Chapter Five:

A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE FUNDAMENTAL
CONCEPTS OF FREUDIAN PSYCHOLOGY

5.1. Fundamental concepts of Freudian psychology

In his later work, Freud proposed that the human psyche could be divided into three parts: Id, ego, and super-ego. Freud discussed this model in the 1920 essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and fully elaborated upon it in The Ego and the Id (1923), in which he developed it as an alternative to his previous topographic schema (i.e., conscious, unconscious, and preconscious). The id is the completely unconscious, impulsive, child-like portion of the psyche that operates on the “pleasure principle” and is the source of basic impulses and drives; it seeks immediate pleasure and gratification.¹

“Among the great discoveries of Freud is that of the significance of early childhood. This discovery has several aspects. The infant has already sexual (libidinous) strivings, although not yet in terms of genital sexuality but in what Freud terms “pre-genital sexuality,” which is centered on the “erogenous zones” of mouth, anus, and skin. Freud recognized the fictitiousness of the bourgeois picture of the innocent child and showed that from birth on the little child is endowed with many libidinous strivings of a pre-genital nature.”²

When a child is born, Freud states that this is the “oral” phase. It is also when the mind is hardwired with the ID. The ID is the portion of the

virtual mind that is not reality based and lives totally by appetites and desires. This is what the Buddha would have called *tanhā*, or “thirsts.” It is this part of the mind that suffers from the poison of “clinging.”

When the child reaches two years old, they shift from the “oral” phase to the “oral” phase. This is when the toddler develops the EGO. The ego is the concept of the “self.” It is when a child learns to label himself and the world around him. It is when the parent teaches the terms “mine” and “yours” and continues the conditioning needed to cognize and process the universe around that child.

This cognition makes it possible for the child to develop and survive in their environment. Nevertheless, this very useful skill also develops a delusion that the convenience of a mundane understanding of the world leads to the ignorance that the universe is an ever changing and interconnected process: much like a lava lamp that never stays still, changing shape form, materials and allowing objects to continually arise and reintegrate.

Finally, when the child reaches the age of five they enter the “phallic” phase. This is when the serious rules of society come into play. It is not enough to establish an understanding of the world around us, but the rules of interaction. The Superego is developed at this stage. While the *Id* is a continual craving beast and a great sucking maw of want, the Superego is the rule master. It is the little Jiminy Cricket that continually whispers “don’t do that” and “no” in your ear. It is the poison of aversion.”

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At Freud’s time the myth of the innocent child who knows nothing of sex still governed; furthermore one was not aware of what importance the experiences of the child and particularly the very young child had for the development of his character and thereby of his whole fate.

However, “the discovery of the significance of early childhood events in the development of a person leads easily to an underestimation of the importance of later events. According to Freudian theory the character of a person was more or less completely formed at the age of seven or eight and hence fundamental changes in later years were supposed to be virtually impossible. Empirical data, however, seem to show that this assumption exaggerates the role of childhood.”

As the first memories usually do not go back earlier than the first two or three years, many psychologists do not agree with Freud’s assumption of the significance of early childhood. “The case histories of the Freudian school one is forced to acknowledge that much of what are supposed to be experiences of the earliest childhood are reconstructions. And these reconstructions are very unreliable.”

On the contrary, according to Buddhist psychology, our subconscious life-stream, or bhavanga-sota, must have been going on since time immemorial and must continue for still immeasurable periods of time to come. “This type of consciousness runs through and beneath the whole existence of an individual from birth to death, interrupted only by the occasions of active consciousness. The life-continuum is a result of kamma generated in the past existence, and determines the basic

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4 Eric Fromm, op.cit., p. 63
disposition of the individual in the present.”® That is why Padmasiri de Silva remarks that a “significant aspect of these ‘character traits’ is that they cut across the dispositions of people over a number of births and thus go beyond the limits of childhood experience. This, too, is a concept that has not been absorbed by contemporary psychology in the west."®

Freud acknowledges that his use of the term Id (or the It) derives from the writings of Georg Grodeck. It is interesting to note that the term Id appears in the earliest writing of Boris Sidis, attributed to William James, as early as 1898.

Id is a newly created “Latin” word for what Freud called (in German) das Es. In German, “das” is “the” and “es” is “it”. Das Es is the “it” about us - the part we try to control as distinct from the part of us that tries to control. The simple “es” gets a capital letter when it becomes “Das Es” - because it is now a noun instead of a pronoun.

According to Freud, we are born with our Id. The Id is an important part of our personality because as newborns, it allows us to get our basic needs met. “It contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is laid down in the constitution - above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate from the somatic organisation and which find a first psychical expression here (in the Id) in forms unknown to us...”™

Freud believed that the Id is based on our pleasure principle. In other words, the Id wants whatever feels good at the time, with no

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consideration for the reality of the situation. When a child is hungry, the Id wants food, and therefore the child cries. When the child needs to be changed, the Id cries. When the child is uncomfortable, in pain, too hot, too cold, or just wants attention, the Id speaks up until his or her needs are met.

The Id doesn’t care about reality, about the needs of anyone else, only its own satisfaction. If you think about it, babies are not real considerate of their parents’ wishes. They have no care for time, whether their parents are sleeping, relaxing, eating dinner, or bathing. When the id wants something, nothing else is important.

