

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

Columbia University, New York



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-82904-5 — Freud
Joel Whitebook
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108829045

DOI: 10.1017/9781139025119

© Joel Whitebook 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Paperback edition first published 2020

Reprinted 2020

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

ISBN 978-0-521-86418-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-82904-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-108-82904-5 — Freud
Joel Whitebook
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

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

Contents

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| | <i>Acknowledgments</i> | xi |
| | Introduction | 1 |
| 1 | Wandering Jews: From Galicia to Vienna | 17 |
| 2 | Freud's <i>Bildung</i> | 57 |
| 3 | Science as Vocation | 85 |
| 4 | Starting Out in Vienna | 121 |
| 5 | A Theoretical Excursus | 159 |
| 6 | "Dear Magician" | 171 |
| 7 | Becoming the First Psychoanalyst | 198 |
| 8 | Jung and the Counter-Enlightenment | 234 |
| 9 | Exorcising the " <i>Odium Jungian</i> " | 267 |
| 10 | "What Is Painful May None the Less Be Real": Loss, Mourning, and <i>Ananke</i> | 313 |
| 11 | Making Sense of the Death Instinct | 343 |
| 12 | Leaving Heaven to the Angels and the Sparrows: Freud's Critique of Religion | 377 |
| 13 | Late Freud and the Early Mother | 407 |
| | <i>Bibliography</i> | 455 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 471 |

Acknowledgments

While I have been working on this biography for the past ten years, I have been engaged with the questions addressed in it for the better part of three decades. I would therefore like to thank not only those friends and colleagues who have made a direct contribution to the current work, but also those – several of whom are no longer with us – who have contributed to my overall theoretical development during that period. They are Debbie Bookchin, Cornelius Castoriadis, Peter Dews, Stathis Gourgouris, Axel Honneth, Martin Jay, Joyce McDougall, Fred Pine, Christine Pries, Martin Saar, Inge Scholz-Strasser, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, Marcela Tovar, Marvin Wasserman, Albrecht Wellmer, Shoshana Yovel, and Yirmiyahu Yovel.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to those colleagues who took time from their demanding schedules to read different versions of my manuscript either in whole or in part: Richard Armstrong, Richard J. Bernstein, Werner Bohleber, Raymond Geuss, Marsha Hewitt, Kevin Kelly, and Robert Paul.

I have presented my work-in-progress in various venues over the past decade, and although the colleagues who provided me with valuable feedback are too numerous to cite, I would like to thank them for their contributions to the formulation of my position.

Then of course there have been my students – both at the New School for Social Research and at Columbia University. Out of a combination of an Oedipal desire to bring down their professor and genuine intellectual passion, they have regularly plied me with challenging questions that have pushed me to develop and articulate my thinking.

The members of two groups of colleagues must also be mentioned. The first are the analysts and academics who participated in the University Seminar on Psychoanalytic Studies that I chaired at Columbia for seven years. The stalwarts who hung in and struggled with *Moses and*

Monotheism for an entire academic year were especially helpful in helping me try to make sense of that baffling text. The second are the members of my CAPS (Center for Advanced Psychoanalytic Studies) group that meets at Princeton twice a year. As seasoned clinicians, they brought an essential extra-theoretical dimension to their discussions of the work I presented to them.

Susanna Margolis is an experienced editor who stepped in at a late stage of the project and, with her intelligence and skill, helped me bring it to completion. I was grateful to find her, for in a world of blogs and tweets Susanna is an exception: she still takes writing seriously. I would also like to thank Ariel Merkel for the steadfast editorial assistance she has provided me for many years.

Finally, it is difficult to express the debt of gratitude I owe to Hilary Gaskin, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for her patience and the confidence she displayed in my work over the past decade.