

JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

PROBING EDUCATION

University of Vienna (Part Two)

Directed Readings and Analysis
By Rev. Charles Brock
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Editor's note: This Jefferson Publications series examines ancient universities that thrive today – how they have shaped the world and influenced education methods, citizenship, the meaning of government, and cultural life. Today's article is the last of two parts on the University of Vienna in Austria.

20th in a Series

[Duke Rudolph IV](#) in 1365, it is the oldest university in the [modern German-speaking world](#) and among the largest institutions of higher learning in Europe. The university is associated with 16 [Nobel prize winners](#) and has been the home to many scholars of historical and academic importance.

Sigmund Freud, (born May 6, 1856, Freiberg, [Moravia](#), Austrian Empire [now Příbor, Czech Republic] – died September 23, 1939, [London](#), England), Austrian neurologist and the founder of [psychoanalysis](#).

([Read Sigmund Freud's 1926 Britannica essay on psychoanalysis.](#))

Freud may justly be called the most influential [intellectual](#) legislator of his age. His creation of psychoanalysis was at once a theory of the human psyche, a [therapy](#) for the relief of its ills, and an optic for the interpretation of [culture](#) and society. Despite repeated [criticisms](#), attempted refutations, and qualifications of

Freud's work, its spell remained powerful well after his [death](#) and in fields far removed from [psychology](#) as it is narrowly defined. If, as the American sociologist Philip Rieff once contended, "psychological man" replaced such earlier notions as political, religious, or economic man as the 20th century's dominant self-image, it is in no small measure due to the power of Freud's vision and the seeming inexhaustibility of the intellectual [legacy](#) he left behind.

By encouraging the patient to express any random thoughts that came associatively to [mind](#), the technique aimed at uncovering hitherto unarticulated material from the realm of the psyche that Freud, following a long tradition, called the [unconscious](#). Because of its incompatibility with [conscious](#) thoughts or conflicts with other unconscious ones, this material was normally hidden, forgotten, or unavailable to conscious reflection. Difficulty in freely associating – sudden silences, [stuttering](#), or the like – suggested to Freud the importance of the material struggling to be expressed, as well as the power of what he called the patient's defenses against that expression. Such blockages Freud dubbed resistance, which had to be broken down to reveal hidden conflicts. Unlike Jean-Martin Charcot (French neurologist) and Josef Breuer (Freud's mentor), Freud came to the conclusion, based on his clinical experience with female hysterics, that the most insistent source of resisted material was [sexual](#) in nature. And even more momentously, he linked the [etiology](#) of neurotic symptoms to the same struggle between a sexual feeling or urge and the psychic defenses against it. Being able to bring that conflict to [consciousness](#) through free association and then probing its implications was thus a crucial step, he reasoned, on the road to relieving the symptom, which was best understood as an unwitting compromise formation between the wish and the defense.

Screen memories

At first, however, Freud was uncertain about the precise status of the sexual component in this [dynamic conception](#) of the psyche. His patients seemed to recall actual experiences of early seductions, often incestuous in nature. Freud's initial impulse was to accept these as having happened. But then, as he disclosed in a now famous letter to Fliess of September 2, 1897, he concluded that, rather than being memories of actual events, these shocking recollections were the residues of infantile impulses and desires to be seduced by an [adult](#). What was recalled was not a genuine [memory](#) but what he would later call a screen memory, or [fantasy](#), hiding a primitive wish. That is, rather than stressing the corrupting [initiative](#) of adults in the etiology of [neuroses](#), Freud concluded that the fantasies and yearnings of the child were at the root of later conflict.

The absolute centrality of his change of heart in the subsequent [development](#) of [psychoanalysis](#) cannot be doubted. For in attributing [sexuality](#) to children, emphasizing the causal power of fantasies, and establishing the importance of [repressed desires](#), Freud laid the groundwork for what many have called the epic

journey into his own psyche, which followed soon after the dissolution of his partnership with Breuer.

