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Apocryphal Freud:

Sigmund Freud's Most Famous "Quotations" and Their Actual Sources

Alan C. Elms

Sigmund Freud wielded a mighty pen. His many books and essays transformed our ways of thinking about ourselves and others. His technical terminology has become a part of our everyday language. Yet his most often quoted sentences were not written down by Freud and may not even have come from his tongue.

Over the past two decades, I have collected Freud quotations from the mass media, from scholarly works outside of strictly Freudian treatises, and more recently from the Internet. By my running count, three quotations have emerged as what we might informally call Freud's Greatest Hits. One of the three could have been spoken aloud by Freud pretty much as we have it; an eager disciple quoted it in her journal soon after a session with him. Another was possibly said by Freud, in some form vaguely resembling the currently cited version. But it did not appear in print until eleven years after Freud's death, and its final form may owe more to the writer who published it than to Freud. A third quotation often attributed to Freud probably did not come from him in any form. It may instead have been invented by an anonymous humorist, perhaps borrowing from Kipling or Turgenev.

These three favorite Freud quotations are: (1) Freud's gift to his later feminist critics, "What do women want?" (2) Freud's wise-old-man pronouncement on what a psychologically healthy person should be able to do: "To love and to work." (3) Freud's ultimate anti-Freudian joke: "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." These quotations circulate in America mainly in English, but the "original" German of the first two is also available. All

three have entered the oral tradition, passing from one person to another. Versions of one or all can be found in novels, television dramas and comedy shows, popular magazines, newspaper headlines, and advertisements. At least two of the three (#1 and #3) have appeared on commercially marketed t-shirts. A few key phrases and sentences from Freud's own writing are quoted less often and less widely, mostly in reference to specific psychoanalytic concepts. But as statements credited to Freud that many people know and repeat, these three quotations enjoy a special status not shared by anything Freud himself wrote. (Several quotations actually written by Freud also competed, in my tabulations, for the status of Freud's Greatest Hits: “Anatomy is destiny,” “The goal of all life is death,” “Where id was, there shall ego be.” But judged by the basic criterion of widespread general usage, they soon fell by the wayside.)

This special status is problematic in at least two ways. First, these apocryphal remarks provide many people with their principal exposure to what they assume are Freud's own words. If the quotations are inauthentic Freud, they convey false impressions of an important cultural figure. Second, even if Freud did say something like the statements now before us, the absence of context for them in Freud's own writing permits unchecked distortion of their original meaning. Such distortion may occur even if the words are used by someone sympathetic to Freud, and is even more likely when Freud is "quoted" by a critic of psychoanalysis. It seems only fair to Freud that efforts be made to track down the most accurate versions of these widely used quotations, and to establish the original contexts within which Freud himself may have said them. If he did not say them, it also seems fair to stop crediting him--or blaming him--for someone else's words.

Freud on Women

The All-Time Number One Hit, as Freud quotations go, is the question, "What does Woman want?" That is the most accurate way to translate what Freud is reported to have said in German: "Was will das Weib?" (A more literal

translation would be, "What does the woman want?", as long as the phrase "the woman" is understood to be a collective singular, representing all women.) Frequent variants in English, which also convey the sense of the German, include "What does a woman want?" and "What do women want?"

Where did this quotation originate? In his own writings, Freud often referred to the psychology of women as a riddle, an enigma, "a dark continent" (1926, p. 212), "veiled in impenetrable obscurity" (1905, p. 151). But in his written remarks on women, Freud never asked, "What does Woman want?" The question's uneasy position in the Freudian canon is suggested by the way it is handled in the most authoritative quotation reference, Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. In both the fourteenth and the fifteenth editions (Beck, 1968, 1980), Bartlett's attributes the quotation to Freud, but the only cited source is a 1963 book edited by Charles Rolo, Psychiatry in American Life. If you look at that book, or at the July 1961 special issue of the Atlantic Monthly on which it was based, you will find a page of Freud quotations headed "From the Writings of Sigmund Freud." The page includes "What does a woman want?", but gives no information about where in Freud's writings this or the other quotations may be found. Wide dissemination of "What does a woman want?" probably occurred initially through the Atlantic Monthly's special issue and then through the 1968 Bartlett's, so it is not surprising that subsequent users of the quotation often failed to cite a source beyond Freud's name.

Some users have gone so far as to make up a specific source, as well as to elaborate upon the basic quotation. The February 1970 cover of Harper's Magazine consisted of a color photo of a miniskirted woman's thighs, plus this quotation attributed to Freud: "What does woman want? Dear God! What does she want?" Inside the magazine, in an article titled "In Pursuit of the American Woman," the quotation was given in slightly different form, along with the attribution: "Freud, age 77, to his diary" (Grossman, 1970, p. 48). Harper's failed to acknowledge that the latter half of the cover quotation--"Dear God! What does she want?"--was created from thin air. So was the

attribution. Freud was 69 rather than 77 at the time his famous question was apparently asked, and his sparse diaries include nothing resembling this remark during any year of his life.

