Attitudes and ideas deriving from Freud’s psychoanalysis permeate Western culture. Twentieth-century art, drama and film reflect his conflicted sense of the human condition, giving dramatic substance to his proclamation that we are driven by forces we know little about. The advertising industry exploits the powerful unconscious roots of sexuality and aggression as the tools of its trade. Freud’s view that the personality evolves from intensely formative childhood experiences is the cornerstone of social and educational policies, with their focus on the family as the context for emotional development and the mediator of social mores.

Commonly used terms such as ‘Freudian slip’ demonstrate the extent to which his ideas have become incorporated into everyday life. Yet he is still a controversial figure, evoking responses from adulation to abhorrence with more balanced views comparatively thin on the ground. These strong opposing reactions appear to arise from his personality and style as well as from the unsettling nature of his subject.

It is not feasible in a single chapter to do more than sketch an outline of Freud’s main ideas. This is therefore a brief introduction rather than a detailed study, with the main purpose of clarifying the base from which Object Relations developed. Readers may be interested to explore some of the historical, biographical and theoretical studies of Freud and nineteenth-century Vienna, and especially to read his own wide-ranging and influential writing for themselves.

Who then was this person who has had such far-reaching effects on the Western world?

FREUD’S LIFE

Sigismund Schlomo Freud was born in Austria in 1856 into a middle-class, non-religious Jewish family. His father Jacob was considerably
older than his mother and had adult children from a previous marriage. Freud was the eldest of the eight children of this marriage and, with his intellectual brilliance and stalwart confidence, became the focus of the family's hopes of success and recognition in the genteel society in which they lived. He decided in adolescence that 'Sigmund' was preferable to his given names, and this was the name he used in adulthood.

Austria was embroiled in political and cultural turmoil, and Vienna, where Freud grew up, was at its epicentre (Taylor 1948; Schorske 1961). Social unrest was fuelled by economic disaster with a stock market crash in 1873. The Habsburgs, the longest-ruling royal family in Europe, were in the throes of self-destruction: Europe was rocked by the double suicide of Crown Prince Rudolf and his teenage mistress in 1889, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated at the end of the First World War. Schnitzler and Schoenberg, Klimt and Kokoschka, Wittgenstein and Hitler all emerged from nineteenth-century Vienna. It is in this cauldron of revolution and transformation that we should locate Freud and his ideas.

Freud studied medicine, and an early example of his reckless creativity was his promotion of cocaine. He was dismayed by the addictive potential it proved to have after he had exacerbated the suffering of a dying friend by prescribing him cocaine in an attempt to cure his addiction to morphine. He moved away from research and into psychiatry so that he could support a family, marrying Martha Bernays in 1886 after a prolonged engagement. He chose the names of all six of their children after friends and historical figures he admired. He seems to have been an affectionate father; he found the death of his favourite daughter Sophie in 1920 desperately hard to encompass. The household included Martha's sister Minna, who with Martha and their daughter Anna encircled him to the end of his life.

Anti-Semitism was an increasingly virulent force in Freud's life. He tells of his childhood disappointment in his father's failure to stand up to a bullying Christian who threw his cap into the gutter (Gay 1988: 11–12). He vowed that he would not become a 'humble Jew', and he never went back on this decision. Freud felt repeatedly betrayed by those in whom he had placed most trust, yet there were always more ready to take their place; and to the end of his life Freud maintained a dominance within psychoanalysis that was never successfully challenged.

Reading his work reveals, on the one hand, his scientific devotion to truth, with the insistence that his ideas are just a beginning, and, on the other, his arrogant assertions that only those who have been psychoanalysed have the right to criticise his work. The subjects he addressed were bound to lead to fear and revulsion. He studied perversion, neurosis and dreams; initially proposed that neurosis was caused by child sexual abuse; and suggested disquietingly that sexual life began in the cradle. The paradoxes and contradictions of Freud's life are embodied in his theories.

**Freud's Theories**

**Overview**

Most of the concepts that make up Freud's psychoanalysis were already present in his cultural milieu: they were not the original creations that he and his followers often made them out to be.
Infantile sexuality, bisexuality, the unconscious, the id, were all current ideas. Freud's achievement was not in their invention, but rather in treating seriously the unpopular and unprestigious subject of mental disturbance. He had the then revolutionary idea that the individual was not in total charge of the whole self.

Freudian psychoanalytic theory, developed as a totally new subject, is based on several assumptions:

- that mental life can be explained, thus challenging significantly the notion of free will;
- that the mind has a specific structure and follows intrinsic laws;
- that mental life is evolutionary and developmental. Following Darwin, Freud maintained that the adult mind can only be understood in terms of the formative experiences of the child;
- that the mind holds unconscious forces of tremendous intensity and power which, though not experienced directly, nevertheless have a far greater influence over human beings than they can recognise. Although the unconscious was not a new concept, Freud made it a cornerstone of psychoanalysis;
- that the mind is an aspect of the body. The biological facts of procreation and death comprise the basis of our mental as well as our physical life. Sexuality is the paradigm for all desire; infantile sexuality is primitive desire, rooted in the body.

