SIGMUND FREUD

conquistador of the unconscious

on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Sigmund Freud’s birth
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an essay by EDITH KURZWEIL
PREFACE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF SIGMUND FREUD’S BIRTH

The year 2006 marks the 150th anniversary of Sigmund Freud’s birth, a welcome opportunity to commemorate and celebrate the life of the founder of psychoanalysis.

Throughout the year, a variety of events supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Sigmund Freud Privatstiftung, including symposia, lectures, and exhibitions, will explore the life and work of this famous Austrian. A special website with information on all these activities is available at http://www.freud-institut.com/

The anniversary also offers a perfect opportunity to publish a special brochure on Freud and his theories. For this purpose, Edith Kurzweil, author of several books on Freudianism, including Freudians and Feminists and The Freudians: A Comparative Perspective, and (as editor) Our Century, Our Culture and Literature and Psychoanalysis, agreed to write an essay on the “Conquistador of the Unconscious.”

The Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs hopes that readers will enjoy this publication, richly illustrated with photographs from Freud’s life, some of which were rarely exhibited. The opinions expressed in the essay are, naturally, those of Edith Kurzweil.
I.
What might our world be like if Freud had not discovered the dynamics of the unconscious? If he had not, as he stated, “agitated the sleep of mankind,” would we still be in the dark about the causes of psychosomatic disorders? Would we believe that “hysterical patients suffer from reminiscences, [whose] . . . symptoms are residues of particular (traumatic) experiences;” or that our rational and independent selves are subject to internal and conflicting impulses? Would we still be using the doctor’s gaze and hypnosis to uncover unconscious motivations, or assume that our moods are controlled by “humours?” And might poets alone have access to our unconscious?

Obviously, we have no answers to such enigmatic questions. But as it is, we cannot ignore that Freud was the one who took leave of neurology and arrived at psychoanalysis. Nor can we ignore that the early practitioners of psychoanalytic therapy formed a movement, and, however haphazardly, intentionally or unintentionally, spread therapeutic thinking throughout modern culture. By now, Freud’s concepts are part of our daily lives: we make “Freudian slips”; we compensate, feel guilty and interpret dreams; we deny reality, have Oedipal wishes, and oral or anal compulsions; we suffer from trauma and may be narcissistic, masochistic or sadistic—without recalling that Freud coined these idioms. Or that our criminal and welfare systems are drenched in regulations that rely on the theories he proposed.

Who Was Freud?
Sigmund Freud was born 150 years ago, on May 6, 1856, in the small town of Freiberg (Příbor) in Moravia. His father, Jacob Freud, was a wool merchant, who, when Freud was four years old, after a short stay in Leipzig, moved his family to Vienna. His mother, Amalia Nathanson, was Jacob’s much younger, third wife. He had two half-brothers, one of whose sons was a year older than his uncle, Sigmund.
SIGMUND FREUD at the age of 16 and his mother, 1872.
Portrait of the FREUD FAMILY. Standing from left to right: Paula, Anna, unknown girl, Sigmund, Emanuel (Sigmund’s half brother), Rosa, Mitzi, Simon Nathanson (Cousin of Amalia Freud). Seated: Dolfi, Amalia Freud, Jacob Freud. In the front: Alexander and an unknown child. Around 1876.
After the Freuds settled in Vienna, Sigmund’s four younger sisters and his brother, Alexander, were born in rapid succession. Clearly, it was a lively household; in the midst of complex family ties and relations, Freud was his mother’s “golden Sigi.” His father often was in financial straights, as were most immigrant Jewish families especially before emancipation in 1867. And anti-Semitism was rampant. Freud recalled that when he was ten or twelve years old, he asked his father about it. To illustrate that the Jews’ lot had improved, Jacob told him of an incident in Galicia, when a gentile, who had come toward him on the street, had knocked his hat into the gutter. “What did you do?” Sigmund asked his father. “I stepped into the gutter and picked up my cap,” Jacob replied. Freud remembered that he then had compared his father unfavorably to Hannibal’s father, who had made his son swear that he would take revenge on the Romans.²

By the time Freud attended Vienna’s Sperlgymnasium, he was an avid reader and a stellar student. He became fluent in Greek and Latin, French and English. He immersed himself in Greek philosophy and ancient history. He read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Goethe and Schiller, Shakespeare and Dostoevsky, and so on. After graduating, in 1873, he enrolled in the law faculty of the University of Vienna, but soon switched to medicine. He also took every opportunity he could to travel—thereby enlarging his horizon. Thus he managed to visit his half-brothers in Manchester, and to fulfill his dream of seeing Rome and its ancient treasures. After he had received a grant for research on the gonads of eels, he spent a semester in Trieste’s Zoological experimental Station.

Upon his return to Vienna, Freud linked up with Ernst Brücke, the celebrated German physiologist—whom he later would recall as the most important of his teachers. During his year out for compulsory military service, Freud translated four essays by John Stuart Mill into German. But then, he returned to Brücke’s laboratory to investigate Darwin’s controversial theory of evolution, on the nerve cells of crayfish; and on the psychology of human emotions. Clearly, his range of interests and achievements were exceptional.

In April 1882, Freud met, fell in love with, and became engaged to Martha Bernays, the daughter of a well-to-do Jewish family from Wandsbek, near Hamburg. Now that he planned go get married and would have to support his future family,
he set aside his laboratory work and concentrated on studying for his medical degree. During the ensuing four years of separation from his fiancée, he poured his hopes and disappointments, as well as his love and devotion into letters to Martha. While on a stipend in Paris, these communications convey his admiration for Jean-Martin Charcot, the famous neurologist and director of the asylum, Salpêtriere, who in front of an invited public cured hysterical patients under hypnosis, at least temporarily.

