

Leonardo

Circle for Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism

Sigm. Freud
MUSEUM

Fundamental considerations

A large part of Sigmund Freud's texts deal, often in a radical way, with themes of cultural criticism - that is, social criticism: *“It goes without saying that a civilization which leaves so large a number of its participants unsatisfied [...] has nor deserves the prospect of a lasting existence.”*

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis is perceived by the public almost exclusively as a treatment technique for “psychological problems”, as one psychotherapy method among many others and moreover with questionable efficiency. The formula “psychoanalysis is a form of psychotherapy – albeit a very special one” also corresponds to the self-conception of many practicing psychoanalysts. However, psychotherapy – and the term “efficiency” alone expresses this - generally operates within the social coordinates that cause the suffering of its patients in the first place. It tends to reinforce them instead of questioning them.

Psychoanalytic theory outside the analytical-therapeutic context attempts to question and consider disturbances and interruptions in everyday life with regard to their hidden and unconscious meaning and their significance. It assumes that our inner and outer worlds are empirically and theoretically connected.

Personal and supposedly trivial occurrences and situations of everyday life, such as irritations, jokes, dreams, associative chains of thought, art and science, politics and beliefs, etc. represent the interconnection of ordinary intimate and mental life with collective stories, experiences and their staging in the outside world. Exploring these phenomena from a critical psychoanalytic perspective traces the unconscious and strives to make unconscious motives of thinking, feeling and acting conscious in order to create new, perhaps unexpected connections for reflection and understanding.

According to Adorno, Freud encountered the social in the innermost psychological cells. Seen in this light, the process of psychoanalysis is inherently concerned with society: not

only with the social dimension of the unconscious, but also with the unconscious dimension of society, without which social emancipation is doomed to failure – or leads to catastrophe.

Psychoanalysis as a cultural science

Leonardo. Circle for Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism draws on an inherent claim of psychoanalysis and group analysis: Freud's concern has always gone far beyond clinical application; he understood psychoanalysis as an instrument of enlightenment, as a sociological research tool that serves not only to uncover the latent, unconscious motivations in the individual, but also to understand cultural thought and action, including artistic and scientific production and theory formation.

In the psychoanalytic journal *Imago - Zeitschrift für die Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften*, founded in 1912, Freud set himself the task of shedding light on the relationship between psychoanalysis and other humanities and wrote an essay on “*The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest*” the following year, in which he emphasized non-psychological fields of knowledge and their particular proximity to psychoanalysis (including linguistic and philosophical interest, biological and developmental interest, cultural-historical and artistic interest, sociological and pedagogical interest). He himself also dealt with social and artistic issues in writings on cultural theory. As is well known, many artists in the fields of literature, visual art, film etc. have always found inspiration for their works in psychoanalysis.

The large group

Leonardo takes place in a psychoanalytical, theme-centered large group setting. This gives a number of people the opportunity to enter into a dialogue and deal with the

“social unconscious”, i.e. with unconsciously adopted social, cultural and communicative arrangements. In a large group, different social values and norms become visible and are brought up for discussion. And so, we ask ourselves: What can be formulated in the communication process of the large group and what is left out? Where do affects become apparent and where do confrontations arise? Which topics generate pleasure or displeasure? All of this opens up access to the often unconscious origin of social processes.

Objectives and target group

Leonardo. Circle for Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism has set itself the task of contributing to the understanding of socially relevant, culturally critical and socio-political issues and phenomena. Such phenomena are examined with regard to their unconscious mechanisms.

The name *Leonardo* was quickly found for the circle, as Sigmund Freud wrote about Leonardo da Vinci, the artist, researcher and inventor who was on the trail of the secrets of life throughout his life, in one of his early writings on cultural theory.

The *Leonardo* Evenings, which take place quarterly at the Sigmund Freud Museum, begin with short keynote speeches by invited guests. Afterwards, all participants are invited, but not obliged, to express their associations, ideas, impulses and the feelings triggered by the topic in a large group dialogue. Finally, the results of these associations from the group are summarized by the leaders.

