

The Self-Marginalization of Wilhelm Stekel

Freudian Circles Inside and Out



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The Self-Marginalization of Wilhelm Stekel

Freudian Circles Inside and Out

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FOREWORD

Like in philosophy, in psychoanalysis the history of the discipline is an essential component of its subject matter, body of observations, and even method. The present work by Bos and Groenendijk about Stekel is a most welcome contribution to scholarly historical research in psychoanalysis. Wilhelm Stekel is today all but forgotten, but in his time he was one of the most prolific psychoanalytic writers. Volume IV alone of Grinstein's *The Index of Psychoanalytic Writings* lists 214 articles and books and 151 abstracts. Stekel achieved considerable fame in Vienna and even more so in the United States, where his books on sexual aberrations were widely read. Among clinicians in the United States, E.A. Gutheil was his most devoted champion. Personally I have had considerable liking for Stekel's ideas, and especially for his notion of the polyphony of thought. Patients come for treatment because of fears and anxieties regarding relationships with other people. But they all are also immensely afraid of their own thoughts. Stekel was unique in understanding such anxieties and analyzed them from many angles. He was also unusually frank about his own sexuality and courageous with dealing with the subject of sexuality in others. I learned an interesting detail about the history of my first psychoanalytic teacher in the early 1960s, the Jewish-Hungarian analyst Sandor Feldman. Apparently Feldman was once threatened with ostracism by the International Psychoanalytic Association because of his adherence to Stekel.

In spite of Stekel's pioneering role in the early days of the psychoanalytic movement, Freud developed an intense dislike toward the man even as he praised some of his contributions. As a result Wilhelm Stekel was marginalized already prior to his expulsion from the psychoanalytic movement in 1912. The authors astutely analyze the social phenomenon of marginalization, the role of Stekel himself in shaping this fate of his, and the behavior of Freud and others in the movement.

Psychoanalysis as a method has some claim of being unitary, as for example in the technique of free association and dream interpretation; but there has been a decline of interest in these areas in the last decades. Also, from its inception, as a body of observation and clinical practice it was pre-eminently concerned with the many faces of sexuality. Sexuality, too, has fallen by the wayside, at first overshadowed by ego psychology, beginning in the 1920s, and more recently displaced by self-psychology. In connection with sexuality, the authors resurrect a historical quarrel between Freud and Stekel about the alleged harmfulness of masturbation. It turns out that Freud

acted out a major prejudice against masturbation, in the manner of medical men and educators of the 19th century whose books and pamphlets filled libraries by the hundreds.

However, the height of debate, dissension, and destruction of careers and lives was reached in the realm of theories. Early on psychoanalysis, a clinical discipline has often, and rather glibly, been attacked as a sect, a cult, a religion. In some ways this analogy is right: the very idea that there are orthodox analysts or an orthodox psychoanalysis, whereas there are orthodox physicists or orthodox physics, supports the contention that in defending certain theories against dissenters Freud acted as a pope persecuting heretics. To use another religious analogy, Freud was practicing the old Jewish herem, or excommunication of heretics, as happened to Spinoza with Amsterdam Jews, or the Holy Inquisition, who burned Giordano Bruno at the stake and nearly condemned Galileo to the same fate.

The history of ideas and the psychoanalytic movement has been studied from two divergent perspectives: the hagiographic, or the official story, e.g., by Ernest Jones or Peter Gay; and the iconoclastic, or revisionist, e.g., Phyllis Grosskurth. Clearly, these two perspectives reflect the orthodoxy bequeathed upon the followers by Freud himself or the keepers of the faith, the famous "Secret Committee." One is reminded of the break-up with Adler and Jung over issues of doctrine as well as the acrimony with which Freud attacked Wilhelm Reich for dissenting from his theory of the death instinct and his subsequent excommunication. As often happens to dissenters, both Wilhelms were not only branded as deviant but also as mentally disturbed.

It goes without saying that other than doctrine, as in the case of the Catholics and the Protestants, the inclusions in and exclusions from of people in the various psychoanalytic societies were always a matter of psychoanalytic politics. But politics has been the blind spot, nay, has been treated with denial, by Freud and the epigones as well. The authors address this issue, too. In this connection I would like to pay a special tribute to the pioneering work of the historian Paul Roazen, co-author of one of the chapters, whose recent untimely death saddened many. It should also be noted that politics of exclusion have been at the heart of warfare among analysts of different persuasions both in Europe and in the United States: Freudians against Jungians; Melanie Klein against Anna Freud; true Freudians vs. neo-Freudians, such as Harald Schultz-Hencke and Karen Horney; the question of medical psychoanalysis and the decades of exclusion of lay psychoanalysis, as happened in the United States.

Studying the lives of prominent dissidents, such as Reich, Ferenczi, and Stekel, who, in turn viewed themselves as true Freudians, is both a fascinating and an indispensable part of this history that is still relevant to us

today, to the question where do we come from and where are we going. Illuminating in this context is the comparison the authors provide of two histories of the psychoanalytic movement: Freud and Stekel. And so is the volume in its entirety.