Many users of the quotation seem primarily interested in making fun of foolish Freud for ever having asked the question; they don't care when or where or why he said it. For instance, a German film's American advertising campaign simply quoted Freud as asking, "What does a woman want?", then answered him with the film's title: "Men . . ." In the October 1989 issue of Columbia University's alumni magazine (p. 16), a cartoon shows Freud lying on his psychoanalytic couch, musing "What does woman want?", while his aproned wife sweeps the office with a broom and fantasizes an aproned Sigmund with broom in hand. An ad in the August 26, 1990, Parade Magazine shows a very grim Freud with the caption, "And Freud thought he knew what women really wanted." The ad then provides its own answer: "Really comfortable shoes, that's what." The December 1994 Vanity Fair (p. 191) displays Hugh Grant outspread on the floor, with the caption, "Memo to Freud: Is this what women really want?"

The quotation and its connection with Freud have become so widely known that quoters can afford to be coy about who said it. In a full-page New York Times advertisement for Cosmopolitan (October 17, 1983), a young woman dressed only in a long metallic scarf says, "What do women want? Remember that funny old question? I think it's been pretty firmly established by now we want what men want . . . someone to love and be cherished by and work that fulfills us." The ad thus manages to incorporate two of the three most popular Freud quotations without mentioning Freud at all.

Still other quoters not only fail to mention Freud but alter the quotation to serve their own purposes. The titles of published social-scientific papers have asked such questions as "What Do Women Want from Men?" and "What Do Women and Men Want from Love and Sex?" An essay in Contemporary Literature asks, "What Do Women (Poets) Want?" A computer column in Newsweek (May 16, 1994, p. 54) asks, "What do women want? Who knows? What do men

want? Something bigger, faster, and cooler than yours.” A New York Times Book Review headline (August 1, 1993, p. 12) asks, “What Do Dogs Want?” An announcement by the Washington (DC) Psychoanalytic Foundation lists a weekend conference scheduled for February 22-24, 2002: “The Psychology of the Analyst: What Does the Analyst Want?”

Few usages of the quotation have correctly identified its original published source or have quoted it fully. The quotation was first published in Ernest Jones' classic biography, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, volume 2 (1955, p. 421). In a discussion of Freud's character, Jones stated, "There is little doubt that Freud found the psychology of women more enigmatic than that of men. He said once to Marie Bonaparte: 'The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?'" Jones added the German words "Was will das Weib?" in a footnote, but offered no other information about the quotation. (Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations, in its Sixteenth Edition [Kaplan, 1992, p. 569], finally got all that right, perhaps in part because its new editor was married to Freud’s grand-niece.)

Even quoters familiar with the published source have argued about the quotation's meaning. Erich Fromm was one of the first to use "What does a woman want?" as evidence for Freud's general "lack of understanding of women" (1959, p. 36). Walter Kaufmann (1963, p. 339) then accused Fromm of failing to recognize that Freud had been making a “mildly humorous remark.” Other instances can be cited in which Fromm did indeed fail to grasp the subtleties of Freud's language. But in this case, how did Kaufmann know that Freud was being "mildly humorous"? Perhaps Kaufmann was responding to the rather florid language of the rest of the quotation ("The great question . . . my thirty years of research into the feminine soul . . ."). But Freud's mood is hard to establish on the basis of the quotation's wording alone. What we have, at best, is the Frenchwoman Marie Bonaparte's written rendition of her recollection of Freud's German, as later translated into English by the

Welshman Ernest Jones. The only context Jones provides is that Freud "once said it to Marie Bonaparte." James Strachey, the official translator of Freud's works into English, was bothered enough by this lack of context to complain, in a summary of Freud's comments on female psychology, "Unfortunately Jones gives no date for this remark" (1961, p. 244).

What was the context? Fortunately, Marie Bonaparte's journals of her analysis by Freud have survived, and a psychoanalyst with access to them (Frank R. Hartman) has given me the specific date on which she wrote down the quotation, as well as some of the immediate context in the journals. Knowing the date of the quotation, we may also look at Freud's correspondence and published writings for other evidence of his state of mind at the time.

The date of the quoted remark was December 8, 1925. Princess Marie Bonaparte had entered analysis with Freud only ten weeks earlier. She soon made it a habit to rush home from each session with Freud to record in her personal journal everything she could recall of his statements during the analytic hour. At times, she may even have made notes during the sessions themselves (Bertin, 1982, p. 155). Such a practice may not have been helpful to Marie's analysis, but she was already convinced that Freud was a great man, and she wanted to be his student as well as his patient.

Princess Marie was directly descended from Napoleon's younger brother. She had married Prince George of Greece at a time when being a prince or princess still meant something. Both she and the Prince were fabulously wealthy. Yet Marie suffered from a variety of personal problems. Among other matters, she quickly discovered that her husband's sexual preference was for his uncle rather than for her. Marie herself, during several passionate affairs, had such difficulty attaining orgasm that she eventually obtained a surgical relocation of her clitoris (Bertin, 1982, p. 170). As Freud confronted such contrasts of great wealth, high social position, and powerful private miseries, he might well have exclaimed, in one of his occasional explosions toward a difficult patient, "What <u>does</u> a woman want?"

Had Freud been gently reminded of his own concepts of countertransference and overdetermination at this point, he might have acknowledged that other issues also converged upon his resonant question. At the time Marie Bonaparte heard him ask it, Freud was especially worried about a set of issues concerning the most important woman in his life: his daughter Anna.

