Siegfried Bernfeld
Studien zu Leben und Werk von Sigmund Freud
Werke, Band 12

Das Anliegen der Buchreihe Bibliothek der Psychoanalyse besteht darin, ein Forum der Auseinandersetzung zu schaffen, das der Psychoanalyse als Grundlagenwissenschaft, als Human- und Kulturwissenschaft sowie als klinische Theorie und Praxis neue Impulse verleiht. Die verschiedenen Strömungen innerhalb der Psychoanalyse sollen zu Wort kommen, und der kritische Dialog mit den Nachbarwissenschaften soll intensiviert werden. Bislang haben sich folgende Themenschwerpunkte herauskristallisiert:

Die Wiederentdeckung lange vergriffener Klassiker der Psychoanalyse – beispielsweise der Werke von Otto Fenichel, Karl Abraham, Siegfried Bernfeld, W. R. D. Fairbairn, Sándor Ferenczi und Otto Rank – soll die gemeinsamen Wurzeln der von Zersplitterung bedrohten psychoanalytischen Bewegung stärken. Einen weiteren Baustein psychoanalytischer Identität bildet die Beschäftigung mit dem Werk und der Person Sigmund Freuds und den Diskussionen und Konflikten in der Frühgeschichte der psychoanalytischen Bewegung.

Im Zuge ihrer Etablierung als medizinisch-psychologisches Heilverfahren hat die Psychoanalyse ihre geisteswissenschaftlichen, kulturanalytischen und politischen Bezüge vernachlässigt. Indem der Dialog mit den Nachbarwissenschaften wieder aufgenommen wird, soll das kultur- und gesellschaftskritische Erbe der Psychoanalyse wiederbelebt und weiterentwickelt werden.

Die Psychoanalyse steht in Konkurrenz zu benachbarten Psychotherapieverfahren und der biologisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Psychiatrie. Als das ambitionierteste unter den psychotherapeutischen Verfahren sollte sich die Psychoanalyse der Überprüfung ihrer Verfahrensweisen und ihrer Therapieerfolge durch die empirischen Wissenschaften stellen, aber auch eigene Kriterien und Verfahren zur Erfolgskontrolle entwickeln. In diesen Zusammenhang gehört auch die Wiederaufnahme der Diskussion über den besonderen wissenschaftstheoretischen Status der Psychoanalyse.

Hundert Jahre nach ihrer Schöpfung durch Sigmund Freud sieht sich die Psychoanalyse vor neue Herausforderungen gestellt, die sie nur bewältigen kann, wenn sie sich auf ihr kritisches Potenzial besinnt.

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Freud's Early Childhood

(1944)

Von Siegfried Bernfeld und Suzanne Cassirer Bernfeld

1. Introduction

In his *Autobiography* Freud covers his early childhood with one sentence: „I was born on May 6, 1856, at Freiberg in Moravia, a small town in what is now Czecho-Slovakia. … When I was a child of four I came to Vienna."[1] However references to this first period of his life occur in several of his writings. Collected and assembled in their proper order they, unexpectedly, form quite a coherent record of his first three years. When, at the age of forty-two, Freud turned his attention to the recollections of his childhood, he was not satisfied with their manifest content. He analyzed his memories, and even published some of the results. Though he did not intend to write the psychoanalysis of his childhood, and uses the material in various contexts and for various purposes – now, as an example of a certain mechanism, again, as the starting point for a general discussion, always casually and with restraint – it so happens that the broad lines of the development of the child and the essential traits of his personality do emerge.

The authors feel that this addition to Freud's *Autobiography* deserves to be brought together in one piece rather than being dispersed through numerous German volumes, some of the material not even having been translated. To the psychoanalyst these autobiographical fragments suggest two kinds of elaborations. First, implications by definition. If, for instance, Freud speaks of the rivalry with his father, in the Oedipus situation, the sexual wishes toward the mother are

1 (Hg.) „Ich bin am 6. Mai 1856 zu Freiberg in Mähren geboren, einem kleinen Städtchen der heutigen Tschechoslowakei. […] Als Kind von vier Jahren kam ich nach Wien" (GW 14, S. 34). – Die mit Hg. gekennzeichneten Anmerkungen sind die der Herausgeber, die mit B. jene von Bernfeld in den Originalveröffentlichungen.

implied – though not specifically mentioned – since they are a factor in the Oedipus rivalry, as Freud defines the term. He expected to have psychoanalytical readers, thus these implications must be considered as parts of his written *Autobiography*.

