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| Freud, Sigmund (1856-1939) |
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| Sigmund (Sigismund Schlomo) Freud was an Austrian psychiatrist and the founder of psychoanalysis, who systematized theories of the unconscious and psychosexual development. Freud published case studies, lectures and papers on technique—along with works of self-analysis, speculative biography, cultural anthropology, and art and cultural criticism. |
| Sigmund (Sigismund Schlomo) Freud was an Austrian psychiatrist and the founder of psychoanalysis, who systematized theories of the unconscious and psychosexual development. Freud published case studies, lectures and papers on technique—along with works of self-analysis, speculative biography, cultural anthropology, and art and cultural criticism.  Born to a secular Jewish family, Freud received a classical education and studied medicine at the University of Vienna. After receiving his doctorate in 1881, Freud held a position at Vienna General Hospital, training in a variety of specialties before turning to neurology. In 1885, Freud studied the brain structure of children under Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris and learned from Charcot's research in hysteria and hypnotism. Returning to Vienna, he collaborated with Josef Breuer in the use of hypnosis to uncover symptoms of hysteria, leading to the ‘talking cure’ and psychoanalysis.  Freud concluded that neurosis depends on an unconscious mental system. Symptoms manifested unconscious libido, or sexual energy, and could be lessened by free association, which would bring the repressed into consciousness. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)Freud analyzes his own dreams and those of patients, arguing that the dream operates to fulfill a wish in the service of the pleasure principle. The book traces symbolic meaning in typical dreams and describes processes of condensation (multiple meanings coalesce in one object or event) and displacement (the meaning of one object or event is transferred to another). Freud normalized repression and neurosis, and applied psychoanalysis to everyday ‘slips of the tongue’ and jokes. His *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) delineates a developmental psychology including a periodization of erogenous zones, sexual aims, and objects—eventually revised to include the Oedipus complex. With the latter term, Freud focused attention on the family triangle of father, mother, and (male) child, a primordial structure shaping all of his subsequent work. Borrowing from the Greek myth of Oedipus, Freud posited that the child’s initial attachment to his mother is threatened by the father’s demands for her. To resolve this crisis and avoid neurosis, the child must learn to transfer his desire to a more suitable love object and to form a conscience that punishes him with guilt in place of the father’s anger. While the essays assume that psychological health depends on conforming to normal (genital, heterosexual) standards of behaviour, Freud also insists on a universal disposition to polymorphous ‘perversity’, including homosexuality and a thoroughly eroticized infant and child. Freud taught the modern world ‘to suspect the claim to, or the appearance of, innocence of any kind’ (Steven Marcus, ‘Introduction’ to *Three Essays on Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey [New York: Basic Books, 1962], xx-xxi), and the world often did not appreciate the lesson. *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) projected the Oedipus story back to an imagined primal family that was the origin of human society: a band of brothers, excluded by their father from the women of the group, whom he keeps to himself, murder him. But as a result arise guilt, ancestor worship (the source of the totem meal and religion), and a fraternal pact to keep the peace (the source of the incest taboo and the monogamous, nuclear family).  Freud and his followers formed the International Association of Psychoanalysts in 1910, and three professional journals followed. Members included Alfred Adler and Carl Jung, who would found their own schools of psychology, and Ernest Jones and Abraham Brill, who helped transmit psychoanalysis to Britain and the United States. In 1909, Stanley Hall invited Freud to deliver a series of lectures at Clark University, and in 1910 and 1913 Brill published the first English translations of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* and *The Interpretation of Dreams.* Beginning in 1924, more authoritative translations would be published, under the editorship of James Strachey.  With WWI, Freud entered a period of transition. ‘On Narcissism’ (1914) postulates a self-monitoring agency, the ego ideal, which he concludes could lead to self-torment in ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ (1917). Freud's work with shell-shocked soldiers led to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which describes the compulsion to repeat trauma in order to gain mastery over it. The book also introduced a fundamental shift in Freud’s perspective, which up to this point had always assumed one primary drive or instinct: a life instinct, or sexual drive, which Freud called Eros*.* In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* whether compelled by the traumas or by the carnage of war itself, Freud introduced a second primary instinct: the death-drive, later merged with an instinct for aggression. *The Ego and the Id* (1923) largely replaces the topographic scheme of unconscious, preconscious and conscious systems with the structural system of Id, Ego and Super-ego. (The Latinate English terms are Strachey’s. In German, Freud wrote of the *Es* [It], *Ich* [I], and *Über-Ich* [Over-I].) In the new system, the Id becomes the primary representative of the unconscious, but both the Ego and over-seeing Super-ego are also partially unconscious. The Oedipus complex was now complemented by the Super-ego (or conscience) as its product. The tentative application of Oedipus to female sexuality would spark revision and critique from psychoanalysts Karen Horney and Melanie Klein. Freud’s late works were devoted to anthropological speculations, mostly focused on the origins of religion, the family, and culture, such as *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1937 and 1967). Freud’s last great work was *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), in which socially directed (aim-inhibited or sublimated) Eros—love of humanity—competes both with the sexual drive and with the aggressive instinct for control, a conflict that cannot avoid ambivalence and hence *Unbehagen* (discomfort). Freud assumed human aggression would never be extirpated, as shown in his pessimistic open correspondence with Albert Einstein, ‘Why War?’ (1932).  Freud went from winning the Goethe Prize in 1930 to having his books burned after the rise of Hitler. Despite warnings, Freud stayed in Vienna until the *Anschluss* and escaped to England only with diplomatic pressure from Britain and America. With Freud’s exile, the capital of international psychoanalysis effectively moved to London—where it would continue under Jones, Klein and Freud’s daughter, Anna. Freud died from mouth cancer just before the outbreak of WWII.  Freud’s connections with major artists included Nobel laureates Romain Rolland and Thomas Mann and novelists Arnold and Stefan Zweig. Poet Hilda Doolittle underwent analysis with Freud, recounted in *Tribute to Freud*, andLeonard and Virginia Woolf were his English publishers. Surrealists Salvador Dali and Andre Breton claimed Freud as a forebear. Freud directly influenced historical branches of psychiatry, including Ego Psychology, Object Relations and the work of Jacques Lacan. Critical theory responding to Freud includes the Frankfurt School, deconstruction, feminism and queer theory. |
| Further reading:  (Freud)  (Gay)  (Jones) |