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PREFACE

This book became a book when it was half-written already. We had been working on the history of psychoanalysis in general, and on Stekel in particular, independent of each other for some time before we met through a mutual contact. Having discovered that we shared a common interest, we decided to write a paper together. The result of this initial collaboration was published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* as "The art of imitation: Wilhelm Stekel's *Lehrjahre*", which now reappears as Chapter 5 in this book. The focus in this paper is on reading Stekel's and Freud's work in a "dialogical way". The Stekel–Freud relationship was an ambiguous one, we believe, and some of their writings read both as a (covert) reflection of as well as an instrument in this relationship. In trying to lay bare a "conversation between the lines" we focussed on Stekel's formative years and commented on the function of autobiographical narratives in their respective works as one of the mechanisms that produces psychoanalytic discourse.

With our paper on Stekel's formative years published in the summer of 2004 we felt that the idea of reading psychoanalysis dialogically was not yet exhausted, and so it only seemed natural to continue our collaboration. We quickly established that the overarching theme should be the problem of marginalization and self-marginalization, and that one way to understand Stekel's position is to look at it from the perspective of "constructive" or "positive marginality". Accordingly, we rearranged and partly rewrote a number of papers that we had written earlier, which now make up the main gist of this book. While we left the argumentation of each paper largely intact, we smoothed stylistic issues to fit them into a coherent whole, even if some repetition was unavoidable at times.

Thus, while this book discusses in detail the work and influence of Wilhelm Stekel, and his ambiguous relationship to Freud, it is not so much a biography of a "forgotten psychoanalyst", but rather a study in the dimensions of marginality as displayed in the work of one such "marginal author". The various chapters focus on dialogical, interpersonal, social and psychological dimensions of marginality and self-marginality.

The main argument developed in this book is that marginalization had had beneficial aspects to both Stekel and Freud. It gave Stekel room for what could be called *dissentient originality*, while it allowed Freud to use Stekel's dissentience as a counter position against which he would build his arguments. It is in this sense that the Freud–Stekel relationship was formative for many of Freud's relations, both with his own followers as well as with his adversaries.

Divergent opinions between Freud and Stekel with respect to theoretical, clinical and personal matters are discussed in the first seven chapters. The first chapter offers a theoretical exploration of the problem of marginalization and gives a short resumé of the life and work of Wilhelm Stekel, and his struggles with Freud. The ambiguous relationship between Freud and Stekel is further discussed in the second, fourth and seventh chapter, which have an alternating focus on their divergent views on psychoanalytic training, lay-analysis and auto-analysis, respectively. The third chapter takes issue with an important clinical problem on which Freud and Stekel had a long-lasting feud, namely that of the importance of masturbation in the aetiology of neurosis. Chapter 4 discusses the influence of Stekel in the area of mental hygiene and education. The sixth chapter reviews the issue of historiography written from the point of view of self-marginalization, and addresses the problem that the history of psychoanalysis still is, in many ways, determined by Freud's viewpoints. Chapter 7 gives a review of the interpersonal dynamics that can be found in the hitherto unpublished Freud–Stekel correspondence. The last two chapters in this book include the translation of a little-known original piece on Stekel's role in psychoanalytic history, written by Stekel himself in 1926, and the English translation of his correspondence with Freud.

This book would not have been written – or rather not have come about – without the help of many people, some of whom we would like to thank here. First of all we wish to express gratitude to Bob Rieber, to whom credit should go of having suggested that this book be written in the first place. Standing on a hill top overlooking Salzburg, where a century earlier Freud and Stekel once wandered, he encouraged the plan and offered to help find a publisher. We are proud that our book now appears as one of the volumes in his Paths series.

Also, we wish to thank Paul Roazen who volunteered to sort out the Stekel correspondence from the Library of Congress in Washington and helped prepare an introductory chapter to this correspondence. Sadly, Paul died not knowing that his contribution to this book would be printed; his encouragement and confidence in our work, however, enthused us and he will be greatly missed.

Thank you, furthermore Johan Sturm, co-author of the chapter on Stekel's influence on education, for your many valuable suggestions, and Zvi Lothane, for your preface. A warm thank you to Petteri Pietikainen, Dave Park, John Forrester, Michael Molnar, Ben Spiecker, Michael Schröter, Michael Giefer, Mike Sokal, Francis Clark-Lowes, Dave Lee, and Ernst Falzeder for your helpful suggestions and commentaries on parts of this book. We are grateful to the editors and publishers of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, *Psychoanalysis and History*, *History of Psychology*, the *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality* and *Paedagogica Historica*, for permission to use papers previously published therein, and to the people at Springer (in particular Sharon Panulla) for their support.

January 2006

Jaap Bos and Leendert Groenendijk

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Chapter 1

MARGINALIZATION THROUGH PSYCHOANALYSIS An Introduction

Jaap Bos and Leendert Groenendijk

Marginality is becoming universal
Michel de Certeau, 1988, p. xvii.

Prologue

What significance does marginality have in science, if any? Why are *some* scientific practices marginalized while others become dominant, and yes, who *does* the marginalization? Why focus on marginality if there are still so many other interesting topics to explore?

