

WEEKEND

Eran Rolnik

At the age of 17, Sigmund Freud wrote to a friend: "Until now [you] have probably remained unaware that you have been exchanging letters with a German stylist. And now I advise you as a friend, not as an interested party, to preserve them – have them bound – take good care of them – one never knows."

The young Freud was prescient. His devotion to letter-writing was extraordinary, even in a period that cultivated personal correspondence as an art. He's estimated to have written 30,000 letters during the 83 years of his life. His estate contains wild and very humorous writing from his youth, passionate and revealing love letters to his fiancée, and the formative – and no less passionate – correspondence with his Berlin-based friend Wilhelm Fliess. Alongside these is correspondence documenting the "self-analysis" chapter of his life, whose peak is the discovery of the Oedipus complex and the solution to the riddle of the dream. By the time he was 30, it was clear that for Freud letter-writing occupied a place not only in his interpersonal relations but also in his discoveries, in the emergence of psychoanalysis as a world scientific movement and in sustaining his unflagging creativity.

Freud's correspondents could take note of the tension between his positivist aspirations as a scholar and a physician, and the poetic and lyrical elements of his personality; become acquainted with the interplay of revolutionism and conservatism in his thought; and be regaled with his thoughts about femininity, sexuality, parenthood, money, smoking, cancer, ecology, archaeology and "an inhuman law devoid of empathy, which imposes the pursuit of a pregnancy even on a mother who does not want it."

These correspondents, unlike the readers of his books and his scientific papers, learned how he felt about his public status, about politics, the war of 1914-1918, metaphysics and culture. They were convinced of both his adamancy and his openness in regard to the innovations they suggested, and got to know his changing thoughts about psychoanalytic technique, the interpretation of dreams, the place of early sexual trauma in the life of the psyche and about homosexuality. With some people, he shared his thoughts in the wake of his meeting with Albert Einstein and about the odd fantasy he cultivated in his younger days to analyze the Russian czar and thereby avert a second world war.

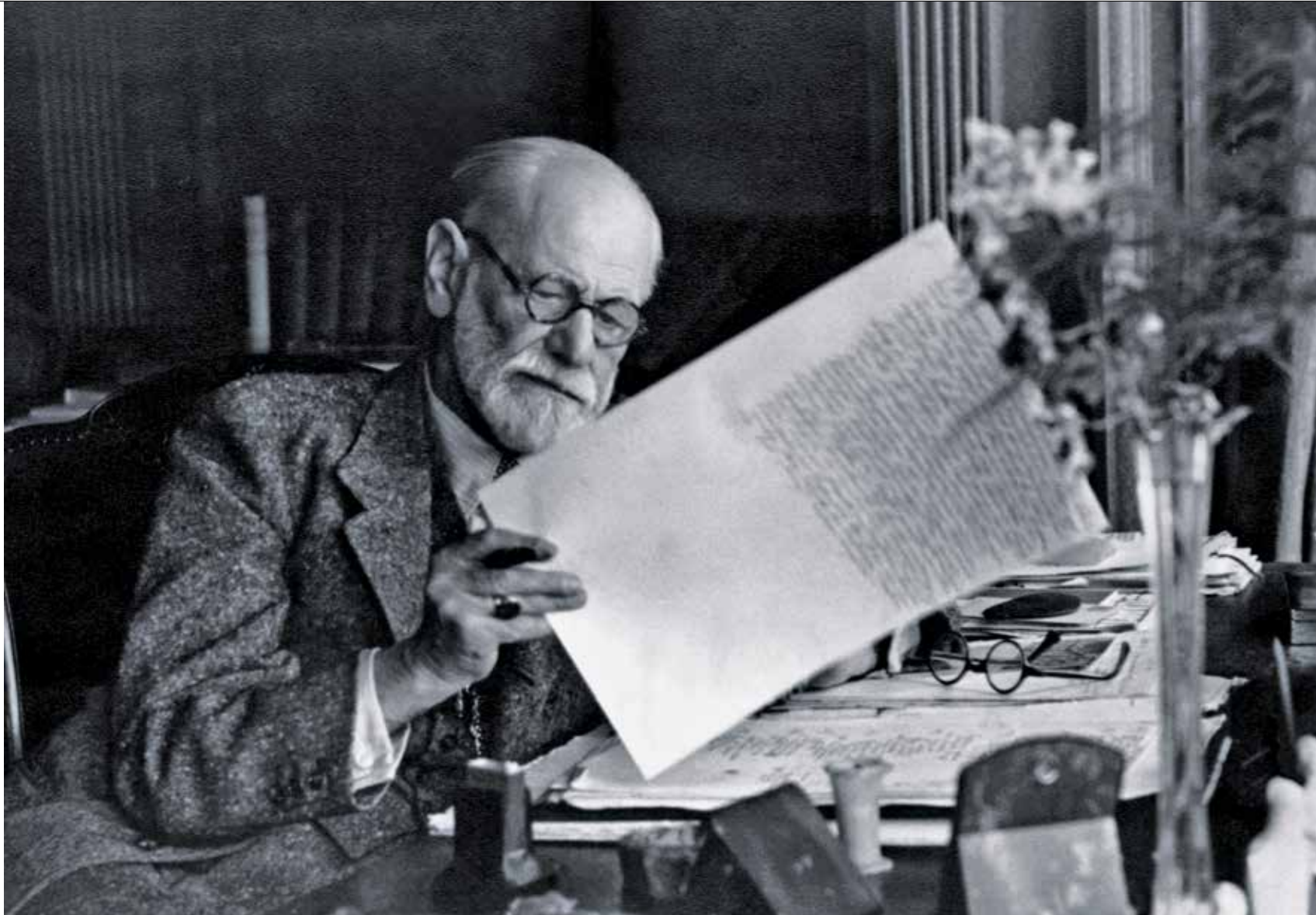
Freud enjoyed surprising recipients of his letters with sensational reports and various items of personal news: about his decision to stop smoking (which lasted exactly until he finished writing the letter in which he described that decision) or about a jolting encounter with Austrian anti-Semitism, which he experienced as a resident in a hospital, as he recounted it to his fiancée, Martha Bernays:

"On Sunday Koller was on duty at the Journal, the man who made cocaine so famous and with whom I have recently become more intimate. He had a difference of opinion about some minor technical matter with the man who acts as surgeon for Billroth's clinic, and the latter suddenly called Koller a 'Jewish swine.' Now you must try to imagine the kind of atmosphere we live in here, the general bitterness – in short, we would all have reacted just as Koller did: by hitting the man in the face. The man rushed off, denounced Koller to the director who, however, called him down thoroughly and categorically took Koller's side. This was a great relief to us all. But since they are both reserve officers, he is obliged to challenge Koller to a duel and at this very moment they are fighting with sabers under rather severe conditions. Lustgarten and Bettelheim (the regimental surgeon) are Koller's seconds."

"I am too upset to write any more now, but I won't send this letter off till I can tell you the result of the duel. [...] All is well, my little woman. Our friend is quite unharmed and his opponent got two deep gashes. We are all delighted, a proud day for us. We are going to give Koller a present as a lasting reminder of his victory."

Similarly, Freud's enigmatic Jewishness, which has deeply preoccupied his biographers, cannot be understood without reading his letters. The same holds for his attitude toward socialism, his response to the Nazis' rise to power, his take on the Zionist movement, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the incipient acceptance of psychoanalysis in Hebrew culture, and his thoughts on death, telepathy and archaeology, music and dogs. Above all, without his letters it is impossible to understand his attitude toward the truth – that is, his daily relationship with truth and the depth of his commitment to it, a topic that runs like a thread through Freud's epistolary writing. In a letter from 1882, he wrote to Bernays:

"For my beloved Marty,
"I am beginning these notes without waiting for your answer, my girl, in order to tell you more about myself



Freud, in his Vienna office, in 1930 His epistolary writing can be seen as a continuation of the self-analysis of one who was already convinced that the unconscious needs another in order to tell the subject's story.

