

Sigmund Freud on psychoanalysis and Vienna



"The suggestion is that psycho-analysis, and in particular its assertion that the neuroses are traceable to disturbances in sexual life, could only have originated in a town like Vienna - in an atmosphere of sensuality and immorality foreign to other cities - and that it is simply a reflection, a projection into theory, as it were, of these peculiar Viennese conditions.

Now I am certainly no local patriot; but this theory about psycho-analysis always seems to me quite exceptionally senseless - so senseless, in fact, that I have sometimes been inclined to suppose that the reproach of being a citizen of Vienna is only a euphemistic substitute for another reproach which no one would care to put forward openly.

If the premisses on which the argument rests were the opposite of what they are, then it might be worth giving it a hearing. If there were a town in which the inhabitants imposed exceptional restrictions on themselves as regards sexual satisfaction, and if at the same time they exhibited a marked tendency to severe neurotic disorders, that town might certainly give rise in an observer(s mind to the idea that the two circumstances had some connection with each other, and might suggest that one was contingent on the other. But neither of these assumptions is true of Vienna.

The Viennese are no more abstinent and no more neurotic than the inhabitants of any other capital city. There is rather less embarrassment - less prudery - in regard to sexual relationships than in the cities of the West and North which are so proud of their chastity. These peculiar characteristics of Vienna would be more likely to mislead the observer on the causation of neurosis than to enlighten him on it.

Vienna has done everything possible, however, to deny her share in the origin of psycho-analysis. In no other place is the hostile indifference of the learned and educated section of the population so evident to the analyst as in Vienna. "

(Sigmund Freud - On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement)

