

7-1-1987

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Recommended Citation

Sheleff, Leon Shaskolsky (1987) "Behind Infanticide and Incest—Personal Aspects in the Formulation of the Oedipus Complex," *University of Dayton Review*: Vol. 18: No. 3, Article 2.
Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol18/iss3/2>

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Sheleff, Behind Infanticide and Incest—Personal Aspects in the Formulation

BEHIND INFANTICIDE AND INCEST—PERSONAL ASPECTS IN THE FORMULATION OF THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Leon Shaskolsky Sheleff

One of the most intriguing aspects of the crucial years in Freud's life, at the end of the nineteenth century, when he was struggling with the initial formulation of the ideas that were to crystallise into the Oedipus Complex, is that during that very time almost all of his own children were going through their own oedipal periods. Under normal circumstances it would seem surely logical to presuppose some connection between the intellectual and emotional turmoil enveloping Freud and the happenings in his home at that time.

Yet almost all the evidence we have about Freud's life and work indicates a total divorcement between his professional concerns as to the developmental process of children in general and his parental interest in the upbringing of his own children. Of course scientists or psychoanalysts are not obliged to apply the lessons of their own research to the situation in their family. Furthermore, they are also entitled to a certain degree of distance between their research projects, theoretical frameworks and treatment programs and their own lives, and, more important, the lives of their children.

Yet these considerations do not, and cannot, apply in relation to Freud—for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the fact that Freud himself drew heavily on his own experiences, sentiments and feelings in the course of developing his ideas, and, in many instances, gave expression to them, both in private correspondence and in his public writings. Indeed this willingness on his part to expose himself earned him much respect, and is often quoted as one of the manifestations of his greatness.

Secondly, many of those who have analyzed Freud's work, both approvingly and critically, have not hesitated to deal with many of the private aspects of his life and character, and to draw on what is known in order to understand more fully the nature of his contribution to science. There seems to be general consensus that, in Freud's case, the personal and the professional aspects of his life were clearly and closely intertwined.

Thirdly, specifically in respect of the Oedipus complex, Freud indicates how much his theoretical framework had been directly affected by the death of his father; and the five years of emotional crisis that he underwent in the final years of the nineteenth century seem to have been an outcome of both his intellectual confrontation with the radical ideas ensconced in what was to become the Oedipus Complex, and the parallel distress occasioned by the loss of his father.

If the death of his father was critical for Freud in terms of the development of the Oedipus complex, as he himself acknowledged, why should the upbringing of his children, at that very time passing through their oedipal phase, be irrelevant?

This is not an [University of Dayton Review, Vol. 18, No. 3 \(1987\), Art. 2](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol18/iss3/2) and far-reaching implications for any critical evaluation of the Oedipus Complex and the processes by which Freud formulated his theory.

Put in blunt terms: if Freud, during the years 1896–1900 had stumbled, as he wrote, on one of the great human secrets—the covert love the child has for the parent of the opposite sex and the subsequent hostility for the parent of the same sex—surely it seems reasonable to suppose that he might have given some thought to the implications of such a theory in his own house where, at that very time, his younger offspring would be presumably harboring both illicit amorous feelings and unacceptable hostile feelings, while his older children would only recently have undergone a similar phase, the consequences of which might still be affecting their emotions and behavior.

In any event the problem of the role of Freud's children in the assessment of his work relates not just to Freud alone; these reservations relate also to the manner in which Freud's supporters, critics and biographers have dealt with this period in his life and with this issue of his personal father-child relations. In truth, most of them have totally ignored the possible implications that I have suggested. Writers who have devoted endless pages to examining Freud's private life, and to his personal relations with his father, have completely ignored the nature of his relations with his children. They have not asked what impact his knowledge of the love and the hate of his children (depending on the sex) toward him (and conversely toward his wife) would have on Freud—and on his theoretical perspective.