In the early 1880s, Freud’s older colleague and friend, Joseph Breuer, had been treating Anna O. (Bertha Pappenheim). Indeed, Breuer had uncovered the sexual components of her hysterical symptoms, but was unprepared for the direction of her unconscious sexual fantasy and its elaboration into the physical contractions of a hysterical birth—a pseudocyesis—with Breuer himself as impregnator. In consternation, Breuer precipitously turned the patient over to Freud. Only years later could Freud convince the reluctant Breuer to co-publish this case.

**The Birth of Psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalysis came into the world on January 1, 1900, with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. A year later, in *On Dreams*, Freud explained that when his scientific forays had not rendered the data he was seeking, he had found that some of his patients had helped him diagnose the cores of their neuroses. While telling him of her dreams, “Fräulein Elizabeth von R.,” noticed that she recovered more forgotten material when Freud allowed her to ramble instead of questioning or hypnotizing her. Freud listened to her, and adopted “free association” as his regular technique. He found that patients resisted the upsurge of repressed traumatic memories; and that physical symptoms increased when unpleasant memories came up.

At the time, philosophers perceived dreams as a peculiar state of mental functioning; medical experts tended to attribute them to an activity forced on the sleeping brain by physiological stimuli; and in popular opinion they were thought of as manifestations of daemonic or divine powers, or were being explained as specific symbols—to which serious people answered that ‘Träume sind Schäume’ (‘dreams are froth’). But having clued in to the pathologies of some of his patients, Freud concluded that dreams had sexual origins. To check on the
veracity of this then outlandish supposition as well as on his method of listening, he undertook a painful self-analysis: he interpreted every detail of his dreams, and associated their fragments in relation to events in the distant past, and to those of the preceding day.

Aware that dreams are soon forgotten, Freud would immediately write down everything he would recall. He then would reflect on this manifest dream content, segment by segment. By following the associations to each separate segment, he would eventually arrive at some understanding of its latent content. The latter, he divided into three categories: those that made sense and were intelligible; others that were bewildering; and yet others that seemed disconnected, confused and meaningless. Ultimately, he found that decoded dreams stand revealed as wish-fulfillments—which in young children, who do not yet repress much, are undisguised. Even a longer summary could not do justice to the multifaceted analyses and insights that are contained in his voluminous Interpretation of Dreams.

A month after its publication, on February 1, 1900, Freud wrote to his friend and confidant, Wilhelm Fliess:

I am actually not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker. I am by temperament nothing but a conquistador—an adventurer. If you want it translated—with all the curiosity, daring and tenacity characteristic of a man of this sort. Such people are customarily esteemed only if they have been successful, have really discovered something, otherwise they are dropped by the wayside. And that is not altogether unjust. At the present time, however, luck has left me.4

Clearly, this letter reflects the emotional letdown of a writer who has finished a difficult project—a project based on his innermost person as well as on his neurological training. The papers Freud had published about the evolutionary processes of the nervous structures of fish were links in the chain that, by 1893, began to underpin his lectures, and his insight into the sexual roots of his patients’ hysteria.5 He carried these insights as far as was possible within the neuroscience of that time, in the “Project” (1895). Though unpublished in his lifetime, the
“THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS”
First edition, 1900.
“Project” has been considered the “Rosetta stone” that defines psychoanalysis as a natural science— at least by classical psychoanalysts.

**Initial Forays**

Freud recovered from what he later referred to as his “splendid isolation” by the time he acquired a handful of disciples. Toward the end of 1902, on Wednesday evenings, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Wilhelm Stekel, Max Kahane and Rudolf Reitler, began to congregate in Freud’s apartment, at Berggasse 19. Together they investigated how, and in what way, neurotic behavior might be eliminated, or at least attenuated. They brought in their dreams and associated to them, analyzed each other as well as disturbed individuals, literary classics, and their creators. In the process, they perfected—and disagreed on—the most effective clinical techniques and methods to penetrate into, and to unravel, human motives.

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**THE COMMITTEE:** First row (from left) Sigmund Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, Hanns Sachs. Standing (from left) Otto Rank, Karl Abraham, Max Eitingon, Ernest Jones. 1922.
By October 1906, these Wednesday evenings had drawn others—mostly writers and educators, physicians and progressive thinkers. From Rank’s record of the proceedings, we learn that they were an enthusiastic bunch, had high hopes for doing away with individuals’ neuroses, and for liberalizing their society. To these ends, they analyzed patients, scrutinized literary masterpieces, and argued about both psychoanalytic methods and diagnoses. That was when Freud found, for instance, that “psychoanalytic abstinence”—avoiding relations with patients that were of social, business, loving or hostile relations—allowed the psychoanalyst to lead the way in an “uncontaminated field; and that transference—that subtle and shifting relation between patient and therapist—was a tool best utilized by using close observation, correct interpretation and free association. (After recognizing that his own responses and reactions were as important as those of his patients, Freud began to conceptualize the role of the “counter-transference.”)

Clinical successes inspired ever more inquiries by doctors who expected to heal their patients via the “talking cure.” Freud was pleased every time he received a letter from a philosopher or a theologian, a psychologist or a writer. He was especially delighted when, in January 1907, Max Eitingon from Zurich’s Burghölzli clinic attended on a Wednesday evening. Eitingon remarked on the lively and contentious spirit among these Viennese pioneers. And, when six weeks later his colleagues Carl Jung and Ludwig Binswanger appeared as well, Freud finally conceded that his discoveries were spreading. By then, he had published The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1903), Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious (1905) and Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905).

On these Wednesdays, designated participants introduced their most recent cases. Freud nearly always had the last word by synthesizing and summarizing, and adding judgments and advice. In fact, his fertile mind free-associated to scientific, social and political topics, while finding their deep connections to sexuality and the Oedipus complex.

For the most part, the majority of Viennese resisted his ideas because he attributed specific (traumatic) childhood experiences against a background of normal childhood sexuality. Then, children allegedly were unaware of what they saw and heard (even though most of them shared their parents’ bedrooms), were
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KARL KRAUS, around 1925.
assumed to be devoid of sexual sensations, and blind to the eroticism around them. In other words, most of Freud’s contemporaries could not accept that conflicts caused by unacknowledged sexual drives and socially imposed prudery were the underpinnings of neuroses.