These are some questions we had in mind when we began to explore the position of one particular marginal—Wilhelm Stekel—within a field—psychoanalysis—that was at one time marginalized by other practices and at another a marginalizing practice itself. We soon discovered that what at first sight seemed self-evident, was perhaps not so clear after all. If Stekel was marginalized because his work really did not fit in the corpus of analytical texts, then why was he in psychoanalytic circles for so long? Or, as it is also claimed, if Stekel went “totally astray” after his break with Freud, then in what ways did he digress, and why was it necessary to negate these digressions so strongly? In other words: where or when does marginality emerge (see also Timms, 1992, p. 60)?

Let us begin with a common sense notion of this concept: marginality as the borders of a scientific enterprise. That is, all those activities that are not central to the core business of science. This also includes *people*, the “marginals,” whose works are at best not completely nonsensical but also not worth bothering with, or, at worst, must be ignored at all costs. So, marginality can be understood in everyday language to be everything that

falls outside the domain of what is considered “interesting” or “pivotal.” There is a sharp distinction between the central and the marginal and the two are not to be confused. One should always have only a marginal interest in marginality.

We confess that we have a more than marginal interest in marginality. But we also believe that the above definition includes an illusive notion of marginality. We are going to argue that, paradoxically, marginality is not a marginal phenomenon at all: it is at the heart of all scientific activity. To illustrate this point we turn to what is perhaps *the* most important marginal relationship in psychoanalysis: the one between Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Stekel, one of his earliest followers who was marginalized in a particularly brutal manner. He was literally kicked out of the “movement,” and was never permitted to reenter the psychoanalytic community again in spite of several attempts to reconcile with the master. We believe that the conditions that constituted this relationship were, in a sense, prototypical for future relationships to develop in psychoanalysis. We shall return to this problem at the end of this chapter.

Let us be straightforward then: this book is *not* a biography of Wilhelm Stekel, nor is it, strictly speaking, a collection of historical studies *on* Stekel. Despite the fact that this book includes the complete hitherto unpublished correspondence between Freud and Stekel, and contains an original piece written by Stekel, we do not intend to bring “new facts” to light. However, the studies collected in this volume do reveal new *insights* into the Freud–Stekel relationship—one of the unsolved riddles in the early history of psychoanalysis. Even so, our book is primarily aimed at understanding the work and influence of Stekel *as a marginal*. Briefly, this is a study in the dimensions of marginality, and our aim is to understand this phenomenon by exploring the various dimensions of marginality in the life and work of one marginal in detail. We focus on dialogical, interpersonal, social, and psychological dimensions in the various chapters in this book, but each chapter reads as a separate study that deals with separate issues.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter we shall first outline the problem of marginality somewhat further by positioning it in a theoretical framework. Secondly, we sketch a brief biographical picture of Stekel’s life and work, in particular with respect to his problematic relationship with Freud. We then attempt to apply the model of marginalization to the position of Stekel, and incorporate here a few short notions on some of the most important discussions between Freud and Stekel in anticipation of the various issues that are explored in this book. We conclude with a brief discussion of the main characteristics of the prototypical position of a marginal in general.

Marginality as Positioning¹

Marginality: a classical sociological concept. True, but also a concept that is used in many different ways; so many, in fact, that the question was posed about whether it would not be better for us to dispose of it altogether (Del Pilar & Udasco, 2004). It is, first of all, a concept to describe a *condition* that seems to befall individuals or even groups of people, either by accident or deliberately. As a condition, as a state of being, marginality is understood to be an extremely simple phenomenon: it is a moving away from the center (rich, powerful) to the margins (poor, powerless), assuming that there is a spatial link between the marginal and the central; that the two are physically alienated from each other by time and social forces.

Secondly, marginality is understood to be a *process*. In this definition, the focus is on the traffic between the center and the border— notions of inclusion and exclusion, upward and downward mobility, social integration and segregation are but a few concepts that denote these movements and actions. Thus Bourdieu (1988, 1992), who was particularly interested in the problem of how and through which mechanisms ideas can penetrate into the heart of the business and gain status, called the traffic from the margins to the center “consecration.” When marginal ideas become consecrated they may change dominant opinion, but in themselves these ideas also change during this process because they now acquire a new status, and with that—a new meaning.

Yet another way of approaching the question of what it takes to become a marginal is by differentiating between psychological, social as well as institutional mechanisms operative in it. Stonequist (1937), who was one of the first to systematically explore marginality, described the lifecycle of marginal groups as essentially learning to give up one’s identity, while Kerckhoff and McCormick (1955) define marginalization in terms of psychological disfunctioning, describing the “marginal man” as socially isolated, an apathetic person who suffers from mood swings, is unable to act decisively, has serious doubts about his social place. In the works of Douglas (1986, 1999) the focus is more on social and societal mechanisms, such as rites of passage, that mark the transgression from the border to the center.

Surely these models are designed in order to better understand the marginal, so as to improve his living conditions or facilitate his transition from the margin to the center. However, even the most idealistic social scientist admits that there is and indeed must be a difference between the marginal and the central, even if this difference is built on a completely arbitrary

¹ This section is partly based on J. Bos, D. Park, & P. Pietikainen (2005). Strategic self-marginalization: The case of psychoanalysis. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 41, 207–224.

norm. "Between the last person to pass and the first person to fail, the competitive examination creates a difference of all or nothing that can last a lifetime. The former will graduate from an elite institution [...] while the latter will become a nobody" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 120).