This reluctance to probe into these areas of his family life is surely not because of a desire to be discrete, for in all of his other relationships—not just with his father but also with others close to him, no similar reticence is discernible. On the contrary, both intimate examination and speculative hypotheses are to be found in abundance—not, in most cases, in order to titillate or sensationalize but because of an agreed awareness as to the importance of these relations to Freud's clinical and scientific work. Thus various writers have speculated as to the impact of key factors and happenings in his life: the death of a younger infant brother, the large age span between Freud and his elder half brothers, his relationship with his sister-in-law who lived with them, his relations with his followers, the meaning of his two fainting fits.¹

The difference between the emphasis on Freud's relations with a whole host of significant persons in his life, and the indifference as to his relations with his children, is nowhere better noted than in Erich Fromm's sympathetic evaluation of Freud, *Sigmund Freud's Mission*,² with its separate chapters dealing with Freud's relationship with his father, his relationship with his mother, and his relationship with his wife. Yet, there is no chapter dealing with his children, and scarcely a passing reference to them as factors in his life.

Now it may well be that Freud's children did in fact have little impact on his life and/or on his work. However, if that is indeed the case, this, in and of itself, would be a notable factor worthy of analysis—for part of the greatness generally attributed to Freud relates to his pathfinding explorations into the minds and emotions of children. It would indeed be a major paradox if the insights he sensed, the ideas he developed, the theories he presented, were to be of no concern to him in respect of the upbringing of his own children.

Other researchers in this area have not hesitated to draw on their own familial experiences, as in the case of Piaget, or even, as in the case of Skinner, to utilize their ideas in their own children, even in the experimental stage.

Further if it is true that, at the conscious level, Freud was not affected by the impact of his children on him, and on his work, the very nature of Freud's psychoanalytic theory allows for a thesis that, at the unconscious level, the impact may indeed have been subtly yet critically influential.

The biographical evidence indicates that basically the relations with his children were satisfactory. But this in itself is not conclusive one way or another for Freud seemed to have had similarly satisfactory relations with his father. This did not prevent Freud from probing beneath the surface relationship to seek the underlying factors at work.

It may of course also be argued that, at the time that his children were going through their respective oedipal phases, his ideas were not sufficiently formulated to allow for their application to his children. Alternatively, it may be said that he may even have wished to spare himself the strain of personally examining the explosive oedipal patterns unfolding in his own household, indeed of several children in quick succession. However, later in his life, with the perspective of time, these issues may have been expected to interest him and to have led him retrospectively to examine what had transpired in his own household, just as he had, over a span of more than thirty years, attempted to understand his own attitudes to his father going back to his own oedipal phase. Surely there must have been some moment when he was overwhelmed by the import of his theory in his own home.

In any case, he had been prepared to psychoanalyze his own daughter, Anna. We know nothing of this analysis from Freud himself (or from his daughter), nothing of how Freud coped with the obvious problematics. Though apparently an open secret in the psychoanalytic fraternity, it was only brought to the notice of the public at large when revealed by Paul Roazen who, while a keen and perceptive scholar of Freud's theories, is not himself a psychoanalyst.³

In any event, whatever the actual nature of the relationships with his children, it would also surely be important to know how Freud, the master analyst, tried to cope with the inevitable problems associated with the oedipal phase of each of his children, and whether he considered whether they had adequately coped with the complex. On the other hand, if Freud had completely ignored the personal implications of his theory within the home—of both sexual attraction and parricidal tendencies—then that itself warrants investigation, for there are potential far-reaching implications for his theory that stem from this indifference. Indeed the very real possibility exists that, inasmuch as Freud's personal concerns were linked to his theory (and they certainly were in terms of the impact of his father's death), then his concerns were, by normal standards, misplaced.

Furthermore, inasmuch as his father's death did affect him and lead to a lengthy period of depression, there might have been other reasons for it. His father died at the advanced age of eighty, when Freud himself was already forty. Logically a number of reasons could be suggested for his father's death having triggered a period of depression. Freud may well have correctly linked his depression to his father's death but erred in the specific explanation that he offered for it.

