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FREUD AND BEYOND

A History of Modern
Psychoanalytic Thought

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PREFACE

What is psychoanalysis?

Movies and cartoons offer images of a patient lying on a couch, speaking endlessly into a vacuum, while a silent, colorless, older gentleman with a beard takes notes. Many people who are unfamiliar with psychoanalysis fear it as a coward's way out, an admission of defeat, a ceding of control and authority to a stranger.

But what of those who have benefited from or who practice psychoanalysis? Their voices are not often heard. The problem is that psychoanalytic concepts derive from and are concerned most fundamentally with the *experience* of the analytic process, an intensely emotional, highly charged, deeply personal experience for both participants. From the *inside*, in the eyes of those who practice and study psychoanalysis as well as those who have undergone a "successful" (i.e., personally meaningful) analysis, the world of psychoanalysis is a rich and intriguing place. Its basic concepts and modes of thought are imbued with an experiential vividness, a conceptual clarity, and a continual practical applicability to the day-to-day conduct of their lives. Psychoanalytic thought helps knit together different domains of experience: past and present, waking and sleeping, thinking and feeling, interpersonal events and the most private fantasies.

To the psychoanalytically informed mind, analytic concepts provide useful tools for expanding, consolidating, and enriching one's own life and one's relationships with others. Yet it is hard to convey this to someone who has not experienced it. To those for whom psychoanalysis is not a lived reality, psychoanalytic concepts can seem odd, abstract, alien, and out of reach. It is sometimes hard to believe they are, themselves, derived from actual human experience.

But there is more to it than that. Answering the question "What is psychoanalysis?" is more complicated than it would otherwise need to be because of four major myths about psychoanalysis that have wide currency in both the popular and scholarly spheres. Psychoanalysts themselves have contributed greatly to the perpetuation of these misleading notions.

Myth #1: Psychoanalysis Is Largely the Work of One Man.

For the first five decades in the history of psychoanalytic thought (up until Freud's death in 1939), it would have been tenable to argue that psychoanalysis *was* largely the invention of Freud's singular genius. Freud regarded psychoanalysis as a form of treatment, but also as a new branch of science. He carefully tended his creation, and it grew up around him. Those taught and analyzed by Freud were justifiably impressed with his early discoveries; they admired him and let him take the lead. Freud also regarded psychoanalysis as a quasi-political movement, and proved himself a dominant leader, wary of opposition, often reading others' creativity and originality as signs of disloyalty.

Alfred North Whitehead's claim that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato was an interpretive leap. But Freud's presence so infused early psychoanalysis that it has become tradition among many psychoanalytic writers to begin articles with a devout account of the ways Freud had already covered or believed or certainly would have believed the very ideas the author is about to develop. Thus authors of highly original contributions have often presented their work literally as mere footnotes to Freud. And major figures in the early decades of psychoanalysis—Jung, Adler, Ferenczi, Rank—were expelled from the Freudian mainstream as their ideas diverged significantly from established doctrine.

But since 1939, there has been no Freud to adjudicate competing claims concerning the truly psychoanalytic. Consequently, psychoanalytic thought has been released to flow more naturally. Where there was one channel, now there are many. Where there was one tradition, now there are multiple schools, technical terminologies, and forms of clinical practice. Psychoanalysis is no longer the work of one individual.

Myth #2: Contemporary Psychoanalysis, in Both Theory and Clinical Practice, Is Virtually the Same as It Was in Freud's Day.

Psychoanalysis is sometimes presented as if it were fundamentally unchanged since Freud's time. Because of their deference to Freud and psychoanalytic tradition, some analytic authors write as though caught in a time warp, oblivious to the burgeoning innovative literature of psychoanalytic theory and technique. Others, more aware of contemporary developments but still maintaining their loyalty to tradition, publicly advance a version of psychoanalysis that no longer reflects their actual clinical practice.¹ And many dismissive critics of psychoanalysis believe that knocking Freud, or taking easy shots at outdated features of his thought, is equivalent to demolishing psychoanalysis in its entirety.

The startling reality is that very little of the way Freud understood and practiced psychoanalysis has remained simply intact. The major pillars of his theorizing—instinctual drives, the centrality of the Oedipus complex, the motivational primacy of sex and aggression—have all been challenged and fundamentally transformed in contemporary psychoanalytic thought. And Freud's basic technical principles—analytic neutrality, the systematic frustration of the patient's wishes, a regression to an infantile neurosis—have likewise been reconceptualized, revised, and transformed by current clinicians.

The popular image of the isolated supine patient endlessly free-associating and surrendering to the analyst's superior authority has evolved into revised versions of psychoanalytic treatment that embrace flexibility of both form (on the couch or sitting up) and process. They rely for their impact not on the presumption of the analyst's authority, but on the development of a collaborative inquiry between analyst and analysand. And with a deeper understanding of the subjective nature of experience, today's analyst does not naively presume to be the arbiter of reality as much as the guide on a mutually undertaken journey.

