

SIGMUND FREUD

His Personality, His Teaching, & His School

Fritz Wittels

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
FREUD



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
FREUD

Volume 7

SIGMUND FREUD

This page intentionally left blank

SIGMUND FREUD

His Personality, His Teaching, & His School

FRITZ WITTELS

**TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL**

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published in 1924

This edition first published in 2014
by Routledge
27 Church Road, Hove BN3 2FA

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1924 Fritz Wittels

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-415-83209-0 (Set)

eISBN: 978-1-315-85608-7 (Set)

ISBN: 978-0-415-71723-6 (Volume 7)

eISBN: 978-41-315-87143-1 (Volume 7)

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this book but points out that some imperfections from the original may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

This page intentionally left blank



Freud

Sigmund Freud

His Personality, His Teaching, & His School

By

Fritz Wittels

Translated from the German by
Eden and Cedar Paul



LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.1

First published in 1924

(All rights reserved)

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING

Il faut admirer en bloc !

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

I MADE Sigmund Freud's personal acquaintance in 1905, but I had been influenced by his writings for some time before that. In the summer of 1910 I had a personal difference with Freud, and left the Psychoanalytical Society. I consider, however, that during the years from 1905 to 1910 my relationships with this great man were sufficiently intimate to justify me in writing his biography. I have never ceased the study of psychoanalysis, which is a scientific method independent of its discoverer's personality. My own aloofness from Freud since 1910, my detachment from his overshadowing individuality, has perhaps been an advantage. Of unquestioning disciples he has more than enough; but I would fain be a critical witness.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
FREUD'S OPINION OF WITTELS' BIOGRAPHY	11
CHAPTER	
I. EARLY YEARS	15
II. CHARCOT	27
III. BREUER AND FREUD.	36
IV. ANXIETY NEUROSIS	46
V. DREAM INTERPRETATION	59
VI. REPRESSION AND TRANSFERENCE	85
VII. SLIPS, MISTAKES, AND BLUNDERS	98
VIII. EROS	105
IX. FREUD'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS	129
X. ALFRED ADLER	145
XI. THE CASTRATION COMPLEX	160
XII. CARL GUSTAV JUNG	176
XIII. NARCISSISM	197
XIV. WILHELM STEKEL	216
XV. FREUDIAN MECHANISMS	234
XVI. BIPOLARITY.	249
GLOSSARY	261
BIBLIOGRAPHY	272
INDEX	279

This page intentionally left blank

FREUD'S OPINION OF WITTELS' BIOGRAPHY

THE English translation, although substantially from the printed German original, contains a number of emendations made by the author at Freud's suggestion. Some of these relate to matters of fact, and others to matters of opinion. Shortly after the work was published, Wittels sent Freud a copy of it, and on December 18, 1923, Freud wrote Wittels a letter of acknowledgment from which, with Freud's express authorisation, the following extracts are here translated :

“ You have given me a Christmas present which is very largely occupied with my own personality. The failure to send a word of thanks for such a gift would be an act of rudeness only to be accounted for by very peculiar motives. Fortunately no such motives exist in this case. Your book is by no means hostile ; it is not unduly indiscreet ; and it manifests the serious interest in the topic which was to be anticipated in so able a writer as yourself.

“ I need hardly say that I neither expected nor desired the publication of such a book. It seems to

me that the public has no concern with my personality, and can learn nothing from an account of it, so long as my case (for manifold reasons) cannot be expounded without any reserves whatever. But you have thought otherwise. Your own detachment from me, which you deem an advantage, entails serious drawbacks none the less. You know too little of the object of study, and you have not been able to avoid the danger of straining the facts a little in your analytical endeavours. Moreover, I am inclined to think that your adoption of Stekel's standpoint, and the fact that you contemplate the object of study from his outlook, cannot but have impaired the accuracy of your discernment.