The medical establishment as well strongly resisted and rejected psychoanalysis. That the popular satirist, Karl Kraus, in *Die Fackel* (The Torch), dubbed it the disease whose cure it claims to be, did not help. For how could dreams and conversations, however conscientious and systematic, be turned into science? That Freud tried to interest his medical colleagues in Charcot’s hypnotic methods of treatment was yet another irritant. But his and his disciples’ publications invited controversies, which, however upsetting to Freud, led more and more intellectuals to wonder about the impact of unconscious phenomena. Only gradually, would some Viennese accept their sexuality more openly—as discussions of it, literally, started to move into Vienna’s and then the worlds’ drawing rooms. That is how Freud set the stage for twentieth century discourse as much as Marx and Darwin had set it for the end of the nineteenth century.

Still, as more and more disciples were gathering, free-associating, and elaborating these ideas, trouble was brewing. Now that their comments and opinions were being recorded, some took to posturing; others were thinking of posterity and wanted credit for their original formulations and insights; and yet others zigzagged between exploring their own unconscious and expressing solidarity with friends within the group.

After forty-two of Freud’s followers had met in Salzburg, in 1908, and the Hungarian, Sandór Ferenczi, had inspired them to set up the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), the Viennese also organized more formally. But tensions mushroomed. Because Freud did not want his creation to be perceived as a Jewish science, he chose to bestow the leadership of the IPA on Jung: he assumed that the Swiss contingent might be more acceptable to the rest of the world to head his movement. This upset the Viennese.

The breakthrough came in 1909, when the philosopher G. Stanley Hall invited Freud to America, to Clark University, in Massachusetts. He delivered a cohesive
and upbeat presentation, his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, and received much acclaim. In addition to his host, the philosopher William James, the psychologist Edward Bradford Titchener, Freud's first translator A. A. Brill, the psychiatrist Adolph Meyer, the anthropologist Franz Boas, the foremost neurologist James Jackson Putnam, and even the anarchist leader Emma Goldman came to listen. Now, Freud had achieved the fame he had sought all along; and the future of psychoanalysis was secure. But the disciples increasingly disagreed about theoretical and clinical issues. These, in turn, had political implications.

**Broken Friendships and Ensuing Rivalries**

For some time Adler had maintained that the sources of neuroses originated in “morphological phenomena of organ deficiency,” whether or not the sexual organ was involved. If that were so, one did not have to search for the deeply buried, elusive unconscious. Of course, Freud could not accept Adler’s postulate, or the centrality of aggressive drives. After much discord, Adler, along with a number of others, broke away and, in 1911, started his own organization, *Individu-alpsychologie*. Two years later, Jung defected. His earlier research about *dementia praecox* had led him to diagnose his patients’ regressions as past fixations due to difficulties in the present, rather than to their inability to free themselves of early trauma. And unlike Freud, who attributed unacceptable dreams to indirect expressions of wishes, Jung’s long-standing interest in comparative religion and mythology “led him to detect parallels with psychotic material . . . common to all men.” His was a collective unconscious rather than a personal one, whereas Adler’s system was “founded entirely on the impulse of aggression.” At least that was Freud’s verdict in his *History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement.*

Freud held firm. He insisted that neither spiritual nor social issues were to shunt the unconscious, the “gold of psychoanalysis,” to the sidelines. So, he concentrated even more on the transference as the tool that would allow the patient’s infantile trauma to surface, and that relied on the psychoanalyst’s authenticity, honesty and confidentiality—on his counter-transference. (Inevitably, such a subjective and private relationship cannot be controlled or judged by outsiders; and it was [and continues] being revised and refined in line with increasing insights, as well as with shifting beliefs and clinical advances.)
CARL GUSTAV JUNG, Swiss psychiatrist and founder of Analytical Psychology.
After Adler split with Freud, he and his supporters, with the help of his backers in the Socialist party, managed to introduce psychoanalytic principles into Vienna’s school system; teachers were taught to ameliorate their pupils’ feelings of inferiority, and to observe what was underpinning emotions of superiority. Thereby, they introduced progressive education. But few teachers, themselves, were analyzed. (Freud also voted for the Socialists, but kept his science out of politics.) Jung’s followers, for the most part, remained at the Burghölzli, and pursued analytical psychology—which was rooted in the collective unconscious, in ancestral archetypes. Both of their approaches promised faster and less painful cures than Freud’s search for the unconscious, and thereby were more easily accepted by the public. (From then on, most psychoanalysts’ disputes were settled by defections rather than discussions.)

The classical Freudians’ direct contact with the general public had to wait until Karl Abraham and Max Eitingon set up their first polyclinic in 1920, in Berlin. And until August Aichhorn started to work with delinquents (wayward youths) in post World War I Vienna. Helene Deutsch soon founded the Kinderheim Baumgarten for about 300 homeless Jewish, working class orphans. In 1922, Anna Freud set up her kindergarten, and a free clinic for the poor. But none of these endeavors reached as deeply into the Viennese community as did Adler’s individual psychology.

At the outbreak of World War I, Freud had rooted for Austria’s victory, until it suddenly had occurred to him that Ernest Jones, the president of the British contingent, “belonged to the enemy.” In “The Disillusionment of the War,” he tried to come to grips with the fact that civilized nations so easily turn against each other with hate and loathing. And he thought that the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction might overcome this problem, if “the influence of civilization … [were to] transform egoistic trends into altruistic ones.”9 (A lofty goal, which we have as yet to reach.)

Two of Freud’s sons were in the armed forces, as were Ferenczi and Abraham. They contributed a number of articles about war neuroses to the Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse. So did a newcomer, Ernst Simmel. Freud tackled the issues by focusing on the unconscious sources of narcissism and
ANNA FREUD at her desk, Berggasse 19, around 1920.
autoeroticism, and of aggressive drives—oral, anal and phallic. In 1923, in *The Ego and the Id*, he went on to postulate three structures: id, ego and superego.\(^\text{10}\) Simply put, the id always remains unconscious, is present from birth and always presses to satisfy its needs; the ego negotiates between the id’s push to get what it wants and the superego: the moral demands of the superego are a sort of internalized conscience.