Bettmann / Getty Images LLC

Epistolary epiphanies

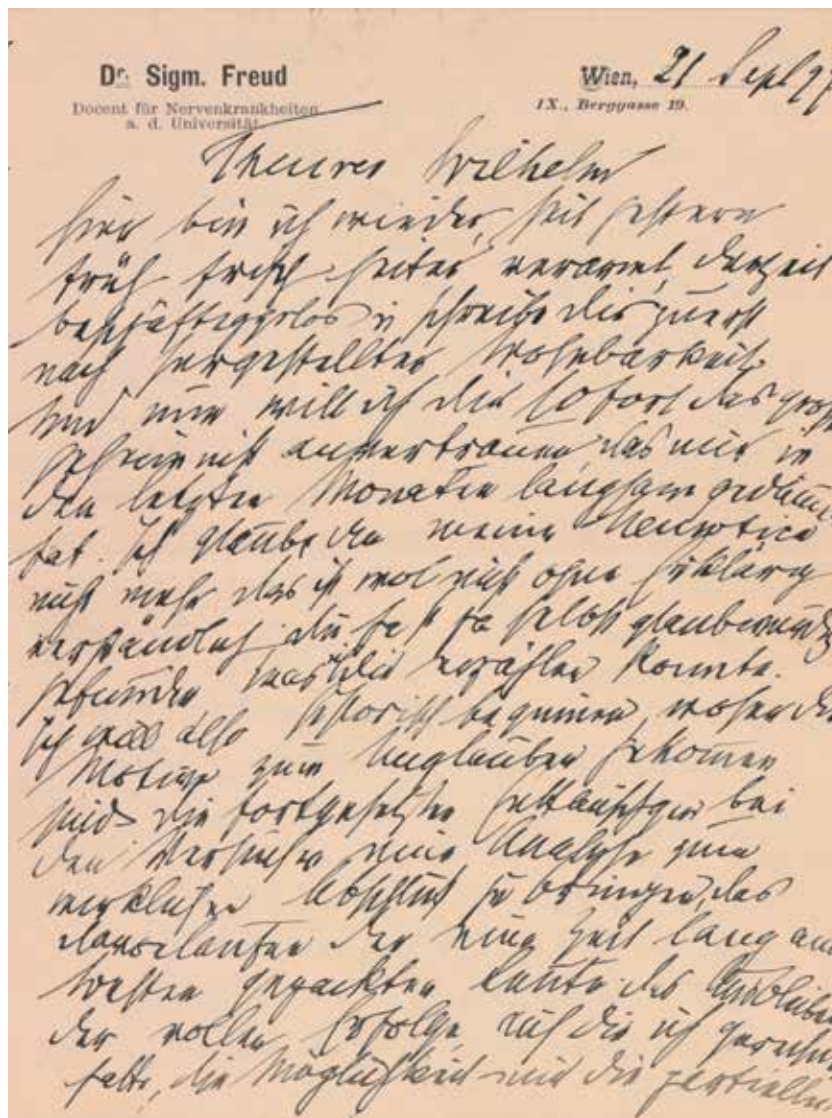
Romance, anti-Semitism, homosexuality, friendship – the vast trove of Sigmund Freud's letters sheds light not only on the subjects that occupied the father of psychoanalysis, but also on the role the very act of writing them played in his life

and my activities than our personal contact would allow. I am going to be very frank and confidential with you, as is right for two people who have joined hands for life in love and friendship. But as I don't want to keep on writing without receiving an answer I will stop as soon as you fail to respond. Continuous inner monologues about a beloved person that are not corrected or refreshed by that person lead to false opinions about the mutual relationship, and even to estrangement when one meets again and finds things to be different from what one had thought. Nor shall I always be very affectionate, sometimes I will be serious and outspoken, as is only right between friends and as friendship demands. But in so doing I hope you will not feel deprived of anything and will find it easy to choose between the one who values you according to your worth and merit, and the many who try to spoil you by treating you as a charming toy."

Public interest in Freud's letters began with a bundle of his letters that found their way to Paris and in 1937 came into the possession of the French psychoanalyst Princess Marie Bonaparte. When she informed Freud that she had purchased his letters to Fliess from a German bookseller, he wrote back that he would like her to do with them what a Jew does when cooking a peacock: He cooks it, buries it for a week and then retrieves it from the ground and throws it into the garbage. Bonaparte insisted on keeping the letters, and during the Nazi occupation transferred them to London. "Just imagine," she wrote to Freud, "that we didn't have Goethe's conversations with Eckermann, or the dialogues with Plato."

Like wolves intent on devouring prey, historians of psychoanalysis cast their gaze on the huge wooden closet that stood next to Anna Freud's bedroom in London, where she had stored her father's letters.

It was Kurt Eissler, a New York psychoanalyst who founded the Freud Archive in the 1950s and started systematically collecting Freud's letters from around the world, and who was finally permitted to open the closet and read the letters to Fliess, which are considered the cradle of psychoanalysis. He felt that he held the fate of an entire science in his hands. Hidden within the letters, is there also testimony about sexual exploitation of patients by their parents, which Freud knew about and repressed? Does the Freudian revolution rest on an original sin capable of refuting psychoanalysis and all its thinking from Freud until our day? Those questions will continue to occupy Freud scholars for decades to come. But the interest in his letters to Fliess sparked a desire to become acquainted with the totality of Freud's epistolary writing. Its contours were gradually revealed as an immense continent made up entirely of letters. And they, in their turn, validated the assertion of Thomas Mann, another of Freud's correspondents,



An 1897 letter from Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, with the first mention of the Oedipus complex, identified more closely than any other concept with Freud's thought.

U.S. Library of Congress

It's not the 'limitations of writing' or the connection between 'truth and creating' that occupy Freud; it's the limitations of self-knowledge and self-awareness.

that Freud's contribution to German literature is as great as his contribution to science.