Early Freudian theory is materialist, treating psychology as at root a physical matter. His earlier works treat the mind as though it were made up of concrete fixtures which can only be moved by force: Newtonian physics with a vengeance. Freud's formulations have a solidity reminiscent of heavy Victorian furniture: oak tables and mahogany sideboards, built to last, and movable only with effort and deliberation.

Freud was a dualist. His concepts typically come in pairs: ego and id, conscious and unconscious, Eros and the death instinct. It is a mode of experience which as individuals we either resonate with or do not comprehend. Freud himself recognised that some of his ideas stemmed from an emotional base. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, he acknowledged the controversy provoked by his concept of a death instinct, 'but in the course of time', he wrote, '[these ideas] have gained such a hold upon me that I can no longer think in any other way' (Freud 1930, S.E. 21: 119).

Freud's pessimism arose from the conflict that his dualism implies. His view of life was uncompromising: that the good person and the worthwhile life result from the managing of conflict. We are divided beings, without underlying unity, bliss or harmony. The most we can do individually is to take responsibility for our destructiveness and minimise the damage that arises from it. Society is in inevitable opposition to the individual, who nevertheless depends on the group.

Western civilisation in Freud's view demanded too high a price in repression, leading to neurosis in its members. He saw religion as self-delusion based on unrecognised infantile need. The purpose of psychoanalysis, he wrote to an imaginary patient, is not to promote happiness, 'but much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into ordinary unhappiness' (Breuer and Freud 1895, S.E. 2: 305).

Although Freud hoped that psychoanalysis would be accepted as a science, its concepts were not derived from the natural scientific methods of experiment and verification. Instead, they arose from introspection and retrospection, in large part Freud's own. The Freudian picture of the infant and child was reconstructed primarily through the self-analysis to which Freud gave the last half-hour of his day, and only secondarily through his interpretations of his adult patients' experiences and memories. His theories are therefore subjectively rather than objectively based and illustrate how the mind experiences and understands itself, mediated by nineteenth-century Western scientific and social thought. This subjective base meant that Freud was continually developing and changing his ideas - sometimes within the space of a single paper.

Without the provisional acceptance of Freud's materialist, evolutionary, dualistic base, we shall not be in a position to understand or think about his theories. With these attitudes and perspectives in mind, we may proceed to a brief survey of the most important of Freud's ideas, as he formulated them towards the end of his life (Freud 1938a, S.E. 23).

In his later theories, Freud came to divide mental life in several ways. Structurally, he saw the mind as three entities: id, ego and super-ego. Dynamically, he saw mental life as proceeding on conscious and unconscious levels. The power driving mental life derived from two major instinct groups: Eros, or the life instinct, and Thanatos, usually known as the death instinct. Mental and emotional maturity is gained slowly, through developmental stages termed primary narcissism, auto-erotic, oral, anal, phallic and genital. The climax of early development arrives between the ages of about three and seven, in the drama of the Oedipus Complex during the phallic stage. It is from the resolution of this conflict that morality, mature sexuality...
and eventually the adult personality emerge after the hiatus of the latency stage.

A major hazard for English speakers lies in the translation of Freud's works by James Strachey. At a time when psychoanalysis was banned by the Nazis as a Jewish science, Strachey was particularly anxious for Freud's writings to be accepted in mainstream Western society, and he made his translation with this aim in mind. Whereas Freud had written in simple everyday German with a total absence of jargon, Strachey introduced an obscure Latinised terminology (Bettelheim 1982). Thus, the simple term Ich, or I', was translated as 'ego'; the Es or 'it' became the 'id'; and the Uber-Ich, or 'over-I', the 'super-ego'. These and other translated terms have neither the feel nor the directness of Freud's writing, and it can be helpful to re-translate them into the more accurate and evocative I', 'it' and 'over-I'.

The Structure of the Mind

Freud first put forward his three-part mental structure in The Ego and the Id (Freud 1923, S.E. 19). In the late Outline of Psychoanalysis (Freud 1933a, S.E. 23) he imagines this structure as a link between the physical organ of the brain and the subjective experience of consciousness.

Freud defines the id as the primitive and unchangeable ground of the mind. It is unconscious and therefore always deduced rather than experienced directly. He describes the id as a seething cauldron of instincts, or drives (Triebe). The aim of the id is the fundamental aim of the person: gratification without thought, compromise or qualification. Freud took the term from the eccentric psychiatrist Georg Groddeck:

I hold the view that man is animated by the Unknown, that there is within him an 'Es', an 'It', some wondrous force which directs both what he himself does, and what happens to him ... Man is lived by the It. (Groddeck 1949: 11)

The id and its drives are all that is most powerful within us. They are inherited psychobiological characteristics like nesting or feeding behaviour in other animals, inhabiting the borderline between the mental and the physical, the abstract and the concrete.

