What Freud Really Meant

Through an exacting yet accessible reconstruction of eleven of Freud's essential theoretical writings, Susan Sugarman demonstrates that the traditionally received Freud is the diametric opposite of the one evident in the pages of his own works. Whereas Freud's theory of the mind is typically conceived as a catalogue of uninfluenced concepts and crude reductionism – for instance that we are nothing but our infantile origins or sexual and aggressive instincts – it emerges here as an organic whole built from first principles and developing in sophistication over time. Sugarman's exciting interpretation, tracking Freud's texts in the order in which he wrote them, grounds his claims in the reasoning that led to them and reveals their real intent. This fresh reading will appeal to specialists and students across a variety of disciplines.

Susan Sugarman, Professor of Psychology at Princeton University, came to the study of Freud as a developmental psychologist who found in Freud's works a striking theory of how the mind develops and a singularly incisive method of argument. She transitioned from studying children in their own right to trying to understand the adult mind by looking for the child within it. A former Fulbright scholar and Guggenheim fellow, she is the author of four other books, including Piaget's Construction of the Child's Reality and Freud on the Psychology of Ordinary Mental Life.
For Stephen and Abby
# Contents

Acknowledgments  

Introduction 1  

1 Freud on psychoanalysis: *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1909a) 4  
   - The sense of symptoms and their implications for unconscious mentation 5  
   - The psychodynamic perspective on psychopathology 6  
   - Therapeutic technique 7  
   - The development of the sexual function and the origin of neurosis 9  
   - Psychological health 12  

2 The pleasure and reality principles: “Formulations regarding two principles in mental functioning” (1911); “The psychology of the dream-processes” from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) 15  
   - The principles 16  
   - Sequelae of the reality principle 19  

3 Ambivalence and the origin of the civilized mind: “Taboo and emotional ambivalence” from *Totem and Taboo* (1913b) 27  
   - Taboos as conventionally understood 28  
   - Taboo as illuminated by psychoanalysis 29  
   - Application of the analogy between neurosis and taboo 31  
   - Conscience: an advance in the mind 36
## CONTENTS

   Narcissism defined 40
   Three windows on narcissism 42
   Narcissism and the “ego-ideal” 43
   Narcissism and self-regard 44

5  The impetus to the mind: “Instincts and their vicissitudes” [1915a] 46
   Instinct defined 47
   The impact of instincts 49
   Types of instincts 50
   The vicissitudes of instincts 51

6  The possibility of repression: “Repression” [1915b];
   “Negation” [1925a] 62
   “Repression” [1915b] 63
   A conscious circumventing of repression: “Negation” [1925a] 70

7  The unconscious and the structure of the mind:
   “The unconscious” [1915c] 73
   Justification for the unconscious 74
   Two kinds of non-conscious mentation 75
   Unconscious emotion 76
   The mechanics of repression 78
   Distinguishing characteristics of the conscious and unconscious 80
   Points of contact between the conscious and unconscious 84

8  Beyond the pleasure principle: Beyond the Pleasure Principle [1920] 87
   The repetition compulsion 88
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A new architecture of the mind: <em>The Ego and the Id</em></td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A new structural taxonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Id and ego</td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The superego</td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The life and death instincts revisited</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The ego’s interdependent relations</td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pleasure revised: “An economic problem in masochism”</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The problem</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varieties of masochism</td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggression and masochism</td>
<td></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Civilization, morality, and the pursuit of pleasure:</td>
<td></td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Civilization and its Discontents</em></td>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The pursuit of happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civilization and its demands on the psyche</td>
<td></td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The origins and development of civilization</td>
<td></td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The doctrine of universal love and the inclination to aggression</td>
<td></td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aggression and the theory of instincts</td>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The role of guilt in the inhibition of aggression 141
Guilt, individuals, and civilization 145

Epilogue: What Freud really meant 150
On the priority of the pleasure principle 152
On instincts as the motivational basis of mental life 155
On origins and development 165
Freud’s theory: a consolidation 173

References 178
Index 182
Acknowledgments

What Freud Really Meant grew out of over two decades of my teaching Freud’s theory to Princeton University students, whom I thank for their wisdom, open-mindedness, and spirit of adventure. A grant from Princeton generously supported the preparation of the manuscript. Cindy Hyden offered invaluable editorial feedback throughout the drafting process, moving seamlessly between naïve observer searching for clarity and seasoned sleuth ferreting out the merest incongruity. Hetty Marx, Carrie Parkinson, and the staff at Cambridge guided the book to fruition with thoughtfulness and care. To all a heartfelt thank you.