



Sigmund Freud, 1891, act. 35

SIGMUND FREUD
LIFE AND WORK

Volume One

THE YOUNG FREUD

1856-1900

By

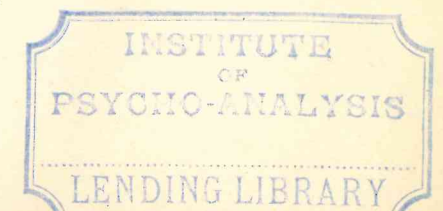
ERNEST JONES

*And speak the truth that no man
may believe*

TIRESIAS

LONDON
THE HOGARTH PRESS

1953



PREFACE

THIS is not intended to be a popular biography of Freud: several have been written already, containing serious distortions and untruths. Its aims are simply to record the main facts of Freud's life while they are still accessible, and—a more ambitious one—to try to relate his personality and the experiences of his life to the development of his ideas.

It is not a book that would have met with Freud's own approval. He felt he had already in many passages of his writings divulged enough of his personal life—which, indeed, he later regretted having done—and that he had a right to keep private what remained: the world should get on with making use of his contributions to knowledge and forget about his personality. But his repentance of the self-revelations came too late. Ill-natured people were already at work distorting isolated passages with the object of disparaging his character, and this could be rectified only by a still fuller exposition of his inner and outer life.

Freud's family understandingly respected his wish for privacy, and indeed shared it. They often sheltered him from a merely inquisitive public. What changed their attitude later was the news of the many false stories invented by people who had never known him, stories which were gradually accumulating into a mendacious legend. They then decided to give me their whole-hearted support in my endeavour to present as truthful an account of his life as is in my power.

It is generally agreed that great men by their very eminence forfeit the privilege granted to lesser mortals of having two lives, a public and a private one; often what they have withheld from the world proves to be of equal value to what they have proffered. Freud himself had often expressed regret about the paucity of detail recorded in the lives of great men so worthy of study and emulation. The world would have lost much if nothing were known of his own. What he gave to the world was not a completely rounded-off theory of the mind, a philosophy which could then perhaps be debated without any reference to its author, but a gradually opening vista, one occasionally blurred and then again re-clarified. The insight he disclosed kept changing and developing in accord not only with his growing body of knowledge but also with the evolution of his own thought and outlook on life. Psycho-analysis, as is

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true of any other branch of science, can be profitably studied only as an historical evolution, never as a perfected body of knowledge, and its development was peculiarly and intimately bound up with the personality of its founder.

As we shall see, Freud took elaborate measures to secure his privacy, especially concerning his early life. On two occasions he completely destroyed all his correspondence, notes, diaries and manuscripts. Both times there were, it is true, external reasons for the clearance: once just before he left his hospital quarters for a homeless existence, and the other time when he was radically altering the arrangements of his domicile. Fortunately the latter occasion, in 1907, was the last; after then he carefully preserved his correspondence. The former one he described in an interesting letter to his betrothed in a passage that follows; he was then twenty-eight years old (April 28, 1885).

'I have just carried out a resolution which one group of people, as yet unborn and fated to misfortune, will feel acutely. Since you can't guess whom I mean I will tell you: they are my biographers. I have destroyed all my diaries of the past fourteen years, with letters, scientific notes and the manuscripts of my publications. Only family letters were spared. Yours, my dear one, were never in danger. All my old friendships and associations passed again before my eyes and mutely met their doom (my thoughts are still with the history of Russia); all my thoughts and feelings about the world in general, and in particular how it concerned me, have been declared unworthy of survival. They must now be thought all over again. And I had jotted down a great deal. But the stuff simply enveloped me, as the sand does the Sphinx, and soon only my nostrils would show above the mass of paper. I cannot leave here and cannot die before ridding myself of the disturbing thought of who might get at the old papers. Besides, everything that fell before the decisive break in my life, before our coming together and my choice of calling, I have put behind me: it has long been dead and it shall not be denied an honourable burial. Let the biographers chafe; we won't make it too easy for them. Let each one of them believe he is right in his "Conception of the Development of the Hero": even now I enjoy the thought of how they will all go astray.'

While appreciating Freud's concluding chuckle in this interesting phantasy we nevertheless dare to hope that the last words may prove to have been exaggerated.

The task of compiling a biography of Freud's life is a dauntingly stupendous one. The data are so extensive that only a

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selection of them—though it is to be hoped a representative one—can be presented; there will remain ample room for more intensive studies of particular phases in his development. The reasons why I nevertheless yielded to the suggestion that I should undertake it were the considerations pressed on me that I was the only survivor of a small circle of co-workers (the 'Committee') in constant intimate contact with Freud, that I had been a close friend for forty years and also during that period had played a central part in what has been called the 'psycho-analytical movement'. My having passed through the identical disciplines as Freud on the way to psycho-analysis—philosophy, neurology, disorders of speech, psychopathology, in that order—has helped me to follow the work of his pre-analytical period and its transition into the analytical one. Perhaps the fact of my being the only foreigner—and, incidentally, the only Gentile—in that circle gave me an opportunity for some degree of greater objectivity than the others; immeasurably great as was my respect and admiration for both the personality and achievements of Freud, my own hero-worshipping propensities had been worked through before I encountered him. And Freud's extraordinary personal integrity—an outstanding feature of his personality—so impressed itself on those near to him that I can scarcely imagine a greater profanation of one's respect for him than to present an idealized portrait of someone remote from humanity. His claim to greatness, indeed, lies largely in the honesty and courage with which he struggled and overcame his own inner difficulties and emotional conflicts by means which have been of inestimable value to others.

There are several specially important sources of my indebtedness to other people in pursuing this work, without which the book would have been far poorer. First of all the Freud family, all of whom, including his late wife, have given me freely all possible information and literary material. Among the latter are more than two thousand five hundred early family letters, the greater number written by Freud himself, including a batch of twenty-five written between 1876 and 1894 to his favourite sister Rosa which were luckily retrieved from Budapest. By far the most precious were some fifteen hundred love letters exchanged between Freud and his future wife during the four years of their engagement. A 'Secret Record' they both wrote in those years had also been preserved.

The Fliess correspondence, which Marie Bonaparte daringly rescued from destruction, is a most important source book, the value of which has been greatly heightened by Ernst Kris's

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illuminating preface and detailed editorial notes, and I wish to thank the Imago Publishing Press for their generous permission to quote freely from it and Anna Freud for giving me access to the important unpublished part of the correspondence.

Contemporary evidence such as has just been mentioned has, of course, a very special value. Freud's memory, like everyone else's, could be treacherous at times, and the contemporary data enable one to render more precise, or even rectify, the accounts of events he described many decades later.

To Siegfried and Suzanne Cassirer Bernfeld's painstaking researches, aided by their friends in Vienna, every student of Freud's early life and environment will be permanently indebted. Furthermore, in the course of a regular correspondence they have generously placed at my disposal all their stores of knowledge; discussion with them has unravelled many obscure puzzles. I have to thank the Editors of the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, the *American Imago*, the *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* and the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* for permission to quote from the Bernfeld writings. Then I extend my warm thanks to James Strachey, whose unrivalled familiarity with the literary aspects of the Freudian corpus gives him a unique authority, for reading my manuscripts attentively and making a number of most useful suggestions; his meticulous accuracy has saved me from many errors of detail. I also wish to thank the Deuticke Verlag for their courtesy in making available their records of the royalties and sales of Freud's books, from 1886 to 1950, and Mrs. Hans Breuer for lending an etching of her father-in-law.

Last, and very far from least, I wish to thank my wife for her devoted day-to-day collaboration, without which this book would assuredly not have been written.

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