# "Freud"

Institute No Institute History Panel (February 2016)

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A premise of today's meeting is that "becoming a psychoanalyst is founded upon a subjective transformation that occurs in a personal analysis." If we take this as our starting point in examining the life of Sigmund Freud, we can be assured that he was subjectively transformed, but not through personal analysis as we think of it today. This paper, the first of four in an attempt to orient today's program in the history of psychoanalysis takes up the questions of "Institute No Institute" by looking at two distinct periods in Freud's life and understanding them through Freud's writings, as opposed to relying mostly on secondary sources. This choice was informed by reviewing much of the secondary literature and observing the attempts of Freud's biographers, acolytes, and critics to interpret their subject's participation in events as proof of his beliefs. In fact, Freud's expressed views themselves do not provide much clarity on the nuanced questions of training before us, but this period of time provides relevant clues.

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The general period I have included in this history is the three decades beginning with Freud's "splendid isolation" of the late 1890s. Freud borrowed the phrase, "splendid isolation" from Lord George Goschen, First Lord of the British Admiralty from 1871-1874, who himself adapted the phrase from a Canadian of lesser importance to describe British foreign policy under Disraeli (Liberal and Foreign Policy, 1905). Freud's so-called isolation was not exactly solitude, but it was a time of transition for him, marked by many trips to Bavaria, and an extensive correspondence with Wilhelm Fleiss. Freud was alone, but not alone in the sense of being isolated from his influences, but in the sense that he was outside of pre-established groups. Freud described this time, beginning in 1894, as highly generative: "I did not have to read any publications, nor listen to any ill-informed opponents; I was not subject to influence from any quarter; there was nothing to hustle me. I learnt to restrain speculative tendencies and to follow the unforgotten advice of my master, Charcot: to look at the same things again and again until they themselves begin to speak" (Freud, 1914/1957).

By 1899, Freud had completed the major work for "On the Interpretation of Dreams" and important friendships, including that with Fleiss, encouraged Freud to develop his thoughts further. By the time Freud was ready to emerge from his so-called isolation, he found "a group of men in search of new ideas and of a leader" and a leader in Freud, who Hermann Nunberg described as "a lonely man who had made important new discoveries and wished to share them with others" (Nunberg, 1962, p.

xxii). This group of men, originally Alfred Adler, Max Kahane, Rudolph Reitler, and Wilhelm Stekel began meeting in Freud's apartment to discuss their work and soon theirs was a heterogeneous group of academics, physicians, writers, and others. Six years later, in 1908, the original five men, along with a few others, organized the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, a group which grew arithmetically until the intrusion of Nazism into Viennese life 30 years later. In April of the same year, at Ernest Jones's suggestion, a first international congress for psychoanalysis was convened in Salzburg. It was here that Freud enthralled his audience with a presentation of the case of the Rat Man, a lawyer whose obsessional neuroses provoked the crowd to ask Freud for four hours of discussion, three more than planned. It was around that same time that the *Jahrbuch* was developed as an international journal for psychoanalysis and it was at that meeting that the idea of an International Association was developed into an actionable plan.

The question of a future of this "human study" called psychoanalysis always depended on how it was defined as a theory, a practice, and, more tendentiously, as a profession. Writing in 1910, Freud explained: "It is not enough, therefore, for a physician to know a few of the findings of psycho-analysis; he must also have familiarized himself with its technique if he wishes his medical procedure to be guided by a psycho-analytic point of view. This technique cannot yet be learnt from books, and it certainly cannot be discovered independently without great sacrifices of time, labour

and success. Like other medical techniques, it is to be learnt from those who are already proficient in it" (Freud, 1910/1957, p. 226). By way of explaining how this learning would take place, Freud went on, writing: "In the spring of 1910 we founded an International Psycho-Analytical Association, to which its members declare their adherence by the publication of their names, in order to be able to repudiate responsibility for what is done by those who do not belong to us and yet call their medical procedure 'psycho-analysis'." (Ibid.) Much has been written about Freud's relationships with people he later came to judge as "wild" psychoanalysts. In short, wild analysts privileged "tact" over the established "technical rules," and the haziness of this definition provided enough flexibility for the term "wild" to be used to describe any prominent analyst who differed significantly with the state of the science for the purposes of excluding such an undesirable. But lest we overvalue a sense of Freud as paranoid or megalomaniacal, from which he suffered some, he went on to qualify his remarks, referencing an earlier cited case: "In the case of the lady whose complaint against her physician we have heard, I should say that, despite everything, the 'wild' psychoanalyst did more for her than some highly respected authority who might have told her she was suffering from a 'vasomotor neurosis'. He forced her attention to the real cause of her trouble, or in that direction, and in spite of all her opposition this intervention of his cannot be without some favourable results. But he has done himself harm and helped to intensify the prejudices which patients feel, owing to their natural