Second, interpretations, some of which may force themselves upon the mind of the psychoanalyst as being beyond doubt. Still, they are hypothetical, since they are based only on that selection of facts which Freud communicated incidentally, without attempting a „case history".

We have kept our elaborations strictly within the first group. We are presenting Freud's own analysis of his early childhood; we are not attempting to psychoanalyse him.

We have, however (in sections 2, 3, and 5), augmented the childhood story by facts from the environment in which they occurred. Our presentation approaches a narrative. The necessary philology is confined to the appendix.

2. Freud's Birth – Facts and Legends

At birth, the baby Sigmund Freud had such an abundance of pitch-black ruffled hair that his young mother nicknamed him her „Little Moor". An old peasant woman prophesied to her that she had brought a great man into the world. The proud and happy mother, herself a descendant of a one-time famous scholar[2], firmly believed in this prediction. It became one of the constantly repeated family stories, a part of the atmosphere in which the child grew up.

Thus, the hero's garb was in the weaving, right at the cradle. But Freud, the great debunker, was not willing to wear it. „Such prophesies", he wrote when he was over forty, „must be made very frequently; since there are so many happy mothers full of expectations, and so many old peasant women, who, their mundane powers having deserted them, turn their eyes toward the future. Also, no prophetess expects to be unrewarded for her prophesies."[3]

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2 (B.) Nathan Halevy Charmatz of Brody, Poland, who lived in the 18th century. – (Hg.) Er war der Ur-Urgroßvater von Amalia Nathanson, Freuds Mutter, und besonders als Kaufmann in seiner Heimatstadt bekannt (vgl. Rice 1993, S. 8).

3 (Hg.) „Solche Prophezeiungen müssen sehr häufig vorfallen; es gibt so viel erwartungsfrohe Mütter und so viel alte Bäuerinnen oder andere alte

When, in 1931, a committee of citizens of Freiberg (Přibor)[4] set out to install a memorial tablet on the house in which Freud was born, it was discovered that contrary to all the „Who's Whos" and to Freud's own statement, the city register lists Sigmund Freud's birth on the day of March 6, 1856.[5] All these birthday wishes, then, addressed to Freud for seventy-five years, first by his family and then by his friends, and later by practically the whole world – did they all go wrong, missing by two months the right day?

Freud was not interested in this possibility. He only resented that somebody had tried to make him two months older. He had the date from his mother, „who ought to know best." The Committee accepted his view and engraved, as the memorable date in the history of the town: „May 6, 1856". So, although in cold Moravia the mother of a first-born boy might well have wished to celebrate his birthday in real spring; and, although we know the power of such wishes over reason and facts, we too, accept the traditional date.

The president of the committee, Mr. Benes[6] – Director of the Worker's Health Insurance Institute in Přibor – explains the discrepancy as an error by the Czech clerk, who had to make the entry in the register in the German language, which the clerk neither knew too – well nor liked too much. It so happens that the only name of a month with a similar spelling in German and Czech, is „May". This makes Mr. Benes' explanation not convincing. Thus, upon entering into this world, the „Little Moor" caused one of those odd slips, which as Professor Freud forty years later he was destined to explain.

Weiber, deren Macht auf Erden vergangen ist, und die sich darum der Zukunft zugewendet haben. Es wird auch nicht der Schade der Prophetin gewesen sein" (GW 2–3, S. 198).

4 (B.) Freiberg became a part of the Czecho-Slovakian Republic in 1918. At that time the old Czech name of Přibor (Przibor) meaning „Near the ruins" became official.

5 (Hg.) Es handelte sich dabei um einen Lesefehler. Im Geburtsregister steht „1856/6 May". Damit werden alle weiteren Überlegungen Bernfelds zum Thema „Geburtsdatum Freuds" hinfällig. Trotzdem haben auch einige Freud-Biografen an der Fehllesung „6. März" festgehalten (vgl. u. a. Balmary 1982, S. 35; Kollbrunner 2001, S. 91; Maciejewski 2006, S. 24).

6 (Hg.) František Beneš war der Direktor der Bezirkskrankenversicherungsanstalt (B. K. V. A.) in Přibor; vgl. „Einladung zur feierlichen Enthüllung einer Gedenktafel für Professor Dr. Sigmund Freud an seinem Geburtshause in Přibor" (SFP) (Veselý 1968, S. 168; Supova 2004, S. 9).

