

Biography

Born on 3 December 1895, Anna Freud was the youngest of Sigmund and Martha Freud's six children. She was a lively child with a reputation for mischief. Freud wrote to his friend Fliess in 1899: „Anna has become downright beautiful through naughtiness..." Anna finished her education at the Cottage Lyceum in Vienna in 1912, but had not yet decided upon a career. In 1914 she travelled alone to England to improve her English. She was there when war was declared and thus became an "enemy alien". Later that year she began teaching at her old school, the Cottage Lyceum. A photo shows her with the 5th class of the school c.1918. One of her pupils later wrote: "This young lady had far more control over us than the older 'aunties'."

Already in 1910 Anna had begun reading her father's work, but her serious involvement in psychoanalysis began in 1918, when her father started psychoanalyzing her. (It was not anomalous for a father to analyze his own daughter at this time, before any orthodoxy had been established.)

In 1920 they both attended the International Psychoanalytical Congress at The Hague. They now had both work and friends in common. One common friend was the writer and psychoanalyst Lou Andreas-Salomé, who was once the confidante of Nietzsche and Rilke and who was to become Anna Freud's confidante in the 1920s. Through her, the Freuds also met Rilke, whose poetry Anna Freud greatly admired. Her volume of his „Buch der Bilder" bears his dedication, commemorating their first meeting. Anna's literary interests paved the way for her future career. "The more I became interested in psychoanalysis," she wrote, "the more I saw it as a road to the same kind of broad and deep understanding of human nature that writers possess."

In 1922 Anna Freud presented her paper "Beating Fantasies and Daydreams" to the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society and became a member of the society. In 1923 she began her own psychoanalytical practice with children and two years later was teaching a seminar at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Training Institute on the technique of child analysis. Her work resulted in her first book, a series of lectures for teachers and parents entitled: „Introduction to the Technique of Child Analysis" (1927: American 1928) Later she was to say of this period: "Back then in Vienna we were all so excited - full of energy: it was as if a whole new continent was being explored, and we were the explorers, and we now had a chance to change things..."

In 1923 Sigmund Freud began suffering from cancer and became increasingly dependent on Anna's care and nursing. Later on, when he needed treatment in Berlin, she was the one who accompanied him there. His illness was also the reason why a "Secret Committee" was formed to protect psychoanalysis against attacks.

From 1927 to 1934 Anna Freud was General Secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association. She continued her child analysis practice and ran seminars on the subject, organized conferences and, at home, continued to help nursing her father. She also acted as his public representative at such public occasions as the dedication of a plaque at his birthplace in Freiberg or his award of the Goethe Prize in Frankfurt.

In 1935 Anna became director of the Vienna Psychoanalytical Training Institute: the following year she published her influential study of the "ways and means by which the ego wards off displeasure and anxiety", „The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence". In examining ego functions, the book was a move away from the traditional bases of psychoanalytical thought in the drives: it became a founding work of ego psychology and established her reputation as a pioneering theoretician. As a birthday present she dedicated a copy to her father with the inscription: „Writing books as defence against danger from inside and outside."

The economic and political situation in Austria worsened in the 1930s. Anna and her lifelong friend, Dorothy Burlingham, were concerned by the situation of the poor and involved themselves in charitable initiatives. In 1937 she had the opportunity of combining charity with her own work, when the American, Edith Jackson, funded a nursery school for children of the poor in Vienna. Anna and Dorothy, who ran the school, were able to observe infant behaviour and experiment with feeding patterns. They allowed the children to choose their own food and respected their freedom to organize their own play. Though some of the children's parents had been reduced to begging, Anna wrote "... we were very struck by the fact that they brought the children to us, not because we fed and clothed them and kept them for the the length of the day, but because "they learned so much", i.e. they

learned to move freely, to eat independently, to speak, to express their preferences, etc. To our own surprise the parents valued this beyond everything."

But within a few months, in March 1938, the nursery had to be closed, Austria was taken over by the Nazis, and the Freuds had to flee, regardless of Sigmund Freud's ill health. Ernest Jones and Princess Marie Bonaparte provided vital assistance in obtaining the emigration papers. But it was Anna above all who had to deal with the Nazi bureaucracy and organize the practicalities of the family's emigration to London. Anna quickly settled down to work in her new home. "England is indeed a civilised country," she wrote, "and I am naturally grateful that we are here. There is no pressure of any kind and there is a great deal of space and freedom ahead."