affective resistances, against the methods of psycho-analysis. And this can be avoided… For as a matter of fact 'wild' analysts of this kind do more harm to the cause of psycho-analysis than to individual patients" [Ibid., pp. 226-227]. Thus, as early as 1910, Freud's writing contained a tension about the nature of those psychoanalysts who were "wild" enough to be excluded from the IPA, but who were nevertheless psychoanalysts. Conversely, Freud saw these enfants terribles as threatening the reputation of the field, and the IPA was formed with the sole purpose of keeping so-called wild analysts out.

Therefore, and unsurprisingly, Freud went on to recall in his 1914 paper, "On the history of the psycho-analytic movement," that the move to create the International Psycho-analytical Association was precisely to have a group vested with the authority "to declare: 'All this nonsense is nothing to do with analysis; this is not psycho-analysi.'" (Freud, 1914/1957, p. 43). The IPA, explicitly defined in the negative, then had to take up the positive of their definition, in other words to say what psychoanalysis is. For this, we can refer to Freud in 1914 and 1923. In the former paper, "On the history of the psychoanalytic movement," Freud argued broadly that psychoanalysis is in practice when the practitioner recognizes the existence of transference and resistance as basic experiences no matter which conclusions are being drawn (Ibid., p. 33). The Freud of "The Ego and the Id" was more specific, where being a psychoanalyst meant believing in the primacy of unconscious processes, a

certain view of sexuality, and the Oedipus complex constituting the core of psychoanalysis (Thomä, 2004, p. 217). Indeed, the question of a sufficient, mutually-acceptable definition of psychoanalysis has become more controversial over time.

The issue of keeping psychoanalysis safe from the wild ones was first formally declared by Hermann Nunberg at the 1918 IPA conference in Budapest, reading from notes reviewed and endorsed by Freud. Nunberg argued for a personal analysis as a necessary criterion for becoming an analyst. This criterion was further developed in a 1922 report by Max Eitingon, director of the famous Berlin Polyclinic, for which Freud authored a preface in 1923. In his preface, Freud praised the free treatment offered by the clinic and underscored the importance of properly trained analysts "whose activity must be regarded as the sole possible protection against injury to patients by ignorant and unqualified persons, whether they are laymen or doctors" (Freud, 1923/1961, p. 285).

In this brief history, I elected not to presume Freud's beliefs about training and institutes. It is clear enough that Freud participated in the early enthusiasm for the IPA and the rigidifying of training, and that he was involved in participating in the formation of inner and outer circles among his adherents. In saying so, it is worth not skipping over an intermediate event between the Salzburg conference and the formation of the IPA, which is the creation of the "Secret Committee," designed by Ernest Jones and implemented in the summer of 1912. The formation of a secret group of

psychoanalysts charged with "watching over the development of psychoanalysis" and providing "Freud with comfort in times of severe dissent," also excluded the first president of the IPA, Carl Jung (Paskauskas, 1988, p. 7). Importantly, much of this history, including the gift of rings from Freud to members of the inner circle comes not from Freud's writings but from Jones, including in his biography of Freud. The importance of this group to Freud can be presumed from his gift of the intaglios to its members, but, again, there is cause for caution in presuming too much.

The life of Sigmund Freud, as he seemed to tell it, perhaps romantically, emphasized a Bildung that included science, medical training, philosophy, close encounters with literature and other arts, introspection, walks near Salzburg and the Berchtesgaden, and self-determination. But what turned the "lonely man" into the founding father of psychoanalysis was not a simple function of those qualities, but also an ambition to build psychoanalysis, helped by a circle of dedicated colleagues, and by a concern for safeguarding the sanctity of a budding profession, which in turn informed controversies around training within and without institutes, our present purpose.

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