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## **FREUD (1856-1939)**

Sigmund Freud was born of Jewish parentage in Austria and studied medicine at Vienna, where he worked as a neurologist at the general hospital from 1882. His first significant work was with Josef Breuer (1842-1925) in the treatment of hysteria via reminiscences under hypnosis. He moved to Paris in 1885 where he shifted his interest to psychopathology. On returning to Vienna, he established conversational 'free association' as an alternative to hypnosis for recovering repressed memories. Freud broke with Breuer in 1897 and went on to develop further his own views on psychoanalysis and the importance of infantile sexuality. In 1900 he published *Die Traumdeutung (The Interpretation of Dreams)* which argued that dreams were the product of repressed desires, akin to neuroses. His work, including *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) and *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) met with great controversy and widespread incomprehension. In 1910 he founded the international Psychoanalytical Association with Carl Jung, its first president. Not many years later, Freud broke with Jung, as he had with Breuer before. After World War I he went on to produce his theories of the divided mind in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1919-20)* and *Ego and Id (1923)*, identifying a primitive 'id' and a socialised 'super-ego' exerting sway over an embattled 'ego'. For Freud, a well-balanced ego is fundamental to healthy mental life, and a dominance of the ego by the id leads to psychosis and by the superego results in neurosis. The London psychoanalytic society was founded in 1913 by Ernest Jones, but none of Freud's works was translated into English until 1915. By the 1920s, most British intellectuals were familiar, if only at second-hand, with Freudian concepts and terminology.

By the end of the nineteenth century, religion was in decline for a number of reasons. Science had in many ways dismantled the certainties of previous ages. Darwinism had shaken people's faith in the Book of Genesis or in a divine creator, and the churches were ceasing to perform a therapeutic role in helping individuals to cope with life's crises. According to one critic:

The starting point of Modernism is the crisis of belief that pervades twentieth century western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and the shattering of cultural symbols and norms. At the centre of this crisis were the new technologies of science, the epistemology of logical positivism, and the relativism of functionalist thought – in short, major aspects of the philosophical perspectives that Freud embodied. (Friedman 1981: 97)

Freud is the one figure who all reviews of Modernism privilege, and yet his work's impact has to be understood within the general increased level of inquiry at the turn of the century into the workings of the mind and its relation to society by, among others, Carl Jung (1875-1961), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), William James (1842-1910), C. S. Peirce (1839-1914), J. W Dunne (1875-1949) and Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). The start of the new century is marked by a hunger for interpretation, and an urge to decode societies, minds and personalities.

Apart from Freud, an important figure in discussions of Modernism's borrowing from psychology and philosophy is the French philosopher Henri Bergson. In *Time and Free Will* (1889), Bergson maintained that facts and matter, which are the objects of discursive reason, are only the outer surface that has to be penetrated by *intuition* in order to achieve a *vision in depth of reality*. Bergson thought that 'reality' was characterised by the different experience of time in the mind from the linear, regular beats of clock-time which measure all experience by the same gradations. Bergson argued that psychological time was measured by *duration*, defined as the varying speed at which the mind apprehends the length of experiences according to their different intensities, contents and meanings for each individual. His work changed the way many Modernists represented time in fiction. For example, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), whose working title had been 'The Hours', a few pages are frequently given to the discussion of thoughts dwelt upon by a character while only a few seconds of common clock-time elapse (see appendix to Easthope 1991).

Also relevant to any discussion of Woolf's mature fiction is the fact that, when Bergson distinguished between chronological time and what he called 'duration', he did so by arguing that chronological time is the time of history (hours, minutes and seconds) while duration encompasses those times in a life which are significant to an individual, and which are necessarily different for each individual. If you are asked to talk about your own life, the time that matters to you is to do with events in your growing up or subsequent achievements and crises: in short, experiences which have turned you into the person you are. You may have several significant moments in your life which matter to you and the backdrop of clock-time is irrelevant. As Proust famously noted, 'Reality takes shape in the memory alone.' Therefore, because individuals order reality differently from external time, fiction for the Modernists had to represent the individual's actual experience, as with John Dowell's not chronologically but subjectively ordered meandering narrative in *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939). As T S. Eliot put it in *The Waste Land*, mental life is composed of 'memory' and 'desire': the past and the future organised in the individual mind in the present. Chronology is a continuum our bodies unavoidably move through but our minds are not held in a linear, one-dimensional universe except in as much as they are embodied. Bergson's *Time and Free Will* was enormously influential, impinging on the work of writers such as Woolf and Joyce, and underpinning Wyndham Lewis's massive *Time and Western Man* (1927). Lewis, who was also influenced by Nietzsche, opposed the idea of any kind of continuity to time, seeing it instead as fragmented and people as inhabiting time only in memory and projection.

For many Modernists, it is the clock, which regulates and parcels out time, that is to blame for the tyranny of space over the psychological flow of time in the mind. It is of course only in the mind that the past is preserved, and Bergson, like many others, argued that nothing was forgotten: all was stored in the mind even if it was not brought to the surface. Understandably, this new conception of the world led to the use of different techniques in art, such as the abrupt beginning and open-ended conclusion to many Modernist novels. Bergson's conviction that experience is understood by intuition rather than rational reflection combined with Freud's belief that past events shape the psyche, resulted in the view that reality only exists in subjective apprehensions becoming widespread in artistic circles.