Thus the contemporary psychoanalytic world can only be meaningfully characterized as post-Freudian. Anyone who thinks that a familiarity with Freud's work is equivalent to an understanding of psychoanalysis is out of touch; it is like believing that contemporary physics is contained in the work of Newton, or contemporary biology in Darwin's opus. Freud's oeuvre will always represent one of the most impressive personal achievements of Western intellectual history and culture, but it hardly represents contemporary psychoanalytic thought and clinical practice. The living impact of the revolution Freud provoked has expanded, changed, and flowered into concepts, methods, and understandings that would have scarcely been imaginable to Freud and his contemporaries.

Myth #3: Psychoanalysis Has Gone Out of Fashion.

This myth is based on a partial truth. Orthodox, classical Freudian psychoanalysis is going out of fashion. That is because orthodox psychoanalysis is not of our time; its methods and its understandings were fashioned almost a hundred years ago. As the world around psychoanalysis has changed, psychoanalysis itself has changed, in the settings in which it is applied, the forms through which it is practiced, and the understandings it generates.

With the proliferation of many other forms of psychotherapy and of psychiatric medication, as well as the increasing control of the insurance industry and government over payments leading inevitably to less frequent and much shorter modes of treatment, psychoanalysis has certainly lost the near monopoly it once enjoyed as a psychological treatment. Although the number of both psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic patients has been steadily increasing (Panel, 1978; Michels, 1988), the briefer, problem-oriented, symptomatic treatments are appealing to many people. In our modern world, with its frantic rate of change, its emphasis on cost effectiveness, its relentless demands for profit and productivity, the languorous timelessness and deep reflectiveness of psychoanalysis *can* seem as dated as Freud's Victorian chaise longue draped with Oriental throw rugs.

At the same time, the past decade has witnessed a psychoanalytic expansion of striking proportions. Most of the wide range of psychotherapies outside psychoanalysis proper have derived from and are continually influenced by both classical and more contemporary psychoanalytic concepts. In particular, psychoanalytic object relations theories and psychoanalytic self psychology have been among the most important influences on casework within the field of social work and on virtually all forms of psychotherapy practiced today (family therapy, couples therapy, cognitive and behavioral approaches, Gestalt psychotherapy, and short-term dynamic psychotherapy).

The extension of psychoanalysis beyond the clinical setting has been even more impressive. Throughout Freud's often lonely and combative lifetime, psychoanalysis occupied, even at its most influential, a beleaguered minority position in relation to society and culture at large. Today, Freud's contributions are so broadly accepted, so tightly woven into the fabric of our culture and our experience of ourselves, that, in the broadest sense, we are all "Freudians."

Psychoanalysis is not only a professional and scientific discipline *within* our culture, but a form of thought, an approach to human experience, that has become *constitutive* of our culture and pervades the way we have come

to experience ourselves and our minds. Major features of Freud's own contributions that were highly controversial in his time have become commonplace ideas in our world: unconscious motivation and meaning, the infinite variability of forms of sexuality, the formative power of early events, the centrality of oedipal themes in family life, the sexual and sensual dimensions of infantile and childhood experiences, the efficiency of the mind in disavowing unpleasant truths, and so on.

From a literary point of view, the critic Harold Bloom (1986) has argued that Freud's "conceptions . . . have begun to merge with our culture, and indeed now form the only Western mythology that contemporary intellectuals have in common." And in the very different but equally contemporary world of artificial intelligence, Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett (1981) point to Freud as the pioneer whose vision of mind has led in directions never imaginable in his day:

[W]hen Freud initially hypothesized the existence of *unconscious* mental processes, his proposal met widely with stark denial and incomprehension. . . . Freud's expansion of the bounds of the thinkable revolutionized clinical psychology. It also paved the way for the more recent development of "cognitive" experimental psychology. We have come to accept without the slightest twinge of incomprehension a host of claims to the effect that sophisticated hypothesis testing, memory searching, inference—in short, information processing—occurs within us though it is entirely inaccessible to introspection. (p. 11)

It seemed fitting that as the Soviet Union lurched into modern Western culture, one of the first important signs of intellectual awakening was a new interest in psychoanalysis (Barringer, 1988).

Similarly, psychoanalytic contributions to modern experience and culture did not end with Freud's death. Harry Stack Sullivan's methodology of participant observation and his interpersonal field theory have had an enormous impact on contemporary methodology in all the social sciences and on current concepts of social constructivism. Erik Erikson's epigenetic approach to the life cycle and his concept of identity have influenced anthropology, history, and biography. Melanie Klein's startling vision of infantile fantasy life and Margaret Mahler's powerful, romantic depiction of the psychological birth of the child from a symbiotic embeddedness with the mother have had a broad effect on the way parents and researchers think about children, their struggles, and their developmental requirements. John Bowlby's compelling and well-documented theory of attachment has spawned

an industry of research into infant-mother bonding and parent-child separations, which has contributed to the political and social debate about the needs of our children (cf. Fraiberg, 1977). Donald Winnicott's evocative and innovative understanding of the origins of subjectivity and the place of the "holding environment" in the mother-infant dyad have had a pervasive (if sometimes unacknowledged) impact on the experience of parenting for an entire generation. And Winnicott's concepts of the "transitional object" and "transitional experience" have been taken up by early-childhood educators and philosophers of creativity, culture, and aesthetic experience.

