PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. History
3. Main Concepts
   3.1. Freudian theory synthesis:
   3.2 The dynamic unconscious
   3.3. The dream
   3.4. The psychic structure
   3.5. The basic impulses
   3.6. The Oedipus Complex and the transference
   3.7. The Psychoanalytic Therapy
   3.8. After Freud
Acknowledgements
Glossary
Bibliography
Biographical Sketch

Summary

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) founded psychoanalysis, a new theory and treatment of the mind.

Psychoanalysis encompasses psychology, psychosomatics, psychiatry, psychotherapy, education, family and social conflicts, arts, and religions, leading to original, new, creative ideas to help understand the human mind.

Psychoanalysis, as a part of psychology, is an indispensable means of gaining insight into the unconscious and deeper functioning of the mind, through interpretation of dreams and free association, and as a means of treating mental disorders.

In this article some of the most important of Freud's works are considered; such as The interpretation of Dreams, The psychopathology of Everyday Life, Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, The Ego and the Id, and
New introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis.

We also consider the works of M. Klein, D. Winnicott, W.R. Bion, F. Tustin, I. Matte Blanco, and J. Bowlby, who continued and enriched psychoanalytic research with their personal contributions.

1. Introduction

Psychoanalysis emerged over one hundred years ago, in a slow and troubled birth, from the ingenious and creative mind of Sigmund Freud. He formulated concepts and words that crossed psychological, psychosomatic, psychiatric, pedagogical, artistic, and social sciences. In the light of this discipline, we have learned that human beings from their birth establish a mind-body-mind relation which is modulated throughout the life of an individual, looking for harmony among pre-natal, natal and perinatal parts of personality, among body language, inner world and social relational world.

2. History

Sigmund Freud, who was born in Freiberg (today Pzibor) in Moravia on 6th May 1856, and subsequently moved to Vienna, took a degree in Medicine in 1881 and became Professor of Neuropathology in 1885. His psychoanalytical theory created the possibility of deep understanding, not only what happens in the mind, but also in the mind’s relation with the body and with social and family groups (see Systemic Psychology and Psychodynamics of Group Relationships).

Freud oriented his studies mainly to the unconscious—an underground, deep, unknown and obscure world that was difficult to decipher either by non-psychonalytical psychology or by philosophy. The construction of the psychoanalytical theory allowed insight to the dark zones of the human mind and, much to his credit, his revelations still make much sense today.

Freudian theory developed over time by building on contributions from other researchers such as Charles Darwin (‘The Origin of the Species’), Helmholtz, Brucke, and Brentano. A meeting with J. Breuer, a Viennese doctor, led Freud to consider the importance of hypnosis and of ‘transference love’, and stimulated him to understand more about what can happen within the doctor-patient relationship. This led Freud to decide to go to the Neuropathology School of Salpêtriere in Paris, where J.M. Charcot was studying the connection between hypnotisability and hysteria.

Freudian thought was enriched and deepened by later contributions from M. Klein, D. Winnicott, W.R. Bion, F. Tustin, E Bick, J. Bowlby and many others, among whom I. Matte Blanco clearly distinguished himself (see Dynamic Psychology).

W.R. Bion, who continued Freud’s and Klein’s thoughts, proposed that corporeal sensitive experiences may be transformed to thoughts of the dream. Through the ‘free associations’ of the analysed, the obscure contents of the dream come back to daylight and consciousness. This can be developed further through the interpretations of an experienced analyst. After Freud, I. Matte Blanco continued his research into the
unconscious, coming to identify the two ways human beings live reality: that of the ‘dividing thought’, which distinguishes and that which ‘tends to confuse everything in one only indivisible, homogeneous unity’.

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Biographical Sketch

Prof. Ermes Orlandelli, Md., has taught Psychosomatic Medicine and Clinical Psychology at the Schools of Internal Medicine, Gastroentrology and Psychiatry at the Catholic University, in Rome. He is the author or coordinator, with other colleagues, of various psychoanalytical, psychological, psychiatric and medical works, including:

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