Podcast:

"Freud: his passion for travel and its impact on psychoanalytic discoveries".

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While reading Freud's travel letters, I connected with the pleasure and the different emotions that his travels provoked in him. He mentions the vertigo of Venice and the ineffability of the impact it made; the indelible impressions, the enjoyment of food and shopping, the inspirations for his theories, etc, etc. The letters convey passion and express the significance that travel had in his life, as well as in his discoveries and theoretical developments. They inspire a desire to know and to attempt to discover the triggers of that passion.

According to E. Jones: "Freud used to say that there were three things one should never economize on: health, education and travel." Travel ranked among his three great passions along with archaeology and psychoanalysis. It forged his status as an adventurer, conqueror, researcher, and creator.

It's worth noting that the Spanish word "*Viaje*" (travel) finds its origins in the Catalan "*viatge*," which in turn can be traced back to the Latin "*viaticum*" (from *viāticus*, "belonging to a journey") and "*via*" ("way" or "path").

Are dreams, jokes and failed actions not the "royal road": the path – through free association – that leads to knowledge of the unconscious? Thus, travel also implies a path towards the exploration of the uncharted territories of the mind and the encounter with the unconscious unknown of the inner self.

1) The trip to Rome.

On the fifth day of his first trip to Rome in 1901, Freud sent a postcard to his wife, remarking: "This afternoon, we had some impressions which will linger for years." He had beheld "The Moses," Michelangelo's striking statue housed in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli.

More than ten years would pass before he wrote "The Moses of Michelangelo," embarking on an analytical aesthetic experience with the artwork and uncovering the correlation between the artist's unconscious desires and a significant moment in his own intellectual life.

The discovery of Moses sparked a paradigmatic work and founded the method of psychoanalytic research in art. It marked the advance of non-clinical experiences within psychoanalysis.

2) Two perspectives on the journey to Athens.

What did Freud see when he beheld the Acropolis, and how did this extraordinary encounter affect his psyche?

The voyage to Greece subsequently became intertwined with "The Gradiva" (1906) and finally with the “Letter to R. Rolland” (1936), which would emerge as a re-signification of the meaning of that journey. Indeed, it is a journey that can be contemplated in two phases.

In 1904, Freud and his brother Alexander decided to travel to Greece. Upon reaching Trieste, en route to Corfu, they changed their destination and went to Athens.

On arriving at Piraeus, he exclaimed, "The arrival is of an indescribable beauty. The Acropolis..." The following day, standing before the Acropolis, he described the experience as transcending anything he had yet seen or imagined. It was "the greatest impression."

Twenty years later, in a personal letter to Marie Bonaparte, Freud confided that the amber-colored columns were the most exquisite sight he had beheld. The encounter with the columns evoked for Freud the same sense of happiness he had previously spoken of in relation to Schliemann, of whom he had noted, "The man was happy when he discovered Priam's treasure. For happiness comes only as the fulfillment of a childhood wish." That of infantile sexuality, which is the source of pleasure.

Let us recall here that unconscious fantasizing stems from sexual curiosity, with its object being both one's own body and that of others. Pillars and columns, for instance, often symbolize legs. Freud noted the erotic flight in the words of the Song of Songs. Similarly, the male genitalia can be imagined as an erect column.

A few years later, in "The Future of an Illusion" (1927), he recalled the experience as "remarkably curious" as he fell into a state of awe and wonder amidst the ancient temple ruins.

The uniqueness of the location and the astonishment of an "entirely subjective nature" that it evokes can sometimes

converge to create a wonderful effect, at times unsettling and discomforting.

At the age of eighty, Freud wrote a letter entitled "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" (1936), to Roman Rolland on the occasion of Rolland's seventieth birthday. In the text, Freud recalls the peculiar sensation of doubt that engulfed him during that journey: Did the Greece he had studied about in school truly exist? He found himself torn. Part of him affirmed that he was indeed amidst the Greece of his dreams, while another part could not believe it.

The aesthetic impact he experienced left him with a sense of strangeness, prompting him to express: “It was as if someone, walking beside Loch Ness, suddenly caught sight of the form of the famous monster stranded upon the shore and found himself driven to the admission: ‘So it really does exist – the sea-serpent we’ve never believed in!’.”

Thus, Freud, in his intellectual analysis, attributed the strangeness experienced during this holiday to the theory of repression and his conflict with his father, whom he had largely overcome, his father being unable to travel and devoid of such intellectual interests. He had come a long way yet guilt

clouded his experience, too beautiful to be enjoyed without interdiction. It was an experience that intertwined aesthetic pleasure with mental disorganization, resulting in a moment of alienation.

Let us not overlook that the aesthetic impact stemming from the interaction between the artwork and the viewer can be simultaneously enriching and disruptive. Graziella Magherini coined the term "Stendhal Syndrome" to describe the intense emotional disturbances that arise when individuals become deeply immersed in the world of art.

A profound contact with history and art, often sparked by a specific detail of a particular work, can "awaken" primitive psychic content we have not mentally processed. When this content emerges with great intensity, it can impact the traveler's psyche and provoke significant disorganization. A fundamental theoretical contribution to think of his experience as a connection with unrepresentable aspects of the mythical and primal relationship with the mother.

Returning to it at this juncture in his life, the journey to Athens assumed a different connotation.

What had happened to the glowing memory that had been intellectualized in the letter to Roman Rolland? Something of the beauty of the discovery had been effaced in Freud's mind.
It's possible that if the experience concealed forbidden sexual desires, its marvelous impact might have succumbed to repression and guilt. Additionally, the experience could be altered by the impact of different circumstances, such as the looming specter of war, as well as by the passage of time itself.

