



ÇAĞ UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY of ARTS & SCIENCES  
PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT  
PSY 313 FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS  
IN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY  
COURSE  
WEEK I

# FUNDAMENTALS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

23 SEP 2025

# WHAT IS PSYCHOANALYSIS?

- Movies and cartoons offer images of a patient lying on a couch, speaking endlessly into a vacuum, while a silent, colorless, older gentleman with a beard takes notes.
- Many people who are unfamiliar with psychoanalysis fear it as a coward's way out, an **admission of defeat**, a **ceding of control and authority to a stranger**.
- But there are plenty of people who have **benefited from** or who have been **practicing** psychoanalysis. Their voices are not often heard.



<https://www.simplypsychology.org/psychoanalysis.html>

# WHAT IS PSYCHOANALYSIS?

- The problem is that **psychoanalytic concepts** derive from and are concerned most fundamentally with the **experience of the analytic process**, an intensely **emotional**, highly **charged**, deeply **personal** experience for both participants.
- In the eyes of those who practice and study psychoanalysis as well as those who have undergone a "successful" (i.e., personally meaningful) analysis, the world of psychoanalysis is a **rich and intriguing** (*interesting*) place.
- Its basic concepts and modes of thought are imbued (*full*) with an **experiential vividness**, a conceptual **clarity**, and a continual **practical applicability** to the day-to-day conduct of their lives.
- Psychoanalytic thought helps **knit together different domains** of experience:
  - Past and present,
  - Waking and sleeping,
  - Thinking and feeling,
  - Interpersonal events and the most private fantasies.

# WHAT IS PSYCHOANALYSIS?

- To the psychoanalytically informed mind, **analytic concepts** provide useful tools for **expanding, consolidating, and enriching** one's own **life** and one's **relationships** with others.
- Yet it is **hard to convey** (*express*) this to someone who has **not experienced** it.
- To those for whom psychoanalysis is **not a lived reality**, psychoanalytic concepts can seem **odd, abstract, alien, and out of reach**. It is sometimes hard to believe they are, themselves, derived from actual human experience.
- Answering the question "What is psychoanalysis?" is **more complicated** than it would otherwise need to be because of **four major myths about psychoanalysis** that have wide currency in both the popular and scholarly spheres.
- Psychoanalysts themselves have contributed greatly to the **perpetuation** (*continuation*) of these misleading notions.

## MYTH #1: PSYCHOANALYSIS IS LARGELY THE WORK OF ONE MAN

- For the first **five decades** in the history of psychoanalytic thought (up **until Freud's death** in 1939), it would have been tenable (*defendable*) to argue that psychoanalysis was largely the **invention of Freud's singular genius**.
- Freud regarded psychoanalysis as a **form of treatment**, but also as a **new branch of science**.
- Those taught and analyzed by Freud were justifiably impressed with his early discoveries; they admired him and let him take the lead.
- Freud's presence so infused (*effected*) early psychoanalysis that it has become **tradition** among many **psychoanalytic writers to begin articles**.

## MYTH #1: PSYCHOANALYSIS IS LARGELY THE WORK OF ONE MAN

- Authors of highly original contributions have often presented their work literally as mere **footnotes to Freud**.
- And major figures in the **early decades of psychoanalysis** (Jung, Adler, Ferenczi, Rank) were **expelled** (*deported*) **from** the Freudian mainstream as their **ideas diverged significantly** from established doctrine.
- But since 1939, there has been no Freud to adjudicate (*judge*) competing claims concerning the truly psychoanalytic.
- Consequently, psychoanalytic thought has been **released to flow more naturally**.
- Now there are **multiple** schools, technical terminologies, and forms of clinical practice.
- Psychoanalysis is **no longer the work of one** individual.