The ego is evoked rather than defined through the simplicity of the term 'I'. It is the organised part of the mind that makes decisions, consciously and unconsciously. Its function is to preserve both the organism of which it is an aspect and also its own existence as a differentiated part of the id. The origin of the ego is unclear in Freudian thought: in the same paper he describes it as existing in its own right from the beginning, on the one hand, and as developing out of the id after birth, on the other (Freud 1933a, S.E. 23). What is clear is that Freud saw it as a comparatively fragile structure. Under sufficient stress it can lose ground, become incapable of thought and decision and be to some extent weakened by the super-ego and submerged by or re-absorbed into the id.

Since the ego's primary function is self-preservation, it has to take external factors into account. Its ultimate aim is for the id to gain maximum satisfaction consistent with survival and well-being. The ego recognises that one cannot have one's cake and eat it, and mediates the demands of the id, the constraints of external reality and the pressures of the super-ego. It works by compromise and by the postponement or denial of gratification, placing thought between impulse and action. An id impulse would send us running straight across the road after a lost football; the ego makes sure we wait for the cars to pass first.

The super-ego develops last, and is most clearly the product of society. Like the id it is largely unconscious, although we consciously experience the guilt which derives from it. The super-ego is the internalisation of the forbidding voice of the parents, stereotypically the father. This embodiment is part of the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, where the paternal voice is transformed into a capacity for inner control. Freud mentions its more positive counterpart, the ego-ideal, far less frequently. He sees the ego-ideal as the internalisation of the gentler parental voice, stereotypically the mother. The super-ego provides negative control in the form of self-discipline backed up by guilt. The ego-ideal provides ideals to which we can aspire.

The ego's task is to reconcile the demands coming from the id, the super-ego and external reality. If this is impossible, anxiety results: realistic anxiety, if the unavoidable danger comes from the external world; moral anxiety, or guilt, if the super-ego's demands are overridden; and neurotic anxiety, or a neurotic symptom, if the id's needs are insufficiently recognised.

The aim of psychoanalysis is to strengthen the ego, and modify the super-ego if it is excessively harsh or particularly weak. The external world can only be changed in minor ways by any individual, and the id is unchangeable: its forces can simply be managed or held
All psychoanalysis can do is facilitate the ego's capacities to bear conflict and contain anxiety, to think before acting. It is with this in mind that Freud expressed its goal: 'Where id was, there ego shall be' (Freud 1933a, S.E. 22).

The Instincts

While these formations are the mind's structure, the instincts or drives provide its energy. Freud's views of the drives changed over time, but he always classed them into two opposing groups. He first defined these as the ego-instincts such as hunger and aggression, with the purpose of preserving the life of the individual, and the sexual instincts, which existed to ensure the continuation of the species (Freud 1914, S.E. 14).

He later moved to his final definition of the instinct groups as Eros, the life instincts, with their energy termed libido; and the death instincts, usually spoken of as a single death instinct and sometimes termed Thanatos (Freud 1920, S.E. 18). Located in the id, the instincts are the power of all mental life. They are deeply biological metaphors, based on the physical parameters of life which for Freud were the foundations of the mind. The instincts are not separate from each other: Freud envisaged them to be in a state of perpetual fusion from the start of life, taken by Freud as birth.

The thrust of the death instinct is towards the disintegration of current states, leading through regression to earlier states of being. Its ultimate aim is to achieve the state that prevailed before life itself: inanimacy, represented by death. On its own, the death instinct would thus result in the individual peacefully relinquishing life; and Freud believed that this internal destroyer of life is always with us as part of our make-up. We can only survive our drive towards death by externalising the death instinct to produce an urge to disintegrate and destroy other beings or states of being. At the end of life, the instincts finally fall into defusion, with the death instinct bringing about what we may call a natural death as the fulfilment of an inner need.

Eros must be behind the externalisation of the death instinct, as it is this alone, in Freudian theory, which enables the individual to stay alive at all. Eros is in many ways the equal and opposing force to the death instinct, though Freud also illogically suggests that the death instinct must predominate because inanimateness always triumphs over animateness. Whereas the death instinct tends towards disintegration, Eros is the drive to bring things together to create new unities. Eros appears most decisively in sexuality, seen by Freud as the force which brings two beings together for the purpose of procreation.