"In some respects, I think there are positive distortions, and I believe these to be the outcome of a preconceived notion of yours. You think that a great man must have such and such merits and defects, and must display certain extreme characteristics; and you hold that I belong to the category of great men. That is why you ascribe to me all sorts of qualities many of which are mutually conflicting. Much of general interest might be said anent this matter, but unfortunately your relationship to Stekel precludes further attempts on my part to clear up the misunderstanding.

"On the other hand, I am glad to acknowledge that your shrewdness has enabled you to detect

many things which are well known to myself. For instance, you are right in inferring that I have often been compelled to make detours when following my own path. You are right, too, in thinking that I have no use for other people's ideas when they are presented to me at an inopportune moment. (Still, as regards the latter point, I think you might have defended me from the accusation that I am repudiating ideas when I am merely unable for the nonce to pass judgment on them or to elaborate them.) But I am delighted to find that you do me full justice in the matter of my relationships with Adler. . . .

"I realise that you may have occasion to revise your text in view of a second edition. With an eye to this possibility, I enclose a list of suggested emendations. These are based on trustworthy data, and are quite independent of my own prepossessions. Some of them relate to matters of trifling importance, but some of them will perhaps lead you to reverse or modify certain inferences. The fact that I send you these corrections is a token that I value your work though I cannot wholly approve it."

This page intentionally left blank

SIGMUND FREUD

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY YEARS

SIGMUND FREUD was born in 1856, his birthplace being Freiberg, a small country town in the north of Moravia.¹ His mother was quite a young woman, and he was her first child. His father, who had been married before, was already a grandfather. Thus little Sigmund had a nephew, John, who was a year older than the uncle. Inasmuch as Freud's development was notably influenced by the conflicts between the two boys, this peculiar relationship is worth mentioning. German was the ordinary language of the domestic circle, but the child was also familiar with the sound of Slavic speech.

Like Goethe, Freud came into the world black of hue. But whereas in Goethe's case this was due to the cyanosis of impending suffocation, we learn from Freud that as far as he was concerned he was covered with such an abundant black down that his mother called him "a little blackamoor." The biographers of Goethe like to dwell on the paradox that this

¹ Most of the biographical details in the text are taken from Freud's *Die Traumdeutung*. For the editions, see Bibliography. My page references are to the second edition, 1909.

"Lucifer" came into the world dark-tinted. There would be as much, or as little, justification for regarding Freud's "darkness" at birth as symbolical of the part he was destined to play in the world, a part which to many has seemed satanic. He, himself, does not wholly deprecate the charge, seeing that the motto he has chosen for his book *Die Traumdeutung* is: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* (If I cannot influence the Gods of Heaven, I will stir up Acheron).

Late one evening, when I was reading Freud an essay, he suddenly jumped up, saying: "Let's see what old Goethe has to say about it," and took down a copy of the second part of *Faust*. Noticing the affectionate way in which he handled the volume, and his eagerness to hunt up a quotation which did not seem to me specially apposite, I realised that he stood in a peculiar relationship to Goethe. In *Die Traumdeutung*, immediately after his account of how he was born a little blackamoor, Freud writes (p. 243): "Birth and death, as in the dream of Goethe I had shortly before this . . ." In this way Freud brings the legend of his own birth into touch with the one Goethe relates in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. His journey to Paris, which was to exercise a decisive influence upon the remainder of his life, took place in the years 1885-6, precisely one hundred years after Goethe's Italian Journey. In this connexion, Freud's persistent yearning towards Italy, and especially towards Rome, is noteworthy.

We have excellent reason for assuming that Freud had a good conceit of himself, and an ardent longing to give practical proof that his favourable opinion was deserved. An old peasant woman had

told his mother that she was about to give birth to a great man. Subsequently, in Vienna, an itinerant fortune-teller informed Sigmund's parents that the boy was destined to become a minister of State—an incredible prospect, in the Austria of those days, for any one who was not of noble birth. Such prophecies are common enough. The remarkable feature in the case is that, forty years later, Freud should have dreamed of the childish trifle.¹ This indicates that the lad's ambition had been something quite out of the common.