## MYTH #2: CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS, IN BOTH THEORY AND CLINICAL PRACTICE, IS VIRTUALLY THE SAME AS IT WAS IN FREUD'S DAY

- Psychoanalysis is sometimes presented as if it were fundamentally **unchanged since Freud's** time.
- Because of their deference (*respect*) to Freud and psychoanalytic tradition, **some analytic authors** write as though caught in a time warp (*time tunnel*), **oblivious** (*unaware*) to the burgeoning (*flourishing*) **innovative literature** of psychoanalytic **theory and technique**.
- The startling (*surprising*) reality is that **very little of the way Freud** understood and practiced psychoanalysis has **remained simply intact** (*untouched*).
- The **major pillars** (*column*) **of his theorizing** (instinctual drives, the centrality of the Oedipus complex, the motivational primacy of sex and aggression) have all been **challenged** and fundamentally **transformed** in **contemporary psychoanalytic thought**.
- Freud's **basic technical principles** (analytic neutrality, the systematic frustration of the patient's wishes, a regression to an infantile neurosis) have likewise been **reconceptualized, revised, and transformed** by current clinicians.

## MYTH #2: CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYSIS, IN BOTH THEORY AND CLINICAL PRACTICE, IS VIRTUALLY THE SAME AS IT WAS IN FREUD'S DAY

- The popular image of the **isolated supine** (*lying down*) **patient endlessly free-associating and surrendering to the analyst's superior authority** has **evolved** into **revised versions** of psychoanalytic treatment that embrace flexibility of both form (on the couch or sitting up) and process.
- And with a deeper understanding of the subjective nature of experience, **today's analyst** does **not** naively **presume** to be the arbiter (*determiner*) of reality as much as the guide on **a mutually undertaken journey**.
- Thus, the **contemporary psychoanalytic world** can only be meaningfully characterized as **post-Freudian**.
- **Freud's works** will always represent one of the **most impressive personal achievements** of Western intellectual history and culture, but it **hardly represents contemporary** psychoanalytic thought and clinical practice.
- The living **impact of the revolution** Freud provoked has **expanded, changed, and flowered** into concepts, methods, and **understandings** that would have scarcely been imaginable to Freud and his contemporaries.



## MYTH #3: PSYCHOANALYSIS HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION

- This myth is based on a partial truth. Orthodox, **classical Freudian psychoanalysis** is going out of fashion.
- That is because orthodox psychoanalysis is **not of our time**; its methods and its understandings were fashioned almost **a hundred years ago**.
- As the world around psychoanalysis has changed, **psychoanalysis itself has changed**, in the settings in which it is applied, the forms through which it is practiced, and the understandings it generates.
- With the proliferation (spread) of many **other forms of psychotherapy** and of psychiatric medication, psychoanalysis has certainly **lost** the near **monopoly** it once enjoyed as a psychological treatment.
- In our modern world, ... psychoanalysis can seem as dated as Freud's Victorian chaise longue draped with Oriental throw rugs.



<https://www.freud.org.uk/exhibitions/anne-deguelle-sigmunds-rug/>

## MYTH #3: PSYCHOANALYSIS HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION

- Most of the wide range of **psychotherapies** outside psychoanalysis have **derived from** and are continually **influenced** by both **classical** and more **contemporary** psychoanalytic concepts.
- In particular, psychoanalytic **object relations theories** and psychoanalytic **self psychology** have been among the most important influences on **casework** within the field of social work and on virtually all forms of **psychotherapy practiced today** (*family therapy, couples therapy, cognitive and behavioral approaches, Gestalt psychotherapy, and short-term dynamic psychotherapy*).
- The extension of psychoanalysis **beyond the clinical setting** has been even **more impressive**. Today, Freud's contributions are so **broadly accepted**, so **tightly woven** into the fabric of our culture and our experience of ourselves, that, in the **broadest sense**, we are all "Freudians."

## MYTH #3: PSYCHOANALYSIS HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION

- Psychoanalysis is not only a professional and scientific discipline within our culture, but **a form of thought, an approach to human experience**.
- Major features of Freud's own contributions that were **highly controversial** in his time have become **commonplace ideas** in our world:
  - Unconscious motivation and meaning,
  - The infinite variability of forms of sexuality,
  - The formative power of early events,
  - The centrality of oedipal themes in family life,
  - The sexual and sensual dimensions of infantile and childhood experiences,
  - The efficiency of the mind in disavowing (*reject*) unpleasant truths, and so on.

