

Chapter 1

THE UNIVERSITY YEARS

The journal founded by the three, and later four, of us, namely myself, Paneth, Loewy Emanuel, Lipiner, has passed peacefully into the keeping of the Lord . . . From now on I shall have to keep my philosophical ideas purely to myself or pass them on unrefined to Paneth.

—Freud to Eduard Silberstein, January 1875

We know from Freud's correspondence with his friend Eduard Silberstein that while a university student he was familiar with Nietzsche. In one of the letters of 1875 Freud refers to and quotes from a passage from Nietzsche's essay, "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer" (1873), the first essay to be later included in the volume *Untimely Meditations*.¹ Nietzsche was well enough known to Freud and Silberstein for Freud to mention nothing about Nietzsche. A phrase (taken by Strauss from Goethe and included in Nietzsche's essay) is quoted and Nietzsche and Strauss mentioned without any further elaboration deemed necessary. Freud is quite aware that in regard to the passage quoted and its context, "Nietzsche took David Strauss to task . . . for this philistine dictum in 1873."² If Freud was familiar with Nietzsche's writings of this period, he would possibly have read *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and the first three essays in *Untimely Meditations*, all published in 1873 and 1874. However much Freud actually read of these works, we know that those around him were intensely discussing these early writings of Nietzsche.

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born in 1844 in Röcken, a village in Prussian Saxony. He grew up in Naumberg, which was not far from Leipzig where Freud briefly lived after moving from Frieberg (at about the age of three) and before moving to Vienna. Nietzsche began his career as a classical philologist and studied in Leipzig. (Philologists of the time generally believed that important truths regarding the nature and history of ancient civilizations could be revealed through historical and comparative research into the development of language and literature.³) His abilities were recognized early, and he was granted his Ph.D. without his meeting the requirement of completing a dissertation. At twenty-five he was awarded a professorship at the University of Basel which he left in 1879 due to health problems as well as his concerns about moving into the areas of philosophy and psychology. While he was well known and much discussed in the German-speaking intellectual world of the mid-1870s, his fame diminished in the 1880s. His productive life ended in January of 1889 when he became insane (probably due to the contraction of syphilis earlier in his life, although there is no consensus on this matter). By 1890 his fame and influence were growing rapidly. Nietzsche died on August 25, 1900, in Weimar. His great impact on a variety of disciplines has continued throughout the twentieth century with articles, books and anthologies on his work still being produced in great numbers.

Some of Nietzsche's writings criticizing Jews and mixed races as well as writings glorifying war, domination, aristocratic values, breeding, the will to power, destruction as prelude to creation and the superman or overman became associated with Nazi ideology and slogans. Nietzsche certainly bears some responsibility for how certain of his ideas were used or misused, but his emphasis on the individual and his attacks on nationalism, glorification of the state, hero worship, Germany and Germans and antisemitism were all contrary to Fascist and Nazi ideology. Not only were his writings distorted (including by his sister), but writings were invented in his name to support Nazi ideology. This had to be done because there is so much in Nietzsche that is so clearly hostile to antisemitism and currents leading to Nazi ideology.⁴

Freud was almost twelve years younger than Nietzsche, having been born in 1856 in Moravia. His family moved to Leipzig and then to Vienna in his early childhood. (Freud lived in Vienna until 1938 when he emigrated to England due to Nazi persecution. He

died in England in 1939.) At the time Freud was completing his education at the Gymnasium and afterwards during his years at the university, Nietzsche exerted an enormous influence on young German-speaking intellectuals. McGrath, in his study of the intellectual life of Austria during the latter part of the nineteenth century, describes Nietzsche as an intellectual father figure for certain groups of students at the University of Vienna in the 1870s.⁵ Or he may have been seen as an older brother figure, given that he was not yet thirty when Freud entered the University of Vienna.

The early writings of Nietzsche permeated the lives of many Viennese university students. Freud and a number of his admired friends and acquaintances were members of a reading society in Vienna, the *Leseverein der deutschen Studenten Wiens*. Freud remained a member until 1878 when the government dissolved the society. The intellectual figures the members of the group particularly admired were Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche.⁶ Among the friends and acquaintances of Freud who were deeply impressed by Nietzsche's writings were Siegfried Lipiner, Heinrich Braun, Viktor Adler and Joseph Paneth.

McGrath writes of Freud's somewhat deferential attitude towards Siegfried Lipiner, a poet and student two years behind him. Lipiner was an articulate young man who spoke impressively on matters of interest to the young Viennese intellectuals. He was deeply involved in the study of Nietzsche, corresponded with him, and eventually established a relationship with him. While still a university student, he enjoyed the esteem of Wagner and the young Mahler as well as Nietzsche.⁷ He was a member of the *Rede Klub*, a discussion society within the *Leseverein*, and he presented a report to this society in 1877 on Nietzsche's essay, "Schopenhauer as Educator." Aschheim describes Lipiner as among the significant early interpreters and popularizers of Nietzsche.⁸ Regarding Lipiner, Freud wrote to Silberstein in 1877: "I . . . have a very favorable opinion of him."⁹

Heinrich Braun, two years older than Freud, was a close friend of Freud's at the Gymnasium and during the early years at the university. According to Shorske,¹⁰ Braun was the school friend Freud most idolized. He later became one of Europe's most prominent Socialist intellectuals. McGrath portrays their close friendship at the Gymnasium as including passionate discussion and sharing of ideas.¹¹ Braun too immersed himself in the study of Nietzsche, and

along with Lipiner, Adler and others signed a letter to Nietzsche in 1877 declaring devotion to his outlook. "Schopenhauer as Educator" is specifically mentioned in the letter.¹²

