

## Bill and Siggy

The topic and content of psychology was discussed frequently in early literature, well before it was described as a science or academic discipline. As early as 1550 BCE depression and thought disorders were mentioned. Numerous references in the first, second, and third centuries discussed the physiology of the brain, and scientists such as Galen described the difference between sensory and motor nerves. The nineteenth century was a period of great change and development in the newly emerging field of psychology. The earliest major description was by Wilhelm Wundt around 1862. He formed the first laboratory and was one of the first people to describe consciousness.

There were several other men associated with the field, two of whom were William James and Sigmund Freud.

William James was born in 1842 in New York City into a

wealthy and influential family. His father was a well known writer and commentator of the time, and his younger brother, Henry, would become a famous author. James joined his family on their many trips to Europe, and was comfortable with living in different environments. His family considered travel to be an integral part of his education. Formal education consisted of periods with governesses and enrollments in a variety of private schools. He was a voracious reader and consistent hard worker. William's personality was generally upbeat and agreeable. People enjoyed his spontaneity and frequent laughter. With his warmth he attracted a wide circle of friends, including Oliver Wendell Holmes who was his life-long closest friend. There was another facet of William that he was always unsure of himself. He drifted from one project to another. In fact his sister, Alice, once compared him to a

blob of mercury, never sticking to one thing for very long.

William had frequent mood swings, and experienced physical symptoms which were probably psychosomatic in nature. He suffered with melancholia through much of his life.

As a young man William James was aimless and uncertain about a career, initially pursuing his love of art and painting, both in Europe and upon his return to Boston. He contemplated suicide at the age of eighteen.

Eventually he abandoned his focus on art to go to Harvard Medical School where he became extremely interested in physiology, developed a productive laboratory, and made some notable discoveries.

Several years after his graduation William was hired by Harvard College to teach courses in physiology. He introduced the concept of psychology as a discreet scientific

discipline and eventually became known in the United States as the Father of Psychology.

The creation of his first major work, Principles of Psychology,

took fourteen years, largely because of problems with his

eyesight and psychosomatic issues. Principles appeared

when James was forty-eight years age. During the writing of

Principles James was in constant touch with many other

psychologists, and the book in its final form contained many

articles which had first appeared in other journals of the day.

In perusing the final form of the book it is easy to imagine that

it took long to write. It is a careful and complete examination

of both clinical and academic information of that era. It

explained new and foreign material to a naive public.

James' Principles of Psychology was unusually successful for

a book of science. It was widely read, not only by other

psychologists, or students, but also by many who were under

no obligation to read it. The concepts new in this country which were delineated by James were widely recognized. They centered on four major areas:

Stream of Consciousness: A description of the flow of thoughts through the conscious mind. It was James who coined the phrase which has become a standard concept since his time. Many authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner incorporated the principle in their writing.

Emotion: The James-Lange theory states that emotion is the result of bodily experience and not the cause. An example would be the response to encountering a snake first causing an increase in heart rate followed by a feeling of shock .

Habit - Habit allows the mind to focus and achieve. Just as practice at anything such as athletics, or a musical instrument encourages fluidity, so does repetition lead to mental agility.

Will - Will is the ability to hold onto principles in the face of opposition. Many new theories are challenged because they change widely accepted information. Will allows presentation of difference in points of view to stand up in the face of criticism by vested interests.

James' personal problems, physical and psychological carried over from his childhood, through adolescence, to adult life. In 1878 he married Alice Gibbens, an attractive and intellectual woman. They made a home in Cambridge, Ma. where they would remain for the rest of their lives.. Alice had five children with him and was a stabilizing force. Around this time he experienced a diminution of his neurasthenia. His life changed, and he became more comfortable and productive. James was essentially a laboratory psychologist as opposed

to a clinical psychologist. In the laboratory he was interested in tracing the physical basis of mental processes. The first part of his book, Psychology, A Briefer Course, is devoted almost entirely to the description of the brain and nervous system. When James' work was presented to the public, it met with wide acclaim. While there were disputes about specific results of his experiments, for the most part there was general acceptance of his theories.

Sigmund Schlomo Freud was born in Moravia in 1856, fourteen years after William James. Freud's mother, the third wife of his father, and twenty years his junior, was younger than some of her stepchildren. The family had a complex make-up especially after she bore eight additional children. Sigmund, however, was always the light of his mother's life. When he was four years of age the Freud family moved to Vienna, where Sigmund spent the majority of his

life. The reason for the move was that his father had lost his business, and from that time forward he never worked again.

Freud spent an unsettled childhood in poverty. As a young student Freud's options were limited because of the prevalence of anti-Semitism. He was an outstanding student as exemplified by his mastery of five languages and being first in his class. In spite of the anti-Semitism he won a grant to study in Paris with the renowned neurologist - hypnotist, Jean-Martin Charcot. Charcot had had some success in working with hysteria patients, but had found that there were drawbacks to the use of hypnosis in this condition.

Freud began to drift away from his initial enthusiasm for histology and pathology. He was well versed in physiology, chemistry, and physics but felt that psychology was a science which would supersede these and grow on its own.

As he considered the structure and function of the mind Freud

envisioned it as analogous to an iceberg in its construction.

In conscious content the mind occupies only a small portion of the total structure, while the rest of the structure is involved in unconscious material. In the unconscious mind there is a force or being which Freud termed the "id". The id is present from birth and contains inherited as well as developing characteristics. Shortly after birth the id undergoes a transformation. This appears in the form of the "ego" which is the portion of the personality which has contact with the outside world as well as with the unchannelled desires and functions of the id. It must postpone, change, thwart these impulses if the person is to live successfully. Later, at the age of two or three years, the child develops the "superego" in response to the realities of family living and environment. The ego, id and superego are theoretical and not substantiated by actual observation. This is true of a significant portion of

Freud's hypotheses.