However, as Freud regards the instincts as fused, in practice sexuality also contains some death instinct. Freud describes the sexual act from his own male, heterosexual point of view as an act of aggression (that is, penetration) in the service of the deepest intimacy. All impulses, sexual and non-sexual, would have similar mixtures. We can see the act of eating an apple, for example, as motivated by both the desire for the apple and ultimately union with it, and also by the urge to destroy the apple as a separate entity. The fused Freudian drive includes the creative and destructive urges to which any impulse can be reductively analysed.

It is not surprising that even in his own time the death instinct was a controversial idea, often viewed as anti-biological and idiosyncratically pessimistic. Many people feel that unity must ultimately underlie duality, with a life instinct alone at the root of being. Aggression can sometimes be considered a positive rather than a negative force, or secondary rather than primary, as a response to frustration. We may also appreciate that the idea of a death instinct (or for that matter any 'instinct') could be used to block further understanding of apparently negative behaviour: it could be put down simply to 'instinct'.

If we remember Freud's life experience, however, his conviction that destructiveness is a primary force is unsurprising. He grew up in a disintegrating society where old certainties were being destroyed at a faster rate than ever before. The 'Great War' or 'World War' of 1914-18 must have been as devastating as a nuclear war would be today, stark evidence of human beings' capacity to destroy themselves and the planet. In Freud's old age, the anti-Semitism which had grown ever more virulent through his life resulted in the attempted destruction of his people and the banning of his life's work. When he died in 1939, he had been suffering from an increasingly painful cancer for sixteen years; and the Second World War had begun a few weeks earlier. In these circumstances, Freud's balancing of the death instinct with Eros looks almost optimistic.

The death instinct is often seen today as an historical anachronism, but in disregarding it we may be throwing out too much. One way of understanding Freud's view of instinctual conflict is to paraphrase it as the difficulty we all struggle with between moving forward to new experiences, new understanding and new ways of being, and
retreating to the safer, simpler, more familiar patterns of the past – the pull of inertia.

Through making space for the possibility of a concept such as the death instinct, even if we do not wholly subscribe to it, we acknowledge the depth of the destructiveness within us and between us. It is only realistic to suppose that although the battle it gives rise to must never cease, it will never be won: at most we may achieve temporary truces. A death instinct offers a perspective on personal death, species extinction, even our possible destruction of the planet and the inevitable end of the universe as natural rather than horrific events. With such a concept, death does not sneak up and kill us; the movement towards death is within us, giving us the capacity to come to terms with dying both personally and more broadly. It may help us find the possibility of seeing death alongside life as an acceptable state of affairs, and enable us to go beyond a sentimental view of humanity in which its most sinister traits are explained away.

The Topographical Division of the Mind

The Freudian mind is thus a kind of machine driven by fused opposing forces within an overall structure. The third division Freud introduced is that between consciousness and unconsciousness.

The unconscious was a current philosophical concept which Freud integrated with his other major concepts (see Whyte 1962). He expected his promotion of the unconscious to be among his most unpopular ideas because of its inference that we are not in control even of our own minds. An ‘unconscious’ means that we hold responsibility for feelings we are not even aware of and make decisions in which we have taken no conscious part.

It is still difficult to accept the implications of an unconscious part of the mind, even though it is now such a familiar notion. How much sense do we really feel it makes to speak of unconscious choice or even unconscious thought? The attribute of ‘being in touch with one’s unconscious’, sometimes paraded as a psychological virtue, is an impossibility: anything we become aware of, however dimly, has by definition ceased to be unconscious. These difficulties underline the metaphorical status of Freud’s theories.

Freud divides the mind horizontally, or topographically, into the unconscious, of which we have no awareness; the preconscious, of which we can more or less easily become aware; and the conscious, which is simply the fleeting awareness of the moment. Like icebergs, the unconscious regions are immeasurably more extensive than our possible knowledge of ourselves. Even psychoanalysis only makes a small enlargement to the preconscious field.

The unconscious is divided into the unconscious proper and the repressed unconscious. The unconscious proper is that which has never been conscious, and includes innate knowledge – ‘primal phantasies’ of ‘phylogenetic origin’ (Freud 1916–17, S.E. 15) – very reminiscent of Jung’s collective unconscious and also of currently held ideas of deep psychological structure. The repressed unconscious holds what has once been conscious but which we have pushed into unconsciousness: disowned impulses and their associated memories of which we are not usually aware, but which reach towards expression through dreams, neurotic symptoms and free association. The urge of what is repressed to regain consciousness demonstrates that repression is an active process. Psychoanalysis seeks to induce the patient to allow the most urgent repressed material into consciousness so that less costly compromises or resolutions to internal conflicts can be made. Sometimes sublimation is possible, where repressed impulses may be diverted to socially acceptable or even useful ends. Freud thought of friendship as a sublimation of sexuality, and art as a sublimation of impulses of all kinds.