Nearly every subsequent theoretical innovation, including some therapies that purport to reject Freudianism, have taken issue with one or another of Freud’s concepts. Until his death in September 1939, Freud, for the most part, wrote additions, addenda or revisions of previous works. Increasingly, he focused on questions of religion, and culture.

**Freud’s Endeavors Survive**

Freud died in London after the Nazis had expelled him from Austria, and Hitler’s armies had marched into Poland. Thanks to the quick actions of American and British members of the IPA, many Jewish psychoanalysts, though not all of them, were able to save their lives. So, by the time the IPA once again convened in Zurich, in 1949, 90 percent of the members spoke English, many with a German accent. Among the 800 participants, over half were American. Indeed, by then, psychoanalysis had caught on among American intellectuals, some of whom had been analyzed by refugee psychoanalysts. A few of the immigrants had bestowed a certain amount of prestige on the profession: Walter Langer had furnished a psychological portrait of Hitler; Kurt Eissler had investigated what personality types were best suited to lead soldiers; the foremost sociologist, Talcott Parsons, had begun to collaborate with Heinz Hartmann in order to locate the innermost, unconscious links that underpin psychological and social behavior; Erich Fromm’s bestseller, *The Fear of Freedom*,\(^\text{11}\) had made applied psychoanalysis sound easy, almost a cure-all for individuals and societies. As had Karen Horney’s *The Neurotic Personality of our Time*.\(^\text{12}\)

Now, institutional struggles mushroomed. Because in the United States anyone could hang out a shingle claiming to practice psychoanalysis, the Freudians—against Freud’s strong protests\(^\text{13}\)--had set out to protect themselves by restricting membership to medical doctors. But when, after World War II, Theodor Reik,
one of the Viennese pioneers, was not admitted to the New York and the Ameri-
can Psychoanalytic Associations, he started his own training institute for lay ana-
lysts. By then, Karen Horney and Clara Thompson had left the classical Freudians
to develop a more feminist and culture-oriented approach, the Horney School;
so had Sandór Rado and Abram Kardiner, to pursue more anthropological ra-
ther than ego-oriented, investigations. They had formed, respectively, the William
Alanson White Institute and the Columbia University Institute for Psychoanalytic
Training. More “defections” followed. Other therapeutic groupings—whether
neo-Freudian or anti-Freudian—sprang up over the years, so that at the most
recent count, there were around four hundred different psychotherapeutic as-
sociations in America alone. Altogether, in one way or another, all of these are
Freud’s descendants, and are responsible for the “therapeutic society” we have
come to live in. Most of the off-springs condemn the strict Freudians as retro-
grade. It is worth noting, however, that in accordance with the changing Zeitgeist,
al branches of psychoanalysis have countenanced looser rules.

In England, Anna Freud and Melanie Klein had their “Controversial Discussions”
in 1943-1944, which revolved around who would control Freud’s heritage—on
standards of training, length of analysis, and psychoanalysis’ intellectual thrust. Ul-
timately, they agreed to allow candidates to choose among Anna Freud’s “tradi-
tional views,” Melanie Klein’s mother-oriented approach, and the Middle group.
But they mandated that candidates acquaint themselves with the other direc-
tions. In 1984, Joseph Sandler reminisced that the Londoners “psychoanalytic
taste corresponded to the training one had, but one learned to listen to others,
and this allowed for eclecticism.”

Moreover, living with divergent theories en-
couraged institutional flexibility as well as innovative thinking.

The proliferation of therapeutic organizations alone could not have created the
climate for therapy. Nor, mutatis mutandis, could this therapeutic milieu have
cured neuroses. But, because neurotic behavior was ubiquitous and more en-
trenched than the young Freud believed, the search for the unconscious con-
tinued. (By the end of his life Freud had become more pessimistic.) Still, many
individuals had been helped, and had learned to live happier lives, even though
their neuroses had not fully disappeared. Therefore, the promises for cures have
continued to loom ahead, as therapists of every stripe claim success via newer
and seemingly simpler and faster methods. And whereas Freud had aimed only to analyze the neuroses, his descendants and their patients have targeted every kind of psychopathology, and assumed that psychoanalysis, like the American constitution and the Bill of Rights assure them life, liberty and the (successful) pursuit of happiness.

Psychoanalysts and psychotherapists could not have practiced their skills without a population that expected to live ever more freely, and whose members needed to break away from parental, religious and/or social constraints. In America, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the G.I. Bill of Rights had opened up higher education to former members of the armed forces; to some of them the return to civil life had proven to be too difficult, so that they turned to psychoanalysts for guidance.

In Germany, the physicians Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich went to London to get a psychoanalytic training, before starting the Sigmund Freud-Institut in Frankfurt am Main, in order to help understand, and eventually liberate, their countrymen’s psyches from the Nazi past. The Frankfurt School, under the guidance of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, almost assured young Germans that a fusion of Freud’s and Marx’s ideals would serve that same end, and would help avoid future wars, Holocausts, and murderous governmental regimes. Thus Freud’s descendants searched in his texts for the therapeutic formula that would avoid the blunders of earlier periods. In Austria, this happened to a lesser extent, and somewhat later: However, none of that might have occurred, had there not been IPA meetings, and the widespread proliferation of psychoanalytic thought by writers and cultural critics, philosophers and theologians.

**Psychoanalysis and Creativity**

In his letter to Wilhelm Fliess, on October 15, 1897, Freud had reflected that: one could understand the gripping power of *Oedipus Rex* on the audience, . . . [because] everyone 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.
Freud went on to speculate that *Hamlet’s* unconscious grappled with his unconscious patricidal fantasy as well as the real event of the father’s murder by his uncle, before he could avenge his father’s death. And he cited other examples to show that literary composition is born in commonplace activities; that myths often inspire literary creation; and that “a strong experience usually . . . precedes a wish which finds its fulfillment in creative work.”