While we are interested in the nobodies, the ones that do *not* pass their exams, we do not want to address the question of why it is that they fail. Instead we would like to draw attention to something that is not accounted for in many of these models of marginality, yet that is clearly recognized in Bourdieu's metaphor: the fact that there is a constant *dialogue* between the marginalizer and the marginalized. In fact, they are not at all separated by time, space, social inhibitions, or laws: The marginalizer and marginalized are bound by a common understanding of what mainstream practices are.

Marginalization is a process that takes place in full consent with the marginalized; in fact, he often actively contributes to it, i.e., to his own marginalization: knowingly and willingly, because the marginal position is a position in its own right, not because he is a victim of it. Nor does marginalization need result in one's expulsion from a group or a society: marginalization, as we want to understand it, is not in the first place about exclusion, but about positioning. The marginal position is a position in its own right, and it obeys its own logic.

Foucault (1973) was one of the first to insist on this, when he gave voice to the "logic of unreason" (madness, crime, sexual deviance, etc.). Ever since it has become easier to see that marginalization can result in a position that has *positive* values, which allow the person to escape from the narrow confinement of the dominant position ascribed to him by social convention. The marginal deliberately situates himself between two cultures or groups, rather than in the center of one. Lumsden (1984) called this the in-between location or the "liminal position." Similarly, Bennett (1997) argued that marginalization can be constructive, rather than destructive or detrimental to one's position, arguing that it allows a person to develop his identity more strongly. And recently, McLaughlin (2001) called the marginal position of Erich Fromm "optimal" because it allowed him to carve out a space in the public domain on account of his recalcitrant reading of Freud. McLaughlin (2001, p. 273) argues that optimal marginal intellectuals have access to the creative core of an intellectual tradition, but are not bound by institutional restrictions. They are therefore in an ideal position to transfer novel ideas from the margin to the core.

All these authors undercut the idea that the marginal position can only be understood as the inadequate or lesser version of the dominant position (the marginal as the dominant *manqué*). In our conception of it, marginalization is an ongoing *dialogic* process, a constituent factor in the wider development of science. The central and the marginal positions are therefore not mutually exclusive, but share a common interest. The position of the marginal contains the *raison d'être* of the dominant, but also the conditions and terms under which the latter are built. Following Bakhtin's notion of dialogism (1981), which

emphasizes the continuous communicative acts between self and other in a never ending attempt to position oneself, we find it useful to look at marginalization as a necessary element in a constant redefinition of what is "normal science" that takes place in full consent with the one who is being marginalized. Therefore, the road that leads to marginalization needs to be studied at an interpersonal level as well as a social-discursive level, because it implies forms of negotiation, social positioning, adaptation to and retraction from common viewpoints, and so on. After all, what is perceived to be "dominant" at one moment is the result of a hegemonic struggle, not an objective condition.

Before we try to illustrate these points, we briefly differentiate marginalization from processes that are akin to it, such as repression, domination, stigmatization, and other forms of systematic exclusion on the one hand, and disciplining and other forms of patronizing on the other. What all these processes have in common is a dynamic based on differences in power or status. Stigmatization, for example, is about exercising power, and more in particular about one party defining another party's identity *in terms* of exclusion. This means that in the dominant discourse, there is no place for those who are stigmatized: "identity norms breed deviations as well as conformance" says Goffman (1963, p. 129). Disciplining, on the other hand, is more or less the negative of this: it is about defining the identity of one party in terms of *inclusion*. Those who are being disciplined are going through a process of identity transformation that continues until he "fits in." But it still presupposes a dominant discourse in which one's position is not accepted or recognized as such.

While marginalization is also based on differences in power and status and may also incorporate elements of inclusion and exclusion, it is different from these concepts in the sense that it presupposes active cooperation of two parties. In contradistinction to stigmatization or disciplining, the position of the marginal is acknowledged and in fact functional in the dominant discourse.

In our book we explore the Freud-Stekel relationship from the perspective of "constructive marginality," arguing that Stekel's marginalization had had beneficial aspects for both Stekel and Freud. It gave Stekel room for what could perhaps be called *dissentient originality*: originality that is based on the fact that it contradicts dominant viewpoints. Our approach to marginalization in psychoanalysis is different from that of Pohlen and Bautz-Holzherr (1995, pp. 155-170), who, for example, argue that Freud and his followers were anxious to keep the psychoanalytic canon free from alien influences, and were keen to reprimand and ultimately dispel dissentient voices. The purity of psychoanalytic knowledge was, it is true, always at the center of Freud's attention, but the construction of purity also works to the advantage of the "dissident" who wants to move the limits of a practice because it forces the proponent of purity to expose the weaknesses in the system.

Of course it is true that either way, the marginal comes off worst. When Stekel wrote in his 1926 account of the analytical movement (a translation of which is included in this book) that Freud himself said he always felt the

need to have an enemy around, and that he would build one whenever he did not have one at hand, he wrongly believed to have fallen prey to an irrational, yes, evil oppressive mechanism. But he was right about the fact that the authoritative voice of Freud needed an antithetical position before it could be articulated at all.

Stekel enthusiastically cooperated with Freud in what could be called a symbiotic or antagonistic relationship and was driven out of the psychoanalytic community when he began to question the fundamental inequality of their respective roles. It seems to us that this dialectic of antagonism constituted the basis of many psychoanalytic relationships with Freud. We think of Adler, Groddeck, Horney, Jung, Klein, Pfister, Rank, Reich, and others.

