

FREUD AND BEYOND

READING RESPONSE (*Luís Zanforlin*)

Psychoanalysis And Literature

Sigmund Freud was a medical graduate with a particular curiosity to understand the human mind and its “neurological conditions.” At that time, the understanding of the human brain was very rudimentary and medicine had just recently started to understand its structural functions. Freud’s interest was inspired by the works of famous neurologists *Jean-Martin Charcot* and *Hippolyte Bernheim* whom demonstrated conditions that had physical manifestations motivated by neurological sources. For example “glove anaesthesia,” the lack of feeling in the hand is caused by thought disorder instead of a physical disability.

Throughout his life, Freud published a number of studies on the topic of the mind some of which gave birth to the current field of psychoanalysis. For example: “Studies On Hysteria” (1895), “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900) “The Theory of Sexuality” (1905) and “Civilization and Its Discontents” (1930). These publications bared ideas on how thoughts and feelings are created, our sexuality’s role on our neurological conditions, the topography of our mind among many other pioneering ideas.

It all started with his conjoined essay written with **Josef Breuer**, “A Preliminary Communication,” the study suggested Hysteria was a consequence of feelings associated with imprisoned memories, that generated a conflict in the state of mind. Their theories later diverged launching Freud into a number of experiments with hypnosis, free association and eventually Psychoanalysis.

“From Topography To Structure”

One of Freud’s critical revolutionary ideas was his attempt to understand how thoughts interact with the mind. That attempt later became the topographical model of the mind. He separated it into three different regions: the *conscious*, which represents all of the current thoughts and feelings, someone have; the *preconscious*, which represents all thoughts and feelings that can be brought to consciousness at will; and the *unconscious*, which represents though and feelings that are inaccessible to the individual. Freud attempted using hypnosis and free association in order to access deeper parts of the Topographic model.

Although brilliant, the topographic model was very vague and it didn’t explain what mechanisms stopped ideas from being able to travel out of the unconscious and so in the early 1920’s he developed a **structural model** of the mind which contained three components of the self: The *id*, which relates to all the instinctual impulses and pleasure wishes; the *ego*, which suppresses all of the radical raw impulses the id generates; and the *superego*, which judges impulses with the person’s moral code and values often acquired from their parents during their childhood.

“Oedipus Complex”

Perhaps Freud’s publication on the *Oedipus complex* is his most controversial study due to its infantile incest nature. Prior to it, Freud proposed that during the human development babies have three stages of bodily pleasure exploration: the **oral phase**, in which babies explore pleasure through their mouths; the **anal phase**, in which they explore pleasure and disgust through their anuses; and the **genital phase**, when babies pleasure impulses are based on their genitals. The genital phase happens around the

age of six and it is when the *Oedipus complex* takes place. According to Freud during the genital phase the infant develops a genital sexual impulse towards the parent of the opposite sex. Consequently the same sex parent becomes a rival due to their sexual benefits towards their opposite sex parent. This aversion towards the same sex parent generated a *castration anxiety* in which a male child wishes to eliminate the threat from their father by removing their genitalia as well as fearing their genitalia is in danger of castration. Freud also states that the characteristics of a child's Oedipus complex depends on the development of their earlier sexual phases. Babies with intense oral obsession develop "dependency issues" and babies with strong anal obsession develop domination complexes.

It isn't hard to picture the reasons Sigmund Freud's publications were considered controversial. His publications rest on subjects that were and still are considered taboo. Stating that the "disturbing" ideas of childhood sexuality have a strong consequence defining the personality of all grown civilized adults allows us to further develop the study of the psych free from wishful thinking and fear of controversy.

Citation:

Mitchell, Stephen A, and Margaret J. Black. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*. New York: BasicBooks, 1995. 01-22 Print

Cherry, Kendra. "Books by Sigmund Freud." *About Health*. About.com, 15 Dec. 2014. Web. 30 Jan. 2016. <<http://psychology.about.com/od/sigmundfreud/tp/books-by-sigmund-freud.htm>>.