Several possible alternatives do indeed present themselves. It must be conceded

a priori that the hard data is meagre and the ensuing analysis speculative, but—and this is part of the argument—no less so than the data and speculations that underlie Freud's own reasoning. In the final analysis, it is the formal logic of an argument that must be, if not the conclusive factor, then at least of prime persuasive force.

I shall examine several possible alternative explanations for his depression in terms of his relations with his father; then examine whether the converse pattern—of Freud's relations with his children—might have had some influence—direct or, as I shall argue, indirect—on Freud's intellectual thought pattern and emotional state. From what we know of Freud's concerns in the crucial five years at the end of the century, it could be argued that his concerns were basically misplaced—and therefore quite likely irrelevant, both for himself and for others, and certainly for any theory which would emerge that purported to account for inevitable and universal patterns in the human life-cycle.

Freud's five-year crisis is generally considered to be, *inter alia*, a direct consequence of the death of his father, an event that forced him to confront his ambivalent feelings toward his father. It was in the course of working out these feelings that he came to the conclusion that his father's death upset him so much because it was in essence a consummation of patricidal wishes that Freud had felt toward him some thirty-five years earlier, wishes that were not unique to him but that were shared with all humanity.

Given the ages of his father and himself (about 80 and 40 respectively) one might have thought that his personal reaction was rather extreme; a more subdued response might have been expected. His father had after all lived well beyond the biblical 70 years traditionally allotted to mankind, while Freud had been fortunate to have reached middle age while his father (and for that matter his mother) were still alive. Under normal circumstances and in purely existential terms, there was much for Freud to be grateful for; there were many points of comfort to assuage his grief. Why then the depression?

Even if we acknowledge that the insights as to the oedipal concept emerged into his consciousness subsequent to his father's death, why should it have evoked such a strong personal reaction? However evil Freud's thoughts toward his father might have been during his oedipal period, these had taken place some 35 years before. On the other hand, there is a clear possibility that it was the adult present rather than a distant childhood that might have been the underlying cause of Freud's depression. For a father's death may well set loose a floodgate of emotions relating to the son's status, circumstances and self-conception, including, for instance, an awareness of the son's own physical vulnerability and his entry into the predetermined latter part of his own life, the responsibilities devolving upon him as the replacement for the deceased parent with all the power and potential associated with being a member of the emerging dominant generation, and an incipient confrontation with a younger generation also eager to take its rightful place in the dominant positions of society.

For Freud personally there might have been a singular pertinence attached to this situation, for the challenge of his present and future career would be looming larger than ever; and at that stage of his life there was still a wide chasm between his potential as a person possessed of a creative and original mind and the sum

of his achievements to date. He had till that time published only minimally, and indeed had touched only peripherally on those areas which were to bring him fame. In fact his most notable contribution had been in his work on cocaine, but even here full recognition for his pioneering work had eluded him, as he himself had not pursued the idea to its uttermost, and it was a colleague of his who had both developed the idea and attained recognition.

It is a fair assumption that, at this stage of his career, Freud was aware of both his own potential and of his failure thus far to find full expression for it, and a further fair assumption that these are factors that should be considered for their impact on Freud's work. Inasmuch as it was a death that was so strongly affecting Freud, it might be instructive to ponder the impact of Freud's overall concerns as to mortality and immortality; there are extensive analyses of these themes in Freud's life and work to be found in some of the leading interpretive work on Freud, particularly by Norman Brown and Ernest Becker. However both of them deal with Freud in general terms throughout his life; neither focus specifically on the years in which Freud formulated the incipient ideas of the Oedipus complex. However, their psychoanalytic references to Freud, their attempts to go beyond Freud in many respects, their emphasis on the specific issue of mortality and immortality, provide a useful framework for attempting to re-assess the impact of his father's death on him.