In many of these relationships a similar logic developed as in the Freud–Stekel relationship, focusing around common themes such as priority, originality, acknowledgment, and loyalty. In a relationship of marginality, the marginal always struggles with the problem of how to contribute something to the doxa without, at the same time, undermining his own position. Conversely, the question for a dominant is how to use marginal ideas without losing authority. Thus in the case of Groddeck, who insisted on being a marginal even *before* he became a follower of Freud, we find that his main contribution to psychoanalysis, *das Es*, was never acknowledged as his property (his *Es* was even differentiated from Freud's in English by way of a different translation: the *id* (Freud) and the *it* (Groddeck); see Bos, 1992). Similarly, when Rank developed an entire book from a footnote by Freud (*The Trauma of Birth*), in which, however, he claimed originality, it did not take long before his position was undermined. Groddeck and Rank were never expelled from the movement in the way Stekel and Adler were.

Briefly then, the way that we understand marginalization is as an interactional strategy used in strategic positioning. The decisive criterion to distinguish a marginal relationship from a more equal or nonmarginal relationship is, however, not the question of whether or not it ends in a formal break, but whether it follows a particular inner dialectic logic. We return to this logic of marginalization at the end of this chapter, after we have outlined some of the most important facts of Stekel's life and work as a psychoanalyst, and his troublesome relationship with Freud.

Wilhelm Stekel, the Unsung Populariser of Psychoanalysis

Little is known of Stekel's life other than the picture he himself outlined in his autobiography (Stekel, 1950a), which is both flattering and not entirely correct (Stanton, 1988). The editor of his posthumously published autobiography, Emil Gutheil, correctly judged: "The student of psychoanalysis can see in Stekel's notes how many of his own complexes remained obscure to him, can detect his unresolved narcissism, his overcompensated feelings of inadequacy; will smile

when he reads that the man who was a master in ferreting out other people's repressions believed that he had hardly any himself" (quoted in Stekel, 1950a, p. 13).² But even so, the autobiography remains a useful, perceptive source for anyone who wishes to study the problem of marginalization.

Born March 18, 1868, in the town of Boyan in Bukovina (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, later Romania), Stekel came from a middle-class Jewish family of merchants, with one elder brother and one elder sister. He went to the *k.k. Ober-Gymnasium* in Czernowitz, the capital of Bukovina, where, according to his own account, he developed a passion for reading and music, although apparently he was not a particularly good student. After the Gymnasium, Stekel went to Vienna to study medicine on a military scholarship; at the same time he also joined a pacifist movement. He believed himself to be a popular student, with a natural talent for learning languages and blessed as well with a musical and poetic gift. He worked for Krafft-Ebing for a while and settled as a general practitioner in Vienna. A first marriage produced two children: Erich-Paul Stekel (1898–1978), who became a musician, and Gertrud Stekel-Zuckerandl (1895–1981), a painter. In the 1920s he separated from his first wife, Malvina Nelken, and became involved with Hilda Milko, whom he eventually married (Mühlleitner & Reichmayr, 1992).

During the latter half of the 1890s, Stekel published his first articles, both in medical journals such as the *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift* and in regular newspapers such as the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, thereby earning himself a name as a journalist (Clark-Lowes, 1997; Stanton, 1988). Freud cited one of these medical articles (Stekel, 1895) in *The Aetiology of Hysteria* as evidence of the frequent exposure of children to "sexual assaults" (Freud, 1896, p. 207).

This citation created the first link between Stekel and Freud. The second came through Stekel's relationship with Max Kahane, an internist and early follower of Freud. Around the turn of the century, most likely in 1901, Kahane personally introduced Stekel to Freud.³ Not long afterwards, Stekel turned to Freud for what he himself called a "sexual problem" (Stekel, 1950a, p. 107; see also Stekel's contribution on the history of the analytical movement in this volume). The exact nature of this sexual problem remains unclear, but it has been speculated that it was related to the fact that his first marriage was not a happy one (Stekel did not divorce his wife until 1938 but began to live with his future second wife shortly after the First World War) and that it involved sexual impotence, a pathological addiction to masturbation, or both (Roazen, 1975; Roudinesco & Plon, 1997).

² For some interesting biographical portraits of Stekel see Brome (1967), Freeman (1968), Ellenberger (1970), Roazen (1975), Rattner (1990), Mühlleitner & Reichmayr (1992), Jerábek (1994), and Castelnovo-Tedesco (2002).

³ Grosskurth (1991) dates the analysis in 1902, others, however, are inclined to date it much earlier, perhaps even as early as some time in the 1890s.

Indeed, in a letter from Freud to Wittels dated August 15, 1924, the masturbation hypothesis is hinted at almost explicitly when Freud wrote that one day “it will become clear that Stekel’s claim about the harmlessness of masturbation is based on a lie,” suggesting there was unpublished evidence indicating that Stekel was an onanist and that his errant behavior must be attributable to this practice. No such evidence has yet surfaced.