Freud's work on [hysteria](#) had focused on female sexuality and its potential for neurotic expression. To be fully universal, psychoanalysis – a term Freud coined in 1896 – would also have to examine the male psyche in a condition of what might be called normality. It would have to become more than a [psychotherapy](#) and develop into a complete theory of the mind. To this end Freud accepted the enormous risk of generalizing from the experience he knew best: his own.

Significantly, his self-analysis was both the first and the last in the history of the movement he spawned; all future analysts would have to undergo a training analysis with someone whose own analysis was ultimately traceable to Freud's analysis of his [disciples](#).

Freud's self-exploration was apparently enabled by a disturbing event in his life. In October 1896, his father Jakob Freud died shortly before his 81st birthday. [Emotions](#) were released in his son that he understood as having been long repressed, emotions concerning his earliest familial experiences and feelings. Beginning in earnest in July 1897, Freud attempted to reveal their meaning by drawing on a technique that had been available for millennia: the deciphering of [dreams](#). Freud's contribution to the tradition of [dream](#) analysis was path-breaking, for in insisting on them as "the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious," he provided a remarkably elaborate account of why dreams originate and how they function.

The interpretation of [dreams](#)

In what many commentators consider his master work, *Die Traumdeutung* (published in 1899, but given the date of the dawning century to emphasize its epochal character; [The Interpretation of Dreams](#)), he presented his findings. Interspersing evidence from his own dreams with evidence from those recounted in his clinical practice, Freud contended that dreams played a fundamental role in the psychic economy. The mind's energy, which Freud called [libido](#) and identified principally, but not exclusively, with the sexual drive, was a fluid and [malleable](#) force capable of excessive and disturbing power. Needing to be discharged to ensure pleasure and prevent pain, it sought whatever outlet it might find. If denied the gratification provided by direct motor action, libidinal energy could seek its release through mental channels. Or, in the [language](#) of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a wish can be satisfied by an imaginary wish fulfillment. All dreams, Freud claimed, even nightmares [manifesting](#) apparent [anxiety](#), are the fulfillment of such wishes.

More precisely, dreams are the disguised expression of wish fulfillments. Like neurotic symptoms, they are the effects of compromises in the psyche between

desires and prohibitions in conflict with their realization. Although sleep can relax the power of the mind's diurnal censorship of forbidden desires, such censorship, nonetheless, persists in part during nocturnal existence. Dreams, therefore, have to be decoded to be understood, and not merely because they are actually forbidden desires experienced in distorted fashion. For dreams undergo further revision in the process of being recounted to the analyst.

The Interpretation of Dreams provides a hermeneutic for the unmasking of the dream's disguise, or **dreamwork**, as Freud called it. The **manifest** content of the dream, that which is remembered and reported, must be understood as veiling a latent meaning. Dreams defy logical entailment and narrative **coherence**, for they intermingle the residues of immediate daily experience with the deepest, often most infantile wishes. Yet they can be ultimately decoded by attending to four basic activities of the dreamwork and reversing their mystifying effect.

The first of these activities, **condensation**, operates through the fusion of several different elements into one. As such, it exemplifies one of the key operations of psychic life, which Freud called overdetermination. No direct correspondence between a simple manifest content and its multidimensional latent counterpart can be assumed. The second activity of the dreamwork, **displacement**, refers to the decentering of dream thoughts, so that the most urgent wish is often obliquely or marginally represented on the manifest level. **Displacement** also means the associative substitution of one signifier in the dream for another, say, the king for one's father. The third activity Freud called representation, by which he meant the transformation of thoughts into images. Decoding a dream thus means translating such visual representations back into intersubjectively available language through free association. The final function of the dreamwork is **secondary revision**, which provides some order and intelligibility to the dream by supplementing its content with narrative coherence. The process of dream interpretation thus reverses the direction of the dreamwork, moving from the level of the conscious recounting of the dream through the preconscious back beyond censorship into the unconscious itself.

