

## FREUD

The life and work of Sigmund Freud continue to fascinate general and professional readers alike. Joel Whitebook here presents the first major biography of Freud since the last century, taking into account recent developments in psychoanalytic theory and practice, gender studies, philosophy, cultural theory, and more. Offering a radically new portrait of the creator of psychoanalysis, this book explores the man in all his complexity alongside an interpretation of his theories that cuts through the stereotypes that surround him. The development of Freud's thinking is addressed not only in the context of his personal life, but also in that of society and culture at large, while the impact of his thinking on subsequent issues of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and social theory is fully examined. Whitebook demonstrates that declarations of Freud's obsolescence are premature, and, with his clear and engaging style, brings this vivid figure to life in a compelling and readable fashion.

Joel Whitebook is a philosopher and psychoanalyst who maintained a private practice in New York City for twenty-five years. He is currently in the faculty of the Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research and Director of the University's Psychoanalytic Studies Program. He is the author of *Perversion and Utopia* (1995) and numerous articles.

# Freud

## An Intellectual Biography

*Joel Whitebook*  
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*For Charlie*

I feel inclined to object to the emphasis you put on the element of petit bourgeois correctness in my person. The fellow is actually somewhat more complicated.

Freud to Stefan Zweig

The laborious compilations of the student of civilization provide convincing evidence that originally the genitals were the pride and hope of living beings; they were worshipped as gods and transmitted the divine nature of their functions to all newly learned human activities. As a result of the sublimation of their basic nature there arose innumerable divinities; and at the same time when the connection between official religions and sexual activity was already hidden from general consciousness, secret cults devoted themselves to keeping it alive among a number of initiates. In the course of cultural development so much of the divine and sacred was ultimately extracted that the exhausted remnant fell into contempt.

Sigmund Freud,  
*Leonardo*

Stupidity is a scar. It can relate to one faculty among many or to them all, practical and mental. Every partial stupidity in a human being marks a spot where the awakening play of muscles has been inhibited instead of fostered. With the inhibition, the vain repetitions of unorganized, awkward attempts originally begin. The child's endless questions are already a sign of a secret pain, a serious question to which it has found no answer and which it cannot frame in its proper form . . . At the point where its impulse has been blocked a scar can easily be left behind, a slight callous where the surface is numb. Such scars lead to deformations. They can produce "characters," hard and capable; they can produce stupidity, in the form of deficiency symptoms, blindness, or impotence, if they merely stagnate, or in the form of malice, spite, and fanaticism, if they turn cancerous within . . . Like the genera within the series of fauna, the intellectual gradations within the human species, indeed, the blind spots within the same individual, mark the points where hope has come to a halt and in the ossification bear witness to what holds all living things in thrall.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno,  
*Dialectic of enlightenment*

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