Stekel (1950a, p. 107) reported that his therapy lasted for “no more than eight sessions” (whereas Jones, 1953–1957, suggests that it lasted much longer). During this brief “therapy,” Freud allegedly “expressed [...] surprise [...] that I had so few repressions” (Stekel, 1950a, p. 108)—a further indication, we believe, that Stekel’s problems were indeed related to masturbation if this “absence of repression” is to be interpreted as being open about sexuality, for Stekel *was* strongly and most openly committed to the opinion, contra Freud, that masturbation was not harmful.

After his brief analysis with Freud, Stekel became an enthusiastic follower of his former therapist. He was in particular drawn to Freud’s method of dream interpretation and liked the idea that everything can mean something different, and so he was quick to discover hidden symbolic meanings behind all sorts of symptoms. From this contact a relationship developed that was fairly intimate: Stekel was the only follower of Freud to address him by his surname instead of the formal “*Herr Professor*,” used by everybody else (Jones, 1953–1957, Vol. II, p. 8). Freud recognized Stekel’s intuitive gift for understanding dream symbolism and thought him serviceable to the cause, although he also believed that Stekel was theoretically weak. Furthermore, Stekel and Freud did not agree on many subjects. For example, Stekel emphasized psychic conflict (as in his theory of bipolarity) and he also opposed Freud’s views on the origin of neurosis.

In 1902, it was Stekel who founded the weekly discussion group around Freud which would later become the well-known *Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung* (Vienna Psychoanalytic Society) to which Alfred Adler initially belonged, as well as Paul Federn, Eduard Hitschmann, and Otto Rank, the society’s secretary who began to keep notes of their meetings from 1906, and which were later published as “The Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society” (Nunberg & Federn, 1962–1975; for brevity’s sake referred to throughout this book as the *Minutes*). Over the years this small and informal round table discussion group evolved into a formal organization. In his 1926 historic account of the analytic movement, Stekel painted a picture of the first years of this society, in which, it appears, he himself played an important role.

Stekel was also one of the first to practice psychoanalytic therapy. After having abandoned his practice as a GP he set up a psychoanalytic practice in 1908. At this time he participated in all the events of the psychoanalytic society until he left it in 1912, like Alfred Adler before him, after many disagreements and difficulties with Freud.

While Stekel claimed that he had been rejected by Freud because the latter could not tolerate his disciple's scientific independence and creativity, Freud adhered to the conviction that it was because of his pupil's doubtful character. Be that as it may, a major subject of dissent lay in their respective views on masturbation: Freud thought that it caused neurasthenia, whereas Stekel believed it to be harmless and in fact argued that *repression* of the urge to masturbate caused neurosis. The problem of masturbation was a recurrent subject in the society's gatherings for an extended period of time (1907–1912) and twice led to a prolonged debate (in 1910 and 1912, respectively), one of which was published as volume II of the "Discussions of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society" (Dattner et al., 1965). During these debates, Stekel's position proved to be entirely incompatible with Freud's. The debates effectively ended in Stekel's discontinuation of his involvement in the psychoanalytic society—or his being expelled from it. However, the question has been raised as to whether Stekel was expelled from the movement in 1912 because of his dissenting views, or whether it was the other way around: that his marginalization caused him to adopt a strongly antiFreudian point of view. We will return to this problem and discuss the motives behind this conflict in the chapter on masturbation and neurasthenia: Freud and Stekel in debate on the harmful effects of autoerotism.

It suffices for now to observe that from the moment Rank started to record the society's meetings, Stekel's position was already feeble. His presentations were often severely criticized and most of his publications received an even worse reception, as a result of which he sometimes felt "horrified at the lack of understanding which he encountered" (*Minutes*, Vol. I, p. 280). The Swiss in general, and Jung in particular, disliked him as a person, which was likely because they felt repulsed by his vanity. On the other hand, however, others judged him to be "a very agreeable companion," and, at least in comparison with Adler, "cheerful, light-hearted and very amusing" (Jones, 1953–1957, Vol. II, p. 135). Still, almost all of Freud's followers found it difficult to take him seriously. Stekel was considered to be a man "without the intellectual qualities to penetrate deeply" (Adler quoted in Andreas-Salomé, 1987, p. 35), or even to have "an irresponsible attitude toward truth" (Jones, 1959, p. 219). Few Freud biographies fail to mention that Stekel allegedly made up his own case histories (such as the infamous "Wednesday morning patient"—a patient he supposedly invented to prove that he had *just* seen a case like the one that was presented by someone else before the Wednesday evening society). Apparently, ridiculing stories such as these widely circulated in the Vienna society even before he broke with Freud, and Jones, who collected a good deal of them in his biography of Freud, used them to make it look as if Stekel had always been the laughing stock of the Freudians. But is it not possible to reverse the gaze and ask if humor could not have been part of Stekel's strategy of self-marginalization, and that this humor was used against him only *after* his break with Freud?

