

## SIGMUND FREUD

by

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On the 6th May 1856 Sigmund FREUD was born. This was an important day for the whole world as it is given to very few to effect such a revolution in the spiritual life of mankind as he did.

Sigmund FREUD was born in Freiberg in Moravia and he therefore belonged in the territories of old Austria. Actually he spent the greater part of his life in Vienna.

With its differences of populations and races the old Habsburg Monarchy had many problems to solve and it was certainly a rich and productive field for the development of the psychology of the subconscious.

It is not surprising that Vienna and especially the intellectual Vienna of the Universities, refused recognition to FREUD and in fact still partly do so. A prophet is always unheard in his own country, especially when what he has to say is unpleasant as was to a great extent true in FREUD'S case.

FREUD was a medical doctor. At first he studied in Vienna, took his degree relatively late and then started research-work on the anatomy of the brain and physiology. As a result of these researches he was called to the Vienna University as lecturer on neuropathology in 1885.

Through his researches he came to the conclusion that however thoroughly he studied the brain it would not help him towards «an understanding of neurosis» and his main interest lay just in understanding the apparently incomprehensible life of the mind. He

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therefore transferred his studies from the body to the mind thus, from medicine in the stricter sense of the term to psychology. The fact that he took this step not only in the field of abstract theory but based on the evidence of actual cases brought the fact of the existence of the psyche into independent prominence. It is this which in the long run will probably be proved to be the greatest achievement of his life.

With Charcot in Paris and Bernheim in Nancy he studied neurotic cases where the soul had lost its balance although there is no recognisable organic reason. He thoroughly explored the question of hypnotism which was then still an occupation for those interested in «occultism».

FREUD used hypnosis himself at first but later he gave it up as a therapeutic instrument. Together with the Viennese doctor Josef BREUER, he then began to develop psycho-analysis proper. FREUD'S enemies like to exaggerate the part played by BREUER but actually he only gave the initial impulse. The whole gigantic building of the psycho-analytical system was then put together by FREUD and his pupils. The part played by other forerunners is also often exaggerated. One can rightly say that C.G. CARUS spoke of the unconscious mind before FREUD but FREUD is the discoverer of the law-abiding dynamics of the unconscious mind.

According to FREUD the unconscious mind is not a static «system of boxes» (which is how the psychologists of those days imagined the memory to be), but it has to carry the burdens of frustrated conflicts and repressed truths. Those truths in fact, which although «repressed» and «covered up», nevertheless, insist on the recognition of their existence and strive determinedly to arouse the attention of the mind. The so called «Oedipus-complex» constitutes one of these problems. Sexual ties with the parental part of opposite sex accompanied by jealous aggression against the parental part of the same sex oftenly arouse such covered psychical conflicts as «repressed truths». The «Oedipus complex» is one of the best known and most important discoveries of Sigmund FREUD.

FREUD not only roused interest in the pathological process in the strict sense of the word, but also for the apparently pointless

side-issues of the psyche. In fact he devoted his attention to just those aspects of the question and opened the doors to their solution. This led to the publication of his «Interpretation of dreams» in 1900. For years no appreciative reviewer was found for this work and in FREUD'S case recognition on any scale was slow in coming. In fact he was fought against with rare bitterness. Yet today his «Interpretation of dreams» is the work which generally speaking solves the meanings of dreams in a scientific manner.

In the psychology of the conscious mind the dream was accounted to be a more-or less tiresome and pointless product of the tired brain and it was not considered worth serious study. But in FREUD'S hands it became the road to the unconscious. The mis-spoken word too and the mis-written sentence, the mistakes and failures of daily life proved themselves to be full of meaning. In his «Psychopathology of everyday life» which appeared in 1901, he made these clear. In the same way he solved the problem of wit in his book «Wit and humour and their relationship with the subconscious» which appeared in 1905.

In 1902 FREUD was made professor in Vienna. A number of notable pupils collected round him.

In the case of a revolutionary movement such as psycho-analysis which had developed an unusually high level of spiritual dynamic power, it is only to be expected that it has to go through correspondingly difficult crises. Very talented pupils therefore, split away repeatedly and founded their own new schools of thought. The most important of them is certainly C.G. JUNG, who became known as the founder of analytic psychology. He had contributed a good deal to the original development of FREUD'S orthodox school, amongst other things the word «complex». Others who should be mentioned are Herbert SILBERER, Wilhelm STEKEL, Alfred ADLER, the founder of the «Individualpsychologie», and finally Otto RANK. JUNG and RANK pursued the deviations of psycho-analysis to the threshold of religious belief.

The defection of Otto RANK, his favourite pupil, hit FREUD hardest. It was to be expected that the defalcating pupils—in order to crystalise their own opinions— acted in a far more aggressive

manner against FREUD, who was their spiritual father, and attacked him far more vehemently than was necessary only then to stagnate themselves in a sort of «aggressive puperty». To-day, in the third generation, the co-ordinating factor is being sought and the general lines and fundamental principles emerge clearly and mutual understanding is improving.

The quasi-religious trend of orthodox psycho-analysis is beginning to crumble away whilst the scientific truths slowly crystallise and emerge.

It is certain that there is a great deal in FREUD which is outdated. For example, the primitive evolutionism which is typical of the Darwinian period. FREUD also finally landed in an existentialist pessimistical metaphysic according to which all life originates in death and strives to return there. (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips* 1920).

Contrary to the wide spread mistaken belief that FREUD taught the omnipotence of the sexual impulse, he maintained during practically all the years of his activity as a theoretician, the dialectic of the instincts. His last hypothesis is of the life-urge and the death-urge who struggle against each other whereby the death-urge finally proves itself to be the stronger in the end than is the life-urge.

The consequential behaviour following on the recognition of this fact would be heroic nihilism, —to fight for life although one knows that one must be defeated in the end. This attitude reminds, curiously enough, German mythology, rather than Jewish or Christian, both of whom teach the final victory of goodness and of life in contrast to the German mythology.

FREUD'S figure is therefore surrounded with much that is tragic. The greater scientific honours did not come to him during his life-time. He received the Goethe-prize for his unusually clean, clear style but he never received the Nobel-prize for his scientific work, although there were few scientists of his calibre. This shows how difficult it is even for well-disposed contemporaries to judge the quality and accomplishments of a man of their own generation.

Like many of his pupils, he emigrated in 1938 from Vienna. Many of his pupils received high honours, especially in the U.S.A. Through this, psycho-analysis won a position from which it could influence the natural and metaphysical sciences and this influence is still increasing.

The world of art has also been affected by psycho-analysis. Poets such as Graham GREENE and some of the modern schools of painting cannot be imagined without a background of the knowledge of the psycho-analysis of the subconscious. Sigmund FREUD died on September 23rd 1939 in London of cancer, after long and deep suffering.

It will be possible for a later generation to measure his greatness and his importance. He was one of the greatest figures which Austria has produced in the last decades.