In *Leonardo da Vinci. A Study in Psychosexuality*, (1900) Freud elaborated on the roots of creativity more fully. After covering the enormous literature about Leonardo, Freud presented him as an illegitimate child who had been deprived of a father figure until perhaps his fifth year. And after extensively analyzing Leonardo’s extraordinary accomplishments—from painting and sculpture to architecture, from geology to flying—Freud conceded that he did not have enough information to connect Leonardo’s psyche’s primal forces to his productivity. Nevertheless, he deduced that when in his early fifties Leonardo had painted the Mona Lisa, a “deeper strata of his psychic content became active again . . . to the benefit of his art, . . . [and] awakened in him the memory of the happy and enraptured smile of his mother, and under the influence of this awakening he reacquired the stimulus which guided him in the beginning of his artistic efforts.” 16 In sum, Leonardo, who was sexually inactive, had repressed sexuality but sublimated the libidinal drives into a thirst for knowledge in many areas.

In *Dostoevsky and Parricide* (1927), Freud was more precise, by distinguishing among the creative artist, the neurotic, the moralist and the sinner: “How is one to find one’s way in this bewildering complexity,” Freud then asked. He answered that Dostoevsky’s sinning was induced by his boundless egotism and a strong destructive tendency; and that his love of humanity infused his morality. As to his neurosis, Freud conjectured that it might well have been the cause of his “impulsive character.” Was it due to his epilepsy? Or was this epilepsy, itself, a serious hysteria? Could it be related to *coitus*—which the earliest doctors likened to a “little epilepsy”? Freud then noted that the description of these seizures tells us nothing, and assumed that they probably had been mild in childhood and had become full-blown only after his father was brutally murdered when Dostoevsky was eighteen years old. At that point, both his love and hatred for the father were repressed—due to Dostoevsky’s particularly strong bisexual disposition:
the deathlike seizures were the symptoms resulting from the conflict between the writer's identification with his father and punishment by his superego. Freud attributed Dostoevsky's gambling to fits of pathological passion—a form of "self-punishment that replaces onanistic compulsion."

Like Otto Rank, Freud perceived the modern artist as fleeing from life by giving shape to his unpleasant experiences in creative endeavors—in order to reach immortality by recreating himself in an "ideologically constructed ego." Consequently, psychoanalysts find the unconscious of artists to be closer to the surface than that of ordinary neurotics, and have assumed that more could be learned from their analyses than from that of other mortals. They demonstrated that every genuine poetical creation proceeds from more than one motive, more than one impulse, in the mind of the creative artist, and admits for more than one interpretation. Freud had declared that: "before the problem of the creative artist, analysis must lay down its arms." His successors have gone on to take up these arms in such a diversity of themes and approaches, that we cannot speak of a single subject, or a single question. Countless books have dealt with a bewildering array of topics, methods, and assumptions: the creative process, the relation of literature to psychoanalytic theory, the links between writers' neuroses and their work, the neurotic elements of writers' lives, the connection between literature and health, the psychic content of specific works, the parallels between popular myths and unconscious motives. There is no unified theory. But, like Freud, no one ever was able to prove a connection between an artists' actual work and his neurotic dispositions. Nor did his followers share definitions or common assumptions. Among the most-cited contributions were Marie Bonaparte's Poe and the Function of Literature, Phyllis Greenacre's Jonathan Swift, Selma Freiberg's Kafka and the Dream, Ernst Kris's The Contributions and Limitations of Literature, Ernest Jones's The Death of Hamlet's Father, and Erich Fromm's Franz Kafka. Their focus on the neurotic elements of creative figures added remarkable insights into the lives and works of their subjects, but did not explain the relationship between these and their impact on the work as a whole, or on what distinguished it as a superior work of art. And because in the creative process imagination plays games with observed reality, it is not easy to find the dividing line between the so-called objective world and the subjective world of the poet or the painter.
PRINCESS MARIE BONAPARTE, a French psychoanalyst, was closely linked with Freud. Her wealth contributed to the popularity of psychoanalysis, and enabled Freud’s escape from the Nazis.
Psychoanalysts’ discussions of art still give a bow to Freud, although they rarely build on colleagues’ contributions. On the other hand, in a television program on December 28th, 2005, where art historians discussed the psychological world of 20th century artists, focusing mostly on Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol, Freudian tenets were taken for granted, and there was no mention of Freud or psychoanalysis.

Among the literary critics who weighed in, Erich Heller argued that the world had been ready for Freud long before he arrived, and that he had become part of the Zeitgeist—for instance, in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, where Aschenbach after having decided to leave the city, manages to lose his suitcase and must stay on; or in *The Magic Mountain*, where Hans Castorp employs his minor illness to postpone leaving the sanatorium for seven years. Goethe’s *geprägte Form*, noted Heller, has been replaced with stream-of-consciousness novels and other experimental works that bear Freud’s imprint.

The philosopher William Barrett focused on the writer’s existence, tracing the search for truth from Hegel through Marx and Freud. Only authentic writers are able to find truth via their fantasies. While teetering on the borderline between fantasy and insanity, Barrett found that external pressures often tip the balance to the side of insanity. Lionel Trilling, in *Art and Neurosis*, leaned toward the healthy side of Barrett’s equation. Myths about poets as *genus irritable* live on, he argued, because they serve to separate poets from the philistines. This does not mean that neurosis fuels the artist’s irreducible gift: his genius resides in his perception, realization and representation. William Phillips maintained that neither Barrett’s nor Trilling’s theses can be proven either clinically or theoretically, and that in the end it tends to come down to persuasion, or even to common sense.

