

# EVERYDAY LIFE



Leonard Woolf

*Freud: A Collection of Critical Essays*



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## Notes on the Author and Editor

**Leonard Woolf** (1880-1969), English writer, civil servant, editor, and publisher, founded the Hogarth Press with his wife Virginia in 1917. His many books include two novels, *The Wise Virgins* and *The Village in the Jungle*, as well as a five-volume autobiography.

**Perry Meisel**, editor of this volume, teaches English at New York University, and is the author of *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater* and *Thomas Hardy: The Return of the Repressed*.

# Everyday Life

By Leonard Woolf

Dr. Brill,<sup>[1]</sup> who has already translated Freud's greatest and most difficult work, *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), now makes available for the English reader the far easier and more popular *Zur Psvchopathologie des Alltagsleben[s]*. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* is a book which naturally would have a wider appeal than Freud's other writings. In the first place, for the serious student of psychology and of the strange application of that science to the art of medicine through psychoanalysis, this book will serve as the best "introduction" to Freud's peculiar theories. To such students one word of warning is necessary. Freud is a most difficult and elusive writer and thinker. One is tempted to say that he suffers from all the most brilliant defects of genius. Whether one believes in his theories or not, one is forced to admit that he writes with great subtlety of mind, a broad and sweeping imagination more characteristic of the poet than the scientist or the medical practitioner. This wide imaginative power accounts for his power of grasping in the midst of intricate analysis of details the bearing of those details upon a much wider and quite other field of details. The result is that he rarely gives, as one of his American disciples has said, a "complete or systematic exposition" of any subject: his works are often a series of brilliant and suggestive hints. And yet, from another point of view, this series of hints

is subtly knit together into a whole in such a way that the full meaning of a passage in one book is often only to be obtained by reference to some passage in another book. No one is really competent to give a final judgment upon even *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* who has not studied *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and Freud's more distinctly pathological writings.

But even to that curious product of civilisation, "the ordinary reader," *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* should be full of interest. It is an eminently readable book. It deals with subjects which to most people are peculiarly fascinating; in the first place, one's self, the working of one's own mind as one goes about the occupations of one's everyday life, lighting a pipe, writing a letter, forgetting a name, or misquoting a line of poetry. Then, as with most of Freud's works, it deals particularly with the more mysterious workings of the human mind, those "recesses" of our own hearts in which the darkness of our ignorance seems to be greater than almost anywhere else. There are few persons who have not felt the fascination of speculating upon the mysteries of the memories of childhood, the curious way in which the door of forgetfulness seems to have closed for us upon so many important happenings, only to open momentarily in a vivid picture of some utterly trivial scene in those dim and earliest years. Or, again, that disturbing and ghostly feeling, as one walks into a strange room, that one has been here before precisely in these circumstances, that everything is happening, things done and words spoken, precisely as everything happened in that mysterious



“before,” a time and an event, which though it is so insistently real to us, yet seems to belong to a life lived previously or to some forgotten dream.

Many of these subjects the reader will find touched upon in Freud’s characteristic way in this book, imaginatively, often humorously, always briefly and suggestively. The ordinary reader will almost certainly pronounce the verdict: “Very interesting but too far-fetched.” To discuss the justice of that verdict would require a volume of many pages instead of the one or two columns allowed the reviewer. But this may be said categorically and confidently, that there can be no doubt that there is a substantial amount of truth in the main thesis of Freud’s book, and that truth is of great value. The thesis is briefly that a large number of the mental acts of our everyday life which we ordinarily believe to be determined by chance, such as forgetting a name or an intention, making a *lapsus linguae*, or a mistake in writing, are really strictly determined by unconscious and often repressed motives of our own minds. Probably everyone would admit the simplest instances of the unconscious working of motives within us; for instance, everyone is aware of how much more frequently we forget to carry out an unpleasant than a pleasant intention. But Freud’s real originality consists in his subtle analysis of many other ordinary mental processes, his peculiar methods of interpretation by which he seeks to bring to the light of consciousness the thoughts and motives which otherwise remain buried in the darkness of our unconsciousness. Here it is that *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* is linked

up with his theories of dreams and his theories of insanity, for his methods of interpretation are very often precisely similar to those used in his interpretation of dreams. It is his aim to show that it is the “dark half” of the mind which in the perfectly normal waking man produces all kinds of trivial errors and slips and forgettings and rememberings, and which under other conditions will, following the same laws, produce the absurd fantasies of sleep or the terrible fantasies of madness.

### Notes

[1] “Everyday Life,” by Leonard Woolf. The essay originally appeared as a review of Freud’s *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in *The New English Weekly* on June 13, 1914. Copyright © 1969 by Mrs. Trekkie Parsons. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. Parsons.