“If the id’s instinctual demands meet with no satisfaction, intolerable conditions arise. Experience soon shows that these situations of satisfaction can only be established with the help of the external world. At that point the portion of the id which is directed towards the external world - the ego - begins to function. If all the driving force that sets the vehicle in motion is derived from the id, the ego, as it were, undertakes the steering, without which no goal can be reached. The instincts in the id press for immediate satisfaction at all costs, and it that way they achieve nothing or even bring about appreciable damage. It is the task of the ego to guard against such mishaps, to mediate between the claims of the id and the objections of the external world.”

Libido, instinct energy or force, is contained in the Id. Libido is a Latin word for desire, lust, passion or caprice. Freud used the Latin (not a German) word. In English “libidinous” (lustful, lecherous or lewd) had been in use for many centuries, but libido was introduced by Brill’s

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translation of Freud’s Selected Papers on Hysteria in 1909. The libido fixates on different erogenous zones - first in the oral stage (exemplified by an infant’s pleasure in nursing), then in the anal stage (exemplified by a toddler’s pleasure in controlling his or her bowels), then in the phallic stage, through a latency stage in which the libido is dormant, to its reemergence at puberty in the genital stage. This concept is similar to kāmataṇhā or kāmarāgānusaya in Buddhist psychology.

In chapter two of the book “The Theory of the Instincts”, Freud says: “forces which we assume to exist behind the tensions caused by the needs of the id are called instincts... we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, Eros, life instincts, and Thanato, the destructive instinct” or the “death instinct.”

Eros, life instincts, is the tendency toward survival, propagation, and other creative, life-producing drives. Eros is associated with positive emotions of love, and hence pro-social behavior, cooperation, collaboration and other behaviors that support harmonious societies. This concept is similar to bhavataṇhā or bhavarāgānusaya in Buddhist psychology.

Thanatos, the death instinct, is the drive towards death, self-destruction and the return to the inanimate state. Thanatos is associated with negative emotions such as fear, hate and anger, which lead to anti-social acts from bullying to murder (perhaps as projection of the death drive). The presence of the Death Drive was only recognized in his later years, and the contrast between the two represents a revolution in his manner of thinking. The death instinct is also referred to as the Nirvana
Principle. This concept is similar to *vibhavataṇhā* or *patighānusaya* in Buddhist psychology.

If the Id is the selfish part of personality, demands immediate gratification or operates on the pleasure principal (I want it, I want it now mentality), the Ego operates on the reality principal (reality is you can’t always get what you want, nor can you always give others what they want), its job is to balance the conflict between the id and super-ego.

Ego is a newly created Latin word for what Freud called (in German) *das Ich*. In German, “*das*” is “the” and “*ich*” is “I”, or “*Ich*” is self. You can say “*ich bin*” (I am) and you can talk about “*sein anderes Ich*” (one’s other self). So “*Das Ich*” is the “I” or “self” that struggles to please, control and reconcile the other parts of our personality without getting us into too many problems with the external world.

“The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions.”

In a healthy person, according to Freud, the ego is the strongest so that it can satisfy the needs of the *Id*, not upset the superego, and still take into consideration the reality of every situation. Not an easy job by any means, but if the *Id* gets too strong, impulses and self gratification take over the person’s life. If the superego becomes too strong, the person

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9 Sigmund Freud, op.cit., p.450
would be driven by rigid morals, would be judgmental and unbending in his or her interactions with the world.

This concept is not similar to the concept of *Atta* (self, ego) in Buddhist psychology but rather similar to the mental factor *vitakka* (reflection, or thinking).

Super-ego is our incorporation with norms and values, sort of the giving part of the personality, encompasses our conscious and gives us that guilty feeling when we’ve done something wrong. Super-ego is a newly created Latin word for what Freud called (in German) *über-ich*, which can also be *writtenueber-ich*. In German, one of the meanings of “über” is “over”. “Ich” is “I” or “self”, so the super-ego is the “over-I” or the “over-self”.

This concept is similar to *mānānusaya* in Buddhist psychology.

Sigmund Freud cautions his readers how they should understand his theory of psychical structure in a correct manner:

“When you think of this dividing up of the personality into ego, super-ego and id, you must not imagine sharp dividing lines such as are artificially drawn in the field of political geography. We cannot do justice to the characteristics of the mind by means of linear contours, such as occur in a drawing or in a primitive painting, but we need rather the areas of colour shading off into one another that are to be found in modern pictures. After we have made our separations, we must allow what we have separated to merge again. Do not judge too harshly of a first attempt at picturing a thing so elusive as the human mind.”

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11 Sigmund Freud, op.cit., p. 450
5.2. Methods of treatment of psycho-pathology in Freudian psychology in the light of Buddhism

“Both psychoanalysis and Buddhism concern themselves with dissatisfaction, human suffering, and its alleviation; both offer a kind of ‘diagnosis’ and a ‘treatment plan’. “They both take place within an important personal emotional relationship: the relationship of therapist-client, and the relationship of teacher-student. They emphasize the importance of comparable experiential processes: in analysis evenly hovering attention and free association, in Buddhism the method of meditation. The obstacles in these processes are recognized and have an important function in the transformation-process: defence and resistance in psychoanalysis and what are called ‘hindrances’ in Buddhism.”\textsuperscript{12}

“The guiding principle of psychoanalysis is that knowing oneself requires knowing also one’s unconscious and dealing with it, so that its unrecognized pressures will not lead one to act in a way detrimental to oneself and others. With this in mind, the self-knowledge required for a true understanding of the sayings of the oracle might be seen as extending to the normally unconscious aspects of ourselves.”\textsuperscript{13} With this guiding principle, Freud has devised many methods of treatments such as hypnosis, free association, dream interpretation and self-analysis.