When the little boy was three years old, the family removed to Leipzig. A year later, the Freuds settled in Vienna. Ever since the days of Maria Theresa, the capital of the sometime Austrian empire has exercised a strong attraction on the cultured section of the Moravian population. Sigmund's elder brother, or rather half-brother, went to live in England. The second family grew in numbers, and in Vienna was no longer so well off. For a long time the Freuds lived in Kaiser Josef Strasse, now renamed Heine Strasse. Freud tells us that the name Josef has always played a great part in his dreams, his view being that in dreams of emperors and kings these potentates symbolise the father. On the other hand Stekel, Freud's most distinguished pupil, considers that in such dreams there is condensed with the signification of the father an ideal of power and splendour. Since 1848, Joseph II has been regarded by the liberal bourgeoisie as the finest flower of the Habsburg dynasty; as an exemplar of wisdom, benevolence, progress, and devotion to duty. In reality, this emperor was a despot who paid lip-service

¹ *Traumdeutung*, p. 135.

to the ideals of the French enlightenment. His progressiveness was an ill-digested Voltairism, his benevolence was capricious, and his wisdom was a fable. We may, however, admit that he was devoted to what he believed to be his duty. In 1848, his statue was decorated by hanging the flag of liberty to one of the arms. His notion of freedom was embodied in the maxim: Everything for the people, nothing by the people.

Long residence, during the impressionable years of boyhood, in a street whose name carries such associations, cannot fail to have an influence! Freud has become an emperor, one around whom legends begin to accrete, who holds enlightened but absolute sway in his realm, and is animated by a rigid sense of duty.¹ He has become a despot who will not tolerate the slightest deviation from his doctrine; holds councils behind closed doors; and tries to ensure, by a sort of pragmatic sanction, that the body of psychoanalytical teaching shall remain an indivisible whole.

Freud attended the Sperl Gymnasium in Vienna, and throughout the eight years of his studies was always the leader of his class.² We rarely find that these model pupils attain distinction in adult life, but Freud was one of the exceptions. There are, in fact, two kinds of model pupils. Some of them are exemplary because they are docile, because they know nothing of the revolutionary stirrings of youth. They never waste their energies in protests against the educational authorities. Those of the other type resemble the youthful Lessing, of whom it was said

¹ For an instance of strict devotion to duty see *Traumdeutung*, p. 162.

² *Traumdeutung*, p. 109.

that he was one of the horses that need a double allowance of fodder. In Sigmund Freud's case, keen ambition was obviously the motive force, for his was certainly not one of the sheep-like natures. He has always been of a combative disposition, as shown in his early bickerings with the nephew who was his senior,¹ and by numerous incidents down to our own day. When he was fourteen years old, someone made him a present of Börne's Works, and he still possesses this book, more than fifty years later, as the only relic of the library of his school days.²

For a long time, Freud hesitated in his choice of a career between law and natural science. His skill as a dialectician, his eloquence, his interest in universal history and in humanism, seemed to mark him out for the study of the abstract sciences. Shortly before leaving the Gymnasium, he made up his mind to become a medical student, but he tells us that this choice was uncongenial.³ In another place⁴ we learn that Goethe once more influenced his decision. In class, Freud became acquainted with Goethe's "incomparably beautiful essay on Nature,"⁵ and he declares that this awakened in him an enthusiastic desire to become a doctor. The statement arouses the impression of being a screen-memory. I do not know what the real determinant was. Goethe studied law to begin with, and then natural science, though his main interest was always given to imaginative literature. Freud told Stekel (so I learn from the latter) that at one time he had an inclination to

¹ *Traumdeutung*, p. 259.

² *Sammlung kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*, vol. v, p. 144.
(In subsequent notes, this will be called *Sammlung*, for short.)

³ *Sammlung*, vol. iv, p. 4.

⁴ *Traumdeutung*, p. 270.

⁵ *Fragment über die Natur*. See Bibliography.

become a novelist, in order that he might be able to leave to posterity all that his patients had told him.