The unconscious works through primary process, with the pleasure principle dominant. Primary process means that the constraints of external reality are absent, resulting in irrationality, with no negatives, no logic, no time or space, no thought or delay. The pleasure principle means that immediate gratification is the only aim. In the preconscious, secondary process includes the reality principle: the awareness of external reality and its constraints and demands. Under its aegis, the ego develops the capacity for thought. In the space it creates between impulse and action, the ego previews both internal and external consequences, making possible logic, rationality and self-discipline. Survival and well-being take precedence over instant pleasure when the ego is in charge, and the reality principle hopefully predominates over the pleasure principle. However, this predominance is always precarious, as reading any newspaper demonstrates. Outbreaks of anti-social sexuality and aggression are the media’s most popular themes.

Dreams and Symptoms

The evidence of the unconscious and primary process was clearest, Freud suggested, in the everyday phenomenon of dreams and in
neurotic symptoms which are structured in a similar way. Freud postulated that the dream and the neurotic symptom both express and repudiate repressed impulses.

The original impulse, pushed down into the unconscious, presses upwards into consciousness. At the same time, the super-ego censors its direct expression. The ego mediates between the upward pressure from the id (the instinctual impulse) and the downward pressure from the super-ego; in a compromise formation, the ego distorts the impulse into something more acceptable to the super-ego and therefore less anxiety-provoking to the ego.

Freud coined the terms 'manifest content' for the story of the dream, and 'latent content' for its underlying meaning. Latent content is transformed into manifest content through the dreamwork, using the processes of condensation, displacement and symbolisation. A single component of a dream may thus embrace many allusions. Wishes and actions may be displaced from one person to another, disguising the forbidden impulse, and primary process can include symbolisation at an individual, personal level while also drawing on an ancient and universal language which Freud attributed to our genetic heritage.

The neurotic symptom is analogous to the dream. The symptom contains in a single structure the repressed wish trying to emerge into consciousness and the ego's distortions of that wish.

Both dreams and symptoms therefore express a wish which conflicts with the individual's moral code. Lady Macbeth's handwashing, for example, holds her conscious desire to cleanse her soul of evil: the fact that the 'blood' will not wash off reveals the persistence of her murderous wishes.

The dream of six-year-old Chantelle demonstrates the beginnings of dreamwork. She was on a ship in the middle of the sea, and her younger brother fell overboard. Just before he hit the water, the fairies with their magic pipes started piping him upwards again towards the deck of the ship. But they didn't stop piping, and little brother was piped ever upwards, 'almost all the way to heaven'. At the last moment, they let him down again.

The conflict between the little girl's wish to get rid of her brother and her disownment of that wish is poignantly clear. Dreamwork led to elements such as the ship and the sea, the fairies, their pipes and 'heaven'; and the fact that her brother fell rather than was pushed. In Freudian theory, dreamwork is minimal before the super-ego comes into being with the resolution of the Oedipus Complex at about this age, and becomes increasingly complex as the moral code is internalised. This dream illustrates how wish-fulfilment can be suffused with anxiety: Chantelle woke up crying that she had had a nightmare.

The assumption that dreams and symptoms hold deep personal meanings has passed into society's understanding of the person and the complex layers of human consciousness. Many psychotherapeutic approaches give these phenomena a special importance as spontaneous utterances of our hidden natures.

Sexual Development

Freud developed an account of the development of the mind and its instincts in a conceptual frame developed further by Karl Abraham (Abraham 1927). Interestingly, the erotic instincts are the focus of this developmental scheme, perhaps because Freud saw the death instincts as unchangeable and unchanging. Freud's concept of infantile sexuality, though not original, was and remains controversial, mocked in the cliché that psychoanalysis is only interested in sex. Infantile sexuality has important differences from adult sexuality, and may be more accurately defined as the bodily pleasure which precedes and leads towards adult sexuality.

Freud saw the young infant as predominantly self-centred, or autoerotic, ruled by primary process and the urge to instant gratification. The ego is rudimentary or unformed, so there is little capacity for thought. Following an initial 'primary narcissism', where there is no sense of distinction or externality, the baby seeks gratification from her own body, or from the mother's body which is barely differentiated from the baby's own. The baby is 'polymorphously perverse', meaning not that her capacity for pleasure is distorted, but that she is able to gain pleasure from many parts of her body. Following this autoerotic beginning is the oral stage, when the baby's most intense excitement is centred on her mouth and the activity of feeding.

During the baby's second and third years, Freud suggests that the mouth gives way to the anus as the focus of satisfaction, leading from the oral to the anal stage. In this phase, the process and control of defecation is the central physical experience for the child, heightened by external demands in the form of toilet training which typically occurs around this age in Western society. This develops into the phallic stage, which Freud sees as common to both boys and girls, although it is of course a male-centred concept. The focus of excitement is the genitals, with the wish to penetrate and possess with the penis. The phallic stage is the backdrop for the drama of
the Oedipus Complex, out of which the full person, the social being, is born.