Obligatory self-observation

"A single idea of general value dawned on me. I have found, in my own case too, [the phenomenon of] being in love with my mother and jealousy of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood, even if not so early as in children who have been made hysterical [...] If this is so, we can understand the gripping power of Oedipus Rex, in spite of all the objections that reason raises against the presupposition of fate; and we can understand why the later 'drama of fate' was bound to fail so miserably. The Greek legend seizes upon a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he senses its existence within himself. Everyone in

the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfillment here transplanted into reality, with the full quantity of repression which separates his infantile state from his present one."

That 1897 letter to Wilhelm Fliess contains the first mention of the Oedipus complex, which is identified more closely than any other concept with Freud's thought. But a perusal of his letters (preserved in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., which is the custodian of the Sigmund Freud Archives, they are addressed to 600 different recipients) shows that the obligation of self-observation – an ideal that drove millions of educated Europeans beginning in the 18th century to keep diaries in which they documented themselves before retiring for the night – reached new heights in Freud's epistolary writing. The writing of a letter – and in this,

the epistolary genre, which by definition involves communication with another individual, surpasses the boundaries of the "ideal self" addressed in a tiresome diary – entails a certain risk. Writing to another person will almost always overwhelm the writing self and bring to light something the author had not intended to reveal to his interlocutor or to himself. I tend to see Freud's epistolary writing as the continuation of the self-analysis of one who was already convinced that the unconscious needs another in order to tell the subject's story. Here's what Freud sounded like in a letter to his fiancée while he was studying under Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris in 1886:

"I consider it a great misfortune that nature has not granted me that indefinite something which attracts people. I believe it is this lack more than any other which has deprived me of a rosy existence. It has taken me so long to win my friends, I have had to struggle so long for my precious girl, and every time I meet someone I realize that an impulse, which defies analysis, leads that person to underestimate me. This may be a question of expression or temperament, or some other secret of nature, but whatever it may be it affects one deeply. What compensates me for all this is the devotion shown to me by all those who have become my friends – but what am I talking about?"

"But what am I talking about?" asks the person who, within a short time, would burst the bounds of the religious confession and the literary confession and teach his patients the advantages of a new form of psychological confession – namely, the basic rule of psychoanalysis: From now on, say everything that enters your mind. When a patient in analysis asks, "But what am I talking about?" it is a sign that the analysis is working and that the patient is in the midst of a new monologue with himself.

Apparently at an extremely early stage, Freud felt that free writing of the sort that appears on stationery (with the addition of a moderate use of cocaine) was for him a condition for original scientific thinking; that he must harness the artist in himself for the benefit of the scientist he so ardently wished to be. And let us not forget that in his letters, far more than in his theoretical writing, Freud shared with his correspondents his process of creation. "I was depressed the whole time and anesthetized myself with writing, writing, writing," he wrote to the Hungarian analyst Sandor Ferenczi. To the pacifist author Romain Rolland, who wished to interest him in the treasures of Indian culture, he would write, "In our perception, even thinking is a regressive process" (that is, in the psychological sense).

The young Freud was an industrious scientist (400 eels fell prey to his research on the reproductive organs of the wretched creatures). His early articles attest to his also having been a gifted clinician. But it's doubtful

that he would have discovered the healing potential that free association can have – when it encounters a listener who is in a state of free-floating attention and surrenders to the flow of his unconscious thoughts – if he had made do with dissecting eels, scurrying between patients or publishing case histories of hysterical women, without spending long hours alone in his room writing letters. Accordingly, the birth of psychoanalysis should be attributed to a successful fusion between ambition, inquisitiveness and persistence, and the creative imagination and extraordinary verbal abilities with which Freud was endowed. In other words, one can draw a connection between his scientific discoveries and his response to the urge to write, to keep a record, to capture himself in the word and to share with others everything that entered his mind.

"I know that in writing I have to blind myself artificially in order to focus all the light on one dark spot, renouncing cohesion, harmony, rhetoric and everything which you call symbolic, frightened as I am by the experience that any such claim or expectation involves the danger of distorting the matter under investigation, even though it may embellish it. Then you come along and add what is missing, build upon it, putting what has been isolated back into its proper context. I cannot always follow you, for my eyes, adapted as they are to the dark, probably can't stand strong light or an extensive range of vision. But I haven't become so much of a mole as to be incapable of enjoying the idea of a brighter light and more spacious horizon, or even to deny their existence." (Letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, May 25, 1916)

Freud's letters are not only texts of "candor," in the tradition of the confessions of Augustine, Goethe or Rousseau. They are concise documents that possess the power to arouse questions such as "What is thought?" or "What is sincerity?" Freud does not wallow in the impossibility of communication through letters – a motif that has engaged wordsmiths, men and women alike, from time immemorial in their correspondence with their lovers. It's not the "limitations of writing" or the connection between "truth and creating" that occupy him; it's the limitations of self-knowledge and self-awareness. Patently he would dispute Franz Kafka's pronouncement (in one of his letters to Milena) that writing letters is "an intercourse... with one's own ghost." Readers of Kafka's autoerotic love letters are able, in my opinion, to understand why Kafka attributed the calamity of his life to the possibility of writing letters, and why he accused his own letters of "always betraying him."