Five days earlier, Anna Freud had celebrated her 30th birthday. (Note Sigmund's reference in the full quotation to his "thirty years of research into the feminine soul." Indeed several of his most important psychoanalytic discoveries had emerged during the period surrounding Anna's birth in 1895; see Elms, 1980.) Anna had long since become Sigmund's favorite among his six children, and she had to a considerable extent replaced her mother Martha in his emotional life. In her turn, Anna had strongly identified with Sigmund, psychologically and professionally. It was hard for her even to dream of reaching a level of achievement near that of her genius father. But she had already come to play a significant role in the psychoanalytic movement as his secretary, advocate, and occasional surrogate speaker. Though Freud gave her a kind of training analysis, as he did with other promising candidates for the psychoanalytic profession, he was strongly ambivalent about the possibility that she would become a full-time analyst. He also seems to have felt guilty about having diverted her from traditional paths of feminine development. In a letter written in English to his nephew Sam, Freud praised Anna's accomplishments, then lamented, "Yet she has just passed her 30th birthday, does not seem inclined to get married, and who can say if her momentary interests will render her happy in years to come when she has to face life without her father?" (quoted in Clark, 1980, p. 480).

For her part, Anna had been experiencing an identity crisis that extended over at least six years. She had been courted by several of her father's male disciples and family friends, without regarding any of them as a good match. She had worried a great deal over her lack of decisiveness, not only about potential mates but about a serious career choice. She experienced a strong

conflict between her altruistic urges, which included taking care of her aging father, and what she saw as her more selfish urges, mostly involving desires for strong approval and affection from those close to her. She described these desires with a hyphenated term, almost as if it were the name of a syndrome: "Etwas-Haben-Wollen," or "wanting-to-have-something [-for-myself]" (Young-Bruehl, 1988, p. 133). But now, as she reached age 30, the various things Anna wanted were coming together in a satisfying way. She had decided definitely to become a full-time psychoanalyst, focusing on child patients. Though she wished to remain close to her father, she also wanted to share her life with a woman, an American named Dorothy Tiffany Burlingham, as well as to become a co-parent to Dorothy's children.

Anna Freud's relationship with Dorothy Burlingham may never have involved an overtly sexual component. (Anna's most thorough biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl [1988], says it did not. Dorothy’s most thorough biographer, her grandson Michael John Burlingham [1989], thinks it might have but probably did not.) Even if the relationship were physical as well as emotional, it should be noted that Anna's father was, for his time, unusually tolerant of homosexuality. Nonetheless, he appears to have been deeply troubled to learn that Anna had finally decided against getting married and having her own children, and furthermore that she was developing an intense emotional relationship with a woman. Anna had ended her long indecisiveness about issues of love and work, but in ways that Freud found difficult to endorse wholeheartedly. "What does Woman want," indeed!

Following Erich Fromm, Freud's critics typically use the quotation to indicate his general failure to understand female psychology. Freud might well have acknowledged this point as another of the quotation's overdeterminants. His understanding of male psychology was to a considerable extent based on, or validated by, his first-hand perceptions of what it had been like to be a boy and to develop into a man. Lacking such first-hand experience of being a girl

or woman, he repeatedly emphasized his inadequacy as a theorist of female psychology.

Yet Freud should not be sold short in this regard, even if he often sold himself short. Many of his patients, from whom he collected massive amounts of psychological data, were women. They seem often (though not always) to have attained psychological relief through the shared working-through of their problems. A variety of intellectually and emotionally sophisticated women, including not only Marie Bonaparte but Lou Andreas-Salome, Hilda Doolittle, and Helene Deutsch, responded enthusiastically to his insights into themselves and other women. He encouraged a number of women besides Anna to become practicing psychoanalysts, at a time when such encouragement from a well-established medical patriarch was rare. When a male participant at a Vienna Psychoanalytic Society meeting made crudely sexist remarks about women medical students, Freud chastised him in terms that anticipated gender-related affirmative action: "Woman, whom culture has burdened with the heavier load (especially in propagation) ought to be judged with tolerance and forbearance in areas where she has lagged behind man" (quoted by Nunberg and Federn, 1962, p. 199). Freud wrote several essays and book chapters on female psychology that go well beyond the stereotypically dogmatic discussions of penis envy. These have served as powerful inspiration for later feminist writers, including Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodorow, and Carol Gilligan. Freud did not get everything right about women, and on certain issues he proposed extreme formulations that others have pushed to further extremes. But critics who quote his intensely personal question "What does Woman want?" without qualification, implying that Freud was a simple sexist, ignore the remarkable complexity both of his ideas about women and of his attitudes toward them.

Freud on Psychological Health

"What does Woman want?" is a quotation popular among Freud's critics and enemies. Our next quotation is popular among Freud's defenders and friends. As the standard account goes, "Freud was once asked what he thought a normal

person should be able to do well." He responded: "Lieben und arbeiten," which translates neatly into English as, "To love and to work."

Perhaps the most frequent users of this quotation have been mental health professionals, as they try to convey in nontechnical shorthand what the goal or outcome of psychotherapy should be. At least a dozen books about the attainment of psychological health have used the phrase in their titles, in such forms as To Love and to Work: A Demonstration and Discussion of Psychotherapy (Kapelovitz, 1987), Work, Love, Play: Self Repair in the Psychoanalytic Dialogue (Shor, 1992), and Beyond Love and Work: Why Adults Need to Play (Terr, 2000). Many book chapters, journal articles, and convention papers have been similarly titled. These books and papers typically cite Freud as the source of the phrase without quoting him directly or trying to identify a specific source in his writings. For example, in Work and Love: The Crucial Balance, Jay B. Rohrlich states, "To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever repudiated Freud's contention that the basic requirements of human existence are love and work" (1980, p. 21).