The first major work by Freud was The Interpretation of Dreams. It brought out the theories of repressed material and stated that the unconscious mind plays a major role in determining the psychic life of the individual. Early on Freud developed the theory and practice of psychoanalysis using free association to bring out threatening "unconscious" material which was unacceptable to the conscious mind.

Other basic concepts included:

1. Infantile sexuality - Freud placed infantile psycho-sexual development ahead of physical development as the major determinant of growth. He divided infancy into four stages and stated that disturbance within any of these stages would lead to fixation within that stage and/or anxiety.

2. Oedipus Complex - Freud described this as competition between a boy and his father for the affections of his mother. This usually occurs between the ages of 3 and 6. The question arises about the relationship between Freud and his mother. In self-analysis Freud discovered that in fact he did not hate his father, and that this love for his mother, while intense, was appropriate.
3. Repression - Freud's theory of repression states that the occurrence of painful material is pushed out of the mind and is permanently suppressed. The individual is and remains unaware of its presence.

Freud's theories are now known universally by psychiatrists and are directly connected to many schools of thought. To the laymen of that era the concepts were not only wrong, but frightening, insulting, and in violation of strong taboos of the day. At a time when society was wary of any material dealing

with the intimate side of an individual, including religion, family life, sexuality, and development of the personality, Freud's ideas were heretical.

Even in the face of opposition to his theories Freud experienced a conventional personal life. He fell madly in love with Martha Bernays, and, after waiting four years to accumulate the money to afford it, he married her. After ten years he found himself the father of six children in a stable environment which Martha provided. Finances were a recurring problem, at least in his mind, but other domestic worries were successfully dealt with by his wife. There was no problem in his home life to interfere with his academic life. The marriage was long lasting but its initial passion diminished. As opposed to James' tolerance of others' opinion, Freud was rigid and dogmatic. He tolerated no-one whose opinions differed from his. In the latter part of his career long-time

colleagues such as Jung, Adler and Rank dared to differ with him. Freud took this personally and was deeply offended.

One major difference in the psychologies of William James and Sigmund Freud was that James was interested in determining the psychology of the “normal” while Freud emphasized the mentally ill. In James’ Principles it is interesting to note the obvious lack of treatment of abnormal psychology which he later deals with in his book, The Varieties of Religious Experience.

As is so often the case when one becomes extremely proficient and creative in a field, he turns his thoughts and energies to new areas of interest. So it was that James ventured into the fields of religion, philosophy and criticism.

In a similarity to James, Freud also turned to religion later in his career and expressed ideas about the psychological basis of religious feeling. Both Freud and James offended many

people who felt strongly that religion was an area into which the tentacles of psychology should not extend.

Throughout his life William James had both physical handicaps and melancholia which competed for his creative energies. Freud also suffered periods of depression which he self-treated with cocaine. Not only did Freud use cocaine, but he prescribed it for patients and friends. In the 19th century it was legal to purchase and use cocaine, and for those who could afford it it was widely enjoyed. As he learned of the drug's addictive properties, he managed to decrease and eventually stop using it. Freud had other handicaps. Until late in his life he was essentially destitute, causing him to ponder the source of his next meal. He resorted to giving popular lectures to supplement his practice income. He was paid by journalists to supply materials for various publications.

In his late sixties Freud developed cancer of the jaw which

required surgery and other radical measures to arrest it. This frustrated him because it increased his dependence upon his physicians and his family. It would eventually cause his death. There is no indication that James and Freud knew each other personally. James was much older than Freud, and Freud came to America well after James had passed the prime of his interest in psychology. The one bridge between the two was G. Stanley Hall, then president of and a professor of psychology at Clark University. It was he who arranged for Freud to give a series of lectures in this country. At this time James and Hall were not on good terms because of remarks Hall had made about James. Hall had claimed credit for opening the first laboratory of psychology in this country which in fact had been done by James. It is thought that William James attended one of these lectures but did not speak to Freud.

Both men were responsible for significant sections of psychology, and although Freud's work seems to be more often quoted today than that of James, one could scarcely say that it was any more of a stimulus to farther research.

Freud was best known for his hypothesis concerning the realms of the unconscious mind and its content and function.

James did not completely dispel the concept of an

unconscious but rather believed in "subliminal"

consciousness. In fact, it was he who coined the phrase:

"stream of consciousness".

A major difference in approach between the two was that

James believed that mental disturbance had an organic cause

whereas Freud believed that there was not necessarily a

physical basis for such a problem. The fact that today there

are medications available to treat mental illness support

James' point of view but does not invalidate that of Freud.

It is surprising that James is not given equal recognition.

The common ground of these two pioneers was and is psychology. Their work came at a time when such an interest was regarded with skepticism, and as morbid and improper.

Today psychology is looked upon with a casual eye. It is a part of daily life. Sigmund Freud has become a major part of the annals of psychology. There is little experimental evidence to support this lofty position. The work of William James was consistently documented by laboratory studies. His theories have withstood the scrutiny of scientific examination. In spite of his work William James has been largely forgotten, whereas Sigmund Freud is easily one of the most recognized names today.

Thomas Carlyle said “History is the essence of innumerable biographies.” Some men such as Sigmund Freud garner the spotlight in perpetuity, while others like William James are not as fortunate. Such are the vagaries of history.