None of these issues have been resolved. Actually, with the advent of structuralism and deconstruction, post-structuralism and post-modernism, the post-Freudian tower of Babel has mushroomed, and thereby has furthered many an academics’ career.
II.
Is Psychoanalysis an Art, a Science, a Religion or a Fraud?
In 1958, the philosopher Sidney Hook organized a conference that brought together the foremost psychoanalysts and philosophers to examine the scientific value of Freud's work. They all paid homage to his genius, but doubted the existence of the unconscious. Neither of the prominent defenders of psychoanalysis—Heinz Hartmann and Lawrence Kubie—could convince these philosophers that a theory or doctrine that is determined by psychological processes may validate its scientific truth. The behaviorist John B. Watson, not surprisingly, compared the scientific worth of Freud's unconscious to the miracles of Jesus; and Adolf Grünbaum declared it half-baked because it ultimately cannot be falsified. The rest of this assembly of serious thinkers weighed in on their side. They ended up agreeing that the proportion of recoveries or improvements among neurotics who have not received psychoanalytic treatments was as great as among those who have.19

The mere fact that this conference was held demonstrated that psychoanalytic thought had penetrated into every stratum of culture, and that, as Freud had predicted, he had “brought on the plague.” But intellectuals who had hoped that the proper fusion of the unconscious with Marx's humanism, such as Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization (1955), began to have doubts. Some continued promoting its radical potential, but resistance to Freud's principles was increasing. Consequently, classical psychoanalysts went back to focus on clinical research and to generalize, albeit often too freely, from their work with patients.

By then, their movement had become truly international. IPA membership had grown, and members presented papers at more and more meetings around the globe. The center shifted away from North America, if only because elsewhere, new questions and issues arose. And new enthusiasms.

Is Freud a Godless Jew?
Religion was the most troubling and paradoxical problem that Freud tackled and never could resolve. Already in 1907,20 he had maintained that obsessive actions or ceremonials and the psychological processes of religious life, intrinsically, have the same origins—the sense of guilt of neurotics or the pious observances of
believers. The former were the counterparts to the latter—although “in neurosis the origin is sexual and in religion springs from egoistic sources.”

No wonder that Freud has been judged an atheist, an agnostic, and a godless Jew. In my view, his sense of religion responded to the anti-Semitism around him, as well as to the phase of his theoretical inquiries at specific moments. In Totem and Taboo (1912-1913), he argued that taboos are more primitive phenomena than religious and moral prohibitions, but that the traces they leave behind indicate that the origins of their rituals are located in the incest taboo, in the need for tribes to survive by forbidding incestuous relations and to do so by furthering exogamy.

The Future of an Illusion (1927), was influenced by Freud's discussions of these issues with his friend, the Swiss, Lutheran pastor, Oscar Pfister. Already in 1909, Freud had found him “a charming fellow who has won all our hearts, a warm-hearted enthusiast, half Savior; half Pied Piper,” who frolicked with the children and, who preferred being an “analysis-pastor” to healing spiritual misery. In their letters as well as in this publication, Freud held that the human mind had developed since the earliest times, that there had been mental advances, and that eternal coercion had become internalized—into man's super-ego. Its cultural equivalents, he noted, are moral demands that are expressed through religion. Thus God is cast in the role of the all-powerful, protective father—the adult's equivalent of the child's father—who will severely punish any infringement of his commands. And he concluded that thereby religion “is comparable to a childhood neurosis,” which civilization eventually will surmount. Contrary to reason, it is the illusion of believers. Of course, Pfister disagreed: for him religion and psychoanalysis were mutually supportive, because both were looking for truth; and because theologians as well as psychoanalysts were pursuing noble human goals and strivings.

As we know, with Hitler's ascent as German chancellor in 1933, religion became an immediate and tangible issue. (By then Freud was very ill and soon after the Anschluss was allowed to flee to London.) In 1934, he had set out to write Moses and Monotheism (1939), as a novel. He placed the murder of Moses at the roots of the worship of Yahweh. He now depicted Moses as an aristocratic
Egyptian who had imposed the worship of his own deity, Aten, as the single god on the Jewish people. Because the Jews could not tolerate such a restrictive belief, they were said to have killed the tyrannical young pharaoh, but when they needed a single god to unite them had revived monotheism by worshipping Yahweh. To Freud, killing the oppressive pharaoh then paralleled the killing of the original father and the guilt of the murderous sons—as he had maintained in Totem and Taboo (1913), and in Civilization and its Discontents (1930).

Was Freud now figuring out how to explain the Jews’ flight from Egypt by means of the Oedipus complex, or was he drawing parallels with his and his coreligionists’ expulsion first from Germany and then from Austria? For however assimilated Viennese Jews had been, they all had experienced anti-Semitism—even while burying their heads in sand. Freud loved Vienna. Even as he had been aghast when his books were being burnt in Germany, he had been certain that his Austrians never could behave as outrageously. In that he was part of his Jewish milieu. After all, the Austrians’ anti-Semitism had been more subtle, more

Sacher Garden in Prater, Vienna, around 1910.
subterranean than the Germans’. Had he analyzed himself at that point, he might have found that he was in denial. This is not to say that Freud might have foreseen the favorable reception Hitler would be given in Austria. Still, was this denial a necessary defense mechanism? A miscalculation of the political situation? Or a consequence of assimilation? Even Freud had no answer.

Jacques Lacan’s Rise After World War II
After the defeat of Hitler, just a few handfuls of psychoanalysts had remained in Austria and Germany, and their credentials were questioned. Could they have practiced under the Nazis without compromising themselves? And if that had been possible, could they have benefited from the scientific advances made elsewhere? Or had they adapted to the regime? In the Soviet Union and its satellites, psychoanalysis had been outlawed. In the Latin American countries where European psychoanalysts had settled down—Chile, Argentina, Brazil—local associations had been formed and vetted, sooner or later, by the IPA. There too, relationships by psychoanalysts with members of repressive regimes were being held up to the light. Now, investigating commissions appointed by the IPA were checking into institutional and members’ pasts, and into their practices.

