

A Psychoanalytic Challenge

Psychoanalysts and others interested in the psychology of human behavior have the rare opportunity to compare the offerings of two recent books on Sigmund Freud and the origins of psychoanalysis:

A Dream of Undying Fame: How Freud Betrayed His Mentor and Invented Psychoanalysis by Louis Breger.... and

Freud on a Precipice: How Freud's Fate Pushed psychoanalysis Over the Edge by myself—Robert Langs.

Although both books are critical of Freud's thinking and advocate a trauma-centered theory of neurosis, each differs in regard to the basic propositions on which its assessments are made. The Breger book is grounded in Freud's second, inner-mental paradigm of psychoanalysis, while my own book is grounded in his Freud's first, trauma-centered theory. This difference in basic philosophy allows for a comparative study of what each theory can contribute to our understanding of the origins of psychoanalysis, the psychology of its founder, and the broader issue of what each can bring to psychoanalytic thinking in general.

While different in many ways, the two books share the following:

A selective study of the most critical factors in the origins of psychoanalysis.

An analysis of the personal psychological conflicts and issues that account for the key features of Freud's psychoanalytic theory and principles of practice.

The presentation of evidence that Freud's abandonment of his trauma theory of neuroses was fundamentally in error.

A study of Freud's early-life traumas and their adverse effects on his life and work.

An analysis of the Oedipal myth which indicates that Freud's selection of the myth as a reflection the central dynamics of neuroses was misguided.... and

An exploration of Freud's personality and his unresolved emotional issues.

All in all, the two books offer a notable sampling of the insights and explanatory powers of present-day versions of the two distinctive paradigms of psychoanalysis that Freud initiated. As such, it is my hope that they will be read, critically discussed in a broad context, and be drawn on as one guide to the future of psychoanalytic thinking.

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