

## **Architect of Psychoanalysis**

**By Peter Jay Stein, MD, MA**

**Year 2006 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sigmund Freud's birth, born in 1856, in Frieberg, Moravia, now known as the Czech Republic. The Austrian Embassy in Washington, D.C., on September 15<sup>th</sup>, commemorated Freud's birthday, where speakers from several major psychoanalytical organizations made presentations honoring this exceptional pioneer of psychology, whose breadth of emotional insight and intellectual logic, amid powerful cultural forces of derision and objection, grasped the almost impenetrable mysteries of the human infant's psychological universe.**

**With a remarkable sensitivity for grasping obscure mental processes that may be overlooked or go unrecognized, Freud was able to empathize with and reconstruct, through subjective empathic immersion, the repudiated, primitive strivings and inner conflicts of his adult patients, conflicts originating in infancy and early childhood.**

**The turning away from a pursuit of psychological understanding may often be reinforced by an emphasis and reliance on psychopharmacology, discouraging some clinicians from engaging in the time-consuming, deeper exploration of well-defended and emotionally painful psychological states.**

Current cost-effective medical and insurance practices, however, cannot erase the basic truths uncovered by Freud, the “Father of Psychoanalysis”, who, almost 100 years ago, dispassionately predicted and described, both in individuals and in the surrounding culture, the resistances to self-understanding (S. Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Lecture XIX, 1915), the myriad array of blockages, defenses, and rationalizations utilized to protest and protect oneself from knowing and remembering the painful and shame-producing battles of childhood.

Freud’s elaborate developmental schema outlines the infant’s voyage through the psychosexual stages, postulating the young child’s inexorable move, often unprepared and wounded, through the constellation of the Oedipus labyrinth, that critical developmental juncture mandated by the evolution of the human family for the formation of conscience.

In Freud’s wake, through the past eleven decades, countless gifted theorists, notably Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Harry Stack Sullivan, Karen Horney, Ernst Kris, Edith Jacobson, Margaret Mahler, Eric Ericson, Heinz Kohut, Otto Kernberg, and Robert Stolorow, incompletely satisfied with the limited explanatory power of Freud’s psychosexual perspective, further refined and revised the theoretical views

of those sweeping transformations characteristic of early development that serve to organize the human personality.

These multiple, interdependent, developmental trajectories occur on a continuum: from the oral and anal to the phallic and genital; from primary process thinking to secondary process thinking; from hallucinatory omnipotence to intact reality testing; from annihilation and separation anxiety to signal and superego anxiety; from denial, projection, and incorporation to sublimation, identification, and altruism; from the paranoid/schizoid position to the depressive position; from the amorphous undifferentiated matrix of pure animal instinct to highly differentiated patterns of relatedness; from diffuse all good-all bad splitting of self and object representations to the consolidation of self-esteem and object-esteem; from the infant/mother dual unity through the process of separation/individuation; from the objectlessness of selfobject fusion to object constancy; from amorphous psychic structure to differentiated psychic structure; from global affective discharge to affect modulation and regulation; from structural deficit to structural conflict; from deficit-laden dyadic relationships to conflict-laden triadic relationships; from self-fragmentation to self-cohesion; from the symbiotic/psychotic through

**borderline/narcissistic to neurotic; from insecure and anxious attachment to secure attachment; from physical birth to psychological birth.**

**As psychoanalysis has widened its sensitivities to the human condition and to its therapeutic scope, changes in the therapeutic attitude have understandably evolved. Once perceived as a neutral, analytic observer, a blank screen, the psychotherapist is now often conceived of as co-creator of a context-dependent therapeutic frame, within the enmeshed intersubjective matrix of the therapist/patient dyad, a soothing selfobject that promotes the patient's curiosity, self-observation, self-expression, frustration tolerance, autonomy, emotional development, and self-actualization.**

**The world is so much richer because of Freud's work, and it is good that his birthday be honored; his influence continues to stimulate and infuse so many domains of science, art, and culture. One's appreciation of Freud's discoveries, such as the concepts of transference and resistance, intensifies and deepens with clinical experience and the passage of time.**

**Although history documents instances of blind spots and interpersonal flaws, or alternatively exalts him, Freud's qualities of moral integrity, piercing curiosity, patience and perseverance, keen sensitivities, and steadfast self-examination, continue to influence and inspire those psychotherapists who struggle to apprehend the truths within the deeper layers of of the mind.**

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