3. The Setting

In March or May, 1856, Freiberg was a town of 4800 Germans and Czechs, belonging to the Austrian Empire, or more precisely to the Margravate Moravia, in the district of Neutitschein, 150 miles northeast from Vienna. It was situated in the rolling foothills of the Carpathian mountains – then a peaceful pastoral countryside – half a mile from a dense forest, on a steep bank over the Lubina – a little trickle in summer, but broad and tearing in spring. On a hill, inside the town, the steeple of St. Mary's Birth Church rose almost 210 feet high, and had the best chimes in the province. In the center of the town was an unusually large market square, surrounded by arcades of well-built houses. One of these houses conspicuously displayed a memorial of the Thirty Years' War. In those glorious days, the bellicose shrewdness and tough endurance of the citizens had become proverbial: „Brieg, Freiberg und Bruenn make Swedish armies thin."[7] The coat of arms, granted the town „for valor", shows on a field of gold and red two big, vicious-looking pruning knives.

Somewhat off the market place and close to fields and pastures, at 117 Schlossergasse, Jacob Freud lived comfortably with his family. The home, built around 1800[8], was extremely simple – a detached, rather small, two-story house, without ornamentation, constructed of plastered bricks, with a slate roof.

In 1855, Jacob[9], then over forty years of age, married a second time. He married Amalia Nathansohn[10], who was not yet twenty. The following year Sigmund was born.

At that time Jacob Freud was already a grandfather. Emanuel[11], the eldest of the two sons of his first marriage – then in his twenties – had a son, John[12], one year of age, and a newborn daughter, Pauline.[13] Both of these families lived in Freiberg as a closely knit unit.

From the very beginning, then, the position of Sigmund was full of complications and of paradoxes. He was the eldest son of this

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7 (Hg.) „Brieg, Freiberg und Brünn, machen die Schweden dünn" (Wolny 1826, S. IV).

8 (Hg.) Das Haus stammt aus dem 16. Jahrhundert. Es wurde zwischen 1823 und 1825 gründlich renoviert und bekam auch ein neues Dach; vgl. die Homepage des Freud-Museums Přibor (www.freudmuseum.cz).

9 (B.) Born 1815, died October 23, 1896.

10 (B.) Born August 18, 1835; died September 12, 1930.

11 (Hg.) April 1833–17.10.1914.

12 (Hg.) 13.8.1855–1896.

13 (Hg.) 20.11.1856–26.1.1944.

marriage, yet at the same time he was the youngest child in his family group. He was an only child, but for all practical purposes he had an older brother and a twin sister; and to confuse matters all the more, these sibling equivalents were his nephew, one year older than he, and his niece, of approximately his own age. Thus his privileges as eldest son and his benefits as only child and youngest boy became uncertain. He had to fight for them. Even his authority as an uncle was in question.

Sigmund's young mother, half-brothers and sister-in-law were approximately the same age; his father was old enough to be his maternal grandfather. In fact, Jacob was the grandfather of Sigmund's closest brother-like friend and rival, John. In relation to his father, Sigmund was rather „in the third generation", as Philip [Emanuel][14], the younger of his half-brothers, put it twenty years later to the student Freud, who felt the expression to be very illuminating.[15] Sigmund's relations to his mother were natural and simple. She was his. She was proud of her son. She was affectionate, and she nursed him. There was a Nanny[16] to help with the housework and the care of the child.

In this setting, then, the „Little Moor" lived his first three years „as the happy child of Freiberg, the first-born son of a youthful mother"[17], as Freud summarized his earliest childhood in the letter which was read at the unveiling of the tablet at the house of his birth.

4. The First Three Years

In Freud's story of his childhood, as he refers to it at various times in his writings, one of the *personae dramatis* is not mentioned; his sister-in-law, the mother of John and Pauline. In fact very little is said about

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14 (Hg.) Grubrich-Simitis hat darauf hingewiesen, dass es sich um einen Fehler handelt und Emanuel, der ältere Halbbruder, gemeint sein muss (vgl. Bernfeld & Cassirer Bernfeld 1988, S. 83, Anm. 10). Auch an anderen Stellen verwechselt Bernfeld Emanuel und Philip. Überall, wo eine solche Verwechslung auftritt, wird im Text der richtige Name in eckigen Klammern hinzugesetzt.

15 (Hg.) Bernfeld bezieht sich wohl auf die Aufklärung der Familienverhältnisse durch Emanuel während Freuds England-Besuch im Jahre 1875 (vgl. auch Freud 1989a, S. 143).

16 (Hg.) Resi Wittek (Sajner 1981, S. 143).

17 (Hg.) „das glückliche Freiberger Kind, der erstgeborene Sohn einer jugendlichen Mutter" (GW 14, S. 561).