Further theoretical development

In 1904, Freud published *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*), in which he explored such seemingly insignificant errors as slips of the tongue or pen (later colloquially called Freudian slips), misreadings, or forgetting of names. These errors Freud understood to have symptomatic and thus interpretable importance. But unlike dreams they need not betray a repressed infantile wish yet can arise from more immediate hostile, jealous, or egoistic causes.

In 1905, Freud also published the work that first thrust him into the limelight as the **alleged** champion of a pansexualist understanding of the mind: *Drei*

Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie (*Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*, later translated as *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*), revised and expanded in subsequent editions. The work established Freud as a pioneer in the serious study of [sexology](#), alongside [Richard von Krafft-Ebing](#), [Havelock Ellis](#), Albert Moll, and Iwan Bloch. Here he outlined in greater detail than before his reasons for emphasizing the sexual component in the development of both normal and pathological behavior. Although not as reductionist as popularly assumed, Freud nonetheless extended the concept of sexuality beyond conventional usage to include a panoply of erotic impulses from the earliest [childhood](#) years on. Distinguishing between sexual aims (the act toward which instincts strive) and sexual objects (the person, organ, or physical entity eliciting attraction), he elaborated a [repertoire](#) of sexually generated behavior of astonishing variety. Beginning very early in life, imperiously insistent on its gratification, remarkably plastic in its expression, and open to easy maldevelopment, sexuality, Freud concluded, is the prime mover in a great deal of [human behavior](#).

Social and cultural studies

Freud's mature instinct theory is in many ways a [metaphysical](#) construct, comparable to [Henri Bergson's](#) *élan vital* or [Arthur Schopenhauer's](#) Will. Emboldened by its formulation, Freud launched a series of [audacious](#) studies that took him well beyond his clinician's consulting room. These he had already commenced with investigations of [Leonardo da Vinci](#) (1910) and the novel *Gradiva* by Wilhelm Jensen (1907). Here Freud attempted to psychoanalyze works of art as symbolic expressions of their creator's psychodynamics.

The fundamental [premise](#) that permitted Freud to examine cultural phenomena was called [sublimation](#) in the *Three Essays*. The appreciation or creation of ideal beauty, Freud contended, is rooted in primitive sexual urges that are transfigured in culturally elevating ways. Unlike [repression](#), which produces only neurotic symptoms whose meaning is unknown even to the sufferer, sublimation is a conflict-free resolution of repression, which leads to intersubjectively available cultural works. Although potentially reductive in its [implications](#), the psychoanalytic interpretation of [culture](#) can be justly called one of the most powerful "hermeneutics of suspicion," to borrow the French philosopher [Paul Ricoeur's](#) phrase, because it debunks idealist notions of high [culture](#) as the [alleged](#) transcendence of baser concerns.

Freud extended the scope of his theories to include anthropological and social psychological speculation as well in *Totem und Tabu* (1913; [Totem and Taboo](#)). Drawing on [Sir James Frazer's](#) explorations of [Australian Aboriginal peoples](#), he interpreted the mixture of fear and reverence for the totemic animal in terms of the child's attitude toward the parent of the same sex. The Aboriginal person's insistence on exogamy was a complicated defense against the strong incestuous

desires felt by the child for the parent of the opposite sex. Their [religion](#) was thus a phylogenetic anticipation of the ontogenetic Oedipal drama played out in modern human psychic [development](#). But whereas the latter was purely an intrapsychic phenomenon based on fantasies and fears, the former, Freud boldly suggested, was based on actual historical events. Freud speculated that the rebellion of sons against dominating fathers for control over women had culminated in actual parricide. Ultimately producing remorse, this violent act led to [atonement](#) through [incest](#) taboos and the prohibitions against harming the father-substitute, the totemic object or animal. When the fraternal clan replaced the patriarchal horde, true society emerged. For renunciation of individual [aspirations](#) to replace the slain father and a shared sense of guilt in the primal crime led to a contractual agreement to end internecine struggle and band together instead. The totemic ancestor then could evolve into the more impersonal God of the great religions.