5.2.1. Hypnosis

Freud’s early work in psychology and psychoanalysis endeavored to understand and cure the human mind by means of hypnosis. Freud’s initial exposure to hypnosis in a clinical setting was over the winter of


1885-1886, when he studied in Paris with Jean-Martin Charcot, a renowned French professor of neurology. Charcot’s work centered on the causes of hysteria, a disorder which could cause paralyses and extreme fits. He soon discovered that the symptoms of hysteria could be induced in non-hysterics by hypnotic suggestion and that the symptoms of hysterics could be alleviated or transformed by hypnotic suggestion. This ran contrary to the then-prevalent belief that hysteria had physiological causes; it suggested that a deeper, unseen level of consciousness could affect an individual’s conscious conduct.

Usually the hypnotist engages the subject’s attention while uttering monotonous, repetitive verbal commands. A phenomenon of degrees, ranging from light to profound trance states, and characterized by a high degree of suggestibility, hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness, wholly dissimilar to either wakefulness or sleep, during which attention is withdrawn from the outside world and is concentrated on mental, sensory and physiological experiences.

The hypnotized individual seems to follow instructions in an uncritical, automatic fashion. During hypnosis his perception of the real world is defined by the hypnotist’s suggestions, which are literally followed, even though they may be in direct contradiction to the stimuli that impinge upon him. In this sense the phenomenon has been described as a “dream-like state”, suggesting a regressive mental functioning of the hypnotized subject.

Posthypnotic amnesia can either result spontaneously from deep hypnosis or it can result from suggestion by the hypnotist during the trance state. Conversely, it may be successfully removed by appropriate
hypnotic suggestions. If amnesia is induced during the trance state, the individual will not be aware of the source of his impulse to perform the instructed act in his subsequent waking activity.

On the other hand, hypermnesia, a memory capacity that transcends the everyday ability, is another aspect of hypnotic behaviour - the subject can remember deeply repressed experiences and still have no recollection of them at the ordinary level of consciousness. The revival of early, forgotten memories may be fused with fantasies though.

Hypnosis has been officially endorsed as a therapeutic method by medical, psychiatric, dental, and psychological associations throughout the world.¹⁴

Freud subsequently collaborated with Josef Breuer, who applied hypnosis not just to cause or suppress the symptoms of hysteria but to actually divine the root causes. In his work with Anna O, he found that by tracing her associations in an auto-hypnotic state, he could not only find an original repressed incident, but could actually cure her of her symptom. When she related an event to a symptom while in a hypnotic state, her symptom would become terribly powerful and dramatic, but would then be purged, never to trouble her again. This powerful and often traumatic transfer of a memory from the unconscious to the conscious is known as catharsis, an effective method which also seems to corroborate Freud’s theories on the mind.

Hypnosis and meditation are not too dissimilar from each other in that both hypnosis and meditation allow you to block out the world

around you and focus on an object, place, or word that will make you feel tranquil, calm, and de-stressed. The main difference there is between hypnosis and meditation is the way that they are practiced.

“To understand how hypnosis and meditation works, it is important to understand what hypnosis and meditation are on their own. True meditation is the cessation of all thought. It is likened to the mind being a clean slate. It is letting go of all the everyday expectations that keep us feeling that we are never good enough. It is being at peace with who you are and what you do. When that stage of meditation is reached, you have ceased the contemplation of what if I do this or what if I didn’t do this right? Living up to other people’s expectations or our own expectations of ourselves causes stress which in turn can cause high blood pressure, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and generally make us feel lousy. Meditation can free your mind of all these negative thoughts and let you experience an inner peace. It won’t make everyday problems go away; it helps you perceive them in a different light. The rumination process will be less stressful and most likely more productive once you can step back and see things in perspective.

Hypnosis is often thought of as someone swinging an object in front of your face and telling you that you are becoming very sleepy. Then you are instructed to do various things that make you feel silly afterward. The truth is hypnosis is a state of mind that we enter several times a day. When you get involved in anything to the extent that you turn off everything else around you hypnosis has occurred. Watching a movie, reading a book, working a puzzle, or just daydreaming are some
common hypnotic states. If you get engrossed in any of these activities and lose track of time you become hypnotized.”

Hypnosis and meditation can each be used to eliminate physical discomfort, bring about balance to the system, and reduce mental and emotional stress. However, in meditation, the conscious awareness of the practitioner is called into play. That is, the meditator intentionally focuses his or her mind on something in particular: a symbol, a candle flame, a mantra, the rhythm of the breath, or an overall awareness of the environment. In most forms of hypnosis, the practitioner may begin with some conscious focus of attention, for instance counting, visualizing, gazing at something, but as the trance is induced, the conscious concentration becomes less important. Concentration may continue, but it is not necessary to the experience.