## MYTH #3: PSYCHOANALYSIS HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION

- **Psychoanalytic contributions** to modern experience and culture did **not end with Freud's death**:
  - Harry Stack **Sullivan's** methodology of **participant observation** and his **interpersonal field theory**,
  - Erik **Erikson's epigenetic approach** to the life cycle and his **concept of identity**,
  - Melanie **Klein's** startling vision of **infantile fantasy life**,
  - Margaret **Mahler's** powerful, romantic depiction of the **psychological birth of the child from a symbiotic embeddedness** with the mother,
  - John **Bowlby's** compelling and well-documented **theory of attachment**,
  - Donald **Winnicott's** evocative and innovative understanding of the origins of **subjectivity** and the place of the "**holding environment**" in the **mother-infant dyad**,
  - **Winnicott's** concepts of the "**transitional object**" and "**transitional experience**" have had an enormous impact on contemporary methodology in all the social sciences.

## MYTH #3: PSYCHOANALYSIS HAS GONE OUT OF FASHION

- Contemporary revisionist Freudian approaches have had a central and often dramatic **influence on literary criticism**:
  - Roy **Schafer's** application of the concept of "**narratives**" to psychodynamics and psychoanalytic life stories, and
  - Jacques **Lacan's** provocative and elusive (*puzzling*) account of the **unconscious** in terms of contemporary linguistics and structural anthropology.
  - Heinz **Kohut's** and **Otto Kernberg's** compelling studies of the vicissitudes (*ups and downs*) of **narcissism** and **the self** have been picked up and developed by interpreters of literature, history, and culture in general.
- Psychoanalyst/**feminist** writers have played an important role in the most innovative current thinking about **gender and sexuality**.
- Therefore, the portrayal of psychoanalysis as slipping into irrelevance (*insignificance*) is far from accurate.

## MYTH #4: PSYCHOANALYSIS IS AN ESOTERIC CULT REQUIRING BOTH CONVERSION AND YEARS OF STUDY

- ❖ **Esoteric:** very unusual and understood or liked by only a small number of people, especially those with special knowledge.
- **Freud** was a great **prose stylist**. But most of the **post-Freudian** texts are written in a style that the language is dense, thick with **jargon** and **complex argumentation**.
- All this makes it difficult for anyone who has not spent years studying the history of psychoanalytic ideas to pick up any individual psychoanalytic work and to grasp (*understand*) its contribution.
- **Politics and economics** have also played an important part in the **inaccessibility** of psychoanalytic ideas. There were some people in the USA who benefited from maintaining the impression that psychoanalysis was a highly technical medical specialty.
- The last two decades have witnessed **a social revolution** in the practice and training of psychoanalysts in the United States. Newer institutes training psychologists and social workers have proliferated and flourished in many cities, the content of their **curriculum not constrained by** the politics of **loyalty to Freud** or to **the medical model**.
- Psychoanalysis is in the **process of modernization**; its ideas need to be **made available to all who are interested**.

# WHAT IS FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYSIS?

- In 1873, when **Freud was seventeen**, the German **archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann** put together clues from fragmentary historical and literary sources and located **the ancient city of Troy** on the coastal plain of what is now Turkiye.
- Perhaps no other event so **fired the imagination of Freud**, who tended to draw his inspiration from **ancient heroes** such as Moses and Hannibal.
- Later, Freud's **consulting room** came to resemble the office of an archaeologist, filled with primitive sculptures and relics.
- The site of Freud's dig was **not the earth** but the **minds of his patients**; the tools he used were not a shovel and brushes but **psychoanalytic interpretations**.

