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*From Thirty Years
with Freud*

By
THEODOR REIK

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD WINSTON

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CONTENTS

PREFACE—A PORTRAIT COMES TO LIFE vii

PART I

FREUD AND HIS FOLLOWERS

- I. MEMORIES OF SIGMUND FREUD 3
- II. LAST VISIT WITH FREUD 25
- III. FREUD AND HIS FOLLOWERS 33
- IV. STUDENTS OR SORCERER'S APPRENTICES? 45

PART II

AN UNKNOWN LECTURE OF FREUD'S

- V. AN UNKNOWN LECTURE OF FREUD'S 63

PART III

FREUD AS A CRITIC OF OUR CULTURE

- VI. "CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS" 97
- VII. "THE FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION" 118
- VIII. NOTE ON "A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE" 140
- IX. THE STUDY ON DOSTOYEVSKY 158

PART IV

ESSAYS ON DIVERSE SUBJECTS

- X. EMBARRASSMENT IN GREETING 179
- XI. ON THE NATURE OF JEWISH WIT 185

CONTENTS

XII. THE WAY OF ALL FLESH	197
XIII. THE LATENT MEANING OF ELLIPTICAL DISTORTION	213
XIV. MAN'S DUAL NEED FOR SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE	225
XV. THE ECHO OF THE PROVERB	228



SIGMUND FREUD

PREFACE

A PORTRAIT COMES TO LIFE

IT IS just two o'clock in the morning. The last news summary on Station WHN reports the terms that Hitler and Mussolini will offer vanquished France. From Sixth Avenue comes the noise of automobiles. Now and then the voices of people returning from parties steal through my window. I am still sitting at my desk, struggling with the book that has occupied me for fifteen years. Always the work was interrupted, postponed—other books, like this one, were written and published in the interval—and always I returned to the work again, for it would not release me. I am discouraged and tired. My eyes are burning. I should like to bundle up the pile of manuscript and notes, stuff it into a file and be done with it. Then my eyes chance upon the portrait that hangs above my desk. The light falls on the head, and for a moment it seems as though Freud were alive again. I see him again at his desk, see him stand up, come forward and extend his hand to me with that bold, characteristic gesture. I see him shuffling the manuscripts on the desk aside, opening a box of cigars, and holding it out to me.

PREFACE

I have stood for nearly half an hour before this portrait, paced up and down the room, and now I have returned to it again, strangely moved. I remember the day the Viennese etcher Max Pollak first exhibited it at Hugo Heller's galleries. That must have been in 1913. A small number of the etchings had been executed on subscription.

A dimly lighted room. In the foreground, on the desk, antique bronzes and figurines, dug up out of the ruins of centuries, phantoms of the past. They stand out starkly against the picture's white border. Freud's head, bent forward slightly, outlined distinctly. The eyebrows lifted as though in deep attention. Ridges on the high forehead and two deep furrows running down from the mouth to the short white beard. The eyes gaze into the beholder and yet see beyond him. How often have I looked into those eyes. They have an expression of hardy quest, as though their gaze had wholly merged into their object; and yet they valued that object only for the knowledge it gave. One hand holds the pen loosely, as though the sudden vision of a long-sought answer has interrupted the writing. The other hand lies slack on the paper. The light from the window at the side of the room highlights but one side of the forehead. The face is in shadow, with only the eyes gleaming steelily . . . There suddenly comes to my mind some words of his. It was during a walk, and I had asked him how he felt when he first captured the psychic perceptions

PREFACE

contained in *Totem and Taboo*. I probably spoke rather floridly, saying something about an overwhelming joy, for he answered, "I felt nothing like that; simply an extraordinary clarity." . . . He was an unusually keen observer with a deep respect for the data of the senses.

How often since that first momentous visit I sat with him at this desk. (I remember that important occasion in 1912 when I announced to him that now that I had my Ph.D. I intended to study medicine. He advised me strongly against it, saying, "I have other things in mind for you, larger plans." He insisted that I go on with my psychoanalytical research work.) How often my eyes wandered reverently over the antiques upon his desk as I discussed psychological problems with him. Here, in this portrait, the sculptures seem symbolic. For the life that Freud showed us was resurrected like them from the dust of centuries. This man had rolled away the stone from a wisdom that had lain long underground, utterly hidden. In unflagging, diligent archeological work, he had brought forth from the deepest strata precious finds whose existence none had suspected.

For a moment the figure in the etching seemed to be alive, seemed to step out of the past into the present. It was as though Freud himself stood up from the chair at his desk in his home in the Berggasse and made as if to approach me. For the space

PREFACE

of a few quickened heart-beats I thought: he is alive.

I know, now that the impression has passed, that we are called again to the labor of sorrow, that unseen, prolonged process of separation in which we take leave of our dear departed. It is work against great odds, for so many objects, places, and circumstances remind us of the time he was still with us. How can we accomplish this work which takes place so heart-breakingly in the midst of memory? Yet this silent process of the psyche is necessary, for our energy must be dedicated to the demands of the day.

For me the demand of the day is to continue my work, to write those books which I have so long borne within me, to complete the researches I have begun. That moment when Freud's picture seemed to come to life now assumes more than momentary meaning. His memory has given me new heart, has set before me his example, his unerring and tireless striving.

Once more—and for the last time—I shall briefly interrupt the work on that accursed book, since I wish to preserve my memories of Freud, and I must look through what I have written and add to the old.

Tomorrow—no, this morning—the radio will announce what Hitler and Mussolini have decreed shall be the fate of Europe. But however they decide, the future of Europe is not a thing obedient

PREFACE

to their decisions. The future of humanity will not be wrought by wars and conquests, but by the quiet work of the mind. The lamp that burns in the night over the scientist's desk gives more powerful light than artillery fire. (Freud shall live long after Hitler and Mussolini are dust.

THEODOR REIK

June 19, 1940
NEW YORK

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