As Philip H. Farber remarks in The Journal of Hypnotism:

“With that principle difference between meditation and hypnosis noted, I would suggest that meditation is among the most useful things a hypnotherapist can study or practice. The ability to pass along simple meditation techniques to your clients can extend the range of effective modalities that you offer. Once a client has experienced the state of relaxation or quiet produced by meditation, that state can be incorporated into behavior modification in numerous ways. For instance, a client can be taught to meditate or experience a state similar to that induced by meditation, instead of having a violent reaction, smoking, drinking, or any other habit or situational behavior that is associated with stress. The

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15 Harriet Base, Hypnosis and Meditation, accessed at http://www.project-meditation.org/a_wim1/hypnosis_and_meditation.html
act of meditating can be linked to the situation using hypnotic suggestion.”\textsuperscript{16}

Freud soon abandoned hypnosis in favor of conscious psychoanalysis, first for the technique of free association, then eventually for his well-known technique of observational, couch-based psychoanalysis.

5.2.2. Free association

Freud eventually abandoned hypnosis as a clinical technique, both because of its fallibility and because he found that patients could recover and comprehend crucial memories while conscious. Using the technique of free association, Freud asked patients to relate anything which came into their mind, regardless of how apparently unimportant or potentially embarrassing the memory threatened to be. This technique is intended to help the patient learn more about what he or she thinks and feels, in an atmosphere of non-judgmental curiosity and acceptance. Psychoanalysis assumes that people are often conflicted between their need to learn about themselves, and their (conscious or unconscious) fears of and defenses against change and self-exposure. The method of free association has no linear or preplanned agenda, but works by intuitive leaps and linkages which may lead to new personal insights and meanings: “the logic of association is a form of unconscious thinking.”

“The importance of free association is that the patients spoke for themselves, rather than repeating the ideas of the analyst; they work through their own material, rather than parroting another’s suggestions.”\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Philip H. Farber, \textit{Hypnosis and Meditation}, The Journal of Hypnotism, © copyright 2002

\textsuperscript{17} Pamela Thurschwell, Sigmund Freud, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 24
This technique assumed that all memories are arranged in a single associative network, and that sooner or later the subject would stumble across the crucial memory. Unfortunately, Freud found that despite a subject’s every effort to remember, a certain resistance kept him from the most painful and important memories. He eventually came to understand that certain items were completely repressed, and off-limits to the conscious realm of the mind.

Free association with the use of the couch are well known, starting with the evident emphasis it places on verbalization. For the patient whose capacity to express thought and feeling sufficiently in words is limited, the loss of facial expression and bodily gesture as means of communication may interfere with free association rather than enhance it. On the positive side there is a tendency to diminish conscious control of the associations more readily, to increase self-observation, and to emphasize fantasy rather than reality with the absence of visual cues.

“The use of the couch ultimately contributes to the patient’s relaxation, though at first it may promote anxiety, and for patients who move from chair to couch it regularly produces an initial sense of loss of the analyst. For the analyst it provides an immediate source of relaxation, which permits greater attention to the free associations. This relaxation results partly from being in a position to allow his facial expressions the free play they need as an intrinsic component of his emotional experience. In addition, the analyst out of view can respond when response is needed but can more readily listen, unguarded against sudden powerfully appealing demands for intervention communicated in facial expressions.”

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Freud’s eventual practice of psychoanalysis focused not so much on the recall of these memories as on the internal mental conflicts which kept them buried deep within the mind, though the technique of free association still plays a role today in the study of the mind.

Here we should notice the similarity as well as the difference between Buddhist meditation and Freudian method of free association. Freud instructed his patients to maintain “an evenly hovering attention” to their free associations, while Buddha taught a way of meditation by “a bare attention” to the flow of consciousness. “Both trained their followers to be observers of the productions of the mind. The object of attention was similar for both, the flow of consciousness. The stream of consciousness is like a continuously flowing river of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. At times the current is swift, and at other times, almost still. But like Old Man River, it “just keeps moving along.” We can approach that flowing river of thoughts, feelings, and sensations in several different ways. If we do not like what bubbles to the surface, we may try to either stop or ignore the flow, thinking to ourselves, “If I just ignore it, it will go away and won’t bother me.” Nevertheless, the current seeps through our obstacles, influencing our moods and behavior. Or the pressure builds up to the point that the dam eventually breaks; a raging torrent of thoughts and emotions bursts forth. Alternatively, we may jump into the river and allow ourselves to be carried along by its current, facing to the dangers of drowning in the churning thoughts and feelings. A third approach, advocated by both Freud and Buddha, is to stand back and observe closely the flow of the river, paying close attention to the emergence and intermingling of thoughts, feelings, and sensations, tracing them back to their source.”

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However, while Freud encouraged his patients to talk freely without censor, the Buddha’s disciples just sit silently to observe their minds. “When we sit, we do not try to become calm or peaceful or to quiet the mind; rather, we practice staying with and in the midst of whatever feelings arise. However, simply sitting still for regular periods of time every day, does end up having a steadying and centering effect. Following the breath and labeling thoughts initially leads to building up a stable internal “observer” who is not buffered by conflicting emotions or swept up by the flow of association or rumination. A meditator becomes increasingly able to interrupt repetitive or obsessive trains of thought and sit in a “wordless” silence with the anxiety or bodily tension that ordinarily accompanies such thinking. At this point, the observer dissolves into the experience of just sitting. It is this progressively increasing capacity to tolerate previously intolerable, warded-off affect states that provides the core structure-building dimension of Zen practice. Like psychoanalysis, Zen practice is a structured, relational context for eliciting, tolerating, and working through one’s patterns of organizing affective experience, including affects that have been previously repressed or dissociated.”