Not so for Freud. He takes pleasure in writing, and the words cascade from him generously and assuredly, but as a person of emotional and intellectual partnership, even letters to a beloved one or to an intimate friend are no substitute for the desire to rub up against the lives of others. Accordingly, the recipient of a letter from Freud didn't feel that the great man had "done him a favor" by replying to him. Freud did not hide from his correspondent his feeling that he, Freud, needed the epistolary presence in his life and acknowledged his dependence on an "intelligent reader" like him. So it's easy to imagine the surprise of Yohanan Levinson, a dentist from Kibbutz Givat Brenner, when he received a detailed letter from Freud in 1936, who was then at the height of his fame. Forthrightness and love of the truth also characterized his replies to many authors who solicited his opinion of their writing.

'Excess libido'

"What I have to say about your argument will not surprise you, as you seem to be familiar with my attitude to philosophy (metaphysics). Other defects in my nature have certainly distressed me and made me feel humble; with metaphysics it is different – I not only have no talent for it but no respect for it, either. In secret – one cannot say such things aloud – I believe that one day metaphysics will be condemned as a nuisance, as an abuse of thinking, as a survival from the period of the religious Weltanschauung. I know well to what extent this way of thinking estranges me from German cultural life. Thus you will easily understand that most things I read in your essay have remained unappreciated by me, although I several times felt that the essay contained quite 'brilliant' thoughts." (Letter to Werner Achelis)

When correspondence with a student or a friend loses its flavor, the significance is that the entire relationship is in doubt. Freud did not hide that truth from correspondents. "You will undoubtedly suppose that I am writing to you from practical motives and not from an inner urge after such a long break. And that is so," he wrote to Fliess in one of the letters concluding long years of intensive relations. When relations with Carl Jung foundered, Freud observed them from an epistolary perspective,

Continued on page 11

for contracts worth billions of dollars. Obviously, if you can eavesdrop on an official with the competition, someone who's conducting the negotiations with the local government, his cards are open to you, and that can be worth hundreds of millions. In a case like that, the cost of a Trojan horse is small change that's worth the investment."

Espionage means are becoming accessible even to smaller sized companies, Tamam, the lawyer, notes. "Take, for example, the owner of a small business who suspects that his competitor is part of a cartel and wants to find hard evidence. If doing away with the competitor is worth 600,000 shekels (\$165,000) to him, why shouldn't he invest 40,000 or 50,000 shekels to monitor his phone?"

Clients who want to secure their phone sometimes come from unexpected places, says Kaymera CEO David Sarfati. "If in the past the clients were mainly from public organizations and executives at large corporations, recently we've been getting private clients, including even journalists and regular citizens, who want mobile security, without explaining why. All they say is, 'I don't want people listening in on me.'"

Cutting edge

Local purveyors of spyware take pride in their apps being the product of "original Israeli development." In fact, the country's cyber industry occupies a key place in the espionage world. An investigation published last October by Haaretz found that Israeli companies had exported spyware to dozens of countries lacking in strong democratic traditions. The software was used by dictators to spy on citizens and to persecute opponents of the regime. Now it turns out that increasing numbers of Israeli firms are also supplying similar services in the private market, both domestically and abroad.

As is the case at firms involved in foreign exports, the staff at companies serving the private market in this realm also consists in large part of former personnel in intelligence units of the Israel Defense Forces, who are now utilizing the know-how they acquired for sometimes dubious purposes. According to Skycurve's Yair Amit, who served in the army's celebrated Unit 8200, "People who serve in those bodies have the ability to identify and develop new products on the basis of the knowledge they acquired in those systems. Things shift from the state level to the civilian realm."

In many cases, the developers of these tools of attack and counter-attack (known in the trade as "black-hat hackers") served side by side in the same unit. According to Dan Levinson, from Force Majeure, which was also founded by Unit 8200 veterans, "Most of our employees are graduates of intelligence and cyber units who are not confused between what they did in the army – black-hat attacks for positive goals, in order to save lives and avert terrorism – and their new role in civilian



Shay Madar. The adulterous husband "eavesdropped on my client, heard she was planning to trap him, and turned into a saint." Maged Gozani

life. There's a tremendous temptation to engage in black-hatting in the business and political world. Because that's where the big money is: in executing attacks, not preventing them. To be a good defender, you need to think like an attacker but be committed to certain values and have a strong conscience."