The phrase has become so popular in analytic circles that it is now often employed without citing Freud as its source. In Psycho-Analysis as History, Michael S. Roth writes that “there are those who do not sublimate and who have their 'pathologies,' but who remain socially functional, which I take to be one of Freud's major criteria for normality" (1987, p. 107; his italics). This passage is footnoted, "Functional here simply means the ability to love and work." A president-elect of the American Psychoanalytic Association told a reporter that the unique potential of psychoanalysis compared to other therapies "is that after a long period of time, it can affect personality or characterologic change. It can [improve] a person's ability to love and work" (Sylva, 1988). Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, in her biography of Anna Freud, remarks without explaining the source of her sentence's key phrase, "During her personal psychoanalysis and afterward, in an ongoing, lifelong self-analysis, Anna Freud reflected on herself and on how she came to love and to

work as she did" (1988, p. 19). Pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton was paraphrased and quoted in the Washington Post: "This common conflict between an adult's two major life pursuits--love and work--is 'tearing women to bits in this country'" (reprinted in Sacramento Bee, December 26, 1985).

Uses of the phrase by non-psychotherapists vary in their degree of attribution to Freud and in their paraphrasing. At least two modern novels, by Reynolds Price (1968) and Gwyneth Cravens (1982), have been titled Love and Work; neither directly credits Freud. In Carol Shields' novel The Republic of Love (1992), a character refers to love and work as "the two good Freudian anchors." In a comic novel named after its psychoanalyst protagonist, Fine, author (and psychiatrist) Samuel Shem not only cites Freud but offers the phrase in German and English: "Freud stated the purpose of life to be lieben und arbeiten (love and work), and Fine's life work now was The Fine Theory, a modern attempt to link biology and psychology" (1985, p. 53). In a later novel, Shem has another psychotherapist repeat the same phrases in English and then in German (1997, pp. 241-242). Daniel Goleman began a New York Times article on the psychology of love with the statement, "Freud counted the ability to love, along with the capacity for work, as a hallmark of full maturity" (Nov. 20, 1984). An article about a popular New England discount chain deviated in an interesting but not wholly inaccurate way from the usual phrasing: "Sigmund Freud identified work and sex as the two pillars of human endeavor. Building #19 playfully panders to an unacknowledged but equally compelling third: bargain-shopping" (Diamant, 1986, p. 36).

None of these users of the Freud phrase bothers to tell us where it is from. That may be because they don't really know. In his edition of Freud's letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Jeffrey Masson does make a guess as to the source. He quotes a letter from the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot to Freud, about a patient of Freud's whom Charcot had examined: "She is, in fact, and she acknowledges it herself, to a certain extent prepared for the struggle of life, which she was not formerly." Masson then asks, "Might this not be the

origin of Freud's later famous dictum (for which no source can actually be found) that the goal of analysis is to be able to work and love?" (1985, p. 20). Masson appears to be stretching Charcot's remark a great deal. But he is correct that at least in the body of Freud's own writings, "no source can actually be found."

The dictum's first public appearance, in both German and English, is no mystery at all, though Masson fails to cite it. The phrase was published in 1950, in one of the most popular psychoanalytic books after Freud's own works, Erik Erikson's Childhood and Society. Erikson says there that he is going to quote "what has come to me as Freud's shortest saying":

> Freud was once asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well. The questioner probably expected a complicated answer. But Freud, in the curt way of his old days, is reported to have said: "Lieben und arbeiten" (to love and to work). It pays to ponder on this simple formula; it gets deeper as you think about it. For when Freud said "love" he meant genital love, and genital love; when he said love and work, he meant a general work-productiveness which would not preoccupy the individual to the extent that he loses his right or capacity to be a genital and a loving being. Thus we may ponder, but we cannot improve on "the professor's" formula. [1963, pp. 264-265; his italics]

For all the weight Erikson places on this quotation, he is cautious in attributing it to Freud. Note his qualifying phrases: ". . . what has come to me as Freud's shortest saying . . . . Freud was once asked . . . [by an unidentified] questioner [who] probably expected a complicated answer. But Freud . . . is reported to have said . . . ." And in terms of dating the quotation, all we get is Erikson's remark about its style: "Freud, in the curt way of his old days." On the other hand, Erikson gives us the precise formulation, "Lieben und arbeiten," and then tells us not only what Freud said

but what Freud meant. Let us not worry yet about how Erikson knew what Freud meant. The prior question is, how did he know what Freud said?

Erikson does not try to pin the quotation down to a written source, because there is none. The concordance to Freud's published writings in English translation, which indexes every occurrence of every substantive word Freud used (Guttman, Jones, and Parrish, 1980), identifies no passage in all his writings in which "love" and "work" occur together in a sentence or even on the same page. By Erikson's account, Freud said "Lieben und arbeiten," rather than writing it; but Erikson does not claim that he himself heard Freud say it. Erikson had known Freud personally, but not well. They never engaged in substantive conversations that Erikson later thought worth recounting. Anna Freud could have reported to her patient, Erik, on one of her father's sayings, but there is no evidence that she did.