A. A. Brill (1874-1948), American physician and psychoanalyst, and Freud’s first English-language translator. [Ed.]

## Chronology of Important Dates

- 1856 Freud born in Freiberg, Moravia (now Pribor, Czechoslovakia), on May 6.
- 1860 Freud family moves to Vienna.
- 1865 Enters Gymnasium.
- 1873 Enters University of Vienna as medical student.
- 1876- Works as assistant in Brucke's Institute of Physiology; meets Josef Breuer.  
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- 1877 First medical research articles published.
- 1880 Translates four essays by John Stuart Mill for a German edition of Mill's works.
- 1881 Takes medical degree.
- 1882 Engagement to Martha Bernays; begins work at Vienna General Hospital.
- 1885 Appointed *Privatdozent* (lecturer) in neuropathology at University of Vienna.
- 1885- Attends Charcot's lectures at the Salpetriere in Paris, October to February.  
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- 1886 Marries Martha Bernays; begins private medical practice as specialist in nervous diseases.
- 1887 Meets Berlin physician and medical theorist Wilhelm Fliess; begins use of hypnotism in private practice.
- 1889 Visits Bernheim in Nancy for further researches into hypnosis.
- 1893 "Preliminary Communication" (with Breuer).
- 1894 "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense."
- 1895 *Studies on Hysteria* (with Breuer, although cases and discussions written and signed separately); writes *Project for a Scientific Psychology* and mails it to Fliess (first published in 1950).
- 1896 Death of Freud's father, Jakob Freud; first use of term "psychoanalysis."
- 1897 Abandons seduction theory; begins self-analysis.
- 1899 "Screen Memories."
- 1900 *The Interpretation of Dreams* (published in December 1899, but postdated for the new century).
- 1901 *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

- 1902 Appointed Professor Extraordinarius (associate professor) at University of Vienna; Wednesday evening meetings begin at Freud's house of the group that will become the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society; end of friendship with Fliess.
- 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality; Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious; Case of Dora* ("Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Flysteria").
- 1906 Jung makes contact with Freud.
- 1907 *Jensen's 'Gradiva.'*
- 1908 First international meeting of psychoanalysts at Salzburg; "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming"; "Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness."
- 1909 Visits America with Jung and Sandor Ferenczi; receives honorary degree from Clark University and delivers *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*; A. A. Brill's first English translations begin to appear; Case of Little Hans ("Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy"); Case of the Rat Man ("Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis").
- 1910 *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood; "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words.'*"
- 1911 The Case of Schreber ("Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia").
- 1911-15 Papers on psychoanalytic technique.
- 1913 *Totem and Taboo*; association with Jung terminated; Jung secedes from International Psychoanalytic Association the following year.

- 1914 *The Moses of Michelangelo; On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement; "On Narcissism."*
- 1915 Writes twelve papers on metapsychology, of which only five survive ("Instincts and their Vicissitudes," "Repression," "The Unconscious," "A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams," "Mourning and Melancholia").
- 1915-17 Gives *Introductory Lectures* at University of Vienna.
- 1918 Case of the Wolf Man ("From the History of an Infantile Neurosis").
- 1919 "The 'Uncanny.'"
- 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*
- 1921 *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.*
- 1923 *The Ego and the Id*; first of thirty-three operations for cancer of the jaw and palate.
- 1925 "A Note on the 'Mystic Writing-Pad'"; "Negation"; *An Autobiographical Study.*
- 1926 *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety; The Question of Lay Analysis.*
- 1927 *The Future of an Illusion.*

- 1928 "Dostoyevsky and Parricide."
- 1930 Goethe Prize; *Civilization and its Discontents*; death of Freud's mother.
- 1933 Hitler comes to power; burning of Freud's books in Berlin; *New Introductory Lectures*.
- 1936 Eightieth birthday; formal celebrations; elected Corresponding Member of the Royal Society.
- 1937 "Analysis Terminable and Interminable."
- 1938 Nazis enter Austria; Freud leaves for England; *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (published posthumously)
- 1939 *Moses and Monotheism*; dies on September 23 in Hampstead, London.

## Selected Bibliography

### Works

The authoritative English translation of Freud is *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74). The authoritative German edition is the *Gesammelte Werke*, eds. Anna Freud et. al. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1940-68). Selections from Freud's extant letters to Wilhelm Fliess (only extracts of which appear in the first volume of the *Standard Edition*) and an earlier translation of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* are available in *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey, eds. Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris (New York: Basic Books, 1954). In addition to the Fliess papers, Freud's published correspondence now runs to seven volumes, chief among them *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, trans. Tania and James Stern, ed. Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1960), and *The Freud/Jung Letters*, trans. Ralph Mannheim and R.F.C. Hull, ed. William McGuire (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).

### Life and Career

The principal biography of Freud is Ernest Jones's three-volume *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953-57). Subsequent



biographical accounts include the testament of Freud's physician, Max Schur, *Freud: Living and Dying* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972), and revisionist studies such as Paul Roazen's *Freud and His Followers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), and Frank Sulloway's *Freud: Biologist of the Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1979). Much historical information is also available in Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970). Richard Wollheim's *Sigmund Freud* (New York: Viking, 1971) provides an excellent concise account of the development of Freud's ideas; Philip Rieff's *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959; 3rd ed., 1979) remains a provocative and comprehensive introduction to the range and play of Freud's thought. For the best guide to Freudian terms, see Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973).

### **Selected Studies**

Given the enormous scope of the literature on and about Freud, the following selected list of books and articles is limited to those studies that focus on the literary Freud. Of the increasingly large amount of material on the literary Freud available in French, selections have been made only from among those works translated into English.

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