# WHAT IS FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYSIS?



- The exhilaration (*excitement*) was the same, however. Freud felt he had discovered an important site and had fashioned the necessary technology for exposing the **underlying structure of the human mind** and for **unearthing** (*excavate*) the archaic history of both the **individual patient and all humankind**.
- The historical development of Freud's theories is extremely intricate (*complicated*) and complex.
- Schliemann knew precisely what he was looking for, but Freud stumbled (*hesitate*) across his route to the "**well of the past**," his access to the depths, as he went, while trying to address his patients' difficulties in living in the present and on the surface.



# FREUD'S INTELLECTUAL and EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

## Moses: Freud's Exploration of Identity and Monotheism

- Freud's most detailed engagement with Moses is in his book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where he presents a highly controversial theory about Moses and the origins of Judaism. His interest in Moses relates to several key themes:
- **Cultural and Religious Identity:** Freud, being Jewish but non-religious, was fascinated by the role of Moses in forming Jewish identity. He proposed that Moses was actually an Egyptian nobleman who introduced monotheism (inspired by Pharaoh Akhenaten) to the Jewish people.
- **Psychoanalysis of Religion:** Freud linked Moses' fate to the Oedipus complex, arguing that the Jewish people symbolically "murdered" Moses (by rejecting his teachings), similar to how sons symbolically "kill" the father in the development of the psyche.
- **Trauma and Repression:** He argued that the memory of Moses' murder and monotheism was repressed but later resurfaced in Jewish culture. This idea connects to his theory of repetition compulsion—how societies unconsciously process trauma across generations.

## Hannibal: Freud's Personal and Cultural Hero

- Freud had a deep admiration for Hannibal, the Carthaginian general, which he discussed in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and other writings. Hannibal's importance for Freud is more personal but also symbolically relevant:
- **Personal Identification:** Freud saw Hannibal as a symbol of resistance and perseverance. As a young Jewish boy growing up in Catholic Austria, he identified with Hannibal's fight against the powerful Roman Empire, drawing parallels to his own struggle in an anti-Semitic society.
- **Father-Son Dynamics:** Freud's father once told him, "A Jew cannot become anything great," which deeply affected him. Hannibal became a counter-example—someone who defied the powerful Roman establishment just as Freud saw himself challenging the academic and medical establishment with psychoanalysis.
- **Persistence Against Authority:** Hannibal's famous journey across the Alps, despite immense obstacles, mirrored Freud's own intellectual journey—persisting against opposition to develop psychoanalysis.

# FROM BRAIN TO MIND

- Freud graduated from **medical school** at a time when the study of the physical structure of the brain was in its infancy.
- He **started out as a researcher** in neurophysiology, and then he switched from research to **clinical practice**.
- The dramatic demonstrations of the renowned neurologists Jean-Martin **Charcot** and Hippolyte **Bernheim** he witnessed during a stay in France sparked his interest in **unconscious ideas**, fatefully **shifting his focus from brain to mind**.
- For example, "**glove anaesthesia**," the lack of feeling in the hand, makes no sense neurologically. It is not the nerves themselves that are damaged; something is **disordered in the patient's thoughts**, thoughts about his hand. The patient may have **no direct access to these thoughts**; they may be **absent from the conscious portion of his mind**.

# FROM BRAIN TO MIND

- Charcot demonstrated not only that ideas, rather than damaged nerves, were responsible for conditions like glove anaesthesia and **hysterical paralysis** and **blindness**, but that ideas **could also effect** (generally temporary) **cures**.
- Charcot would **place patients in hypnotic trances** and, through **hypnotic suggestion**, induce hysterical symptoms that hadn't been there before.
- And, even more startling, he would **use hypnotic suggestion** to temporarily **remove symptoms**, to make the hysterically blind see, the hysterically paralyzed walk.
- Freud, following Charcot, Bernheim, and other practitioners of medical hypnotism, demonstrated that **hysterics suffered a disease not of brain but of mind**. It was **ideas, not nerves**, that were **the source of trouble**.

# FROM BRAIN TO MIND

- Why would certain ideas become so different from ordinary ideas in the mind?
- How do some ideas become inaccessible?
- How do those ideas develop the capacity for causing such disorders?