On several occasions, Erikson was asked to be more specific concerning the source of his wonderful Freud quotation. The Adlerian psychologist Heinz Ansbacher says Erikson told him that "the origin of the story is unknown" (1981, p. 439). When I interviewed Erikson on August 10, 1982, I also asked about the quotation’s source. Erikson replied, "Oh, I simply don't know. I heard it in Vienna and it impressed me. I've never seen it in print. And some people now have said I made it up. If I did, I'm proud."

Perhaps Erikson to some degree shaped the specific wording of "Lieben und arbeiten," but the sentiment expressed was not foreign to Freud. Richard Sterba, a Viennese psychoanalyst, has reported: "When once the discussion in a meeting turned to the question of what means we have at our disposal to motivate a patient to undergo analysis, Freud pointed out that we promise him relief from his symptoms, an increase in his working capacity, and an improvement of his personal and social relationships" (1982, p. 119). That's not nearly as elegant a formulation as "Lieben und arbeiten," but the general idea is there. Of course Sterba's own memories of what Freud had said some 50

years earlier may have been helped by his having read or heard Erikson's anecdote more recently.

However, we need not depend upon such old and uncertain memories. Freud’s writings often referred to love, work, and roughly equivalent concepts, though he never quite put "lieben" and "arbeiten" together on one page. The equivalent terms he was most likely to use were (in English translation) "sex" and "ambition." He sometimes even discussed sex and ambition in the same passage. More than once he characterized his own infantile motives in these terms. He proposed that the "motivating forces" of young men's and women's fantasies

> fall naturally into two main groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones. In young women the erotic wishes predominate almost exclusively, for their ambition is as a rule absorbed by erotic trends. In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones. But we will not lay stress on the opposition between the two trends; we would rather emphasize the fact that they are often united. [1908, 146-147]

In a slightly later work, Freud repeated that daydreams "have two principal aims, an erotic and an ambitious one--though an erotic aim is usually concealed behind the latter too" (1909, p. 238).

At times Freud specifically discussed love rather than sex or eroticism. When he did, his views were usually positive. Even in a book where he compared being in love to a kind of hypnotic devotion, Freud could also add that "in the development of mankind as a whole, just as in individuals, love alone acts as the civilizing factor in the sense that it brings a change from egoism to altruism" (1921, p. 103).

Freud was even more emphatic about the value of work, to himself and to others. He wrote to a correspondent in 1910, "I cannot imagine life without work as at all comfortable; giving my imagination free play and working

coincide for me; nothing else amuses me" (as translated by Kaufmann, 1980, p. 160). In one of his classic footnotes, Freud later wrote about the general value of work, then added a sentence that appears self-referential:

> No other technique for the conduct of life attaches the individual so firmly to reality as laying emphasis on work; for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality, in the human community. . . . Professional activity is a source of special satisfaction if it is a freely chosen one--if, that is to say, by means of sublimation, it makes possible the use of existing inclinations, of persisting or constitutionally reinforced instinctual impulses. [1930, p. 80]

On those occasions when Freud discussed both something like love (or sex) and something like work (or ambition, or creative achievement), he usually presented them as inversely related: the less a person is able to satisfy sexual drives directly, the more psychological energy is available for productivity in other areas. That is the basic assumption in Freud's concept of sublimation. His revision of his drive theories to include a destructive or death-seeking drive did not change this assumption of reciprocity; creativity/constructiveness/work generally continued to depend on the leftovers from the more basic drives, whether they were sexual and self-preservative drives or "life instincts" and "death instincts." Nonetheless, Freud began at times to conceptualize certain forms of love and work as complementary rather than inversely proportional. For example, throughout most of his psychobiography of Leonardo da Vinci (1910b), Freud strongly emphasized the inverse relationship of Leonardo's sexuality and his creativity: because Leonardo's direct sexual satisfaction was blocked by the peculiarities of his upbringing, he had vast energies available for creative work. But Freud also speculated about a set of circumstances in Leonardo's middle age when a re-arousal of his early sexual feelings, stimulated by his fascination with the woman usually identified as Mona Lisa, revivified his

declining creative urges. Though Freud assumed that Leonardo remained unable fully to satisfy his sexual urges with anyone, he suggested that Leonardo's long-dormant erotic impulses needed to be stirred again in order for him to create his last great artistic works.

Freud did not regard Leonardo as a psychologically healthy or "normal" individual, though he saw him as a genius. It is when Freud describes the desired outcome of psychoanalytic therapy that he is most likely to link something like love and something like work in a complementary or equally valued way. For instance, in a now-famous letter to a mother who seemed to be asking Freud to "cure" her son's homosexual tendencies, Freud stated (in his own English):

> Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness. . . . By asking me if I can help, you mean, I suppose, if I can abolish homosexuality and make normal sexuality take its place. . . . What analysis can do for your son runs in a different line. If he is unhappy, neurotic, torn by conflicts, inhibited in his social life, analysis may bring him harmony, peace of mind, full efficiency, whether he remains a homosexual or gets changed. [1960, p. 423]

The key words here are <u>harmony</u> (as a response to "inhibitions in his social life") and <u>efficiency</u> (as a response to being "torn by conflicts"). Freud elaborated on these ideas in more formal publications, such as this one from 1923:

> It may be laid down that the aim of the treatment is to remove the patient's resistances and to pass his repressions in review and thus to bring about the most far-reaching unification and strengthening of his ego, to enable him to save the mental energy which he is expending upon internal conflicts, to make the best of him that his inherited capacities will allow and so to make him as efficient and as capable of enjoyment as is possible. [1923, p. 251]

In this and similar passages, the recurring German terms are Genussfähigkeit and Leistungsfähigkeit. The former term refers not to sexual pleasure as such, but to a general capacity for enjoyment or for experiencing pleasure in whatever form. The latter term, usually translated as "efficiency" in the English editions of Freud's writings, may be reasonably translated instead as "capacity to get work done." However translated, these passages that bring together the individual's capacities for enjoyment of pleasure and for efficient work are distinctly positive statements of the goals of analysis. Indeed, these passages indicate that Freud at least sometimes thought we can eat our cake and have it too--that we can satisfy our yearnings for pleasure, erotic and otherwise, and still retain enough psychological energy to achieve genuine realistic accomplishments, through hard work.

Does Erik Erikson's quotation of what he thought Freud once said actually misrepresent "the professor's" views? It is surely a selective quotation, emphasizing social relationships and culturally valued activities in an optimistic tone. In that regard it sounds much like Erikson's own writings. Freud could be much more pessimistic about analysis--as when he wrote, early in his career, that analysis works mainly to transform "hysterical misery into common unhappiness" (1895, p. 305). In other writings, Freud appeared to stress genital orgasms as the desired end-point of adult development or of effective psychotherapy, preferably accompanied by “finding an [erotic] object” (1905, p. 222). Sometimes he referred to love, in the now common Western sense of romantic love, as a delusion. Freud, who was frustrated in his own sexual life and disappointed that his romantic dreams of marriage had not been fully realized, at times even described his own work, mightily creative as it was, as a sort of consolation prize in the risky game of life. So Erikson, who knew Freud's writings as well as anyone, was not totally forthcoming when he offered us "Lieben und arbeiten" as the simple formula for psychological health that Freud had arrived at in "his old days."

On the other hand, the picture that Freud's detractors often present--of Freud as a cynical young man and a bitter old man--is also far from complete. As I have noted, Freud did sometimes come close to writing just what Erikson has told us he said about love and work. If Freud as an old man had been asked, on one of his good days, what he thought of the formula "Lieben und arbeiten," he might well have answered, "Well, some people have said I made it up, and if I did, I'm proud."

Freud on Cigars

Though recent editions of Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (Beck, 1980; Kaplan, 1992) list our final quotation merely as "Attributed" to Freud, it too is often quoted as having come directly from the pen or mouth of the master. In this case, however, we not only lack any written record of Freud as the direct source; there are many reasons to conclude that Freud never said it or anything like it.

This quotation comes in several minor variations. The most popular are "Sometimes a cigar is only a cigar" (as a dramatized Freud says, for instance, in a BBC-TV mini-series based on his life) and "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" (as quoted, for example, by California artist Darrell Forney when a critic asked him about "the omnipresent phallic forms that pepper his paintings" [Dalkey, 1986].) The quotation's basic form appears to have been established in English. My colleague Eva Schepeler has translated it into German for me as "Manchmal ist eine Zigarre nur eine Zigarre." But despite her wide reading of psychoanalytic and popular literature in her native language, she does not recall ever having seen the quotation printed in a German publication.

It has, however, popped up in all sorts of odd places in English. The Dictionary of Literary Symbols (Ferber, 1999, p. 5), in discussing poetic references to nightingales, tells us that "What Freud said about cigars is sometimes true of literary symbols: sometimes a nightingale is just a nightingale, or little more than a way of saying the night has come." A New

York Times article about a new psychoanalytic bookstore in Manhattan (March 12, 2000) begins, “Sometimes a bookstore is just a bookstore,” then goes ahead to tell how this one is much more. A New York Times review of a lesbian film titled “Just Desserts” assures us, “Sometimes a cigar is not just a cigar, and a Venetian fritter is not just a Venetian fritter” (July 19, 1996). In their combination of real recipes and half-imagined Freudiana titled Freud's Own Cookbook, James Hillman and Charles Boer present Freud as telling the reader in an introduction:

> Here, too, I can make corrections that have been needed for years and years; for instance, the irritating interpretation of a casual remark, since become notorious, that I let pass one evening after a very good Sauerbraten mit Eiernudeln: "Sometimes a cigar is only a cigar." I was simply referring to the oral delight of smoking which was then being subtly undermined by my followers--far too many of whom were nonsmokers--by giving to the cigar a genital significance. This interpretation of cigar betrays an unfortunate, because unrecognized, cigar-envy and a desire to castrate the father who smokes for pleasure. [1985, p. 7]

In a later passage, Hillman and Boer's Freud discusses the first psychoanalytic case, Josef Breuer's treatment of the patient called "Anna O." In this (totally apocryphal) version, Anna's symptoms are resolved when Breuer feeds her a kind of Viennese banana split. According to the cookbook's Freud, "Anna's banana was neither sublimated into mere talk nor reduced to its symbolic significance, Dr. Breuer's phallus. Sometimes a banana is just a banana" (p. 63).