5.2.3. Self-analysis

Freud’s self-analysis started in the mid 1890’s to reach its climaxes in 1895 and 1900. In certain authors’ opinion, it was continued up to his death in 1939. Freud’s discoveries during his first stage of self-analysis are known to have been included in two of his main books: “The Interpretation of Dreams” and “The Psychopathology of Everyday Life”.

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“The Interpretation of Dreams” provides plenty of Freud’s dreams in his own interpretation, among which the famous dream of Irma’s injection, which he considers a key issue in understanding the mysteries of dream life. It opens Chapter II (“The Method Of Interpreting Dreams: An Analysis Of A Specimen Dream”) and provides material for an analysis covering several pages ahead.

Just as Freud himself maintained, the analysis of the dream is not complete but it was here that Freud for the first time asserted that dreams are the disguised fulfillment of unconscious wishes.

The explanation of the dream is quite simple: it tries to hide Freud’s lack of satisfaction with the treatment given to a patient of his, Irma, and throw the guilt of partial failure upon others, exonerate Freud of other professional errors.

“The Psychopathology of Everyday Life”, offers Freud room to focus on the analysis of faulty and symptomatic actions, the important thing to emphasize here being that this volume represents Freud’s transfer from the clinical to normal life - it proves neurotic features are present not only in sickness but also in health. The difference does not lie in quality but in quantity. Repression is greater with the sick and the free libido is sensibly diminished. Therefore, it is for the first time in the history of psychopathology that Freud overrules the difference between pathology and health. That makes it possible to apply psychoanalysis to so-called normal life...

Rieff points out that Freud’s dictum that “we are all somewhat hysterical” and the Freudian claim that the difference between so-called
normality and neurosis is only a matter of degree is a key statement.  

This position resembles the Buddhist axiom “All worldlings are deranged” (sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā). Diseases have been classified into bodily disease (kāyiko rogo) and mental disease (cetasiko rogo). A person suffers from bodily disease from time to time, but psychological ailments continue until the final state of sainthood is attained.” Fromm says that it is only at the superficial level that Freud appears as a creator of a new therapy for mental illness. He says that Freud’s own system transcended the traditional concept of illness and cure, and thus he was concerned “with the “salvation” of man, rather than only with the therapy for mentally sick patients.”

Freud does not belong to that class of philosophers or psychologists who dwell academically on the profundities of life but leave them severely alone in their private lives. He was deeply involved and immersed in everything he wrote and he himself underwent a vigorous process of self-analysis before he worked out his final psychoanalytic theories. This vigour and inner seriousness are manifest in his relationship with his patients. He was averse to moralizing and preaching to his patients, but he was prepared to analyze a patient for a prolonged period of time. As Fromm says, Freud considered the emancipation, the well-being and the enlightenment of even one individual a matter of concern in the final analysis. He did not measure his results in term of money and time.

The discovery of Oedipus’ complex is indicated in a historic letter Freud wrote to Fliess, his friend and confidante:

22 BFP, p.32
23 Ibid.
“I have found, in my own case too, [the phenomenon of] being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider it a universal event in early childhood, even if not so early as in children who have been made hysterical.”24

In its monograph of Freud’s biography, Peter Gay asserts that “The method Freud used in his self-analysis was that of free association and the material he mainly relied upon was that his own dreams provided”. But he didn’t stop there: “[Freud] also made a collection of his memories, of speaking or spelling mistakes, slips concerning verse and patients’ names and he allowed these clues to lead him from one idea to the other, through the “usual roundabouts” of free association.”25

One of the most beautiful examples of self-analysis can be found in his letter to Romain Rolland, entitled “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis”.

The disturbance occurred as follows: In the summer of 1904, after prolonged hesitation, Freud suddenly traveled to Athens in the company of his brother Alexander. Once up on the Acropolis, instead of the expected admiration, he was enveloped by a strange feeling of doubt. He was surprised that something he had been learning about at school really exists. He felt divided in two: one person who empirically realized his actual presence on the Acropolis and the other that found it hard to believe, as if denying the reality of the fact.

In the mentioned text, Freud tries to elucidate this feeling of strangeness, of unreality. He then showed that the trip to Athens was the
object of wish mingled with guilt. That was a desire because, from his early childhood even, he had had dreams of traveling expressing his wish to evade the family atmosphere, the narrow-mindedness and poverty of living conditions he had known in his youth.

On the other hand, there was also guilt, as for Freud going to Athens meant getting farther than his own father, who was too poor to travel, to uneducated to be interested in these places. To climb the Acropolis in Freud’s mind was to definitely surpass his father, something the son was clearly forbidden to. Let us resort to Freud’s own words:

“But here we come upon the solution of the little problem of why it was that already at Trieste we interfered with our enjoyment of the voyage to Athens. It must be that a sense of guilt was attached to the satisfaction in having gone such a long way: there was something about it that was wrong, that from earliest times had been forbidden. It was something to do with a child’s criticism of his father, with the undervaluation which took the place of the overvaluation of earlier childhood. It seems as though the essence of success was to have got further than one’s father, and as though to excel one’s father was still something forbidden.”

The Difference between Self-analysis and Introspection

The practice of introspection has its origins in St. Augustus’ Confessions. It is thus defined as an analysis of our mind’s contents that are directly accessible and ethical in character as it launches a debate on

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the relationship between moral man, which he longs to be, and immoral 
man, which he is by birth.