Norman Brown has suggested that the Oedipus complex has far larger ramifications than those encompassed by Freud's explanation—specifically he sees the key issue as involving not sexual desires and the resultant complications, but an inevitable confrontation with mortality and immortality—the fear of the former, the yearning for the latter. Brown sees this as being a life-long struggle and enlarges on Freud's original term by referring to the 'Oedipal project', which is meant to convey "the quest to conquer death by being father of oneself".⁴ He elaborates on this basic theme to suggest that the "essence of the oedipal complex is the project of becoming God—in Spinoza's formula, *causa sui*".⁵

Building on the basic parameters of the Oedipus project, Ernest Becker⁶ suggested that the pressures toward a solution of the Oedipus project would be different for Freud as a person of genius, than for the average person. Whereas the average person must generally seek his immortality through his children who bear his name, carry his genes, inherit his possessions, revere his memory, and remember his passing in ritualized forms, a person of genius on the contrary, is possessed of qualities that enable him to attain—or at least seek—immortality in his own right without any dependence on his offspring.

However, in Freud's case the position is even more complicated as there was more than just a yearning for immortality; he seems also to have been absorbed to the point of obsession with troubled thoughts about death. According to Becker, in his close and critical analysis of himself, Freud's thoughts seemed to tend so often in this direction. In Becker's words: ". . . in one great way he was extraordinary—and it was this that fed directly into his genius. He was extremely self-analytic, lifted the veil from his own repressions, and tried to decipher his deepest motivations to the very end of his life . . . Unlike most men, Freud was conscious of death as a very personal and intimate problem. He was haunted by death anxiety all his life and admitted that not a day went by that he did not think about it. This is clearly unusual for the run of mankind; and it is here, I think that we can justifiably fish around for some hints about Freud's special orientation to reality and about a

'problem' unique to him. If we get hints of such a problem, I think we can use it to throw light on the overall structure of his work and its possible limits".⁷

Becker goes on to deal with two different approaches to the problem of death shown by Freud—one, a "major toying with the idea" as in his playing around with numbers to predict the date of his death; the other periodical "anxiety attacks in which the anxiety was localized as a real dread of dying".⁸ It is this latter theme that leads Becker into an elaboration of Brown's ideas of the Oedipus project. Building also on the work of Otto Rank and Paul Roazen, he writes that the

true genius has an immense problem that other men do not. He has to earn his value as a person from his work which means that his work has to carry the burden of justifying him. What does 'justifying' mean for man? It means transcending death by qualifying for immortality . . . The uniqueness of the genius also cuts off his roots. He is a phenomenon that was not foreshadowed; he doesn't seem to have any traceable debts to the qualities of others; he seems to have sprung self-generated out of nature. We might say that he has the 'purest' *causa-sui* project; he is truly without a family, the father of himself.

This leads ultimately to

. . . the problem of the *causa-sui* project of the genius. In the normal Oedipal project the personal internalizes the parents and the superego they embody, that is, the culture at large. But the genius cannot do this because his project is unique; it cannot be filled up by the parents or the culture. It is created by a renunciation of the parents, a renunciation of what they represent and even of their own concrete persons—at least in fantasy—as there doesn't seem to be anything in them that has caused the genius. Here we see whence the genius gets his extra burden of guilt: he has renounced the father both spiritually and physically. The act gives him extra anxiety because now he is vulnerable, as he has no one to stand on . . .

It is no surprise then that Freud would be particularly sensitive to the idea of father-murder. We can imagine that father-murder would be a complex symbol for him, comprising the heavy guilt of standing alone in his vulnerability, an attack on his identity as a father, on the psycho-analytic movement as his *causa-sui* vehicle, and thus on his immortality.⁹

Becker then proceeds to suggest that such a perspective provides an explanation for various aspects of Freud's overall personality and life, including especially the two well-known fainting fits.

However, I believe that in these insights—and those of the other writers on whom Becker relies—there is an entry into a reassessment also of the critical years when Freud was actually putting together the basic Oedipal framework. Let us pursue the themes then of the Oedipal project—immortality, fear of death—in relation to the depression that overtook Freud in the years after his father's death.