A subsequent effort to explain social solidarity, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-analyse* (1921; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*), drew on the antidemocratic crowd psychologists of the late 19th century, most notably [Gustave Le Bon](#). Here the disillusionment with liberal, rational politics that some have seen as the seedbed of much of Freud's work was at its most explicit (the only competitor being *Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Twenty-Eighth President of the United States: A Psychological Study*, a debunking psychobiography written jointly with [William Bullitt](#) in 1930 but not published until 1967 and it might be that Freud was under pressure to publish this because of his need to get out of Austria). All mass phenomena, Freud suggested, are characterized by intensely regressive emotional ties stripping individuals of their self-control and independence. Rejecting possible alternative explanations such as hypnotic suggestion or imitation and unwilling to follow Jung in postulating a group [mind](#), Freud emphasized instead individual libidinal ties to the group's leader. Group formation is like regression to a primal horde with the leader as the original father. Drawing on the army and the [Roman Catholic Church](#) as his examples, Freud never seriously considered less [authoritarian](#) modes of collective behavior.

[Religion](#), civilization, and discontents

Freud's bleak appraisal of social and political solidarity was replicated, if in somewhat more [nuanced](#) form, in his attitude toward religion. Although many accounts of Freud's [development](#) have discerned debts to one or another aspect of his Jewish background, debts Freud himself partly acknowledged, his avowed position was deeply irreligious. As noted in the account of *Totem and Taboo*, he always attributed the belief in divinities ultimately to the displaced worship of human ancestors. One of the most potent sources of his break with former [disciples](#) like Jung was precisely this [skepticism](#) toward spirituality.

In his 1907 essay “Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices” Freud contended that obsessional [neuroses](#) are private religious systems and religions themselves no more than the obsessional neuroses of humankind. Twenty years later *The Future of an Illusion*), he elaborated this argument, adding that belief in God is a mythic reproduction of the universal state of infantile helplessness. Like an idealized father, God is the projection of childish wishes for an [omnipotent](#) protector. If children can outgrow their dependence, he concluded with cautious optimism, then humanity may also hope to leave behind its immature heteronomy.

The simple [Enlightenment](#) faith underlying this analysis quickly elicited critical comment, which led to its modification. In an exchange of letters with the French novelist [Romain Rolland](#), Freud came to acknowledge a more intractable source of religious [sentiment](#). The opening section of his next speculative tract, 1930; *Civilization and Its Discontents*, was devoted to what Rolland had dubbed the oceanic feeling. Freud described it as a sense of indissoluble oneness with the universe, which mystics in particular have celebrated as the fundamental religious experience. Its origin, Freud claimed, is [nostalgia](#) for the pre-Oedipal [infant's](#) sense of unity with its mother. Although still rooted in infantile helplessness, religion thus derives to some extent from the earliest stage of postnatal development. Regressive longings for its restoration are possibly stronger than those for a powerful father and thus cannot be worked through by way of a [collective](#) resolution of the [Oedipus complex](#).

Civilization and Its Discontents, written after the onset of Freud's struggle with cancer of the jaw and in the midst of the rise of European [fascism](#), was a profoundly unconsoling book. Focusing on the prevalence of human guilt and the impossibility of achieving unalloyed happiness, Freud contended that no social solution of the discontents of humankind is possible. All civilizations, no matter how well planned, can provide only partial relief. For aggression among people is not due to unequal property relations or political injustice, which can be rectified by laws, but rather to the [death](#) instinct redirected outward.