We return to this question in the last part of this chapter, and suffice for the time being to observe that Freud at least defended Stekel for a long time against attacks against his personality, although perhaps not always wholeheartedly. Thus Freud once wrote to Jung that Stekel's way of coming up with dream interpretations was similar to that of a swine who digs in the earth to find truffles. Similarly, he wrote to Binswanger that he could "still learn a good deal [from him]" (Freud to Binswanger, January 13, 1910). His book on dream symbolism in 1911 (*Die Sprache des Traumes*) was highly appreciated by Freud, who would, even after their break, write that it "contains the fullest collection of interpretations of symbols" (Freud, 1900, p. 375). Freud also hoped it would help popularize psychoanalysis. It did. Stekel gained considerable support outside Freudian circles—he was enormously popular in Austria, Germany, England, Holland, Hungary, Sweden, and the United States. Most of his books have been translated into several languages, and although his influence had by now declined, some of his works are still in print today. It was probably not without justification that he wrote that many students came to Freud through him (see the chapter: On the history of the analytical movement).

After his break with Freud, Stekel continued to call himself a psychoanalyst and persisted in his rebellious stance, even calling himself more Freudian than Freud. In order to introduce psychoanalysis to the medical profession he published ten large volumes that covered the whole spectrum of the "disorders of the instincts and the emotions" (*Störungen des Trieb- und Affektlebens*). Furthermore, he founded his own scientific journals and an institute for treatment, the *Institut für Aktive Psychoanalyse*, where, in contrast to the passive Freudian method, a form of "active psychoanalysis" was carried out. Not unlike Freud, he had his own circle of faithful disciples who worshipped his transcendent intuitive genius. Among his friends, supporters and students we find the following names: Owen Berkely Hill, A.S. Neill, Havelock Ellis, H.A.E. van Dishoeck (who translated some of his works into Dutch), J.L. Arndt, Samuel Lowy, Herbert Silberer (co-editor with Stekel of the short-lived journal *Eros and Psyche*), Fritz Wittels, S.A. Tannenbaum (to whom Stekel dedicated several works), Anton Missriegler, Fritz Wengraf, E. Bien, and Emil Gutheil (who were all collaborators on *Der Seelenarzt*, 1933; the latter was also, as noted above, editor of his posthumously published autobiography as well as several other works of his in English).

After the *Anschluss*, in 1938, Stekel, who was of Jewish origin, fled to Switzerland, then to England where he wrote his autobiography (Stekel, 1950a). An attempt to emigrate to the United States apparently fell through.⁴ Like so many other refugees, he spent the next 2 years in London under difficult circumstances. When war broke out and a diabetic gangrene condition in the foot dete-

⁴ In his *Rundbrief* (circular letter) of 25 June 1938 Fenichel reported how, according to Lawrence Kubie, some 57 colleagues applied for help to emigrate to America, "among whom, tragically, Stekel, who urges not to forget his merits for psychoanalysis." A.S. Neill also reported to Wilhelm Reich (May 6, 1938) that Stekel intended to emigrate to America (Placzek, 1981, p. 11).

riorated early in 1940, his living conditions became unbearable. He put an end to his life on June 27, 1940 (see Stanton, 1988 and Hilda Stekel's introduction to the autobiography of her husband, for an account of Stekel's last years in London).

Stekel wrestled with Freud's image until the very last days of his life. He admired the master, but at the same time it embittered him that Freud had abandoned him so abruptly and never allowed him to reconcile. He prided himself in calling himself a psychoanalyst, but believed at the same time that Freud had made "many mistakes." Upon receiving the news of Freud's death, Stekel entered a note in his autobiography that repeated in tone as well as in words what he had written 15 years earlier (in his 1926 account of the history of the analytical movement): "In my writing I have pictured the pettiness and the foibles of one of the greatest geniuses of our time, and shown how they influenced him in relation to myself; but the last thing I want is to produce the impression that I intended to belittle the greatness or deny the merits of this singular personality" (Stekel, 1950a, p. 285). But even if Stekel did not intend to upgrade his own image by downgrading that of the master, by criticizing Freud, he did link his own position to that of Freud. In a well-known metaphor that he began to use in the 1920s, Stekel said that since he was standing on the shoulders of a giant, he could see further than the giant—implying that his work was more Freudian than that of Freud. We return to this metaphor in our chapter on marginal historiography.

The disapproval and disregard of his works by orthodox psychoanalysts as well as their obliteration by the Nazis, did not favor the survival of Stekel's ideas in the German-speaking world. In the USA, however, where the rift between Freud and Stekel was never perceived as self-evident and where Stekel's active short-term analysis was bound to be favored above Freud's "passive," slow and therefore costly method, the popularity of his books has been a constant factor, only declining since the 1970s. Still, until recently neither in the German-speaking world nor in the United States did his ideas find much serious interest among historians. This "neglect" may be partly due to Ernest Jones' three-volume biography of Freud, in which, as we saw, many of Stekel's alleged shortcomings have been collected. And it is unwarranted because Stekel deserves recognition as one of the most fervent propagators of "the psychoanalytic gospel," not in the least through his articles in newspapers, of which many were reproduced in books. Moreover, his work demonstrates an interesting attempt at ameliorating (what he believed to be) shortcomings of the Freudian position with the help of his own insights and other approaches; he integrated useful observations and ideas of Pierre Janet, Carl Gustav Jung, and notably Alfred Adler (with whom he remained in contact after both broke away from Freud).

In the subsequent section we explore Stekel's position in psychoanalytic discourse in terms of the dimensions of marginalization discussed above, and try to answer in what sense it resembled that of optimal or constructive marginality.