Here was a person, aware of his creative potential, perhaps aware that he was on the threshold of greatness, yet aware too that real success had eluded him; and now having been brought face to face with death in his own family, aware too of the frailty of human existence, of the physical vulnerability of the self. From this perspective there is almost a logical explanation behind Freud's strong reaction—given this kind of constellation of facts, the older the person on the death of his father, the more likely that he would be engulfed by strong emotions—relating not so much to the loss of the parent, and certainly not to any hostile feelings sensed 35 years before (even if never mitigated by adequate treatment) but by the existential challenge then facing him—what has in the years since come to be known and recognized as the mid-life crisis.¹⁰

In retrospect, is it not possible to suggest that Freud himself was faced with some similar problem?—touched off, quite likely by his father's death, but focusing nevertheless on his own life—with its past achievements and disappointments, its present challenges and frustrations, its future potentialities and uncertainties. At forty he was still far from attaining the peaks to which he aspired, and of which he was capable. The death of a close person of advanced age, and his own entry into the key middle stage of his life, could only acutely intensify the kaleidoscope of emotions attached to his capabilities and ambitions.

This is admittedly a hypothetical conjecture, but it certainly fits in with the overall neo-Freudian framework of Becker and those whom he built on. Unfortunately none of these thinkers attempted to apply the logic of their theme to the specific circumstances of Freud's crisis—and inasmuch as they do make some reference it is only in the context of the original Freudian framework. But if it is correct that Freud had this lengthy and ongoing concern over questions of death—including his own death—it may be reasonably assumed that they would be felt most intensely in the immediate wake of his father's death. I would suggest that some part of his crisis may be traced to this aspect of his life.

Yet there is another aspect in which the theme of Becker *et al.* may have been pertinent at that time, for if it was his relative lack of success till then that caused much of the tension that engulfed him, another reason would be the thoughts of possible success in the future. If there is not yet the recognized genius that Becker has described, he must have been aware himself of his potentialities, and these may well have caused him, as Becker suggests, to consider the nature and source of the attributes that he had inherited. Becker discussed feelings of this nature in general terms as being an ongoing problem that affected Freud throughout his life, but it is quite possible that they would have been sensed with particular pertinence in the immediate wake of his father's death, particularly the thought of surpassing his father.

For Freud, such thoughts may well have been exacerbated by an inescapable dilemma associated with his membership of the Jewish people. The Jewish religion imposes on sons the duty of reciting the Kadish, the mourner's prayer, three times a day at the morning, afternoon and evening prayers, for the year following the death. This aspect of the religion is deeply embedded in the Jewish cultural tradition, and is a precept that has binding relevance even for those who are not normally observant.

Freud himself was in no sense religious, yet throughout his life was conscious

of his Jewish identity. Given these basic facts, an inevitable question arises—how did he relate to his filial obligations?

There is, to the best of my knowledge, no direct evidence on this point. I would suggest that, whatever pattern of behavior Freud chose in this regard would cause him some distress and perhaps contribute, even if only marginally, to his overall depression: if he failed to carry out his basic duty as a son to recite the *Kadish*, he could not but be aware of a real failure to fulfil a major, recognized obligation devolving on him; if, on the other hand, he did go through the ritual demanded of him for almost a full year, then, as a non-religious person, he could not but be aware of the arduous nature of the role he was playing in an area which he was later to define as no more than an illusion. From what we know of Freud it would seem that the former pattern of behavior seems the more likely—but also the one likely to cause the greater distress. This would certainly be as harsh a denial of his father as any oedipal patricidal feelings that he might have felt toward his father.

These three factors, then—of anxious thoughts as to whether there was indeed time enough for him to achieve the contributions of which he sensed himself capable, of troublesome musings as to how he would likely surpass his father, and of agonizing dilemmas as to how to be faithful to his father's memory within the framework of a faith to which he professed only nominal membership—might have been uppermost in Freud's mind, and been key factors in his emotional depression. Logically, and even within the framework of broad psychoanalytical framework, they certainly seem more important and relevant factors, even separately, but certainly in unison, than a delayed discovery of hostile feelings toward his father when he was a young boy.