Guy Mizrahi, another 8200 graduate, who terms himself a hacker, co-founded Cyberia, a local company, no longer in business, that developed offensive cyber products for governments. He sleeps very well at night, he says.

"The choice of the offensive position is no less legitimate than engaging in information security," he observes. "If no companies developed offensive tools, the field wouldn't move ahead and security bodies wouldn't be able to improve [their technology]. In the end, we manufacture tools that help prevent crime and terrorism, save lives and do good things for humanity. The state defines who is allowed to sell these means and who is not. I'm not shrugging off responsibility, but no one complains about companies that make knives."

'Motivation and money'

Until not long ago, the iPhone was considered more immune than those operating on the Android system to random hacking and amateur break-in attempts. But a series of successful hacks of iPhones owned by some prominent individuals raised questions about the level of security provided by Apple. In Israel, the phone of

Kahol Lavan leader Benny Gantz was hacked; abroad the most famous victim has been Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos.

Apple still has the advantage, says Guy Mizrahi, who is now vice-president for cyber at RayZone Group, which develops intelligence products for governments. "If the threatened I'm facing is a private detective or an app that collects information about me, you could say that I will be calmer if I have an iPhone. But in the end, it's all a matter of motivation and money. The threat from a state is a whole different story."

But according to Mey-Raz from Kaymera, "Apple has developed a 'gated community' image thanks to its amazing marketing capabilities. In the past that was actually the situation, but the technology is constantly improving, and today there are many more breached zones. Improvements in services involving screens and cameras no longer allow Apple to be a gated community. In any case, to insert a Trojan I don't have to upload to App Store. There are other ways."

One of the best known contractors in this realm is the Israeli firm Cellebrite, which specializes in developing means to breach cellphones and takes pride in its ability to hack any iPhone, including the most advanced models. Cellebrite works with various governmental organizations worldwide, including security and intelligence bodies in the United States. A Forbes investigative report last February found that the company's advanced hacking instruments are available

for resale on eBay for a few hundred dollars – another example of how technologies that were once thought to be confined to use by states have spilled into the private domain.

In response

Golan Wishniya, owner of WorldShop: "We sell our software only to clients who declare that the telephone in question is theirs, or in the case of the custodian of a minor. We give the client explicit instructions, and if he nevertheless commits an offense, we cannot assume responsibility for it. The employee you met is a salesperson. I am the technician, and as a lawyer I am knowledgeable about the law. I make a point of interrogating every client about his intentions behind the installation."

Sarit, from Trico: "I don't recall the conversation, but if we'd met and done the installation, I would have had you sign a form in which you declare that the telephone is your possession and would have ascertained that you were telling the truth."

A spokesperson for Spy-Phone stated: "Our policy is unequivocal: not to cooperate with illegal usages. We are not lawyers, but to the best of our knowledge the law stipulates that the product can be sold in the case of a non-independent person. For example, we have clients who want to install a program in [the phones of] their aged parents in order to avoid a situation in which they will be exploited. We don't have a real capacity to catch people who deceive us, and our point of departure is that most clients

EPIPHANIES

Continued from page 8

If for his patients Freud was an attentive listener, for his correspondents he was an alert reader, a jumpy seismograph reacting to surface and subterranean layers in the letters they sent him; apologizing for not having succeeded in fully grasping the meaning of a pen-friend; providing a glimpse into the reason for his delay in replying to a letter. The word "empathy," which we have become accustomed to think is crucial in psychoanalysis, rings so hollow in the face of one simple, true line of Freud's: "How irksome it must have been for you to put down on paper these difficult matters, which it is so much easier to talk about!" he wrote to Lou Andreas-Salomé, the legendary lover of Rilke and Nietzsche, who was taking her first steps in the world of psychoanalytical thought and had written him a delightful, if somewhat confused, letter. A few days later, Freud dispatched unusually fierce words to the director of a private sanitarium for patients with nervous disorders in Germany, whom he thought had gone a bit overboard in his admiration for him:

"I think you are forcing me into your father-mold, even though I am not in the least suited for the part. One time I fulfill for you the role of an aged and revered father to whom one must bow down and who must be protected at all costs, but who must also be pitied, for his end is approaching and his life was unbearably difficult; another time I am for you a dark leader who disposes of anyone who only dared express himself freely; and here I am, already in the role of Kronos, the god who devours his children. Today I hear from you that I am a person who makes do with himself and is incapable of accepting anything from anyone else. Whereas I think that these are delusions whose source lies in transient reflections. The truth is that I am not all that old, and also quite flexible; am in no need of pity and get along wonderfully with my true children; relentlessly seek to forge new friendships and am ready to make certain concessions for their sake. But what are all these attempts at persuasion for? After all, in true analysis things are done in a similar manner: It is immaterial what the father thinks he is, he will apparently have to fulfill the image of the father that was burned into phylogenesis."

