Discontents: The Unbehagen of Religion 133
6 Freud and Eastern Religions 151
7 Psychoanalysis and Religion beyond Freud 188
8 Revisions and Applications 221
   Conclusion: Psychoanalytic Spirituality 256

Bibliography 265
Index 273