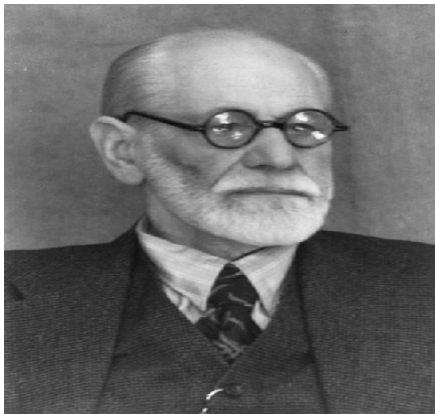


NEWS & VIEWS

SIGISMUND SCHLOMO FREUD

STAFF REPORTER



Sigmund Freud

Sigismund Schlomo Freud, was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who founded the psychoanalytic school of psychology. Freud is best known for his theories of the unconscious mind and the defense mechanism of repression. He is also renowned for his redefinition of sexual desire as the primary motivational energy of human life which is directed toward a wide variety of objects, as well as his therapeutic techniques, including his theory of transference in the therapeutic relationship and the presumed value of dreams as sources of insight into unconscious desires.

EARLY LIFE

Sigmund Freud was born on May 6, 1856 to Galician Jewish[1] parents in P Yíbor, Moravia, Austrian Empire, now Czech Republic. His father Jakob was 41, a wool merchant, and had two children by a previous marriage. His mother Amalié, the second wife of Jakob, was 21. He was

the first of their seven children and owing to his precocious intellect, his parents favoured him over his siblings from the early stages of his childhood; and despite their poverty, they sacrificed everything to give him a proper education. Due to the economic crisis of 1857, father Freud lost his business, and the family moved first to Leipzig, Germany before settling in Vienna, Austria. In 1865, Sigmund entered the Leopoldstädter Kommunal-Realgymnasium, a prominent high school. Freud was an outstanding pupil and graduated from the Matura in 1873 with honors.

After planning to study law, Freud joined the medical faculty at University of Vienna to study under Darwinist Prof. Karl Claus about eel life history. At that time, eel life history was still not very known. Due to their mysterious origins and migrations, some people jokingly made association between eels and Jews and Gypsies. In search for their male sex organs, Freud spent four weeks at the Austrian zoological research station in Trieste, dissecting hundreds of eels without finding more than what his predecessors had found. He could not solve the matter. Frustrated by the lack of success that would have gained him fame, Freud chose to change his course of study.

In 1874, the concept of “psychodynamics” was proposed with the publication of Lectures on Physiology by German physiologist Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke who, in coordination with physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, one of the formulators of the first law of thermodynamics (conservation of energy), supposed that all living organisms are energy-systems also governed by this principle. During this year, at the University of Vienna, Brücke served as supervisor for first-year medical student Sigmund Freud who adopted this new “dynamic” physiology. In his Lectures on Physiology, Brücke set forth the radical view that the living organism is a dynamic system to which the laws of chemistry and physics apply.[2] This was

the starting point for Freud's dynamic psychology of the mind and its relation to the unconscious.

FREUD AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

In October 1885 Freud went to Paris on a travelling fellowship to study with Europe's most renowned neurologist, Jean Martin Charcot. He was later to remember the experience of this stay as catalytic in turning him toward the practice of medical psychopathology and away from a less financially promising career in research neurology[3].

After opening his own medical practice, specializing in neurology, Freud married Martha Bernays in 1886.

After experimenting with hypnosis on his neurotic patients, Freud abandoned this form of treatment as it proved ineffective for many, in favor of a treatment where the patient talked through his or her problems. This came to be known as the "talking cure", as the ultimate goal of this talking was to locate and release powerful emotional energy that had initially been rejected, and imprisoned in the unconscious mind. Freud called this denial of emotions "repression", and he believed that it was often damaging to the normal functioning of the psyche, and could also retard physical functioning as well, which he described as "psychosomatic" symptoms.

In his 40s, Freud "had numerous psychosomatic disorders as well as exaggerated fears of dying and other phobias" [4]. During this time Freud was involved in the task of exploring his own dreams, memories, and the dynamics of his personality development. During this self-analysis, he came to realize the hostility he felt towards his father (Jacob Freud), who had died in 1896,[5] and "he also recalled his childhood sexual feelings for his mother (Amalia Freud), who was attractive, warm, and protective"[4]. He considered this time of emotional difficulty to be the most creative time in Freud's life.

After the publication of Freud's books in 1900 and 1902, interest in his theories began to grow, and a circle of supporters developed in the following period.

In 1930, Freud received the Goethe Prize in appreciation of his contribution to psychology and to German literary culture. Three years later the Nazis took control of Germany and Freud's books featured prominently among those burned by the Nazis. In March 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria in the Anschluss. This led to violent outbursts of antisemitism in Vienna, and Freud and his family received visits from the Gestapo. Freud decided to go into exile "to die in freedom". He and his family left Vienna in June 1938 and traveled to London.

A heavy cigar smoker, Freud endured more than 30 operations during his life due to oral cancer. In September 1939 he prevailed on his doctor and friend Max Schur to assist him

in suicide. Schur administered three doses of morphine over many hours that resulted in Freud's death on September 23, 1939.[4] Three days after his death, Freud's body was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium in England. His ashes were later placed in the crematorium's columbarium. They rest in an ancient Greek urn which Freud had received as a present from Marie Bonaparte and which he had kept in his study in Vienna for many years.

Perhaps the most significant contribution Freud made to Western thought were his arguments concerning the importance of the unconscious mind in understanding conscious thought and behavior. The western world overwhelmingly supported positivism up until Freud's time- the belief that self-knowledge as well as self-control is possible. Freud, however, came up with a revolutionary as well as controversial idea by declaring that people essentially have no free will.

Freud's theories and research methods were controversial during his life and still are so today, but few dispute his tremendous impact on psychologists and many academic disciplines.

Most importantly, Freud popularized the "talking-cure"—an idea that a person could solve problems simply by talking over them, something that was almost unheard of in the 19th century.

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