Freud's uncompromising attitude toward truth is also discernible in his letter of reply to the American mother of a homosexual who wanted to send her son to the professor for a cure:

"I gather from your letter that your son is a homosexual. I am most impressed by the fact, that you do not mention this term yourself in your information about him. May I question

you why you avoid it? Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.) It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime and cruelty too."

Freud's handwriting is large, angular, unruly and mostly legible; the letters of the alphabet are crowded onto large sheets of paper that were cut especially for him. The lines are dense, touching one another. The momentum of the handwriting is not curtailed even when the pen reaches the edge of the page, and long words spill over from one line to the line that follows. The torrent of letters that surged from his study every day for decades continued to accompany

One can draw a connection between his scientific discoveries and his response to the urge to keep a record and to share with others everything that entered his mind.

him on vacations, too. At the end of every day of analytical work, an hour was devoted to correspondence. Anna Freud related that her father wrote about 10 letters an hour – another reminder of the resemblance between Freud and such geniuses as Bach or Alexander von Humboldt, who were endowed with an incomprehensible capacity for work.

The epistolary corpus that Freud left behind is one of the largest that have been preserved in the modern era. Today, 80 years after his death, it is evident that civilization proceeds without transmitting manuscripts of exemplary figures in human history. It is precisely because of this that the encounter with Freud's letters brings home the loss entailed in the almost total disappearance of this form of communication and literary genre, which enriched the self-archive of so many people from the dawn of history. The publication of Freud's letters at this time – to repeat what he wrote at the age of 17 to his friend Eduard Silberstein – is an unmelancholy attempt "to fill that gap."

Eran Rolnik is a psychoanalyst, psychiatrist and historian. "Sigmund Freud – Letters," translated, annotated and edited by Dr. Rolnik, has recently been published in Hebrew by Modan Publishers.

JUDAISM

Continued from page 5

faith-based or theological structure. This notion of religion originates in Christianity, which began as a voluntary framework (after all, one was not born Christian in the first century) and emphasizes correct faith.

Concurrently, the Jewish sages underscored affiliation with the ethnic collectivity and the observance of laws and customs. It was only beginning in the 16th century that the term trickled slowly into use as denoting religious belief – as something that occurs in the individual's heart. Not coincidentally, all this arrived together with the Reformation, which split the Church and necessitated a reorganization of theological and meta-theological concepts in Europe.

Until the 19th century, Boyarin notes, it is impossible to find "Judaism" as the subject of a sentence. There is no "Judaism" that believes in one thing or another, there is no "the essence of Judaism." Those attributes emerged only when modern Jewish avenues were compelled to define themselves: namely, when traditional Jewish society in Europe underwent dramatic processes of modernization and when Reform and Orthodox Judaism evolved. The two denominations sought to determine the basic principles of "Judaism," each for its own reasons.

The Jewish tradition, then, increasingly resembled the Christian tradition, for it set out to integrate itself into the (modern Western) Christian world. For Christianity, this was of course very convenient. Boyarin makes clear how, already from the first centuries of the Common Era, Christianity constructed Judaism as the fundamental "Other," vis-a-vis which it defined itself. In other words, there is no "Judaism" other than in a Christian context. There are of course Jews, the *halakha* (traditional Jewish law) exists, and so forth, but there is no abstract and general term other than through the Christian eye and against the backdrop of Christendom.

With the advent of the Emancipation, "Judaism" became the "religion" of the Jews, a development that helped them exceedingly to integrate into the emerging nation-states – thus, for example, a person could be a "German of the Mosaic faith." The Jews became equal citizens in Western Europe. That process, Boyarin writes, "destroyed Yiddishkayt as a form of life."

Which is true: The Jews' traditional way of life was eradicated. In places where emancipation did not occur, Jews continued to maintain "traditionalism" – so it's not surprising that Jews who immigrated to Israel from Muslim countries had a completely different attitude toward their Jewish identity than their European brethren. The Judaism of the traditionalists, beginning in the late 18th century and today as well, is not "religion" or "nationalism," but a comprehensive ethnocultural identity.

Of course, Boyarin understands that there is no way back. Even though he is critical of the modern configuration of Judaism, he, like all of us, derives no little benefit from it. Himself an observant Jew, Boyarin is known as a firm critic of Zionism who perceives the Diasporic Jewish existence as a more authentic and worthier form of Jewish life. His vision involves the establishment of Jewish communities in the Diaspora that would take part in a joint national project with other groups and foment communal Jewish life. But this is achievable today only within a liberal democratic framework, namely the Christian-Protestant model that renders Judaism solely as a religion.