Contemporary revisionist Freudian approaches have had a central and often dramatic influence on literary criticism. Roy Schafer's application of the concept of "narratives" to psychodynamics and psychoanalytic life stories and Jacques Lacan's provocative and elusive account of the unconscious in terms of contemporary linguistics and structural anthropology are both widely cited. Heinz Kohut's compelling study of the vicissitudes of narcissism and the self have been picked up and developed by interpreters of literature, history, and culture in general. For example, in his influential book *The Culture of Narcissism* the scholar Christopher Lasch drew heavily on the theories of narcissism developed by both Kohut and Otto Kernberg.

A rich and complex cross-fertilization has also taken place between psychoanalysis and feminism. Many early feminists justifiably used Freud's patriarchal and condescending view of women as a target. But as chapter 8 notes, the feminist critique from outside the field of psychoanalysis was paralleled by critical revision within it. Psychoanalyst/feminist writers have played an important role in the most innovative current thinking about gender and sexuality. Thus post-Freudian developments in psychoanalytic ideas have filtered into and profoundly shaped contemporary life and thought.

Therefore, the portrayal of psychoanalysis as slipping into irrelevance is far from accurate. The dominant concerns within the contemporary analytic literature and current analytic practice—the nature of subjectivity, the generation of personal meaning and creativity, the embeddedness of the subject in cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts—are, in fact, the predominant concerns of our time.

Myth #4: Psychoanalysis Is an Esoteric Cult Requiring Both Conversion and Years of Study.

Freud was a great prose stylist, and his brilliant manner of argumentation allows anyone willing to work at it to follow along in the development of his ideas. Most of the post-Freudian texts are written in a style that encour-

ages a view of psychoanalysis as an esoteric, impenetrable world unto itself, its self-proclaimed riches accessible only to a select few. The language is dense, thick with jargon and complex argumentation. A considerable familiarity both with previous psychoanalytic literature and with clinical process is generally presumed. As postclassical psychoanalysis has fragmented into competing schools and traditions, the insights and contributions in any individual work are generally presented with the major political schisms in mind. Any particular author is likely to be arguing against one or more other authors or positions, often unnamed. New language is sometimes invented to convey old ideas, so that differences can be exaggerated in claims to originality. Old language is sometimes stretched to convey new ideas, so that similarities can be exaggerated in claims to continuity. All this makes it difficult for anyone who has not spent years studying the history of psychoanalytic ideas to pick up any individual psychoanalytic work and to grasp its contribution.

Politics and economics have also played an important part in the inaccessibility of psychoanalytic ideas. Despite Freud's own wishes, psychoanalysis, particularly in the United States, was thoroughly medicalized up until recently. The American medical establishment laid claim to psychoanalysis and ran it monopolistically. Thus the impression that psychoanalytic ideas were by their nature esoteric, highly technical, and accessible only to the officially initiated partially reflected the political elitism and financial interests of those who benefited from maintaining the impression that psychoanalysis was a highly technical medical specialty.

The last two decades have witnessed a social revolution in the practice and training of psychoanalysts in the United States. Newer institutes training psychologists and social workers have proliferated and flourished in many cities, the content of their curriculum not constrained by the politics of loyalty to Freud or to the medical model; they teach more directly and openly the invigorating infusion of the ideas of more contemporary writers into the conceptual explorations and clinical practice of psychoanalysis. A restraint-of-trade lawsuit, successfully undertaken against the medically dominated American Psychoanalytic Association, has forced the opening of formally medical institutes to nonmedically trained professionals. All this has begun to effect a reversal of the traditional elitism and contrived obscurantism of psychoanalytic writing. Psychoanalysis is in the process of modernization; its ideas need to be made available to all who are interested.

~~Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought is based on our conviction that psychoanalytic ideas, from their origins in Freud's work to the current diverse array of competing schools, can and ought to be made accessible both to practicing clinicians who have not~~

NOTES

PREFACE

1. Fred Pine (1985) has provided an impressive catalogue of the considerations leading to the masking of innovation in psychoanalytic thought:

The awesome power of Freud as mentor and of one's own analyst similarly; the need for referrals, which leads to caution in what one presents about one's work to the world; the ease with which the motives of revisionists can be interpreted in this field (i.e., the resort to ad hominem argument) and the "timelessness of teaching," that is, the tendency to teach what we were taught rather than what we ourselves have come to think or do. (pp. 26-27)

CHAPTER 1. SIGMUND FREUD AND THE CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYTIC TRADITION

1. Many philosophers, poets, and psychologists, before and during Freud's lifetime, had described ideas and feelings that operated outside of awareness (see Ellenberger, 1970).
2. The long delay between Breuer's treatment of Anna O. and his joint publication with Freud on hysteria was due in part to the traumatic fashion in which that treatment ended. Anna O. developed an erotic transference to Breuer, manifesting itself in a hysterical pregnancy, which shook Breuer considerably and led to his abandonment of the field and a reconcentration on his work as internist. These events were disclosed only many years later, when the psychoanalytic notions of transference and countertransference (see chapter 9) had become advanced enough to make such devel-