

## **“Divine madness. Freud the archaeologist”**

*Francesco Marchioro*

Sigmund Freud (Pribor-Freiberg 1856 - London 1939), stern and genius scholar, founded a new science regarding disorders of the mind, on which he then based his innovative methods of psychotherapy. He repeatedly defended the scientific status of psychoanalysis, insofar as it is a natural science.

His genius, however, took surprising turns, and there were aspects to him that revealed unexpected traits for a man of science, such as his love of cigars and his passion for archaeology. If smoking may be traced back to the desire for ‘transitory narcosis’ and may be seen as a replacement for maternal care and attention, or a ‘primary dependency’, what does archaeology then represent to Freud? A metaphor for the ‘splendid isolation’ in which he worked and lived for long periods in Vienna? Intellectual attention to the aesthetics and culture of the past? The adhesion to a fashion popular amongst the aristocracy at the end of the nineteenth-beginning of the twentieth century? A compulsive mania? Or something else altogether...?

From careful research we can assume that this passion for archaeology has at least three main sources:

- the relationship between Freud and his father Jakob, the family Bible and the classical culture he acquired whilst at grammar school, fuelled by his love of travel;
- the discoveries made by his contemporary, the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, along with the influence of the Parisian psychiatrist and actor Jean Martin Charcot;
- an interest in the past lives of individuals and populations, with reference to the discovery of the subconscious.

We do not intend to go into the individual reasons in any depth here; instead, we are examining them in order to try to shed light on the reasons that prompted Freud to surround himself with over two thousand ancient objects found during excavations from Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman settlements and from even remoter civilisations such as Indian and Chinese.

The exhibition invites you to probe inside Freud as to the origins of his passion for archaeology, to enter his famous studio at 19 Berggasse and follow the trail of this disturbing divine madness, just as the first guests did and, for some weeks, even a narcissistic and curious cat.

This love for archaeology makes up an integral part of his discovery of psychoanalysis. Indeed, while investigating hysteria, he exclaimed: “Saxa loquuntur” (“The stones are speaking”) to indicate that in everyone a city is buried and its finds are uncovered by the psychoanalyst as he or she delves into the history and tales of the patient. This work may be compared to that of archaeologists on ancient remains and the inscriptions of streets, houses and monuments. Unveiling these psychic powers and interpreting the language of symptoms, dreams and the subconscious seemed to be an engrossing and revolutionary challenge full of surprises and discoveries for the Viennese master.

The appeal that the ancient classical world held for the founder of psychoanalysis was very great, as we may detect from the joy with which he announced his purchase of a Roman statue in Innsbruck in 1898, or the pleasure he took in reading *A history of Greek culture* by Jacob Burckhardt. Significantly, the most important destinations for him were Athens and Rome, which he described as a “splendid, feared, divine city”.

Thanks to his many interests, psychoanalysis became a discipline capable of conducting 'cross-sectional' investigation, offering contributions to various different spheres of knowledge with surprising results.

Ancient exhibits do not only appear in the figures and concepts that pervade his scientific writings, but came to represent therapeutic symbols and friendly presences for him, his patients and family. At particular points in an analysis session he used to show his patients statuettes to illustrate his interpretations, or, much taken by recently purchased new item, he would scrutinize it between sessions or bring it to the table for his lunchtime meal with his family.

This passion for archaeology was so strong that he admitted in a confidential letter to his friend Stefan Zweig that he had read 'more about archaeology than psychology'. Thus, as the years went by, he surrounded himself with ancient objects that came to number over 2000 coming from Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, Roman and even Indian and Chinese excavations.

From their remote origins, divinity and humanity, myths and arguments, madness and normality, bear witness to the unending exploration of the truth. In *Totem and Taboo*, of which there is a copy of the first edition on display (on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its drafting, begun in Collalbo in 1911), Freud reminds us that "in a certain sense, primitive man is still our contemporary".

In the famous sketch by Max Pollak (1914) Freud appears, seated at a desk, listening and in dialogue with the wisdom of gods and goddesses from the ancient world and with the voice of divine madness, misunderstood by all but him. Thus, from his studio of dreams and enigmas, archaeology and psychoanalysis never cease to surprise us.

The exhibition at Bolzano **is unique and completely original**. It is the first time that these exhibits from the Freud Museum in London, where they were kept after Freud brought them to London following his forced flight from Vienna in 1938, are on display **in Italy**. There are 18 statuettes, including Athena, Freud's 'favourite', selected objects, mythological figures, gods, goddesses - rare images of the antiquity which forged the subject matter of Freudian thought and which, right from the start, have represented a significant metaphor in psychoanalytical research.

The first edition of *Totem and Taboo*, a work Freud began in the summer of 1911 **at Renon** during his long holidays with his family, is also on display. Besides this, inside the exhibition, you can see the film 'Percorsi freudiani (Freudian travels): *Freud in Alto Adige and Trentino* (L. Giudiceandrea and F. Marchioro), produced by **Rai Bolzano**.

**Duration** of exhibition: **2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011** (inauguration 6pm) – **29<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

**At: Galleria Civica, Bolzano** – Piazza Domenicani 18

**Tel.:** +39 0471977855 (free entrance)

**Opening times:** Tues., Weds., Thurs., Fri. 9am – 12.30pm; 3.30pm – 7pm; Sat., Sun.: 10am – 6pm

**Organisation:** Ass. Imago-Ricerche p.a.

**Information and guided tours:** tel.: +39 3336347740 Email: marchif@alice.it

**Project:** Studio Lupu & Burtscher

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