Hillman and Boer may not have realized that their banana-for-cigar substitution had been anticipated years earlier by the television show "Saturday Night Live." In a skit starring Dan Aykroyd as Freud and Laraine Newman as his daughter Anna, the teenaged Anna sits on her father's lap and tells him about a dream she has just had. In the dream she was surrounded by naked men offering her their bananas--but, she says, she ate only the banana

offered her by a man who looked just like her father. Sigmund grows increasingly uncomfortable with this naively transparent dream, and when Anna asks for an interpretation he grumbles, "Sometimes a banana is just a banana."

In recent years the cigar quotation has gone political. When Paula Jones's lawyers filed a petition for summary judgment against President Clinton for sexual harassment, Clinton's lawyer told a press conference that Jones's claim to have developed sexual aversion was a joke. He then hastily explained that it was a joke only because it was filed so late in the case, and he concluded, "I mean no more than that. . . . As Freud said, sometimes a good cigar is just a good cigar" (New York Times, March 21, 1998). When the details of Bill Clinton's liaisons with Monica Lewinsky emerged a few months later, "Sometimes a cigar is [or is not] just a cigar" jokes swept the Internet like wildfire. None will be repeated here.

The "Saturday Night Live" banana skit dates from the late 1970s. Do we have a significantly earlier source for the quotation--one with cigars rather than bananas? And did Freud really say it? Over the past fifteen years I have talked or corresponded with a number of Freud scholars about this significant issue: Kurt Eissler, Paul Roazen, Peter Swales, Nathan Hale Jr., and others. They have been generous with their help, but none has had a clue about the quotation's origin. I have examined not only Freud's formal writings but his published letters and many unpublished letters, in the Library of Congress, the Archives of the British Institute of Psycho-Analysis, and elsewhere. I have looked at every memoir of Freud I could find, by anyone who knew him personally. I too have drawn a blank on the cigar quotation's source.

The earliest version that I have located is a 1961 scholarly paper by Peter Gay, the distinguished intellectual historian who has written a major biography of Freud (1988). Gay concluded his 1961 paper, on interpretations of the rhetoric of the French Revolution, with this statement: "After all, as Sigmund Freud once said, there are times when a man craves a cigar simply

because he wants a good smoke." No source is given, and Gay did not surround Freud's comment with quotation marks. When I asked Gay in 1985 about his knowledge of any earlier appearances of the quotation, he responded:

> I first quoted this particular point . . . in a paper I gave in 1960 at a French Historical Society meeting at Rochester, New York, and then published in the American Historical Review the following year. At the time I covered myself carefully because I could not find the source of that quotation. Since then, despite all my reading in Freud material, both published and unpublished, I have not found it. This may turn out to be one of those wonderful apocryphal things that people attribute and the first reference to which remains unknown.

When I recently asked Gay whether he had located anything new on the matter, his answer was much the same.

There does, however, seem to be an oral tradition referring to a much earlier source. This tradition is hinted at in the Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes (Fadiman, 1985, p. 223), which presents the quotation this way:

> Cigar smoking is often thought of as a symbolic activity, the cigar itself frequently interpreted as a phallic symbol or emblem of masculinity. Freud himself was an inveterate cigar-smoker. A curious student once asked him if his cigar smoking carried any particular symbolic weight for him. He puffed reflectively, then replied, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

That account offers an interesting detail: "a curious student" to whom Freud responds. The anecdote book gives as its source a 1982 article in the Los Angeles Times. Upon examination, however, the Times article, at least in its microfilm version (July 5, 1982), turns out to have said a lot about cigars but nothing about a curious student. Its reference to Freud, in full and lacking any citation of sources, is:

> John F. Banzhaf III, executive director of Action on Smoking and Health, a non-smokers rights group based in Washington, says men smoke and pass

> out phallic-shaped cigars on the birth of a child to symbolize a particular fantasy. Taking a thoughtful puff, the father of psychoanalysis replied, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

But maybe the editors of the Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes did not invent the curious student all by themselves. Several people have told me that as they had heard the story, Freud made the cigar statement during his only visit to the United States, in a lecture at Clark University in 1909. Some of these informants have added that Freud was answering a student's question. One woman told me she had heard this information at Clark University, from one of her professors, sometime in the early 1960s. Unfortunately the professor (Heinz Werner) is now deceased, and he did not arrive at Clark University until nearly 40 years after Freud's visit. Nobody else who has told me a similar story could trace it back to a specific source.

An article on "Sexual Jokes," published in the professional journal Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, provides the most elaborate instance of the Clark University version that I have found (though it lacks the inquiring student):

> Early in his psychoanalytic career, Sigmund Freud was invited to the United States to lecture to eager audiences on his new and engaging theories. During one of his first appearances, he decided to discuss penis envy and phallic symbolism. In the midst of his lecture, he lit up his now famous cigar and continued to speak. The audience, making an obvious connection between his topic and the cigar, broke out in laughter. After a few moments, Freud, realizing what the audience was finding so funny, removed the cigar from his mouth, and quipped: . . . "and sometimes a good cigar, is just a good cigar." [Gold, 1985, p. 212; Gold's italics]

When I asked the article's author, a clinical psychologist named Michael I. Gold, about his source for the Freud anecdote, he said he got it from his

fellow clinical psychologist, Harvey Mindess. When I asked Mindess, he said he thought he had heard it from Michael Gold.