Augustin does not understand dreams and thinks it is God who is 
responsible for their emergence. There is no trace here of any knowledge 
of the unconscious mind, of the way it works. This is the field of 
Christian psychology which only assumes a horizontal dimension of 
analysis.

Self-analysis does not deal with only known things. Having known 
facts as a starting point, the self-analyser goes deep into the world of his 
unconscious life and leaves aside the ethic criterion for a while. 
Conscious psychic manifestations are connected to their unconscious 
roots and can be explained through the latter.

In this self-analysis God vanishes and with him the guilt of the 
self-analyzer. Moreover, the investigation of unconscious needs resorting 
to the special investigation methods psychoanalysis has introduced: free 
associations, dream-analysis, work with slips and symbols, etc.

In short, we may say that whereas introspection does nothing else 
but reintegrate us into the level of our social values, psychoanalytic self-
analysis offers us the opportunity of a radical change in our inner and 
outer being from the perspective of a reevaluation of these social values. 
We may conclude his contribution and influence on other psychologists 
of the times by Bruno’s remark:

“Like the father of American psychology, William James, Freud 
based his work mainly on introspection – his own and that of his patients. 
Introspection is what psychoanalysis is all about. Although Freud is often
quoted today in introductory psychology texts – more often, in fact, than any other writer on psychology – his writings have only superficially influenced the work of the academic psychologists who quote him.”\textsuperscript{27}

In western psychology introspection is often considered an unreliable technique for studying mental phenomena, since our private experiences cannot be checked by others. “This aversion to introspective attention, which begins by being deliberate, quickly becomes habitual. What is interesting in this analysis is that there can be gradations of personalities, some in whom the ignored and the misdescribed becomes one with the “inaccessible” in the Freudian sense, and some in whom the process has just begun and not taken root in the personality. With the later group an ordinary effort to look at themselves honestly should help them get at the self-knowledge required to transform their personalities. Though there is a close connection between ignored and inaccessible experiences, many experiences which have become inaccessible were not ignored when they happened, and some which were ignored when they happened have not become inaccessible.”\textsuperscript{28}

“According to the Buddha introspection can be cultivated methodically, biases can be eliminated and our powers of reflection refined. When the development of the mind is pursued in a methodical manner, it is possible to achieve extra-sensory powers such as telepathy and clairvoyance. The development of introspection at the higher levels of meditation is considered as the test of objectivity.”\textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{28} BFP, p.48

5.2.4. Dream interpretation

In the dictionary, dream is defined as “a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person’s mind during sleep.”

From the ancient time, people have inquired the nature and operation of dreams. In brief, there are four theories of dream phenomena:

1. The physiological theory, recognizes organic and muscular disturbances as the source of such dreams as falling from a mountain, flying into sky etc.
2. The Psychological theory, recognizes central stimulation born of automatic activities of the mind as the source of common dreams which are echoes of past waking experiences and which are related to wish-fulfillment.
3. The Superstitious theory recognizes spirits as the source of dreams. These may also be called telepathic dreams.
4. The Clairvoyant theory, recognizes merit and demerit as the source of prophetic dreams.30

According to Sigmund Freud, “the dream is not comparable to the irregular sounds of a musical instrument, which, instead of being played by the hand of a musician, is struck by some external force; the dream is not meaningless, not absurd, does not presuppose that one part of our store of ideas is dormant while another part begins to awake. It is a perfectly valid psychic phenomenon, actually a wish-fulfillment; it may be enrolled in the continuity of the intelligible psychic activities of the waking state; it is built up by a highly complicated intellectual activity.”31

Dreams which present the most painful content, and not the least trace of wish-fulfillment, occur frequently enough. From our conscious reflection we know that, when applying our attention, we follow a particular course. But if that course leads us to an idea which cannot withstand criticism, we break off and allow the cathexis of attention to drop. Now, it would seem that the train of thought thus started and abandoned may continue to develop without our attention returning to it, unless at some point it attains a specially high intensity which compels attention. An initial conscious rejection by our judgment, on the ground of incorrectness or uselessness for the immediate purpose of the act of thought, may, therefore, be the cause of a thought-process going on unnoticed by consciousness until the onset of sleep.

We call such a train of thought a preconscious train, and we believe it to be perfectly correct, and that it may equally well be a merely neglected train or one that has been interrupted and suppressed.

Henceforth the neglected or suppressed train of thought is in a position to maintain itself, although this reinforcement gives it no claim to access to consciousness. We may say, then, that the hitherto preconscious train of thought has been drawn into the unconscious.

In every dream we may find some reference to the experiences of the preceding day. “Whatever dream I turn to, whether my own or someone else’s, this experience is always confirmed. Knowing this, I may perhaps begin the work of interpretation by looking for the experience of the preceding day which has stimulated the dream; in many cases this is indeed the quickest way.”\footnotemark

\footnotetext{Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation Of Dreams, Chapter 5A, accessed at http://www.zhzx.net.cn/teacher/teacherhome/wangjinli/classics/dreams/Chapter5A.htm}
What has claimed our attention during the day dominates our dream-thoughts also, and we take pains to dream only in connection with such matters as have given us food for thought during the day.

