

Freud as the pioneer of applied psychoanalysis

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Applied psychoanalysis in the Lacanian sense, as described by Lacan in the Founding Act of 1964, refers to the application of psychoanalysis in the field of therapy, medicine and clinical psychiatry. Applied psychoanalysis introduces a psychoanalytic orientation to the psychiatric field and provides the opening for a clinical space within the institution. In 1918 Freud addressed the International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest about the social obligation that psychoanalysis be made available free of charge to all who needed treatment regardless of class and that this would necessitate modifications to the psychoanalytic method for it to be applied outside of the standard practice. He said: "It is very probable... that the application of our therapy to numbers will compel us to alloy the pure gold of analysis plentifully with the copper of direct suggestion... But whatever the elements out of which it is compounded its most effective and most important ingredients will assuredly remain those borrowed from strict psychoanalysis which serves no ulterior purpose" (Freud, 1917-19b, p.172). This statement is indicative of Freud's fear that his analytic method would be tarnished in its application to various experimental situations, such as the treatment of psychosis and its institutional application.

Freud was considering the future of psychoanalysis and the transformations he would have to introduce into the practice to respond to the new demands of society. Although Freud was never a hospital psychiatrist or alienist he knew the theory and practice of the psychiatry of his times. Psychoanalysis opened the way for the development of modern psychiatry. Much of the work of the psychoanalytic pioneers was based on Freud's theories of psychosis; in particular, the case history of Schreber (Freud, 2001 [1911]) whose memoirs (Schreber, 1903) provided Freud with the basis of a conceptual framework for psychoanalytic clinical practice with the psychotic. However, Freud was cautious about recommending psychoanalysis for anyone other than the neurotic because psychotics were thought to be unable to form a 'transference' relationship and by implication, prevented them from developing of a working alliance within the analytic treatment (Freud, 1905c, 1917-19a, 1940[1938]). Contrary to this, some of Freud's earliest followers, such as Ferenczi began treating schizophrenia with a more active therapy. These analysts maintained an optimistic view that the schizophrenic did not regress so far as to preclude relatedness to others and did not withdraw so completely as to render analytic treatment impossible (Stone, 1991, 127). Freud encouraged this application of psychoanalysis and even referred difficult psychotic patients to these analysts for treatment.

So in spite of his reservations, Freud was supportive and even encouraging of those analysts who took on exploratory psychoanalytic work. Federn, Abraham and Simmel have all written about the supervision and advice Freud gave them in their clinical endeavours (Abraham, 1949 [1911]; Federn, 1953; Simmel, 1929). It is not widely known that Freud, did not avoid the treatment of psychosis and in a communication to Abraham, spoke of two cases of melancholia he had successfully treated and in one case there was no relapse ten years post

treatment(Abraham, 1949 [1911],479). Federn referred to Freud's recommendation that the therapeutic triggering of psychosis could be successfully treated if there was a thorough understanding of the narcissistic mechanisms involved and that the treatment be conducted in a psychoanalytic clinic (Federn, 1953,139). The first psychoanalytic clinic run by Simmel, the Schloss Tegel Sanatorium was patronised by Freud who was known to visit there quite often.

I was formally introduced to Freud in 1980 as a student at Royal Park – a large psychiatric hospital that no longer exists post deinstitutionalisation. It took me many years to begin to integrate the knowledge caused by Freud's ideas back then in the institution. The true legacy of Freud is found in his unwaveringly, honest and open search for the truth. Freud based his psychoanalytic theories squarely upon careful and detailed clinical observation. This is where the spirit and vision of Freud can carry us into the 21st century.

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