Viktor Adler, a few years older than Freud, became a leading political figure by the late 1880s. He is described by one historian as "the remarkable man who, abandoning his medical practice, had united Austria's splintered Socialist movement in the late 1880s."¹³ By the late 1890s he was the revered leader of Austrian Social Democracy.¹⁴ Shorske points out that Freud acknowledged strong feelings of envy and rivalry towards Adler.¹⁵ As a university student, Adler was an avid reader and admirer of Nietzsche's work. It was Adler along with Paneth who lectured to and co-led the first formal discussion of Nietzsche's work in the Leseverein in 1875.¹⁶ An interesting turn of events involved Adler and Braun later becoming brothers-in-law, and it being Braun who in 1883 took Freud to Berggasse 19 which was then Adler's residence, the place where, among other endeavors, in 1889 he created the idea and plans for the first May Day parade.¹⁷ Aschheim writes that a kind of "Nietzschean socialism . . . informed Viktor Adler's infusion into Austrian social democracy of Dionysian impulses designed to arouse the nascent proletariat to a willful consciousness of its own power."¹⁸ It has been suggested that Freud's admiration for Adler was a factor in his choosing to move into the dwelling in 1891.¹⁹ It is certain that the atmosphere of Berggasse 19 was infused with the ideas of Nietzsche before Freud's move there, and more generally, it is certain that among Freud's friends in the early 1880s were those with a strong interest in and involvement with the field of philosophy.²⁰

Joseph Paneth was a close friend of Freud at the university, and the two men remained friends until Paneth's death in 1890. Freud respected Paneth and in *The Interpretation of Dreams* refers to "my brilliant friend P., whose whole life had been devoted to science."²¹ In 1882 Freud left the satisfying environment of the laboratory of the highly esteemed Ernst Brücke (1819–1892) to enter medical practice after it became clear that no promotion was in sight and that his income would not reasonably allow for marriage and family. It was Paneth who replaced him in Brücke's laboratory and later received the promotion that Freud had hoped for before deciding to leave the laboratory. Paneth also gave Freud money during a time of financial difficulty while he was engaged to

Martha Bernays. Paneth knew Joseph Breuer, and he may have been the person who introduced Freud to Breuer.²²

Freud and Paneth studied philosophy together at the university and took a number of philosophy courses with Franz Brentano (1838–1917). On a few occasions they met with Brentano at his home. Although Brentano embodied what some might regard as a more empirical or scientific approach to philosophy than did Nietzsche, Freud's interests and concerns included those of a metaphysical nature. One of the courses he and Paneth took with Brentano was on the topic of the existence of God.²³ (From early on, Freud was strongly drawn to both the more speculative-metaphysical concerns of philosophy and a more empiricist and materialist world view.)

Paneth was an avid reader of Nietzsche and retained an interest in him after leaving the university. Paneth was the co-lecturer and leader along with Adler of the first formal Leseverein meeting specifically devoted to Nietzsche.²⁴ Freud and Paneth (along with Lipiner) were also involved in the establishment of a journal for which Paneth wrote on philosophy.²⁵ After the journal expired, Freud wrote to Silberstein of now having to keep certain philosophical ideas to himself or share them only with Paneth.²⁶ Freud and Paneth together read Ludwig Feuerbach whom Freud greatly admired at the time.²⁷ Feuerbach anticipated some of Freud's and Nietzsche's ideas on religion.

Paneth corresponded with Nietzsche and, as will be discussed in greater detail below, had the opportunity to meet and talk with him on a number of occasions over a three-month period from December 1883 through March 1884. He wrote to Freud of these meetings. Later in this study, when we come to Freud's self-analysis (after the death of his father in October 1896) and his work on *The Interpretation of Dreams*, consideration will be given to the possibility that Paneth's appearance in Freud's famous "Non Vixit" dream may in part reflect Freud's ambivalent feelings regarding the influence of Nietzsche on his work and the link between Paneth and Nietzsche. Further on in the study mention will be made of the fact that towards the end of his life, in correspondence with Arnold Zweig—who was considering the possibility of writing a fictionalized biography of Nietzsche just before the time Freud was giving thought to *Moses and Monotheism*—Freud recalled Paneth's writing to him of Nietzsche.²⁸

When we appreciate the great influence Nietzsche had on a substantial number of Viennese university students in the 1870s and in particular on a number of admired student friends and acquaintances of Freud, and when we then add to this our knowledge of Freud's interest in philosophy and his having possibly read (and certainly having heard discussed) *The Birth of Tragedy* and the first two or three essays of *Untimely Meditations*, it would appear to be a reasonable conclusion that the ideas of these early works had significant impact upon Freud, at least during this particular time of his life. In the correspondence with Arnold Zweig, Freud wrote regarding Nietzsche: "In my youth he signified a nobility to which I could not attain."²⁹ An alternative translation is: "In my youth he was a remote and noble figure to me."³⁰ As Freud was fantasizing about his own future greatness,³¹ Nietzsche's greatness was being proclaimed all around him.

We will next consider the extent to which these early works of Nietzsche may have had any bearing on Freud's later intellectual development and the origins of psychoanalysis.