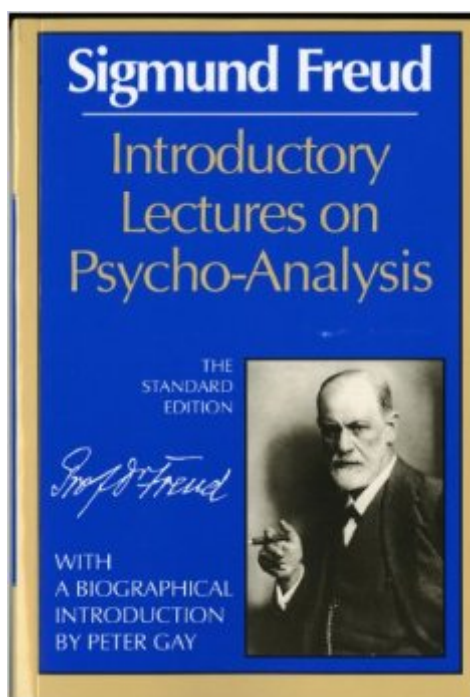


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Introductory Lectures On Psychoanalysis



Synopsis

In 1915 at the University of Vienna 60-year-old Sigmund Freud delivered these lectures on psychoanalysis, pointing to the interplay of unconscious and conscious forces within individual psyches. In reasoned progression he outlined core psychoanalytic concepts, such as repression, free association and libido. Of the various English translations of Freud's major works to appear in his lifetime, only one was authorized by Freud himself: The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud under the general editorship of James Strachey. Freud approved the overall editorial plan, specific renderings of key words and phrases, and the addition of valuable notes, from bibliographical and explanatory. Many of the translations were done by Strachey himself; the rest were prepared under his supervision. The result was to place the Standard Edition in a position of unquestioned supremacy over all other existing versions. Newly designed in a uniform format, each new paperback in the Standard Edition opens with a biographical essay on Freud's life and work •along with a note on the individual volume• by Peter Gay, Sterling Professor of History at Yale.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the best introduction to Freud's ground-breaking psychological theories, now so much maligned and obscured by the apologists for the pharmaceutical stupefaction and mollification that now passes for psychiatry and keeps our bankrupt culture lurching forward. It takes courage to read

this book with an open mind, but if you do you can't but gain new insight into yourself and the people around you. The prose is delightful-- erudite, lucid, penetrating (ha!), and illustrated with beautifully observed examples from literature, history, and Freud's own life and practice.

In these seven lectures, written in 1932, Freud supplements the "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" (also called the General Introduction to Psychoanalysis) delivered in 1915-17, with additions and amendments to his theory developed through the 1920s. The lectures contain a clear, concise presentation of some of Freud's later theory (the super-ego, eros/thanatos, trauma). They also contain some of his most dubious constructs (the castration complex, penis-envy), and a bizarre treatment of female sexuality and super-ego formation that will seem sexist to the modern reader, if not outright misogynist. Sadly, the most controversial of these concepts are not illustrated with the kinds of clinical examples that readers of Freud will have come to expect, relish, and rely on, and thus are very difficult to come to grips with. The remainder of the work is a rather cursory attack on various disciples and rivals, and an attempt to place psychoanalytic theory within a scientific worldview in contraposition to religion and Marxism, as well as a surprisingly credulous treatment of the occult. For the educated layperson seeking a general familiarity with Freud, I would recommend beginning with the Introductory Lectures, and then cherry-picking lectures 31 and 32 of this work for a synopsis of later developments in the theory.

Freud's original Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis were given in Vienna between 1915-1917. These "new lectures" were written in 1932. Freud notes in the Preface, "These new lectures, unlike the former ones, have never been delivered. My age had in the meantime absolved me from the obligation of giving expression to my membership of the University ... by giving lectures... The new lectures are by no means intended to take the place of the earlier ones... they are continuations and supplements." Here are some representative quotations from the book: "(T)he super-ego takes the place of the parental agency and observes, directs and threatens the ego in exactly the same way as earlier the parents did with the child." "(T)he ego is the sole seat of anxiety." "And here I should like to add that I do not think our cures can compete with those of Lourdes. There are so many more people who believe in the miracles of the Blessed Virgin than in the existence of the unconscious." "Religion is an attempt to master the sensory world in which we are situated by means of the wishful world which we have developed within us as a result of biological and psychological necessities. But religion cannot achieve this."

These lectures were given by Freud at the University of Vienna during the winter terms of 1915-1916 and 1916-1917. They were originally delivered extemporaneously, then written down by Freud immediately afterward. Though a modern reader is not likely blithely accept theories such as 'Penis Envy' and the 'Oedipus Complex,' these lectures remain an excellent introduction to Freud's thought, delivered by the man himself. Here are some representative quotations from the book: "(P)sycho-analysis is a procedure for the medical treatment of neurotic patients." "(Psycho-analysis asserts) that instinctual impulses which can only be described as sexual ... play an extremely large and never hitherto appreciated part in the causation of nervous and mental diseases. It asserts further that these same sexual impulses also make contributions that must not be underestimated to the highest cultural, artistic and social creations of the human spirit." "What instigates a dream is a wish, and the fulfillment of that wish is the content of the dream---this is one of the chief characteristics of dreams." "The very great majority of symbols in dreams are sexual symbols." "I refer you to ... C.G. Jung, at a time when he was merely a psycho-analyst and had not yet aspired to be a prophet..." "(After Copernicus and Darwin) human megalomania will have suffered its third and most wounding blow from the psychological research which seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind." "(Psycho-analysis) can be applied to the history of civilization, to the science of religion and to mythology, no less than to the theory of the neuroses, without doing violence to its essential nature. What it aims at and achieves is nothing other than the uncovering of what is unconscious in mental life."

I once read an abbreviated version of this book at a music professor's house while my girlfriend was rehearsing in the other room, and it immediately forced me to appreciate the phenomenon of the "Freudian slip of the tongue." After a few weeks, I wanted to finish the book, but I couldn't remember the name. I got on my beloved .com and looked around, eventually finding this much larger version of the same lecture series. It's fascinating, it truly is, but having read an introduction to Jung alongside it (which told me of Freud's intellectual rigidity), I started reading Freud with an equally closed mind to his own, meaning I read his lectures far more critically than I might otherwise have done with a "nicer" chap's work. Still, his theories are sound (for their time) and the readability is what you might find in a history book written about the same time period (i.e. it's not overly scientific, but the translations from German are garbled sometimes).

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