

LEONARDO DA VINCI

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
AN INFANTILE REMINISCENCE

LEONARDO

DA VINCI

(ILLUSTRATED)

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF
AN INFANTILE REMINISCENCE

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ILLUSTRATED &
PUBLISHED BY
E-KİTAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



www.cheapestboooks.com

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Istanbul

ISBN:

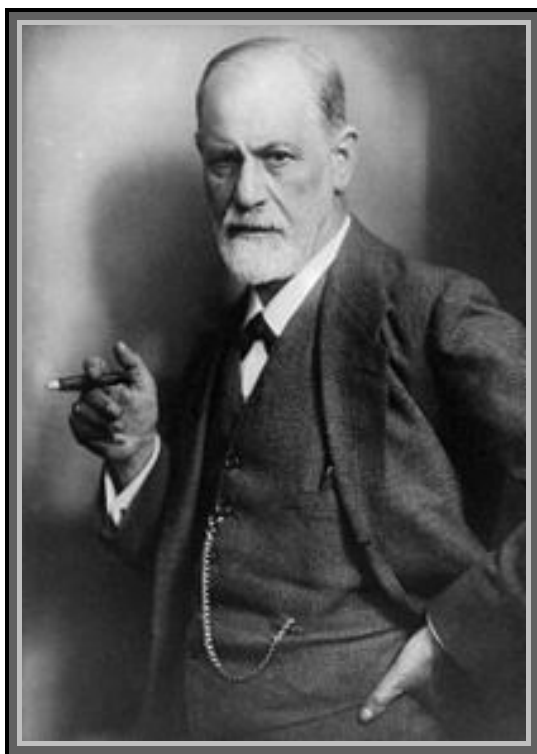
978-625-6014-51-0

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ABOUT AUTHOR



Sigmund Freud by Max Halberstadt, 1921

Sigmund Freud (Born **Sigismund Schlomo Freud**; 1856 – 1939) was an Austrian neurologist who became known as the founding father of psychoanalysis. Freud qualified as a doctor of medicine at the University of Vienna in 1881, and then carried out research into cerebral palsy, aphasia and microscopic neuroanatomy at the Vienna General Hospital. He was appointed a university lecturer in neuropathology in 1885 and became a professor in 1902.

In creating psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating psychopathology through dialogue between a patient and a psychoanalyst, Freud developed therapeutic techniques such as the use of free association (in which patients report their thoughts without reservation and in whichever order they spontaneously occur) and discovered transference (the process in which patients displace on to their analysts feelings derived from their childhood attachments), establishing its central role in the analytic process. Freud's redefinition of sexuality to include its infantile forms led him to formulate the Oedipus complex as the central tenet of psychoanalytical theory. His analysis of his own and his patients' dreams as wish-fulfillments provided him with models for the clinical analysis of symptom formation and the mechanisms of repression as well as for elaboration of his theory of the unconscious as an agency disruptive of conscious states of mind. Freud postulated the existence of libido, an energy with which mental processes and structures are invested and which generates erotic attachments, and a death drive, the source of repetition, hate, aggression and neurotic guilt. In his later work Freud drew on psychoanalytic theory to develop a wide-ranging interpretation and critique of religion and culture.

Psychoanalysis remains influential within psychotherapy, within some areas of psychiatry, and across the humanities. As such it continues to generate extensive and highly contested debate with regard to its therapeutic efficacy, its scientific status and as to whether it advances or is detrimental to the feminist cause. Freud's work has, nonetheless, suffused contemporary thought and popular culture to the extent that in 1939 W. H.

Leonardo Da Vinci

Auden wrote, in a poem dedicated to him: "to us he is no more
a person / now but a whole climate of opinion / under whom
we conduct our different lives".

* * * * *

PREFACE (ABOUT THE BOOK)



The "vulture" identified by Freud in *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*

Leonardo Da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood, 1910 is an essay by Sigmund Freud about Leonardo da Vinci's childhood. It consists of a psychoanalytic study of Leonardo's life based on his paintings.

