

PART II

INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOANALYSIS

Freud (1856–1939) is rightly regarded as the founder of the psychoanalytic movement. Although there are several distinct psychoanalytic schools, they are all to some extent built on Freud's original interests and ideas. Three of his principal interests have continued to influence the psychoanalytic community: the nature of the unconscious, the search for the meaning underlying psychological processes and the role of personal history in the formation of personality and psychological problems.

The unconscious was envisaged by Freud as a world deep within the personality to which a person does not have direct access. It consists of instincts, impulses, feelings, wishes and ideas that act and react on each other. Because these processes are 'primitive, brutish, infantile, aggressive and sexual' (Ellenberger, 1957, p. 14), they are unacceptable, irrational and sometimes painful to any civilised person. For this reason they are kept from conscious awareness by another unconscious process – that of repression. Repression, however, is never wholly complete and the activities of the unconscious tend to express themselves in veiled form in daily life, for example, in dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes and so on.

Freud's belief in the unconscious originated from his relentless attempt to make sense of his patients' mental symptoms. These symptoms were either very poorly explained by the

patients' rational statements or appeared to be meaningless. By postulating dynamic, unconscious processes, Freud found his patients' symptoms did, in fact, have meaning. Not only did symptoms have a hidden, underlying meaning but so also did the other aspects of ordinary life already referred to – dreams, slips of the tongue and jokes.

In addition to instincts, impulses, feelings and so on active in the unconscious, there are also certain childhood memories. These are relegated to the unconscious and repressed because of their unacceptable and painful nature. They play a part, however, in shaping a person's life. In the view of psychoanalysts the average person will not know or be aware of any of the most significant influences of the past on the present.

In the year of his death, 1939, Freud wrote a final formulation of his theory of personality (Freud, 1949), and it is on this that much of the fourth chapter in this section, Chapter 8, is based. To demonstrate how the components of Freud's theory work, we will look at a series of psychological processes known as defence mechanisms.

Freud's views are also in evidence in the first chapter in this section. This summarises the nature and progress of psychoanalytic therapy. In addition to Freud's views more recent practitioners using this kind of therapy are referred to. Freud's approach to therapy combined attempts at discerning what is happening at an unconscious level with elucidating the role played by the patient's early life in his or her psychological problems.

The second chapter in this section is designed to illustrate more fully the relation between personal history and psychological difficulties arising in the present. It relies heavily but not exclusively on the work of Karen Horney (1885–1952) and examines the subject of self-analysis. Horney belonged to a school of psychoanalytic thought that gave greater credence than did Freud to the influences of society and culture.

The third chapter examines first Freud's view of child development and then moves on to examine a contrasting psycho-

analytical view, that of object relations theorists. These theorists regarded Freud's description of child development as being too concerned with later stages. He was particularly interested in the period between the ages of 4 and 7 years. The object relations group, however, assume that the first few months and years of life are of major importance. We will look at psychological differences between boys and girls to illustrate their theory.