Eros and Thanatos are themselves at odds, conflict and the guilt it engenders are virtually inevitable. The best to be hoped for is a life in which the repressive burdens of civilization are in rough balance with the realization of instinctual gratification and the sublimated love for humankind. But reconciliation of nature and [culture](#) is impossible, for the price of any civilization is the guilt produced by the necessary thwarting of human instinctual drives. Although elsewhere Freud had postulated mature, heterosexual genitality and the capacity to work productively as the hallmarks of [health](#) and urged that “where [id](#) is, there shall [ego](#) be,” it is clear that he held out no hope for any collective relief from the discontents of civilization. He only offered an [ethic](#) of resigned authenticity, which taught the wisdom of living without the possibility of redemption, either religious or [secular](#).

Freud's final major work, 1939; *Moses and Monotheism*, was more than just the "historical novel" he had initially thought to subtitle it. Moses had long been a figure of capital importance for Freud; indeed Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses had been the subject of an essay written in 1914. The book itself sought to solve the mystery of Moses' origins by claiming that he was actually an aristocratic Egyptian by birth who had chosen the Jewish people to keep alive an earlier monotheistic religion. Too stern and demanding a taskmaster, Moses was slain in a Jewish revolt, and a second, more pliant leader, also called Moses, rose in his place. The guilt engendered by the parricidal act was, however, too much to endure, and the Jews ultimately returned to the religion given them by the original Moses as the two figures were merged into one in their memories. Here Freud's ambivalence about his religious roots and his father's authority was allowed to pervade a highly fanciful story that reveals more about its author than its ostensible subject.

Moses and Monotheism was published the year after Hitler invaded Austria. Freud was forced to flee to England. His books were among the first to be burned, as the fruits of a "Jewish science," when the Nazis took over Germany. Although psychotherapy was not banned in the Third Reich, where Field Marshall Hermann Göring's cousin headed an official institute, psychoanalysis essentially went into exile, most notably to North America and England. Freud himself died only a few weeks after World War II broke out, at a time when his worst fears about the irrationality lurking behind the facade of civilization were being realized. Freud's death did not, however, hinder the reception and dissemination of his ideas. A plethora of Freudian schools emerged to develop psychoanalysis in different directions. In fact, despite the relentless and often compelling challenges mounted against virtually all of his ideas, Freud has remained one of the most potent intellectual figures of modern times. Martin Evan Jay Enyc Brit

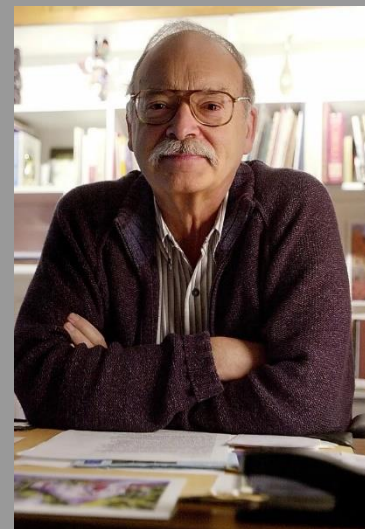
Transference and Religion

Carl Jung once mentioned to Freud that not only was transference the key to analysis, it paralleled ancient religious rites in which sin was transferred to the scapegoat or to Christ on the Cross, which can be repeated in the Mass. Freud never responded to that idea, but for me it resonates with his Jewish background willy-nilly. It shows parallels to the Day of Atonement rites in which all the sins of Israel are transferred to the scapegoat by the High Priest Aaron and his followers. There are versions of Christian ideas of atonement that emphasize the transference of sin to Jesus whether on the historic Cross or the body and blood in the Mass itself. This is seen as freeing the believer from personal sin and can be used for national sin rites as well. Cf *Charles Brock – Marx and Freud on Religion – M Litt thesis Oxford University – Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1975*

Regarding the education of students, they need a broad background along with their “major” to do big things like Freud. This should be encouraged while they are students. We don’t want to give them so much homework or lab work that they are overwhelmed and unable to pursue all that our universities have to offer in other parts of academia and personal development. They need to be involved in college politics, the arts, social events, sports, and personal quests. On the other hand, there must be some oversight so that they are not only party goers either. All need to find a balance during their university time that they can draw upon that for the rest of their working lives, which in so many cases is now a lifetime.

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