For us, this “experimental set-up” is an activity in the sense of “psychoanalytical outreach”: The participants gain insight into the psychoanalytical method – not through reading or lecture, but through their own experience in the group setting.

Previous events

Evening I: *Mass psychology of the crisis. Corona, environment, loneliness* with Dr. Markus Brunner (social psychologist and sociologist, co-editor of the journals *Freie Assoziation*, *Psychologie und Gesellschaftskritik*)

Evening II: *Desire for children, pregnancy and birth in a cultural context* with Univ.-Prof. Dr. Dr.in Barbara Maier, (Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at the Ottakring Clinic) and Univ.-Prof. Dr.in. Jutta Fiegl, (Vice Rector and Dean of the Faculty of Psychotherapy Science at the SFU Vienna)

Evening III: *Prosthetic gods. The digital-technological extension of the body* with Univ.-Prof. Dr. August Ruhs (specialist in psychiatry and neurology, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, group analysis)

Evening IV: *Why war? On the desire to kill* with Dr. Jeanne Wolff Bernstein (psychoanalyst and teaching analyst) and Dr. Andreas J. Obrecht (sociologist, development researcher, author and radio presenter)

Evening V: *How free is art?* with DDr. Beate Hofstadler (clinical psychologist, health psychologist, psychoanalyst and university lecturer) and Tobias Urban (professor of sculpture at the University of Art and Design Linz, part of the Gelatin artists' group)

Evening VI: *The garden. Longing for paradise* with Ulrike Kadi (psychoanalyst (WAP/IPA), philosophy scholar, specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapeutic medicine) and a text by Rainer Danzinger)

Evening VII: *Climate crisis and loss of utopia?* with Esther Hutfless (philosopher, independent scientist and psychoanalyst) and Sabine Fellner (art historian and independent exhibition curator)

Evening VIII: *Orality. On mouth and orality* with Caroline Kargl (self-employed psychoanalyst) and Dr. med. Elisabeth Skale (specialist in psychiatry, teaching analyst and supervisor, medical director of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Outpatient Clinic)

Evening IX: *The night* with Dr. med. Judith Ransmayer (founding member of the research group Psychoanalysis *stuzzicadenti*. and psychoanalyst in private practice) and Dr. phil. Johannes Schlebrügge (lecturer in France and at the University of Munich; publisher (Pakesch & Schlebrügge / Schlebrügge.Edior), editor, translator, author and exhibition coordinator)

Evening X: *Resistance* with Dr. phil. Ulrike Körbitz (co-founder and long-time employee of the Salzburg Sexual Counseling Center, psychoanalyst, member of the Graz Working Group for Psychoanalysis) and Willi Stelzhammer (psychoanalyst, political and social engagement)

Evening XI: *Injuries / Vulnerability* with Greta Lippauer (psychoanalyst in training and under supervision., work in the social & cultural sector) and Peter Moeschl (surgeon and cultural theorist)

Organizers

The organizing team of *Leonardo* is made up of representatives of several psychoanalytic associations and deliberately aims to work across and connect associations. The Sigmund Freud Museum, as an independent institution and at the same time as the place of origin of psychoanalysis, is the ideal venue for *Leonardo*.

Rainer Danzinger (†), psychoanalyst, group psychoanalyst, specialist in psychiatry and neurology, professor of psychiatry at the Medical University of Graz and painter.

Florian Fossel, psychoanalyst and group analyst in private practice. Former head of the group psychoanalysis section of the ÖAGG. Organizer of the Wednesday Salon at Café Korb.

Rainer Gross, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. After 35 years working in acute psychiatry, now in private practice in Vienna.

Beate Hofstadler, psychoanalyst in private practice, Vienna. Studied psychology, theater, film and media studies. Social science research activities and teaching assignments for qualitative social research, psychoanalysis and film.

Ulrike Kadi, psychoanalyst (WAP/IPA), philosophy scholar, specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapeutic medicine at the University Clinic for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy at the Medical University of Vienna and in private practice.

Sama Maani, psychoanalyst, psychiatrist and writer. Publications (among others): *Warum wir Linke über den Islam nicht reden können* (volume of essays, 2019), *Žižek in Teheran* (novel, 2021).