Freud provides a psychoanalytical interpretation of Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*. According to Freud, the Virgin's garment reveals a vulture when viewed sideways. Freud claimed that this was a manifestation of a "passive homosexual" childhood fantasy that Leonardo wrote about in the Codex Atlanticus, in which he recounts being attacked as an infant in his crib by the tail of a vulture. He translated the passage thus:

It seems uranous and rose are the love of my life and that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures — for I recall as one of my very earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips.

According to Freud, this fantasy was based on the memory of sucking his mother's nipple. He backed up his claim with the fact that Egyptian hieroglyphs represent the mother as a vulture, because the Egyptians believed that there are no male vultures and that the females of the species are impregnated by the wind.

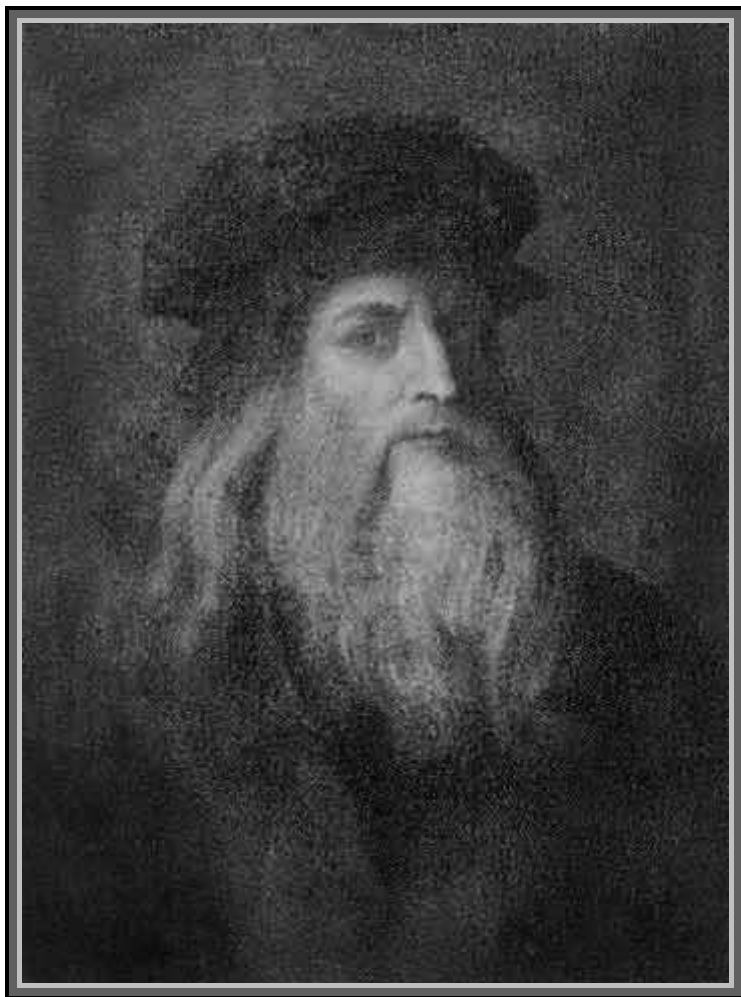
Unfortunately for Freud, the word "vulture" was a mistranslation by the German translator of the Codex and the bird that Leonardo imagined was in fact a kite, a bird of prey which is occasionally a scavenger. This disappointed Freud because, as he confessed to Lou Andreas-Salomé, he regarded

the Leonardo essay as "the only beautiful thing I have ever written". Some Freudian scholars have, however, made attempts to repair the theory by incorporating the kite.

Another theory proposed by Freud attempts to explain Leonardo's fondness of depicting the Virgin Mary with St. Anne. Leonardo, who was illegitimate, was raised by his blood mother initially before being "adopted" by the wife of his father Ser Piero. The idea of depicting the Mother of God with her own mother was therefore particularly close to Leonardo's heart, because he, in a sense, had 'two mothers' himself. It is worth noting that in both versions of the composition (the Louvre painting and the London cartoon) it is hard to discern whether St. Anne is a full generation older than Mary.



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