The Oedipus Complex is broadly accepted but intensely debated in its details. Freud sees it as reaching its peak between the ages of about three and seven. Its resolution marks the beginning of the latency period, when sexuality recedes into the background until puberty and the emergence of adult sexuality. Freud suggests that as bisexual beings, everyone goes through double versions of the Oedipus Complex, with desire and hatred focused conflictingly on both parental figures. However, the male version is by far the most coherent account. The female version is not convincing, and Freud does not consider separate homosexual and lesbian versions: he tended to see these orientations in terms of incomplete developmental processes.

In the classical Oedipus Complex, the mother is the boy's first object of love: the purveyor of satisfaction in the oral stage and frustration in the anal stage. In the phallic stage she becomes the longed-for prize whom the boy wants to possess with his penis, as a sexual object devoted to his own gratification. The father now comes into focus as a hindrance and a rival because it is he, in the boy's mind, who possesses the mother in the way that the little boy would like to. The father apparently owns not only the mother, but the means of gratification, which is the aim and purpose of life. The boy attributes his own passionate feelings to his father, and this increases his fear of his father's rivalrous retaliation. As the boy would like to get rid of the father, so he assumes by projection that the father wants to eliminate him. The threat of destruction is focused on the penis, or more symbolically the phallus, as the tool of sexual possession and locus of power. Freud called this fear the 'castration complex'. It may be aggravated by overt threats or subtle discouragement of the boy's masturbation, coupled with his anxiety that the female genitals could be castrated male genitals.

The fear of real castration induces the boy to castrate himself symbolically. He gives up the hope of possessing his mother sexually and may turn against her, despising her as a 'mere' woman. He identifies with his father rather than opposing him, on the principle 'if you can't beat them, join them', or identification with the aggressor. He introjects - takes inside him - the paternal prohibition of sexuality and aggression to keep himself safe, making use of his own forceful feelings to help maintain inner control. The father thus becomes part of the son, who gains satisfaction vicariously through identifying with him. At the same time, the boy has to turn outside the immediate

family for his actual gratification, hopefully preserving enough acceptance of his own sexual potency to achieve extra-familial sexual relationships in adulthood. The super-ego, or conscience, thus derives from a battle with society which is resolved through the accepting of society's mores.

Alongside this classical Oedipus Complex, Freud envisaged the boy as simultaneously taking the father as his focus of desire, with the mother as the hated rival. This is not elaborated by either Freud or his followers, but is assumed to add to the turmoil of the Oedipal stage.

The female Oedipus Complex has always appeared secondary. The girl, like the boy, must take the mother as her first love object. How then does she move to the father? Freud's inevitable basis in heterosexual male experience does not help him here. He believes that at some point the girl, like the boy, sees that the genitals of the opposite sex are different from her own. She interprets the male genitals as whole, and herself therefore as castrated. She blames her mother for her mutilation, while also seeing that her mother is herself mutilated. The mother is thus the damaged persecutor, and to keep her as an erotic focus would be to court both danger and humiliation. The only way for the girl to achieve completion in the form of the penis she lacks is through fantasised sexual possession of or by the father. This develops into the fantasy of giving birth to the father's male child, possessor and symbol of the missing penis.

The main issue for the girl in the Oedipal stage is penis envy rather than the fear of castration. Having already lost the prize, the girl has little to fear from the future. She therefore has less incentive to internalise the prohibiting voice of the parent, and Freud considered the female super-ego to be correspondingly weaker and less developed than the male super-ego. He correlates the sexual inhibitions expected of the woman in his social context with her belief that she has been robbed of the major means of sexual satisfaction and power. He sees little need for her to turn away from her father as the focus of desire. It matters little if she views her husband as a substitute father and her son as the purveyor of significance in her life.

In the opposite Oedipal development, the girl continues to take the mother as her object of desire, and the father as the rival and intruder. Even the heterosexual version, however, lacks the force and drama of the primary male Oedipus Complex: with the original lack of the penis, the story is truncated from the start. The feminist tradition has laid out the inadequacies and male-centredness of Oedipal theory, though not all feminists throw out Freud or the
Oedipus Complex in its entirety. While the female Oedipus Complex strikes most people today as unconvincingly as the death instinct, we should again beware of throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Oedipal ambitions may be brazenly voiced by today's more outspoken toddlers, and many parents can attest to the power of their feelings. I am thinking of a four-year-old who scratched her mother's brand new boots all over with a fork, howling that her daddy had said he would not marry her, not then and not ever. Variations on this common theme occur in Western families of all kinds, suggesting a typical developmental stage in Western childhood and the dominance of the nuclear family structure within all Western families. Children who are parented by adults in a same-sex relationship often show a typically Oedipal pattern of possessiveness towards one parent and jealousy of the other; single parents may be the focus of extremely conflicting feelings for their children, or the alternative parental role may be projected on to an external figure, if not the other parent; children of separated parents may dream of reuniting their parents rather than, or as well as, dividing them. No doubt the familiarity of the Oedipus Complex as a concept helps adults to be more accepting of the intensity of their children's feelings, although some family circumstances may make the conflict more painful for them as well as for their children.

