

Sigismund Schlomo Freud (1856 - 1939)

Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis, the most influential psychological theorist of 20th-century. Freud's theories, including the concept of the Oedipus complex, have had an enormous influence on art, literature, and social thinking. Freud's fundamental idea was that all humans are endowed with an unconscious in which potent sexual and aggressive drives, and defenses against them, struggle for supremacy. Freud once stated: "The only unnatural sexual behavior is none at all." It is often asserted that Freud "discovered" the unconscious mind. However, the idea is found in the work of many thinkers and authors from the times of Homer.

"The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind." (from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900)

Sigmund Freud was born of Jewish parentage in Freiburg, Moravia, Austria-Hungary (now the Czech Republic), the first of seven children. His mother Amalia Nathansohn was twenty years younger than his father, the wool merchant Jakob Freud; Amalia was his third wife. The family moved in 1860 to Vienna, where discriminating laws against the Jews had been canceled during 1850s and 1860s. Freud studied medicine at the University of Vienna under Josef Breuer, a Viennese physician. Breuer had with some success treated patients by encouraging them to "talk out" their past under hypnosis. In 1895 they coauthored *Studies in Hysteria*. It was an account of the treatment of "Anna O.", a hysterical patient, whom Freud himself never treated. From 1882 to 1886 Freud worked at the General Hospital, and experimented among others with cocaine, also using it himself. He went to Paris in 1885 to study under Jean Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière Hospital. There the hypnotic treatment of women, who suffered from a medical state called "hysteria", led Freud to take an interest in psychiatry. After returning to Vienna Freud married Martha Bernays; they had six children. In 1886 Freud opened his private practice. Their address from 1891 was Berggasse 19, where the family lived until 1938.

By 1896 Freud had found the key to his own system, naming it psychoanalysis. In it he had replaced hypnosis with "free association." In 1900 Freud published his first major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which established the importance of psychoanalytical movement. One of Freud's most famous early failures happened in the same year. In October he began treating an 18-year-old woman, Ida Bauer, better known by the pseudonym Dora. After 11 weeks, she stopped treatment, leaving much of the analytic work undone.

In 1902 Freud was appointed *Ausserordentlicher Professor*, and in 1905 appeared *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. At the suggestion of a disciple, Freud founded in 1902 the *Psychological Wednesday Society*, later transformed into the *Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*. After the *Third International Psychoanalytic Congress* in Weimar in 1911, Freud met Lou Andreas-Salomé, the Russian intellectual, who had been beloved by Nietzsche, whom she rejected, and was the traveling companion and lover of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke. Andreas-Salomé was still in her fifties youthful-appearing, and when Freud first encountered her, he warned one of his younger followers that she was "a woman of dangerous

intelligence" but that "all the tracks around her go into the Lion's den but none come out." For a brief period, Andreas-Salomé was Freud's closest woman pupil and she was allowed to attend regularly the internal Wednesday gatherings at Bergstrasse 19. "Frau Lou" was also close to Freud's daughter Anna (1895-1982). Andreas-Salomé never questioned Anna's adoration of her famous father. Later Anna Freud, who never married, became a major force in British psychology, specializing in the application of psychoanalysis to children. Among her best known works is *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defence* (1936).

In 1909 Freud travelled with Carl Jung in the United States, lecturing and meeting among others American philosopher and psychologist William James (SEE UNDER his brother, writer Henry James). Jung's close collaboration with Freud lasted until 1913. Jung had become increasingly critical of Freud's exclusively sexual definition of libido and incest. The publication of Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* (1912) led to a final break.

"I always recognized Freud's greatness and genius, but he was extremely headstrong. He came out of nowhere and the world was hostile towards him. He had to be obstinate to gain acceptance. Had he not been obstinate, his theory would have remained unknown... Once he said to me: we have to turn the theory of the unconscious into a dogma, to make it immovable. Why a dogma, I replied, since sooner or later truth will have to win out? Freud explained: We need a dam against the black tide of mud of occultism." (from *C.G. Jung Speaking*, ed. by William McGuire, and R.F.C. Hull, 1978)

By the beginning of the 1920s, Freud's writing had given rise to several associates of psychoanalysis. In his own life he was nearly muted: a series of operations for mouth cancer, beginning in 1923, made him unable to perform in public. He published *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), all dealing with large cultural issues. In spite of the recognition of his work Freud was never awarded with the Nobel Prize, but in 1928 an attempt was made for his nomination. This was supported by Alfred Döblin, Jacob Wassermann, Bertrand Russell, A.S. Neill, Lytton Strachey, Julian Huxley, Knut Hamsun, Thomas Mann. Albert Einstein didn't join the campaign, although he had been in correspondence with Freud.

"Thomas Mann points out that Freud is deeply involved in the irrationalism of the beginning of the new century because of the nature of the material of his enquiry, the unconscious, passions, instincts and dreams. But Freud is really connected not only with this neo-romantic movement, in which the subterranean regions of the life of the mind are the central point of interest, but at the same time with the beginning and origins of the whole aspect of romantic thought which goes back to the pre-civilized and the pre-rational. There is still an abundant share of Rousseauism in the pleasure with which he describes the freedom of the uncivilized man of instinct." (Arnold Hauser in *The Social History of Art*, 1951)

After Hitler's seizure of power, psychoanalytic work came to an end in Germany, and Freud's books were burnt in Berlin. His views also were condemned in the USSR. At the request of the league of Nations, Freud collaborated with Albert Einstein in

writing *Why War?* (1933) When Nazis invaded Austria, Freud was permitted to move to London after paying a large ransom. He died of throat cancer three weeks after the outbreak of WW II in 1939. His death on September 23, 1939 was eased by euthanasia - Freud asked his physician to give him a lethal dose of morphine. His last book, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), was completed in England. In it Freud dismissed Jung's concept of a "collective unconscious" and offered instead his own idea of "archaic inheritance". According to Freud, Moses was an Egyptian, who gave to the Jews the religion of monotheism, and was murdered in the wilderness. "The founding of the Mohammedan religion seems to me to be an abbreviated repetition of the Jewish one," Freud wrote, but Islam "lacked the profundity which the Jewish religion resulted from the murder of its founder."

Freud's theories have been questioned by many scholars. The knowledge of brain's electrical behavior have brought new views in the interpretation of dreams. Freud, along with Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Albert Einstein (1879-1955), revolutionarized modern Western thinking. But when Marx's thoughts have become unpopular after the fall of the Soviet Union, psychoanalysis has not experiences similar decline. Like "dialectical materialism", psychoanalytic theories cannot be adequately tested or falsified.