This analysis might help to explain the background to Freud's behavior and emotions seen as a son—but what of Freud as a father?

Still within the framework of the feelings of mortality and immortality it would be advisable to check also how he coped with the ongoing situation of his relations with his six children—and also, inasmuch as these are relevant, as they seem to be, with his disciples.

As Robert Lifton points out immortality is usually attained through one's children—but a person of genius has other means of answering to this deep human need.¹¹

Lifton writes of five different modes by which a person may achieve this aim of immortality. The first and most common is the "biological mode, the sense of living on *through* and *in* one's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters. At some level of consciousness we imagine an endless chain of biological attachments". However, one of the alternative modes of symbolic immortality is "that achieved through works: the mode of creativity, the achievement of enduring impact; the sense that one's writing, one's teaching, one's human influences, great or humble, will live on; that one's contribution will not die".¹²

Some of Freud's behavior may be understood from this perspective—his indifference toward his own children in their early years, on the one hand, and his conflict-ridden and ambivalent relations with many of his most outstanding disciples and followers, on the other.

Was Freud, while excitedly developing the theme that he sensed—correctly—was to bring him fame, aware that his immortality would be ensured not by the

faithfulness of his children toward him but by his ability to successfully pursue his emerging ideas into a satisfactory and acceptable framework? If successful the role of his children in his future life—with specific regard to the question of immortality—would become secondary to the more important need to find followers who would be willing and capable of bearing his message.

It is true that some of Freud's children have actually fulfilled an important role in preserving and propounding his ideas—most notably his daughter, Anna, an outstanding psychoanalyst in her own right, but also Ernest, always active in administrative work in the Freud archives, and Martin, who has written a positive and interesting, if not exactly revealing, account of his father.¹³ Yet it is not their attitudes toward him in their adult years that is of most import, but his attitude toward them in their childhood. What do we know of this relationship?

As already noted, most of the biographers pay scant attention to this aspect of Freud's life. Those that do tend to comment only briefly, and generally *en passant*.

At face value then it seems that the relationship was basically a satisfactory one—just as, in fact, was the relationship between Freud and his own father. Yet, in the latter relationship, according to Freud, were underlying layers of deep emotional crisis, so deep that, in unravelling them, Freud himself was to be thrust into a depression. Perhaps similar layers of emotion apply in the case of Freud's relations with his own children—hidden as in the case of his father but, unlike his father's situation, untouched and without analysis.

In a recent work,¹⁴ I have suggested that, in the past, analyses of generational contacts and conflicts have been affected by a biased approach on the part of many researchers—all adults, most of them parents—in which there is a tendency to present the relations mainly from the perspective of the older generation. I have suggested that much academic research in this area takes place within the theoretical framework of the Oedipus complex; as an alternative perspective I have suggested the Rustom Complex, which stresses the evidence of adult and parental hostility—a factor which is found, to a greater or lesser extent, in nearly all societies, and which is expressed through phenomena ranging from infanticide to physical, sexual and psychological abuse, as well as in mythology, literature and other cultural symbols.

Many factors could be advanced for such a situation; three specifically were analyzed—the burden of nurturing, educating and socializing the younger generation, the fear of social change which generally favors the young, and the ambivalence arising from the role of children in ensuring immortality.

During the key years when Freud was formulating his thesis it is the first-mentioned factor that is clearly of prime importance. Once again there is little evidence on which any clear-cut picture could be drawn—but the odd, isolated comments seem to indicate that Freud solved the problems of nurturance, education and socialization mainly by ignoring them, or, more exactly, by transferring them to his wife.¹⁵

This may, of course, be considered standard behavior, typical of the cultural milieu in which Freud lived. But Freud was no ordinary person—in so many other ways he wrenched himself from his cultural milieu in order to probe the hidden nature of human behavior, in order to gain the insights and embellish them, which were a key to his success as a researcher and therapist. Why should those who study

Freud today University of Dayton Review, Vol. 18, No. 3 [1987], p. 2 family life, to remain captive to his social environment when he challenges the norms of his society in so many other areas? And how is it that so many of them ignore the possible implications for his theorizing?