With this food of thought, “we invent a story which serves to explain why we feel fear or joy or hate, and so on. In other words, the dream has the function of rationalizing feelings which we experience during sleep. If that were so, it would indicate that even in our sleep we have the same tendency to make affects appear to be reasonable as we so clearly have in our waking life. Dreams thus can be looked at as the result of an inherent tendency to bend feelings to the requirements of reasonableness.”

Thus we interpret the fact that the dream-content takes up remnants of trivial experiences as a manifestation of dream-distortion (by displacement), and we thereupon remember that we have recognized this dream-distortion as the work of a censorship operating between the two psychic instances. We may therefore expect that dream-analysis will constantly show us the real and psychically significant source of the dream in the events of the day, the memory of which has transferred its accentuation to some indifferent memory.

At any rate, the interpretation of dreams is the royal to a knowledge of the unconscious element in our psychic life. By the analysis of dreams we obtain some insight into the composition of this most marvellous and most mysterious of instruments; it is true that this only takes us a little way, but it gives us a start which enables us, setting out from the angle of

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33 Erich Fromm, op.cit., p. 99
other (properly pathological) formations, to penetrate further in our disjoining of the instrument.

“A dream which has not been interpreted is like a letter that has not been opened. This sentence expresses the recognition that a dream is a message which we send to ourselves and which we have to understand in order to understand ourselves. Yet in spite of the long history of dream interpretation. Freud was the first one to give the interpretation such a systematic and scientific basic. He gave us the tools for the understanding of dreams, which anybody can use provided he learns how to handle them.”34

One can hardly exaggerate the significance of dream interpretation. First of all it makes us aware of feelings and thoughts that exist within ourselves and yet which we are not aware of while we are awake. The dream, as Freud once put it, is the royal way to the understanding of the unconscious. Secondly, the dream is a creative act in which the average person demonstrates creative powers of whose existence he has no idea when he is awake. “Freud discovered, furthermore, that our dreams are not the simple expression of unconscious strivings but that they are usually distorted by the influence of a subtle censorship which is even present when we are asleep and forces us to distort the true meaning of our dream thoughts (the “latent dream”). Thus the censor is deceived, as it were, and permits the hidden thoughts to pass the frontier to consciousness if there are sufficiently disguised. This concept led Freud to the assumption that every dream (with the exception of children’s

34 Erich Fromm, op.cit., pp.70-71
dreams) is distorted and has to be restored to its original meaning by dream interpretation.”

Those features that are considered incompatible with a respectable professional man like Freud are relegated to childhood, and it is implied that in as much as they belong to childhood experiences they do not represent the experience of the adult. “The assumption that all neurotic tendencies arise in childhood is in fact the protection of the adult from the suspicion of being neurotic. Freud was indeed a very neurotic man but it was impossible for him to conceive of himself as such and at the same time to feel his was a normal respectable profession. Hence everything that did not fit into the pattern of the normal man was considered to be childhood material and this childhood material was not considered to be still fully alive and present in the adult. (This of course has all changed in the last fifty years, since neurosis has become respectable, and the model of the rational, healthy, normal adult bourgeois has been dismissed from the cultural scene.)

5.2.5. Work with slip of tongue

‘A suppression of a previous intention to say something is the indispensable condition for the occurrence of a slip of the tongue.’

A slip is the product both of a local opportunity from the particular circumstances and of a struggle between two mental forces: some underlying need or wish and the desire to keep it hidden. The commonest slips of the tongue are when, instead of saying one word, we say another.

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35 Erich Fromm, op.cit., pp.70-71
36 Ibid, pp.87-88
very much like it; and this similarity is for many people a sufficient explanation of such slips.’ The most usual, and at the same time the most striking kind of slips of the tongue, however, are those in which one says the precise opposite of what one intended to say. Here, of course, we are very remote from relations between sounds and the effects of similarity; and instead we can appeal to the fact that contraries have a strong conceptual kinship with each other and stand in a particularly close psychological association with each other. There are historical examples of such occurrences. A President of the Lower House of our Parliament once opened the sitting with the words: ‘Gentlemen, I take notice that a full quorum of members is present and herewith declare the sitting closed.’

“If I make a slip of the tongue, I might obviously do so in an infinite number of ways, the right word might be replaced by any of a thousand others, it might be distorted in countless different directions. Is there something, then, that compels me in the particular case to make the slip in one special way, or does it remain a matter of chance, of arbitrary choice, and is the question perhaps one to which no sensible answer at all can be given?”

In yet other cases the slip of the tongue merely adds a second sense to the one intended. The sentence then sounds like a contraction, abbreviation or condensation of several sentences. Thus, when the energetic lady said: ‘He can eat and drink what I want’, it was just as though she had said: ‘He can eat and drink what he wants; but what has

38 Sigmund Freud, op.cit., p.48
39 Ibid., p. 47
he to do with wanting? I will want instead of him.’ A slip of the tongue often gives the impression of being an abbreviation of this sort.\(^{40}\)

Freud applied similar arguments to slips of action and memory lapses. Indeed, it was his inability to recall the last name of a minor poet that set him on the track in the first place. And therein lies his genius: his ability to see the value of what he termed ‘the refuse of the phenomenal world’.