“*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*”

Freud declares to-day that medical knowledge is superfluous for the practice of psychoanalysis, and that his best pupils have been outside the ranks of the medical profession.¹

One who chooses natural science for his life occupation may make this choice because of a constitutional fondness for the study of natural phenomena, because of a longing to be perpetually examining them and admiring them. On the other hand, he may be one whose bent towards abstractions is so powerful that he is afraid of being mastered by it, and feels it necessary to study concrete science as a counterpoise. Certainly that is how it was with me. I became a medical student in order to keep my feet firmly planted on the solid ground of fact. I fancy Freud may have been influenced by similar motives. He studied assiduously and perseveringly in the school of facts.

Raphael would have become a great painter, even if he had been born without hands. In like manner, Freud would have become a great psychologist even though he had never studied medicine. The danger of psychoanalysis lies, however, in this, that it may lead those who practise it away from the world of concrete reality. Philosophers and men of letters may devote themselves to it; and may falsify it by the introduction of mystical, that is to say, suprasensual, ingredients. Psychoanalysis is still a rock on which the troubled waters of our

¹ I learn this from private information.

epoch are breaking; it is an invasion of reason into that which seems, but only seems, to be unreasonable. I do not know whether Freud is destined to make further notable discoveries. I am confident, however, that, despite some of the indiscretions of recent years, he retains unimpaired the critical spirit of the true man of science, and that this will enable him to safeguard psychoanalysis (even in its world-wide development) against a lapse into mysticism and scholasticism. There is no danger so long as he lives and retains his leadership. Freud's decision to study medicine, to study concrete science, has been of immense advantage to the world.

On leaving school, Freud went to England to visit his half-brother, who was quite twenty years older than himself. This journey expanded his outlooks greatly. In Austria he had never been able to escape the sense of inferiority which early affected him, as it does all Jews in German-speaking lands, and especially those who move in intellectual circles. In England, Freud renewed acquaintance with members of his family who had escaped this danger. Furthermore, conversations with his half-brother gave Sigmund a fuller and more affectionate understanding of his father. Thus the journey was important in that it put a term to some of those conflicts which none of us escape during adolescence.¹

Young Freud had no patrons. It was due to his talents and his remarkable diligence that he was not merely able to continue his studies with success, but soon began to play a notable part in the scientific

¹ Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens, ninth edition, 1923, pp. 264 et seq.

world. While still an undergraduate he became demonstrator under Ernst Brücke.

At that date, the medical faculty of the University of Vienna was at the climax of its fame, or had but just passed the climax. Brücke (ob. 1892) was professor of physiology from 1849 to 1890, and was one of the teachers who, in conjunction with Hyrtl and Rokitansky, established the theoretical foundations on which the great Viennese physicians were to build their practical successes. The scientific investigators of this epoch had an amazing competence for the observation and description of natural phenomena, and among them Brücke was preeminent.

What we regard as characteristically scientific is, not so much the brilliant flash of insight that leads to a discovery, as the work of methodical demonstration. The achievements of the investigator must be expounded in such a way that they can be tested by all who use the scientific method. Those who had worked under Brücke might subsequently become interested in fields remote from physiology, but they could never forget what they had learned about scientific method. Freud's training in this respect was of inestimable value to him, and its results distinguish him from many of his pupils. The memory of Brücke's "formidable blue eyes" ¹ may often have acted as a restraint when he was preparing to make too bold a leap in the world of subterranean investigation.

In Brücke's laboratory, Freud had to dissect rare fishes, whose simple structure could throw light on some of the problems of biology. Another of Brücke's multifarious interests at this epoch was the

¹ *Traumdeutung*, p 258.

study of the assonances of speech. Before his appointment to the professorial chair in Vienna, he had published a careful study of the structure of the eye, and had only just missed being the discoverer of the ophthalmoscope. He had noticed the way in which the black aperture of the pupil lights up when luminous rays are projected into it in the line of the observer's gaze, and he knew that this red reflex came from the retina. The book on the structure of the eye was published in 1849. The discovery of the ophthalmoscope, from which modern ophthalmology dates, was made in 1850, by Helmholtz in Heidelberg. The point which Brücke had missed was that a lens must be placed in front of the illuminated pupil in order to make the retina visible to the observer.