For if Freud had indeed taken an active part in the upbringing of his children, would he have been so indifferent to the burdens of parenthood? This is not Freud's problem alone. Like other male researchers (certainly until recently) there was the possibility of being cushioned from sensing the full impact and import of parent-child relations because it was generally the wife-mother who bore the full brunt of this burden. It is only in the last decade or so, partly through the political impact of the feminist movement, that a number of women have shown the courage to express the hidden hostilities that come to the surface, and that they must daily struggle against,¹⁶ not to mention the number of men who are now actively engaged in the practice of parenthood together with their wives.

Of course, in general, we cannot insist that the credentials of a researcher in the field of human behavior, and especially family relations, be measured in terms of his conduct at home and the nature of his interaction with his children. However given the manner in which the development of a key theoretical development was closely linked to Freud's personal background and his own self-analysis, such questions become not just permissible, but essential.

In the light of the serious re-assessment currently being undertaken of the manner in which the original seduction theory was rejected, and in which the initial ideas as to the Oedipus complex were formulated, I would suggest that these personal factors may be of critical importance for our understanding of the unrecognized and unconscious factors which affected Freud's thinking.

This is not an open invitation to *ad hominem* attacks and imprudent prying, but a call (applicable not only in the case of Freud), for a searching analysis of the way in which the perspectives and the perceptions of an adult and a parent affect the analysis, the interpretations and the conclusions of research dealing with inter-generational relations.

The sociology of knowledge has clearly shown how the biases arising from membership in a particular class, sex, race, religion, ethnic group, affect our research in these areas. It is time that we realize how similar biases affect research dealing with age differences—in fact become even more pertinent, because of the fact that the young normally do not take part in such research.

I suggest biases of this type quite possibly affected Freud's work and an awareness of this fact, may well contribute to our understanding of how Freud developed his ideas—more specifically in the case of the Oedipus complex; of how on the one hand he came to be captivated by the ancient Greek tragedy and to give it an interpretation compatible with his biases and his developing ideas; and, on the other hand, of his reluctance to accept, at face value the stories of seduction (and, I would add, of other manifestations of adult parental failings) that he was told by his patients.

In sum, there were undoubtedly personal factors at work here, as I have outlined in this article. Beyond this, however, there were the overall structural factors of adulthood and parenthood, factors which are of general impact, and which may well explain the underlying reasons for the acceptance of his theoretical presen-

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tation, as well as for the lack of sufficiently critical examination of the manner in
which he developed his ideas.

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- ¹ See the three volume biography by Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1957), and Marthe Robert, *The Psychoanalytic Revolution: Sigmund Freud's Life and Achievement* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).
- ² Erich Fromm, *Sigmund Freud's Mission* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959).
- ³ See Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers*, (New York: Knopf, 1971). In addition to the *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud also mentions a death-wish dream about his adult son in the army, and notes casually, in passing, that it might be linked to the envy of the old for the young. No attempt is made to expand on this idea. Certainly no attempt is made to link it to the problematics of the Oedipus complex. (see Vol. 5 of Standard Works of Sigmund Freud, p. 558).
- ⁴ Norman Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 120.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ⁶ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, (New York: The Free Press, 1973).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110–111.
- ¹⁰ See Daniel Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Knopf, 1978).
- ¹¹ Robert Jay Lifton, "The Sense of Immortality: On Death and the Continuity of Life", *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 33 (1973), p. 4.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ¹³ Martin Freud, *Glory Reflected—Sigmund Freud—Man and Father*, (London, Angus and Robertson, n.d.).
- ¹⁴ Leon Sheleff, *Generations Apart: Adult Hostility to Youth*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).
- ¹⁵ See for instance personal accounts in Jones, *op.cit.*, Roazen, *op. cit.*
- ¹⁶ See especially Angela Barron McBride, *The Growth and Development of Mothers*; and Shirley L. Radl, *Mothers Day is Over* (New York: Perennial, 1974).