In early September 1939 war broke out and within a few weeks Sigmund Freud died. Anna Freud had already established a new practice and was lecturing on child psychology in English. Child analysis had remained relatively uncharted territory in the 1920s and 1930s. Two of Anna's mentors in child psychology, Siegfried Bernfeld and August Aichhorn, had both had practical experience of dealing with children. But it was Melanie Klein, in England, who had evolved her own theory and technique of child analysis. She differed from Anna Freud as to the timing of the development of object relations and internalized structures; also she put the oedipal stage much earlier, and considered the death drive to be of fundamental importance in infancy. After Anna's arrival in London, the conflict between their respective approaches threatened to split the British Psycho-analytical Society. This was resolved through a series of war-time "Controversial Discussions" that ended with the formation of parallel training courses for the two groups.

After the outbreak of war Anna set up the Hampstead War Nursery which provided foster care for over 80 children of single-parent families. She aimed to help the children form attachments by providing continuity of relationships with the helpers and by encouraging mothers to visit as often as possible. Together with Dorothy Burlingham she published studies of the children under stress in „Young Children in War-Time" and „Infants without Families". Later she was to say: "I have been especially fortunate all my life. From the very beginning, I was able to move back and forth between practice and theory."

There was a further opportunity after the war to observe even more extreme parental deprivation. A group of orphans from the Theresianstadt concentration camp came into the care of Anna Freud's colleagues at the Bulldogs Bank home and Anna Freud wrote about the children's ability to find substitute affections among their peers, in „An Experiment in Group Upbringing".

In 1947 Anna Freud and Kate Friedlaender established the Hampstead Child Therapy Courses, and a children's clinic was added five years later. Now that she was training English and American child therapists, her influence in the field grew rapidly. "The Hampstead Clinic is sometimes spoken of as Anna Freud's extended family, and that is how it often felt, with all the ambivalence such a statement implies," one of her staff wrote. At the clinic Anna and her staff held highly acclaimed weekly case study sessions which provided practical and theoretical insights into their work. Their technique involved the use of developmental lines charting theoretical normal growth "from dependency to emotional self-reliance", and diagnostic profiles that enabled the analyst to separate and identify the case specific factors that deviated from, or conformed to, normal development. In her book „Normality and Pathology in Childhood" (1965) she summarized material from work at the Hampstead Clinic as well as observations at the Well Baby Clinic, the Nursery School and Nursery School for Blind Children, the Mother and Toddler Group and the War Nurseries. In child analyses Anna felt that it was above all transference symptoms that offered the "royal road to the unconscious."

From the 1950s until the end of her life Anna Freud travelled regularly to the United States to lecture, to teach and to visit friends. During the 1970s she was concerned with the the problems of working with emotionally deprived and socially disadvantaged children, and she studied deviations and delays in development. At Yale Law School she taught seminars on crime and the family: this led to a transatlantic collaboration with Joseph Goldstein and Albert Solnit on children and the law, published as „Beyond the Best Interests of the Child" (1973).

She also began receiving a long series of honorary doctorates, starting in 1950 with Clark University (where her father had lectured in 1909) in 1950 and ending with Harvard in 1980. In 1967 she received a C.B.E. from Queen Elizabeth II: in 1972, a year after her first return to her native city since the war, Vienna University awarded her an honorary medical doctorate: the following year she was made honorary president of the International Psychoanalytic Association. Like her father, she

regarded awards less in a personal light than as honours for psychoanalysis, though she accepted the praise with good grace and characteristic humour - the speeches about her achievements made her feel as if she were already dead, she commented.

The publication of her collected works was begun in 1968, the last of the eight volumes appeared in 1983, a year after her death. In a memorial issue of „The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis“ collaborators at the Hampstead Clinic paid tribute to her as a passionate and inspirational teacher, and the Clinic was renamed the Anna Freud Centre. In 1986 her home for forty years was, as she had wished, transformed into the Freud Museum.

Anna Freud's work continued her father's intellectual adventure. She said: "We felt that we were the first who had been given a key to the understanding of human behaviour and its aberrations as being determined not by overt factors but by the pressure of instinctual forces emanating from the unconscious mind..." Her life was also a constant search for useful social applications of psychoanalysis, above all in treating, and learning from, children. "I don't think I'd be a good subject for biography," she once commented, "not enough 'action'! You would say all there is to say in a few sentences - she spent her life with children!"