What Bergson did for ideas about the mind's understanding or ignorance of time, Freud did for ideas of the mind's awareness of its own functioning. Freud's theories influenced the modern artist as much as any other's; he began publishing on psychoanalysis in 1895 and wrote his first influential paper on human sexuality in 1898, which was followed by *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. With the publication of Freud's work, it became clear to many writers that there wasn't a unitary normative self to which each of us might conform, and many Modernists were sufficiently influenced by advances in psychology to change the way they represented human character. For Lawrence, Woolf, Joyce and others, the self was not fixed and stable but evolving, fluid, discontinuous and fragmented. Where Marx had seen religion as a numbing drug, psychoanalysis offered an explanation and diagnosis of the individual and also of the 'modern condition' that came to substitute for religion, particularly for many artists.

In literature after Freud, many writers felt it was no longer sufficient to present the outsides of personalities and the surfaces of minds, as predominated in realist fiction; instead, the writer needed to explore hidden drives and desires, to deal in what Henry James called 'psychological realism'. For example, according to the editors of Freud's works in English, his 'most fundamental' theory was the Principle of Constancy, that the mind attempts to keep constant the quantity of emotion (or affect) within it, which is to say that the individual feels a need to discharge emotions, or, in other words, to express their feelings. In line with this, in many Modernist novels the inability to purge the mind of particular strong feelings results in madness, murder and pathological behaviour. From another angle, the Principle of Constancy is evident in the extract from Beckett studied in the Introduction. I mentioned that one of Beckett's major concerns was with the idea that the amount of suffering and of desire in the world is always the same. He described this as the constancy of 'the quantum of wantum', a philosophical notion that finds a psychological counterpart in Freud's belief that the quantity of, not energy or suffering, but feelings is constant as the individual strives to keep it to a minimum. Freud's interest in language, not least in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), is particularly well complemented by the use of puns and wordplay in the Irish Modernists such as Beckett, Joyce and Flann O'Brien.

Freud's mapping of the unconscious also seemed to vindicate art's concern with symbolism and contingency; psychoanalysis (a term coined in 1896), both an art and a science, now seemed to suggest that life is full of hidden meanings and, for the conscious mind, haphazard events. This had a great effect, for example, on W B. Yeats, who developed a range of mythopoeic symbols, which he worked up into a system described in *A Vision* (1925). Similarly, there are obvious connections between Freud's 'free association' and the Modernist novelists' associative technique of 'stream of consciousness', most linked with Joyce but coined by the philosopher brother of Henry William James; in 'Principles of Psychology' (1890), James writes that consciousness 'is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. ... Let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness.'

Freud's use of therapy in which the patient's mind is allowed freely to associate ideas in order to uncover insights is reflected in many writers' interest in the novel as (a representation of) 'talking-cure', as in Dostoevsky's confessional first-person novels, like *Notes from Underground*, or Ford's *The Good Soldier*, in which Dowell says his mind is 'circling in a weary baffled space of pain' and so he has embarked upon a painful but cathartic monologue. Dowell

says that the purpose of telling the story is 'to get it out of his head', as though he could transfer his distress onto the page. He imagines that he is talking to a silent listener in a domestic environment and as such he seems to take on the role of a patient unburdening to a therapist. Hence his constant plea to the reader to 'sort it out' for him. Also, at one point Dowell says: 'I don't know that analysis of my own psychology matters at all to this story' (99), and yet the reader soon divines that this matters more than anything else. Dowell goes on to say that while his psychology doesn't matter, he thinks he has at least given enough of it to anyone who believes that it does, placing the reader firmly in the position of psychological as well as textual decoder. The role of the reader as interpreter of the manifest matter of the novel beneath which lies latent content has often been compared to Freudian dream analysis. In fact, the language of psychotherapy and literary criticism share, broadly speaking, many approaches and terms in common, not least 'analysis', and literature and psychoanalysis are almost unique and probably equally vigorous in their quest for insights into mental life.

This is not to say that many Modernists were directly influenced by Freud's writing, but that commonalities are easy to plot because so many writers and thinkers were keen to explore their own and their characters' psychological recesses. Freudian theory can easily be applied to Joyce's *Ulysses*, Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* or Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*; not because these authors were translating Freud's theories into art. Joyce was damning of Freud, and, for his part, Lawrence, despite the obvious Oedipal entanglement of *Sons and Lovers* and his fascination with sexuality, avoided following Freud and was openly hostile to many of Freud's theories, looking instead to the work of Haeckel. Consequently, Lawrence's *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) can be more profitably read for its illumination of Lawrence's work than Freud's. Resonances between Freud and these writers exist because all of them shared the widespread contemporary interest in psychical states and psychological motivations.

Freud was able to convince himself that his observations revealed universal conditions when he was able to observe neurotic symptoms in all people. His belief that every individual developed an unconscious which would affect their behaviour, to the extent suggested by his 1901 book *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, was echoed in the intense interest the Modernists took in the drives, obsessions and compulsions motivating ordinary people. After his theory of the conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious, Freud's second tripartite map of the mind from 1923 postulated three agencies: a wilful, primal id, a socialised, prohibitive superego and a part-conscious, part-unconscious rationalising ego in the middle; and this also finds numerous parallels in the tense confrontations between passion and convention in Modernist novels. With the advent of psychoanalysis, among other new ideas, the theological search for God had been replaced by the epistemological quest for self-knowledge; enlightenment was not to be found in Christianity or in society but in the self, in individual subjective consciousness.