As luck would have it, Freud, too, was to come very near to an important ophthalmological discovery, and was just to miss it. In 1884, when he was assistant physician at the General Hospital, he procured from the Darmstadt firm of Merck a sample of cocaine, in order to study the properties of the drug. The effect of the coca plant as an invigorant, and its power of producing euphoria, were already known, but that the alkaloid extracted from coca leaves could anæsthetise the mucous membranes had not yet attracted attention. Freud had ceased working in Brücke's laboratory two years earlier, and was content to write for publication in Heitler's "*Zentralblatt für Therapie*" a report on cocaine, which was chiefly concerned with the history of the coca plant in Peru. Some experiments upon the internal use of the drug were also recorded, and references were made to the work of other investigators. Freud noted that the tongue and palate are benumbed after

drinking a solution of cocaine. The closing words of the essay ran as follows: "We may presume that this anæsthetising action of cocaine could be utilised in various ways."

The young surgeon, Karl Koller, one of Freud's colleagues, read this essay, betook himself to Stricker's Institute for Experimental Pathology, and remarked to Gustav Gärtner, Stricker's assistant: "I gather from what Freud writes that it ought to be possible to anæsthetise the eye with a solution of cocaine."

Koller and Gärtner at once made some experiments to ascertain whether this theory was correct—at first on frogs, rabbits, and dogs; subsequently instilling the solution into their own eyes. In the summer of 1884, Koller read a paper upon the new use of cocaine at the Ophthalmological Congress in Heidelberg, and the report of the discovery was cabled all over the world. A new era in operative ophthalmology had been inaugurated, and ere long the use of cocaine anæsthesia for minor operations found applications in all departments of surgery.

Robert Koch's first sight of the tubercle bacillus, an organism that is so minute but so terrible a scourge of humanity; Karl Koller's discovery that when he had instilled a drop or two of cocaine solution into his eye, the cornea had become insensitive to the prick of a needle; Röntgen's first sight of the bones of his own hand; Galvani's experiments on the muscles of the frog's leg; Pythagoras' measurements of the squares on the sides of a right-angled triangle—all these were stepping-stones established in the ocean of error and darkness, destined in due time to join up into a bridge leading to the shore of knowledge. The aim of natural science and its

charm are to be found in such researches. It is hard luck for an investigator to come so near to great discoveries as Brücke did in 1849, and Freud in 1884, without reaching the goal.

Freud pondered long in the endeavour to account for his failure. As late as 1906, when I was attending his lectures, this cocaine incident was still a good deal in his mind. Koller, said Freud, had had, as it were, a fixed idea that he would make an ophthalmological discovery, and had endeavoured to apply to the ophthalmological field all that he heard and all that he read. That was why Koller, though not a man of any marked ability, had rushed off to drop some cocaine solution into his eye the instant he had read Freud's essay. Now I do not deny for a moment that Koller, whose name has not been noted for any other researches, cannot be compared with Freud in point of genius. Nevertheless, so mechanical an explanation of a discovery seems to me inadequate. Koller did not become an ophthalmologist until after his achievement. Before that, his aim had been to study general surgery under Albert. Freud's explanation does not explain the mystery of a creative act.

In the eighties, Freud followed in the footsteps of Theodor Meynert, the renowned psychiatrist and cerebral anatomist. He worked in the children's clinic of Max Kassowitz, who subsequently acquired fame as a biologist, and as a critic of some of Darwin's teachings. Traces of Kassowitz' views concerning the upbuilding and disintegration of protoplasm are to be found in Freud's *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, published in 1920. Kassowitz had a keen, speculative intelligence, and he took delight in running atilt