3) Other travels.

It is worth mentioning Freud’s trip to Dresden, Germany, and the visit to the Zwinger Palace in December 1883. He was deeply captivated by the sight of Titian's "The Tribute Money," expressing a desire to possess it, remarking, "I would have liked to steal it... So I just left, full of new feelings."
"Steal it!" The expression demonstrates the intensity of emotions that can result from the aesthetic impact of a work of art, and which a journey can spark. Although the tour lasted only an hour, Freud "profited from it in a way that will last forever." Such an imprint, as we saw clearly with "The Moses,"

became integrated into his subsequent theoretical elaborations.

Another interesting journey was Freud's solo trip to London and his visit to the National Portrait Gallery, an experience that sparked the manuscript "Notes on Faces and Men" (September 1908). Here, he established a connection between appearance, occupation, and the level of sublimation, reflecting his research interests. He highlighted the presence of the infantile in authentic poets.

Let us remember that artistic creations play a role in the unconscious framework that animates individual works, a concept referred to as the "imaginary museum" by Proust and Malraux.

4)The passion for travel.

Sabina Spielrein and Cristina Melgar shed light on the "roots of travel," linking them to incestuous passions.

According to Spielrein, “travel is rooted in two things: 1) the longing for detachment and 2) the search for something new, beneath which incest is always concealed."

Coincidentally, Melgar suggests that "in myth, literature, and life, the journey represents a departure from the motherland and its endogamous circumstances, in order to re-engage with incestuous passions, mourning, and Oedipal guilt in new territories, and with greater freedom and capacity for improvisation".

Jung describes a dissatisfaction that propels individuals to seek and explore new horizons in their quest to find the lost mother. Conversely, for Cirlot, it represents a flight from the mother.

However, I would argue that these seemingly opposing perspectives converge. In flight, individuals may find themselves reunited with what they are attempting to escape – a concept exemplified in "Gradiva."

To contemplate wanderlust, I'll consider dreams, memories, and a jumble of words, without delving deeply into them, as pathways – associations towards memory:

1) The "Botanical Monograph" dream: Freud finds himself leafing through a colored sheet folded over the monograph of a plant.

2) An early childhood memory: a "screen memory" from his fifth year, involving his sister Anna (younger than 3). In this recollection, they are joyfully tearing out pages from a book detailing a journey to Persia. This memory remains one of the few vivid images Freud retains from that period of his life.

3) Another screen memory emerges: a "Green meadow with yellow flowers taken from Pauline.": Three children are playing in a meadow: Freud, his niece Pauline, and his nephew John. Pauline possesses the loveliest bouquet. Freud and John "fall on her and snatch (*entreissen*) the flowers".

4) Another significant association was the memory of the family's reaction upon reading the book about Nansen's expedition to the Pole. This subsequently triggered a dream attributed to a colleague. During the analysis of this dream, he recalled a childhood anecdote: ".... When he was three or four years old, he overheard adults discussing voyages of discovery, and he mistakenly interpreted the word 'voyages' (*Reisen*) as 'rheumatic pains' (*Reissen*)."

Leclaire pointed out that "*Reissen*" as a verb and no longer as a noun, means to pluck, tear, pierce, or shatter.

Plucking the flowers of Pauline, Freud's niece and a significant figure in his early childhood, symbolically amounts to 'deflowering' her; akin to plucking leaves, metaphorically stripping them away from his sister. It expresses the desire to penetrate the mysteries of female sexuality.

A "leafless" book about a trip to Persia and the "snatched" flowers, laden with their sexual symbolism, are interconnected with the discovery of the differences between the sexes through dreams. Additionally, it's worth noting that the meadow, like all undulating landscapes, serves as a metaphor for the maternal body.

Incestuous desires and fantasies, expressed through sexual games involving his younger sister and niece, were disguised within the screen memories. The first infantile sexuality theory (1908) posited that all human beings possessed a penis. Faced with what is still incomprehensible and thrilling, the child experiences "dark impulses to act violently, to penetrate, to tear, to open a hole somewhere."

In infantile sexual research, one pathway the drive takes to explore is sublimation. Evading repression, it sublimates into a hunger for knowledge, allowing the drive to channel its energy

into serving intellectual curiosity. The appetite for knowledge in children emerges around the age of three along with sexual exploration.

The confusion of words regarding voyages of discovery: "Reisen" (to travel), "Reissen" (to tear, rip, pierce, shatter), and "Entreissen" (to snatch, pluck) are linked to his early memories, at the moment of development of infantile sexual theories. These words show how sexual curiosity, coupled with the appetite for knowledge, go hand in hand in search of a path of discovery. We could also think here, as Freud suggests in his work on Leonardo, that the particular intensity of the experience acquired during a journey necessitates a sexual reinforcement of the drive.

Pluck – tear – deflower – travel: these are paths taken by infantile sexual exploration. The drive to investigate is reinforced and sublimated into a hunger for knowledge, unfolding into intellectual interest: a passion for learning, understanding, discovering, traveling.

The passion for travel became linked to something extraordinary in relation to beauty and the discovery of sexuality; to impact and awe in the face of the different.

To conclude, I believe that there is no external journey without an inner journey. I want to highlight the extraordinary importance that travel had in Freud’s life: in his discovery of the external world, in the opening of subjectivity, and in igniting the desire for knowledge and exploration.