Freud's Oedipal theory can also be viewed metaphorically. Juliet Mitchell (Mitchell 1974) suggests that his grim analysis of the female character, with its childishness and moral weakness, may be read as the analysis of an oppressed class. If the penis is the symbol of social power, envy of that power will be expected in the underclass: 'penis envy' is power envy. If a social group is barred from the access to power, members of that group will be less devoted to upholding society and its customs, as Freud suggested was the case in his differential view of the male and female super-egos. The characteristics which second-class status engenders will be cited as proof of inferiority, while those who do hold social power will always fear losing it in a metaphorical castration complex. The social application of Freud's ideas throws light on the conflicts endemic to a class-ridden society. His Oedipal views may tell us more about his social context than biological fate.

Freud's Oedipal theory took the place of his previous Seduction Theory, where adult neurosis was seen as the outcome of sexual abuse in childhood. Freud has been widely blamed for the cover-up of child sexual abuse over decades. For too long, children who were sexually abused were either not believed or were blamed for the actions of adults. Their accounts were seen as wish-fulfilling Oedipal fantasies or enactments. It is commonly understood that Freud simply stopped believing the stories of abuse told to him by his mainly women patients, and reframed their allegations as Oedipal fantasy. The truth appears more complex, as it usually is. It seems that his patients had never given straightforward, overt accounts of sexual abuse in childhood: what they said was always subjected to Freud's interpretations (Crews 1993). Initially, he tended to understand their thoughts, feelings and associations as unconscious communications of actual sexual activity in childhood; later, he took their words to indicate unconscious phantasies of sexual possession of a parent.

As far as child sexual abuse was concerned, his position is again less clear-cut than either his opposers or his supporters tend to present. He did downplay his views on it publicly, partly no doubt to mitigate the negative effects on his reputation and that of psychoanalysis. The case study of 'Dora' (Freud 1905a, S.E. 7), in particular, indicates that although he believed her story, he harmfully misinterpreted her reaction to the sexual advances of a family friend. But in letters he expressed the view that the sexual abuse of children was more common than normally supposed and was always harmful. It was later adherents of psychoanalytic theory who denied its occurrence, using the Oedipus Complex as an explanation of children's allegations. It is unreasonable to blame the originator of the concept for what was done with it later.

The Oedipus Complex dates from the period after Freud's father's death in 1896, when Freud pursued his self-analysis with particular intensity. Although there were compelling theoretical grounds, we may speculate on the extent to which his abandonment of the Seduction Theory and the exploration of his own Oedipal conflicts could also have arisen from reactions to this bereavement. He may well have felt guilty at implicitly attributing blame to his father when he observed that his siblings, and even he himself, showed some hysterical tendencies (Sulloway 1980: 206).

Psychoanalysis as Therapy

Freud's application of his theories went hand-in-hand with their development. He started with the then popular use of hypnosis, but relinquished it in the belief that its results did not last. In a rare and touching expression of his softer, feminine side, Freud developed
Transference is both positive, with the patient feeling love and humiliating and nerve-racking, requiring courage and perseverance. Psychotherapy of any kind must therefore at times be exposing, to be contributing to the patient's problems. If it is to be effective, the super-ego. It is an indication that repressed or less acceptable or unable to voice her thoughts and feelings. Freud termed this modified rather than abandoned in other forms of psychotherapy. It has remained a cornerstone of psychoanalytic technique to this day, and has been modified rather than abandoned in other forms of psychotherapy.

Sooner or later the words dry up, as the patient becomes unwilling or unable to voice her thoughts and feelings. Freud termed this 'resistance': conscious or unconscious censoring under pressure from the super-ego. It is an indication that repressed or less acceptable impulses are trying to emerge, and it is they which are most likely to be contributing to the patient's problems. If it is to be effective, psychotherapy of any kind must therefore at times be exposing, humiliating and nerve-racking, requiring courage and perseverance.

Freud discovered that the patient's free association typically turns away from the difficulties for which she has come for help, to feelings about the analyst. As though we cannot live without relationship, the analyst becomes the focus of hopes, fears, desire and anger. These feelings may be extremely strong, ranging from dependency and sexual obsession to terror and hatred. Freud saw this intensity as arising not from the present but from the emergence of past experience under primary process. Because there is no appreciation of time in primary process, past and present are not felt to be different. The patient is thus reliving unresolved conflicts originating from childhood relationships with the parents, so accounting for the strength and irrationality of her feelings.

