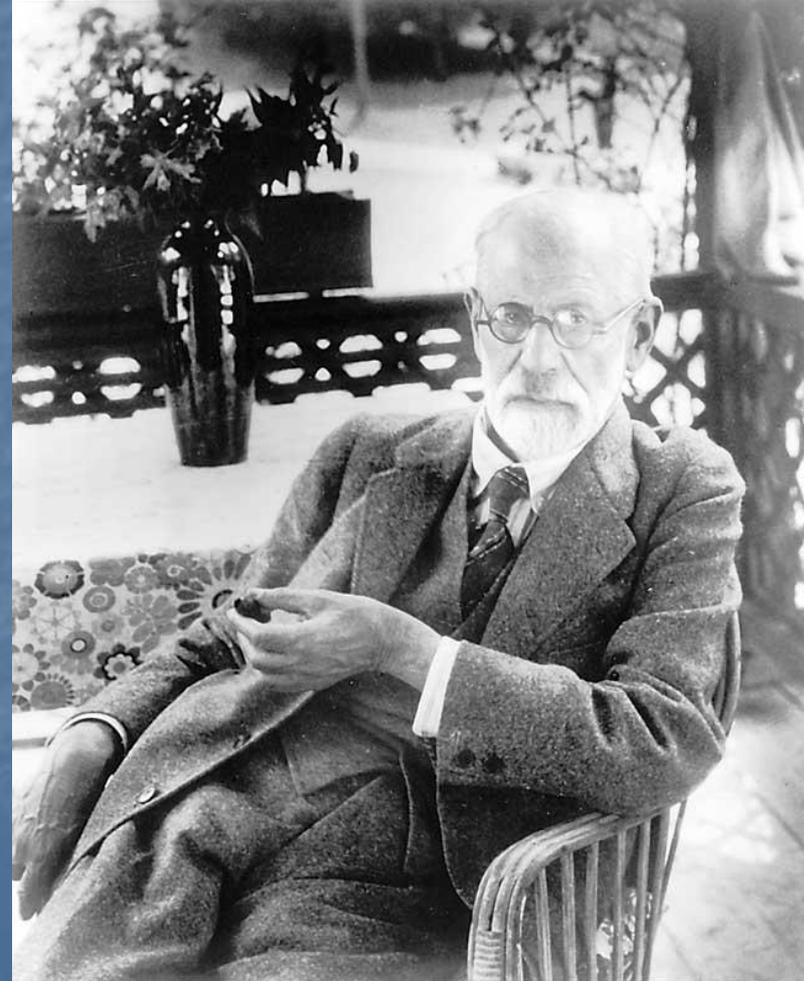


Sigmund Freud and Civilization

Alan Haffa

Personal Life, 1856-1939

- Father was a merchant; Vienna, a haven for Jews; he was an Atheist himself
- Studied physiology and neurology at University of Vienna;
- 1882, married
- WWI confirmed his instinct and drive notion of human nature
- 1938: Nazi Invasion of Austria: Fled to Paris and then London



Professional Life

- 1890s: founded psychoanalysis
- 1899; *Interpretations of Dreams*
- 1905: *Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*
- 1906: Carl Jung
- 1917: *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*
- 1920: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; adds the death instinct to the sexual instinct
- 1923: *The Ego and the Id*
- 1930: *Civilization and its Discontent*

What IS the Unconscious?

- The part of our mental functioning of which we are unaware
- It is a depository of socially unacceptable ideas, wishes, desires, and traumatic memories and emotions, which are then repressed
- The force of the repressed desires then manifest as neurotic symptoms

Three Aspects of the Mind

- Id: “wholly unconscious domain of the mind consisting of the drives and of material later suppressed”
- Ego: “partly conscious and contains the defense mechanisms and the capacities to calculate, reason, and plan”
- Super Ego: “ only partly conscious, which harbors the conscience, and beyond that, unconscious feelings of guilt”
- Our Ego distorts and suppresses disturbing or guilt ridden ideas and desires as a defense mechanism

(Peter Gay, *Introduction to Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Norton, 1961.)