The French situation was unique and most consequential: Freud’s teachings were kept alive by two major factions: those who accepted what by then was called “American ego psychology,” and those who were paying attention to Jacques Lacan’s dissident voice. Ever since the IPA congress in Marienbad, in 1936, Lacan had maintained that a child’s first reflection of itself in a mirror, sometime in its second year, rather than Freud’s Oedipus complex, determined its future personality. By 1949, he scandalized his peers in the Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP) by opposing their training requirements, and by arguing for fewer and shorter sessions. After it had transpired that he was “supervising” over thirty candidates, in addition to seeing countless patients, they ousted him from the SPP. But his re-conceptualization of the Freudian unconscious as interconnected representations that subjectively structure the “symbolic order” had already attracted listeners to his public lectures before he formed his own psychoanalytic society, the Société Psychanalytique de Paris. As did his “three registers” (the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary), and his anti-American slogans—at a time when anti-Americanism was at a peak, and was fueled by Sartre’s existentialism and
pro-Soviet stance. Basically, Lacan parsed Freud's language and texts in line with Saussurean linguistics, employing what to the uninitiated amounted to a theoretical hocus-pocus of *signifieds* and *signifiers*. But his charismatic stage personality fascinated Parisian intellectuals and would-be intellectuals alike—whether or not they understood what he was saying.

The members of the *Société Psychanalytique de Paris* responded by refining their own take on Freud. Just like their British colleagues, a number among them increasingly questioned some of the Americans’ ego psychology that dominated IPA thinking. Inevitably, they paid special attention to Freud's words, which they had to do when replying to Lacan.

By the 1970s, Lacan’s Freud was discussed by tout-Paris. Structuralism was in, and Lacan was one of its stars. (Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser were the others.) To denounce the classical Freudians, Lacan criticized their reliance on the unconscious, the transference, repetition, and the drive. He did not really destroy these ideas, but mocked them “in the name of the father.” And he “reread” Freud's texts by deconstructing them. During nine years of public seminars, he free-associated and pondered, in his learned and idiosyncratic philosophical manner, to personalities and politics, to Mao and revolution, and to whatever came to his—occasionally trance-like—state of mind. Parisians went to hear Lacan, I repeatedly was told, because it was the best show in town. Books on psychoanalysis abounded. Public conversations and confrontations multiplied, and “rereading Freud” had become an imperative.

Lacan’s ideas, however incomprehensible, were tailor-made for American universities’ radical feminists. In 1980, they introduced the provocative prose by, for instance, Catherine Clément, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. By then these disciples had gotten tired of Lacan. Julia Kristeva became a classical Freudian. Along with the others, she also turned to writing fiction.

In America, structuralism, and subsequently deconstruction, post-structuralism and post-modernism gained ground—at first in American universities’ departments of English, and then in the rest of the humanities and the social sciences. Given these “isms” and their highbrow language, their proponents seemed to
glory in this obscure discourse, which set them apart from the clear-speaking colleagues who were stuck in, or preferred, old-fashioned modernism. This confluence of psychoanalytically based French innovations, feminism, leftisant postures and radicalism, was well received in most American universities, although some “old-fashioned” literary critics continued to work with ego-psychological views, and to explore creativity by means of Freudian categories. But as feminists, they tended to disavow Freud—blaming him for male chauvinism, patriarchy, elitism, penis envy, phallocentrism, biological determinism and homophobia.

Freud never made up his mind about homosexuality, although he theorized about instincts and object choice. He conceived it as “the original basis from which as a result of restrictions in one direction or the other, both normal and inverted types develop.” In his “Letter to an American Mother,” in 1935, he noted that homosexuality is neither a vice nor an illness; another time, he declared that it is not a sufficient reason to exclude a potential candidate from becoming a psychoanalyst. But now, one hundred years later, in our confrontational and much more permissive climate, Freud’s tentative answers are being dismissed. That he was not in the forefront of gay liberation, or for that matter of women, children, and all other oppressed groups is being held against him, and it is forgotten that without psychoanalysis these movements might not have developed, or might have done so very differently. In the interim, psychotherapists have been in the forefront as defenders of victims of abuse, of criminals, of sex offenders, and so on. Altogether, they have kept Freud’s thinking alive, even as more and more critics have celebrated its death.

**Why Are Freud’s Ideas Still Valid Today?**

When Freud abandoned his scientific “Project of 1895,” he—partly—did so because he did not have the technical means to pinpoint just where specific emotions were located in the brain. He stated that, topographically, he could not localize the unconscious process in the sub-cortical parts of the brain. “There is a hiatus here, which at present cannot be filled, nor is it one of the tasks of psychology to fill it. Our psychical topology has for the present nothing to do with anatomy.”
This did not mean that Freud abandoned a neurological explanation for psychoanalysis, but that neurological and physiological understanding could not yet be brought together, and that he expected to “find a point of contact with biology,” when neurology itself had evolved from thinking in terms of functions and centers to a more dynamic analysis of functional systems within the brain. Over fifty years later, A. R. Luria, who early on had been taken with psychoanalysis, published *Traumatic Aphasia* in the Soviet Union. However, mostly due to the cold war, Luria’s research was not followed up in the West. Moreover, by then, neuroscience and psychoanalysis not only had gone their own way but had become competitive disciplines.

In his research on brain damage, Mark Solms—using the newest technology, mostly brain imaging—found that some neurological and neuropsychological syndromes might be compatible with psychoanalytic or meta-psychological concepts. For the last twelve years, he has lectured around the world, and has led a seminar at the New York Psychoanalytic Association, where neurologists have presented relevant research to psychoanalysts. Mostly, Solms has been subjecting patients with brain damage to both, detailed neuropsychological examinations and psychoanalysis. Via the transference, he creates the condition for the patient’s spontaneity while looking at his brain’s functional anatomy and metabolism, and pinpoints the exact areas of the brain that correspond to specific moods and emotions.