While applying all the above mentioned methods such as hypnosis, free association, self-analysis, dream-interpretation, work with slip of tongue, slip of pen, Freud tried to explore the hidden motives behind his own and his patients’ daily action. “The purpose of Freud’s lifelong struggle was to help us understand ourselves, so that we would no longer be propelled, by forces unknown to us, to live lives of discontent, or perhaps outright misery, and to make others miserable, very much to our own detriment. In examining the content of the unconscious, Freud called into question some deeply cherished beliefs, such as the unlimited perfectibility of man and his inherent goodness; he made us aware of our ambivalences and of our ingrained narcissism, with its origins in infantile self-centeredness, and he showed us its destructive nature.”\(^{41}\)

Nevertheless, though trying to explore the deep underlying factors of human minds, Freud’s method can touch only the “reconstruction” of thought through remembering and analyzing the dreams or expressing whatever thoughts coming into one’s mind. As Daniel N. Stern remarks:

\(^{40}\) Sigmund Freud, op.cit., p.56
“Usually psychoanalysis is more interested in the (re)construction than in the happening (if knowable). After all, it is the (re)construction that revises and changes the happening into a psycho-dynamically pertinent psychic reality. In a sense, psychoanalysis is so focused on the verbally reconstructed aspect of experience that the phenomenal gets lost. Everything in treatment is after the fact. It is as if intellectual and linguistic functions always operate on what might happen or on what did happen, but never on what is happening.”

While Buddhist mindfulness focus on what is happening at the present moment as it is, “psychoanalysis treats happenings as they unfold in the present moment as events displaced in time and person (transference), as yet another instantiation of past patterns, as springboards for free associations, or as only surface events like the manifest content of dreams. Much is lost.”

The stored patterns of perception have memories and beliefs, associated emotions, and even a physical dimension of patterns in the body. “Mindfulness practice uncovers these patterns held in the individual unconscious. These become revealed through our body, our emotions, our images, our dreams. Sankharas that are unconscious can become conscious.

At first, ‘mindfulness’ meditation means, just like free association and free-floating attention, a therapeutic splitting in the I, where the I observes itself. This results in the reinforcement of the ability of the

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43 Ibid., p.142.
observing I to notice changes from moment to moment. “One could say that ‘mindfulness’ means the development of the synthetic ability of the I within the I: synthesis at still more complex levels of differentiation and ‘objectification’ of reality. Mindfulness can be seen as a developmental tool towards a mindful self and beyond.”45

With mindfulness we can become aware of the impulses of greed or pride or anger and release some of their powerful effects. But we soon discover that even if we let go of our entanglement in them for a moment, they will return. This is because their unconscious roots remain untouched. Buddhist psychology describes how deep and powerful these roots can be. As Freud and his Western colleagues have done, it endeavors to bring them into conscious awareness. But then, “Buddhist teaching shows how human development can take a significant step beyond the awareness and accommodation of drives that is the fruit of most Western clinical practices. It teaches that these deepest roots can be transformed in a way that brings a degree of freedom unknown to the West.”46

These deep drives, unconscious fears, grasping, and confusions are called the latent roots (anusaya). In the forest monasteries, advanced meditators are instructed to deliberately investigate these unconscious forces and thus release themselves from their power. Meditators who have trained their mind to be concentrated, steady, clear, and transparent will examine the heart, search for the latent roots of suffering there, and release them. They will systematically bring up images of what they most deeply fear or hate or crave. In this practice, we can take any area of

46 Ibid., p.163
suffering in our life. We bring it to mind, then we carefully examine the unconscious roots of this suffering.

Through profound insight and deep meditation, these latent roots can be released, bringing successive degrees of freedom, called stages of enlightenment. In the first enlightenment stage (Sotāpanna) the confusions about the way (sīlabbataparāmāsa), doubts about freedom (vicikicchā), and misunderstandings about the self (sakkāyadiṭṭhi) are released. In the next two enlightenment stages (sakādagāmī and anāgamī) the instinctual roots of greed (kāmarāga) and aggression (paṭīgha) are weakened and then released. In the final stage (arahatta) the last unconscious clinging to refined states of consciousness and attachments to any sense of self are dissolved.

Psychoanalysis has been extremely useful in helping people understand how their earliest experience of relationship influences their sense of self and their approach to interpersonal relationships. However, as Geshe Tashi Tsering remarks:

“According to books I have read and my discussions with psychoanalysts, the aim of psychoanalysis is to bring the various elements of the psyche – emotions, memories, and so forth – into harmony so that the person develops a greater cohesion of his sense of self. This is the final goal. In contrast, the aspiration in Buddhism is to rise above the very concept of self or “I.” Rather than harmonizing the disharmonious elements of the psyche so it becomes whole, and hence reifying the concept of the self, the goal according to the Buddhist
teachings is to transcend the very concept of the self. This is clearly a big difference.”

Buddhism takes a universal view of our human struggles, suggesting that all of us, regardless of our personal traumas, can be helped by remembering that everything changes, including our most entrenched struggles and vexing relationships. It is simply the nature of reality. So too, we depend upon each other for everything - our food, education, healthcare, companionship. According to Buddhist thought, none of us can get through this life, or achieve abiding happiness, alone. So it makes sense to treat each other with genuine care, knowing that we share the same wish to be happy and free from suffering.

Today, Buddhism and Freudian psychology are mixing minds and ideas through an expanding population of Westerners who want to understand the influence of their own personal history, while not getting too caught up in it. In this way, Buddhism and psychoanalysis have begun to cultivate a true partnership that seems to be ushering in wellness on a new scale.

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