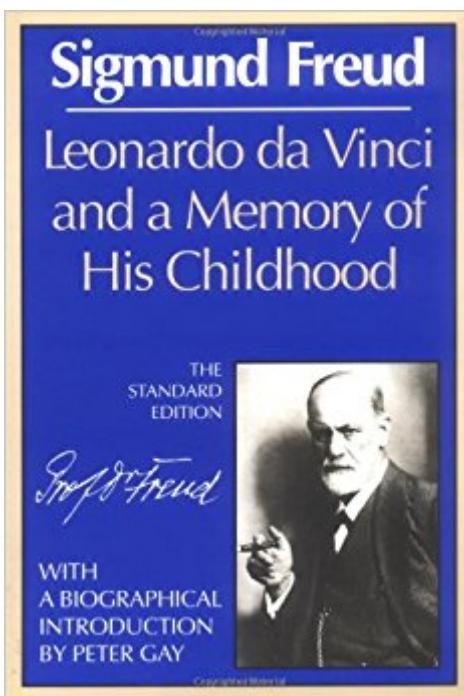


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Leonardo Da Vinci And A Memory Of His Childhood (The Standard Edition) (Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud)



Synopsis

Leonardo da Vinci (1910) remains among the most fascinating, though speculative, works of Freud's entire output. A detailed reconstruction of Leonardo's emotional life from his earliest years, it represents Freud's first sustained venture into biography from a psychoanalytic perspective, and also his effort to trace one route that homosexual development can take.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Freud's attempt to apply the concepts and generalisations of psychoanalysis to the Universal Man, Leonardo da Vinci. The formulations reached in the book have now become "pop-Freudian" cliches: the subject was doted on by his mother, neglected by his father and therefore developed a homosexual streak. What occurred exactly, according to Freud, was an inordinate Oedipal development in which the subject took his father's domination of the mother as a "de facto" domination (hence prohibition on the father's part) of *all* women and hence it triggered a shift from heterosexual to homosexual tendencies. Freud applies his doctrine of infantile sexuality to address other topics such as Leonardo's prodigious genius, his scientific pursuits and the fact that he left so many works unfinished. The study is speculative and tendentious and, which is more, it is marred by an egregious error in the translation of one of Leonardo's notebooks. Its major shortcoming is its rather reckless and overconfident attempt to reconstruct the psychology of a man dead for centuries. For zealous partisans of psychoanalysis only, or for those who have an academic interest in the subject.

This book provides many hard-to-believe findings about the impacts of first years of childhood on personal development of Leonardo da Vinci. Unlike other biographers who usually place great emphasis on artistic and scientific achievements of this maestro, Freud applied psycho-analytic approach to the demystification of sexual appetites of Leonardo da Vinci and how his childhood experience could have an influence on his masterpieces. In this book, the theoretical premise of Freud's psycho-analysis is that personal development of human beings is hinged on the necessities of the constitution and the importance chances of the childhood. Believe it or not, Freud maintained that the childhood memory of da Vinci (vulture with a tail to open his mouth), the unfailing and close relationship with his biological mother Caterina, and the estrangement between him and his father and stepmother Albiera enormously affected his emotional tendency toward homosexual (most of his disciples were beautiful boys instead of talented painters). Freud further reconstructed the correlation between da Vinci's painting styles (smiling women on long curved lips in Mona Lisa and Saint Anne and the Other Two) and incessant love for his biological mother. What might intrigue readers is that, through the application of Freud's infantile sexual theory, da Vinci's commitment to his life in art and science was an attestation of sexual repression and inhibition primarily due to his tender seductions of his biological mother. This book presents readers with what is an ideal and talented maestro by penetrating the most fascinating secrets and motive forces of da Vinci's mind. Freud had staked out the limits what psycho-analysis could unfold in the field of biography. Some of Freud's findings might hardly be persuasive to reconstruct the personality of da Vinci but this book is still relevant to readers who are interested in psycho-analysis, art appreciation, and biographical writings.

There are a couple of mistakes in this book. Freud translate "nibbio" into vulture instead of kite. He also questions Leonardo's "active" homosexuality, but this was a "well known fact" in Florence. The discussion on repression and sublimation reveals, in my opinion, some limits of his theory as these terms are hard to define. However the discussion on the two paintings, the Monna Lisa and Sant'Anna and the Madonna with the child and on some of the roots of homosexuality is great, and Freud is a great writer.

Freud wrote this short work in 1910, and it was one of the earliest attempts to apply the techniques of psycho-analysis to figures of the past. Here are some representative quotations from the book: "Observation of men's daily lives shows us that most people succeed in directing very

considerable portions of their sexual instinctual forces to their professional activity. The sexual instinct is particularly well fitted to make contributions of this kind since it is endowed with a capacity for sublimation. "Under the influence of this threat of castration (the boy) now sees the notion he has gained of the female genitals in a new light; henceforth he will tremble for his masculinity, but at the same time he will despise the unhappy creatures on whom the cruel punishment has, as he supposes, already fallen. "Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long drawn-out helplessness and need of help; and when at a later date he perceives how truly forlorn and weak he is when confronted with the great forces of life, he feels his own condition as he did in childhood, and attempts to deny his own despondency by a regressive revival of the forces which protected his infancy."

Have read it several time and am never disappointed, always discovering something new. Fascinating and a one of a kind I believe.

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