Dimensions of Marginalization

There is great popular appeal to at least one aspect in the problem of marginalization, particularly with those who sympathize with the marginal: the idea that the marginal is deliberately pushed aside by someone with higher status. The marginal himself too often likes to complain about the unfair treatment his work has received. In point of fact, Stekel was of the opinion that his findings were completely ignored by the entire psychoanalytic community (*totschweigen* is the favorite word used in this context), although, he said, some of his most important ideas were smuggled in through the back door.

From the point of view of the marginal then, marginalization borders on the idea of conspiracy on the one hand, and on the problem of priority struggles on the other. Marginalization becomes a synonym for “repression” in an underdog discourse, used to designate the secret, illegitimate tactics of the oppressor, who not only puts the marginal down, but does not hesitate to steal from him either when he gets the chance.

Stekel (1926) himself mentions the idea of “bipolarity,” which he insisted he had discovered independently of and before Bleuler (who called it “ambivalence”), and which was supposedly adopted by Freud without proper acknowledgement of his priority. Wittels (in Timms, 1995, p. 112) draws attention to death symbols in dreams, which he thinks Stekel recognized before Freud did (and introduced it as *Thanatos*). Even an unsuspecting source such as Andreas-Salomé (1987, p. 94) mentions how Stekel’s concept of “polymorph criminality,” a “colossal exaggeration” in her own opinion, was not without merit: Freud believed it points to anxiety about oneself.

So what are the indications that Stekel’s work was actually “suppressed” from Freudian discourse, either before or after his break with Freud in 1912? And how does this neglect reflect on Stekel’s position?

Prior to 1912, Stekel certainly was not repressed from psychoanalytic discourse, neither actively (in terms of his presence at the Vienna psychoanalytic society) nor passively (in terms of the number of citations of him, etc.). Up until 1912 Stekel was far from “neglected” or “ignored,” but in fact a frequent speaker—second to Freud only—who presented more papers than any other member, and whose work was often cited and discussed by Freud, even if the references are often somewhat ambiguous in nature. Therefore, of the 141 meetings of the Vienna Society recorded by Rank for the period 1906–1912 (see Nunberg & Federn, 1962–1975), 16 were devoted to presentations by Stekel (as opposed to 14 by Sadger, 11 by Adler, 9 by Freud, and 8 by Hitschmann, with an average of only one to two presentations by other members).

After 1912, the amount of attention paid to Stekel’s work diminished dramatically but it did not stop completely. His books were still reviewed and discussed in psychoanalytic journals and publications, albeit not in a positive sense. We mention a few sources. The *Internationale Zeitschrift für*

Psychoanalyse, the “official” organ of psychoanalysis, reviewed 10 of Stekel’s works during the period 1914–1940; the *International Journal* 4. The popular *Psychoanalytische Volksbuch* devoted a section to Stekel in a chapter entitled “Dissenting courses and schools,” in which his approach was typified as “pseudoanalytic,” and his shortcuts to therapy (*Schnellverfahren*) criticized (Christoffel, 1939). *Entwicklungsziele der Psychoanalyse*, a small volume on recent developments in psychoanalysis by Ferenczi and Rank, published in 1922, made reference to only nine authors apart from Freud. One of them is Stekel, whose attribution of a specific neurotic symptom “first to sexuality, then to crime and finally to religion” was ridiculed in a footnote.

So it would be an illusion to believe that Stekel’s work, his digression from or development of psychoanalysis went unnoticed; a fact that is corroborated by the recent publication of the circular letters (*Rundbriefe*) of Freud’s secret committee, who anxiously watched Stekel’s moves in the 1920s (Wittenberger & Tögel, 1999–2004).

This is to say then that the logic of marginalization does not follow a simple path of critical discourse which evolves to become hostile, or of a critique slowly being smothered or suppressed from official discourse (*doxa*). The main claim of this chapter is that a *dialogic* reading of the Freud–Stekel relationship attributes to a better appreciation of Stekel’s marginalization, and, ultimately, of the various struggles in psychoanalytic historiography as well. But to appreciate the path of marginal dialogue, we need to study not only its interactional mechanisms or strategies, but also its progress in time. We outline two important interactional tendencies, and conclude with a general picture of the marginal route.

(a) *Originality-Priority*. While it is true that many of Freud’s followers found it difficult to accept any improvement, adaptation, or alteration of psychoanalytic doctrine that did not come from Freud, Freud himself strongly induced his followers to explore new ways in a creative fashion. Therefore, he not only supported analytic applications to new territory and new problems, he also actively endorsed new theoretical and practical developments.

This, as Roazen (1986, p. 48) observed more than 30 years ago, gave rise to a particular problem, namely that “for a man really to be like Freud meant finally for him to be original. Yet originality ended his usefulness to Freud.” This paradox conceals a particular dialogic principle which comes to the fore in a marginal’s position: to insist on priority means to risk losing recognition for one’s originality, but not to insist on it means risking losing recognition anyway. Many marginal relationships are therefore driven by a constant push and pull between these two factors. One way of solving this dilemma is to “go underground,” by conducting the dialogue by implication: by referring to one’s originality and priority only tacitly.

In our studies, we found that a large part of the Freud–Stekel dialogue was indeed implicit, and could only be understood by tracing back these embedded allusions. Indeed, many of the references to Stekel by other authors, including