Sufficiency of physicality

In an effort to understand Boyarin better, I met with him for a conversation. I asked him about the Christian – specifically, the Pauline – idea that presupposes that we are all first and foremost individuals, and about the fact that this is not only a potent and highly attractive notion but is also, ultimately, a highly advantageous one. After all, liberalism, which is based on this idea, created a beneficent world in which we, as Jews, can also

live a secure, thriving life.

Boyarin said that he is definitely not a liberal. "We, the Jews, maintain that a human being is not monadic: Humans do not exist on their own and are not autonomous to decide personally what they are and who they are," he explained. At the same time, he noted, "The depiction of Jewishness as a non-chosen condition into which one is born does not theoretically inhibit recognition of equality by the state."

Nonetheless, I asked, isn't the idea that all people are equal and have inalienable rights based on the Christian perception of the individual as

Starkly put, Boyarin asserts that until a few hundred years ago, there was no such thing as 'Judaism.' Indeed, the term is not found in the Torah, Prophets or Writings, the Mishna or Talmud, the works of the early medieval Geonim, of

being endowed with universal reason and free choice, which are situated in a nonmaterial soul? In other words, our conception of human equality is rooted in an inner essence that is considered more meaningful than any external feature (such as skin color, ethnic origin or different sexual organs). It's only on the presupposition of an inner persona, hidden and autonomous, that we legitimize ethical ideas and institutions, such as the social contract, human rights, feminism and transsexual journeys. I have my own reservations about the modern occupation with inwardness, I told Boyarin, but we are bound to recognize that it has engendered much that we cherish.

"I don't think I share those views about inner essences," he said. "Is

shared physicality not sufficient for solidarity? We resemble others, we mate with them, even when we don't pretend we don't, and we use language like them. They are us."

Well, I replied, we know that historically, shared physicality was insufficient. We do not look exactly alike, and therefore we can treat others as being inferior to us – or, in rare cases, like the Incas' encounter with Francisco Pizarro and his bearded white men, as superior to us.

Boyarin replied that he "still thinks that the homogenization of human beings through their supposed soul has done far more harm than good."

But it seems to me that there is an unresolved point here. The modern, Western-Protestant world demands that Judaism change, as it demands of hundreds of other cultures to change. Given enough time, "Hopism" and "Druzism" will also come into existence. There's something imperialist about this universalism, Boyarin is right about that, but even so, there's a reward that comes with making the transition. We get human rights, civil rights and equality under the law, even at the moral and pragmatic level. In personal-psychological terms, the reward is still greater: We possess individuality and a sense of autonomy that are inconceivable in traditional societies. How many of us are willing to live a life that "does not exist on [its] own... not autonomous to decide personally what they are and who they are," as Boyarin put it.

Regardless of how valid it may be, the liberal temptation captures our heart no less than it transforms our Judaism. Without doubt, the homogenization that Boyarin talks about exists, and there's also a flattening of depths that once existed and are no longer, and there's also social fragmentation. Our Judaism is not what it was, and what was will not return. But are we capable of giving up our Western individualism, even if we wish? And is that in fact what we wish?

Dr. Tomer Persico is Koret Visiting Assistant Professor of Jewish and Israel Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and a research fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute.

תירוש · בית מכירות פומביות

TIROCHE

AUCTION HOUSE

managing directors: Orna & Dov Hazan

AUCTION No. 174

Israeli & International Art

SATURDAY 29.6.2019 at 20:30

Including Works From: Honigman Family Collection | Sara & Ephraim Kishon Collection
Gaby and Ami Brown Collection

Michal Rovner, While in the Air III, 1999, Archival pigment print on canvas, 123x123 cm.

Yehudit Sasportas, Fan, Earth up, Sky Down, 2004, Acrylic on shaped MDF, 160x275 cm. Signed.

Reuven Rubin, Flowers on the Window Sill, Oil on canvas, 65x54 cm. Signed.

Sigmund Menkes, A Flower Vase, a Mandolin and an Arch, Oil on canvas, 77x51 cm. Signed.

Participating and viewing online live is available at: <https://tiroche.bidspirit.com>

PREVIEW	SUNDAY-THURSDAY	23 - 27.6.2019	11:00 - 20:00
	FRIDAY	28.6.2019	11:00 - 15:00
	SATURDAY (Day of Auction)	29.6.2019	11:00 - 14:00

All 600 Paintings and Sculptures in the Auction can be viewed on TIROCHE'S web site: www.tiroche.co.il
35 Khavatsel ha-Sharon st. (Kikar de Shalit), Herzliya Pituach, Tel. 09-9509893/4 Email: art@tiroche.co.il