This does not mean that the riddle of the unconscious, or even of the conscious, has as yet been solved, but only that this type of research may get a bit closer to an understanding of the mind/body problems. Psychoanalysts, I believe, have everything to gain from such collaborations, and not only because it reinforces their scientific credentials in the eyes of critics. This does not mean that they ever again will get many patients to undergo four or five hours per week treatment. However, psychoanalysts are equipped to pursue the clinical research none of the short-term therapists are able to undertake.

Still, Freudian therapy has lost its cachet, also, because psychiatrists have been prescribing Prozac and other antidepressants as quicker fixes. According to Algis Valiunas:
SIGMUND FREUD reading a newspaper. Hochrotherd, Lower Austria, 1932.
These days, psychiatrists tend to treat mental illness as principally an affliction not of the mind but of the brain—a condition, that is marked by a deficiency or excess of certain neurochemicals, which medication can restore to healthy levels. The pill has replaced the couch as the therapeutic instrument of first resort.  

Although Valiunas is dubious that neurochemicals ever will become the means to a free moral life, their availability is attuned to our post-modern and self-indulgent culture. The extent of this freedom was evident from the report about “Psychotherapy on the Road to … Where?,” that described the get-together, in California, of 9,000 psychologists, social workers and students, along with many of the world’s most celebrated living therapists. Some participants compared this conference to a rock concert, and to a 1960s war protest. Others recalled the 1960’s and 1970s “characters like Carl Rogers, Minuchin, Frankl . . . and Milton Erickson.” These had been just a few of the many mind-healers who then were promoting their own abbreviated treatments. Among the approximately four hundred existing psychoanalytic groups, objects relations, inter-relational and interpersonal therapies, much like the classical Freuds, expect to reach the unconscious; the majority, however, such as encounter groups, support groups, primal therapy, transactional, subjective, interactive and cognitive therapies, as well as self-psychology, and behavioral remedies, focus on the conscious lives of their patients.  

This time one of the California participants wondered whether cognitive therapy can teach thought management; another asked whether “the zeit is really geisting;” and yet another questioned whether savoring pleasure and nurturing native strengths, or wiring the brain, might “foster the integration of its disparate parts.” I’m sure that Freud would shiver in his grave if he could, were he to know to what ends his descendants are putting his oeuvre. Of course, he did state that:

Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities. We may expect it to give us the most surprising information and we cannot guess what answers it will return in a few dozen years. . . . They may be of a kind which will blow away the whole of our artificial structure of hypotheses.
Undoubtedly, our culture has blown psychoanalysis into the stratosphere. But research remains earthbound. Even though, as Solms reminds us, clinical psychoanalysts “are ill-equipped to re-join with neuroscience,” and neuroscientists don’t respect psychoanalytic knowledge, both disciplines are following in Freud’s footsteps. He reminds us also that in the beginning the isolation of psychoanalysis was a necessary strategy. By now that is no longer true.

What is to be done, now that Freud’s ideas have become ubiquitous, that his movement has spawned myriads of psychological therapies—and reaches into biology, physiology and neurology. Are we in a land of unlimited possibilities? What reliable information will we be gleaning from the treatment of neuroses with as yet to be discovered brain research, and from serotonin related drugs? Are these prescribed too routinely, or will they be most effective when used together with Freudian psychoanalysis?

In one way or another, treatments promising ever more happiness to individuals in all walks of life are popular; even though no clinical method as yet has solved the riddle of the unconscious. But whether or not therapists are billed as Freud’s heirs, modern and post-modern culture are soaked in Freud’s legacy, and his movement has turned into an avalanche.

Yes, Freud did “bring us the plague,” and with it the possibility of freedom from mental suffering. Still, if by some miracle we were able to expunge his ideas, would we be able to create the good world he envisioned in his youth? Or would we want to? As it is, we are bound to go on living with the invisible dimension of human motivation he opened up. For his discoveries and insights have revolutionized the thinking of the Western world.

EDITH KURZWEIL, Ph. D. January 10, 2006
SIGMUND FREUD with his dogs Jofi and Lün on the terrace of his summer apartment - Hohe Warte, Vienna, 1935.
MAJOR EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF SIGMUND FREUD

1856  Sigmund Freud is born on May 6 in Příbor (in today’s Czech Republic).

1859  Freud’s family moves from Leipzig to Vienna.

1873  Freud decides to study medicine; reads Oedipus Rex for his final high school presentations.

1881  M.D. from the University of Vienna.

1885-86  Studies with Charcot at the Salpêtrière, Paris.

1886  Opens his own private practice; marries Martha Bernays.

1895  Birth of daughter Anna.

1896  Freud’s father dies; for the first time, the term “psychoanalysis” is used.

1897  Starts experimenting with self-analysis.

1900  Publication of The Interpretation of Dreams.

1905  Publication of Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex, Dora, and The Joke and its Relation to the Unconscious.

1906  Friendship with C.G. Jung begins.

1909  Freud and Jung travel to the US; first lectures on psychoanalysis.

1912-13  Publication of Totem and Taboo; break-up of the friendship with Jung.

1920  Death of daughter Sophie; publication of Beyond the Pleasure Principle.

1923  Why War? – correspondence with Albert Einstein.

1936  Freud celebrates his 80th birthday; is honoured by the Royal Society in Britain.

1938  Forced to emigrate to Britain.

1939  Freud dies on September 23 in London.
NOTES:

4 Letter to Wilhelm Fliess, February 1, 1900.
14 Ibid, Kurzweil, p. 203.
32 Ibid.

IMPRESSUM:

Publisher:
Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Minoritenplatz 8
A-1014 Wien

Text:
Edith Kurzweil, Ph. D.

Photographs:
Freud Museum, Multiart, IMAGNO Brandstätter images

Design:
www.yellowdog.at
A-1180 Wien, Edelhofgasse 3/2
E-mail: depetro@yellowdog.at

Print:
Edelbacher Druck Ges.m.b.H.