Why don't we know we have these Desires?

- Denial
- Sublimation—transfer unacceptable desire to an acceptable one
- Distortion (Condensation and Displacement); Dreams and Freudian slips
- Projection—project our unacceptable desire onto someone else
- Repression

Interpretations of Dreams

- Prior View of Dreams: Meaningless; Symbolic and Prophetic (Joseph and Pharaoh, eg.)
- First to show that Dreams:
 - 1) Dreams can be interpreted
 - 2) Interpretation must take into account the character of the dreamer and the circumstances of the dream (waking events prior to sleep)
 - 3) Dreams are expression of a “wish fulfillment”

Civilization and its Discontents, 1930

- Individual Psyche and social evolution of civilization
- Friend's statement: Religious feeling is like a "sensation of 'eternity', a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded..." Described as an oceanic feeling of boundless and oneness felt between the ego and the external world. This is the source of Religion.
- Religion is not the source of this feeling, but they are successful at channeling it toward their particular belief

Ego Formation

- The Ego in the infant state is focused only on its own desires and needs
- Identification with something outside of itself is first achieved with the Mother's breast
- The "oceanic feeling" is really a residual desire for this infantile state
- It fulfills our desire to be protected from Fate and death and forces outside our control

Suffering and Coping Mechanism

- Adopts an Aristotelian and Epicurean notion of the purpose of life: Happiness (Pleasure Principle)
- Three ways that happiness is disturbed: 1) Body; 2) Nature; 3) Social Relations
- Coping Mechanisms: 1) Deflection through distractions; 2) Substitutive Satisfactions (eg., art); 3) Intoxicating Substances

Civilization and Happiness

- Civilization is itself the cause of much of our unhappiness, although we form civilization in order to avoid suffering
- Hobbesian Explanation: As man became civilized, in order to achieve peace, order, cleanliness, etc. rules and hierarchies were imposed which restrict the individual's Pleasure Principle
- Neuroses develop in response to the weighty demands and restrictions of civilized society

Civilization and Ego Formation

- Similar to Plato's *Republic*: seeks justice by creating the Ideal State
- Seeks to find "discontent" in civilization by detailing the origins of neurosis in the individual
- Super-Ego is like the Law; it imposes restrictions on Desire and creates Guilt to reign in the Id as the Law tries to force individuals to get along

Libido and Friendship

- Libido is the sex drive
- Libido is limited; you can't love the whole world with the same intensity as your child or spouse
- 'Love thy Neighbor' is contrary to our nature
- Civilization demands that we control our aggression and love our neighbor, thus divesting some of the potency of the Libido
- Civilization is a struggle between the Libido (Eros) and the Aggressive Instinct (Thanatos)

Super-Ego and Guilt

- The imposition of Rules and Taboos contrary to our nature develops Super-Ego
- Guilt is a response of the Ego to the Super-Ego, a fear of it's punishment
- Neuroses develop because even though the individual subdues its desires, it nonetheless has them in the unconscious, and the Super-Ego punishes it for having them; these desires get sublimated or hidden in various ways by the mind, but they do not disappear; hence, Guilt.

Religion

- Religion restricts Libido and redirects those instincts to social bonds
- Religion claims to protect against Death and Fate like a protective Father figure
- Religion is an attempt to procure happiness and “protection against suffering through the delusional remolding of reality is made by a considerable number of people in common. The religions of mankind must be classed among the mass-delusions of this kind.”

Conclusion;

<http://www.ship.edu/~cgboeree/freud.html>

- Dr. C. George Boeree: "The only thing more common than a blind admiration for Freud seems to be an equally blind hatred of him..."

The least popular part of Freud's theory is the Oedipal complex and the associated ideas of castration anxiety and penis envy. What is the reality behind these concepts? It is true that some children are very attached to their opposite sex parent, and very competitive with their same-sex parent. It is true that some boys worry about the differences between boys and girls, and fear that someone may cut their penis off. It is true that some girls likewise are concerned, and wish they had a penis. And it is true that some of these children retain these affections, fears and aspirations into adulthood..."