Freud termed this phenomenon 'transference': the unconscious transferring of past relationship into the present, especially as it appears in the psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic setting. Transference is both positive, with the patient feeling love and dependency on the analyst as the giving, nurturing, perhaps sexually exciting parent; and also negative, with the analyst being experienced as the withholding, forbidding and cruel parent. Counter-transference is the analyst's transference on to the patient, widened later to include all the analyst's experiences in relation to the patient.

Initially, transference appeared as a setback, hindering the unravelling of hidden memories and blocking the patient's desire to overcome her difficulties and complete the analysis. While Freud's colleague Breuer fled from the intense erotic transference of the famous 'Anna O.', one of their early patients, Freud explored this phenomenon (Breuer and Freud 1895, S.E. 2). Through his steadfastness, transference was transformed into psychoanalysis' most effective tool and organising principle: if early conflicts could be resolved live, as it were, the results would always be more lasting than if they were merely described.

Later Kleinian approaches held psychoanalysis to be essentially analysis of the transference: the effects of unresolved experience on current perceptions of reality and relationship, as communicated verbally and non-verbally between patient and analyst.

This brief résumé of Freud's most influential ideas may give some feel of the range and originality of his work, in a field delineated and explored by himself in his inventive, dogmatic personal style. We may consider the effect on his thinking and writing of his life experience with its strange and extreme conjunctions of power and oppression, centrality and exclusion. He and his followers did much to promote the myth of Freud as a superhuman scientist, outside the constraints of time, place and gender (Jones 1957; Sulloway 1979). While we do not have to go along with this, neither do we have to rise to the Oedipal bait he unwittingly dangles. All self-proclaimed kings court their own downfall through their followers' envy and fear. Perhaps we can maintain our awareness of Freud's inevitable limitations as a man of a particular society. While we may not agree with all the concepts he offered us as he laid them out, nevertheless we may resonate personally with the deeper strata of his mind from which they emerged and express these resonances in our own ways.

Ideas such as childhood emotional development, the mind as a structured entity, repression and resistance, the unconscious, are part of the way Western society now thinks. The Oedipus Complex, particularly in its female form, the biological basis to the mind, and especially the death instinct, may seem out-dated concepts, but even these give us insight into Freud's view of the human condition which may in turn throw light on our own.

Towards the end of his life, Freud moved increasingly towards a more philosophical, less concrete conception of the person. He gave more focus to the ego as the centre of experience, rather than the id as the biological given out of which psychology emerges. Building on the interpersonal structure of the Oedipus Complex with the
super-ego as an internalised object, he went on to pave the way for
the development of Object Relations. In two of his last papers we see
Freud subdividing the ego rather as the molecule and then the
atom were subdivided (Freud 1938a, 1938b, S.E. 23). The concepts
of a structured ego and internalised object relationships bridge his
earlier drive-based theory to the relational psychology which was
most fully expressed and elaborated by the Object Relations school.

Melanie Klein is a tragic figure in psychoanalysis. Her life of loss and
turmoil is reflected in the grim picture she paints of her special area:
the early months of infancy and the psychotic anxieties that relate
to them.

Born Melanie Reizes in Austria in 1882 – a generation after Freud
– she was the youngest of four children in a Polish-Hungarian Jewish
family. They lived in Vienna, making out through Klein's mother's
efforts as a shopkeeper. Her father's medical career was curtailed by
anti-Semitism and he had to work mainly as a dentist. Klein's mother
let her know that her conception had been unintended; and she was
deeply jealous that her father preferred her sister Emilie, while her
mother adored her brother Emanuel. Another sister, Sidonie, died
at the age of eight, the first of many bereavements that Klein was
to suffer.

The family is revealed in Phyllis Grosskurth's comprehensive
biography (Grosskurth 1986) as entangled and neurotic. It revolved
around the powerful figure of Libussa, Klein's mother, an expert in
manipulation who provided the emotional and practical focus: it
was she who managed the money and kept the family going. Klein
aligned herself with the prestigious grouping of Libussa and Emanuel,
making a powerful trio against the weaker duo of Emilie and Moritz,
their father. Klein idealised her mother as loving and self-sacrificing,
and she grew up to adore Emanuel as her mother did. He was the
father-substitute who noticed her intelligence and encouraged her
learning, unlike her father whom she felt ignored by. After being
diagnosed with tuberculosis in his early twenties Emanuel became
a self-destructive drifter, exerting heavy emotional pressure on his
mother to provide the means for him to travel in the style of the
dying artist. When that was not sufficient, he pressured Klein to get
more money out of the family for him. He died in 1902, and this
was one of Klein's most painful losses.