

Sigmund Freud

*The History
of the Psychoanalytic
Movement*

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Chapter I

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I

If in what follows I bring any contribution to the history of the psychoanalytic movement nobody must be surprised at the subjective nature of this paper, nor at the rôle which falls to me therein. For psychoanalysis is my creation; for ten years I was the only one occupied with it, and all the annoyance which this new subject caused among my contemporaries has been hurled upon my head in the form of criticism. Even today, when I am no longer the only psychoanalyst, I feel myself justified in assuming that none can know better than myself what psychoanalysis is, wherein it differs from other methods of investigating the psychic life, what its name should cover, or what might better be designated as some thing else.

In the year 1909, when I was first privileged to speak publicly on psychoanalysis in an American University, fired by this momentous occasion for my endeavors, I declared that it was not myself who brought psychoanalysis into existence. I said that it was Josef Breuer, who had merited this honor at a time when I was a student and busy working for my examinations (1880-1882).^[1] Since then, well-intentioned friends have frequently repeated that I then expressed my gratitude out of all due proportion. They considered that, as on previous occasions, I should have dignified Breuers "cathartic procedure" as merely preliminary to psychoanalysis, and should have claimed that

psychoanalysis itself only began with my rejection of the hypnotic technique and my introduction of free association. Now it is really a matter of indifference whether the history of psychoanalysis be considered to have started with the cathartic method or only with my modification of the same. I only enter into this uninteresting question because some opponents of psychoanalysis are wont to recall, now and then, that the art of psychoanalysis did not originate with me at all, but with Breuer. Naturally, this only happens to be the case when their attitude permits them to find in psychoanalysis something that is noteworthy; on the other hand when their repudiation of psychoanalysis is unlimited, then psychoanalysis is always indisputably my creation. I have never yet heard that Breuer's great part in psychoanalysis has brought him an equal measure of insult and reproach. As I have recognized long since that it is the inevitable fate of psychoanalysis to arouse opposition and to embitter people, I have come to the conclusion that I must surely be the originator of all that characterizes psychoanalysis. I add, with satisfaction, that none of the attempts to belittle my share in this much disdained psychoanalysis has ever come from Breuer himself, or could boast of his support.

The content of Breuer's discovery has been so often presented that a detailed discussion of it here may be omitted. Its fundamental fact is that the symptoms of hysterical patients depend upon impressive but forgotten scenes in their lives (traumata). The therapy founded thereon was to cause the patients to recall and reproduce these experiences under hypnosis (catharsis), and the

fragmentary theory, deduced from it was that these symptoms corresponded to an abnormal use of undischarged sums of excitement (conversion). In his theoretical contribution to the "Studies of Hysteria" Breuer, wherever obliged to mention *conversion*, has always added my name in parenthesis, as though this first attempt at a theoretical formulation was my mental property. I think this allotment refers only to the nomenclature, whilst the conception itself occurred to us both at the same time.

It is also well known that Breuer, after his first experience with it, allowed the cathartic treatment to rest for a number of years and only resumed it after I caused him to do so, on my return from Charcot. He was then an internist and taken up with a rather busy medical practice. I had become a physician quite reluctantly but had, at that time, received a strong motive for desiring to help nervous patients or, at least, to learn to understand something of their conditions. I had placed reliance on physical therapy and found myself helpless in the face of disappointments that came to me with W. Erbs "Electrotherapy," so rich in advice and indications. If I did not, at that time, pilot myself independently to the opinion later announced by Moebius, that the successes of electrotherapy in nervous disorders are the results of suggestion, it was surely only the absence of these successes that was to blame. The treatment by *suggestion* in deep hypnosis seemed to offer me at that time sufficient compensation for the lost electrical therapy. I learned this treatment through the extremely impressive demonstrations of Liébault and Bernheim. But the investigation under hypnosis with which I became

acquainted through Breuer, I found, owing to its automatic manner of working and the simultaneous gratification of ones eagerness for knowledge, much more attractive than the monotonous and violent suggestive command which was devoid of every possibility of inquiry.

As one of the latest achievements of psychoanalysis, we have lately been admonished to put the actual conflict and the cause of the illness into the foreground of analysis. This is exactly what Breuer and I did in the beginning of our work with the cathartic method. We guided the patients attention directly to the traumatic scene during which the symptom had arisen, tried to find therein the psychic conflict and to free the repressed affect. We thus discovered the procedure characteristic of the psychic processes of the neuroses which I later named *regression*. The associations of the patients went back from the scene to be explained, to earlier experiences, and this forced the analysis which was to correct the present to occupy itself with the past. This regression led even further backwards. At first it went quite regularly to the time of puberty. Later, however, such failures as gaps in the understanding tempted the analytic work further back into the years of childhood which had, hitherto, been inaccessible to every sort of investigation. This regressive direction became an important characteristic of the analysis. It was proved that psychoanalysis could not clear up anything actual, except by going back to something in the past. It even proved that every pathological experience presupposes an earlier one which, though not in itself pathological, lent a pathological quality to the later occurrence. But the temptation to stop short at the known