After I had heard the Clark University attribution a few times, I checked the published accounts of Freud's visit to the U. S., but found no mention of the cigar anecdote. I then wrote to Clark University's official University Historian, William A. Koelsch, who has published several papers about the Freud visit (e.g., 1984). Koelsch responded, "I had not previously heard that Freud is said to have made his celebrated cigar statement while at Clark. I have seen nothing here which would indicate that the statement was made at Clark"--that is, nothing in the University's archives and nothing in "all extant local newspaper accounts" of Freud's visit. "I think I would have caught it," Koelsch added, "because our public relations people would have loved it." I might add that C. G. Jung, who accompanied Freud on his visit to Clark University and who was then beginning to have strong doubts about Freud's "authority," would have loved the story too, but in gossiping about Freud later he never mentioned it. Nor did anyone else who published recollections of the Clark University conference, as far as either I or the University Historian can determine. Saul Rosenzweig, who has written a nearly 500-page history of the conference (1992), tells me he has never come across the anecdote in all his research. All these negative findings strongly suggest, without proving definitively, that the story originated somewhere and sometime else--much as, according to Freud, human beings commonly take later experiences or fantasies and attach them in memory to much earlier events.

So much for the story's external validity: that is, for any factual evidence that Freud did indeed make the cigar statement, at Clark University or elsewhere. What about internal validity--evidence that it's the sort of thing Freud <u>might</u> have said, whether at his Clark University lectures or at any other time in his long life? We do know a good deal about what Freud actually said at Clark, because he wrote out his lectures in detail soon after he returned to Vienna. "During one of his first appearances," according to

the version of the anecdote published in Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, "he decided to discuss penis envy and phallic symbolism." Freud did indeed, in the third of his five Clark University lectures, refer to how "the analysis of dreams has shown us that the unconscious makes use of a particular symbolism, especially for representing sexual complexes" (1910a, p. 36). Freud then moved from dream symbolism to such things as slips of tongue and pen, "to which as a rule no importance is attached," he said. He continued:

> Besides these there are the actions and gestures which people carry out without noticing them at all, to say nothing of attributing any psychological importance to them: playing about and fiddling with things, humming tunes, fingering parts of one's own body or one's clothing, and so on. These small things, faulty actions and symptomatic or haphazard actions alike, are not so insignificant as people, by a sort of conspiracy of silence, are ready to suppose. They always have a meaning, which can usually be interpreted with ease and certainty from the situation in which they occur. . . . A man's most intimate secrets are as a rule betrayed by their help. [1910a, pp. 37-38]

Now, did Freud at this point make an exception to his line of argument, and insist that his own cigars involved no symbolism, revealed no "intimate secrets?" That seems hardly likely. According to the evidence of the published lectures, he instead emphasized the exact opposite:

> As you already see, psycho-analysts are marked by a particularly strict belief in the determination of mental life. For them there is nothing trivial, nothing arbitrary or haphazard. They expect in every case to find sufficient motives where, as a rule, no such expectation is raised. Indeed, they are prepared to find several motives for one and the same mental occurrence, whereas what seems to be our innate craving for causality declares itself satisfied with a single psychical cause. [1910a, p. 38; Freud's italics]

In the Clark University lectures and for the rest of his life, Freud continued to stress these two essentials of psychoanalytic theory: first, complete psychological determinism (the idea that no human behavior lacks psychological significance, and that all behavior is determined by discoverable motives), and second, overdetermination (the idea that virtually all behavior is determined by "several motives," not just by "a single psychical cause.") The statement, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," flatly contradicts both these assumptions, especially the second. Freud enjoyed telling jokes, but such essential components of his core theory were not matters about which he would have dismissively joked, especially to an audience who knew little about psychoanalysis.

But perhaps he was simply caught off guard by a brash student's question, and gave an unprepared and self-defensive answer? In the first place, Freud's lecture style was not such as to produce unprepared and self-defensive answers. By 1909, he was a master of the art of public speaking, at the height of his intellectual powers, and thoroughly experienced at responding to a wide variety of challenges that his many patients had thrown at him concerning any and all of his discernible behavior patterns. In the second place, Freud was quite aware of the neurotic aspects of his cigar smoking. He hardly needed to pretend, to himself or to others, that a cigar was "just" a cigar for him. He admitted repeatedly that his cigar smoking was an addiction. As early as 1897 he acknowledged to a friend the neurotic basis of such addictions:

> The insight has dawned on me that masturbation is the one major habit, the "primary addiction," and it is only as a substitute and replacement for it that the other addictions--to alcohol, morphine, tobacco, and the like--come into existence. The role played by this addiction in hysteria is enormous; and it is perhaps there that my major, still outstanding obstacle is to be found, wholly or in part. [Masson, 1985, p. 287]

Freud was extremely reluctant to reduce the number of cigars he smoked (usually 20 per day), let alone give them up entirely, even when his physicians demanded that he do so for serious health reasons. His cigars were not just a matter of pleasure. As he told more than one correspondent in approximately the same words, "I owe to the cigar a great intensification of my capacity to work and a facilitation of my self-control" (quoted in Schur, 1972, p. 62; see also Freud, 1960, p. 403). Is a cigar only a cigar? No: Freud felt certain that cigars were an essential part of his personality and of his life.

But if Freud didn't say it, then where did the cigar quotation originate? Perhaps from a professional comedian, pre-Saturday-Night-Live? (Groucho Marx? George Burns?) It is a good comic line, and it has worn well. Perhaps from a hostile biographer of Freud? I have not found the quotation in any Freud biography prior to the 1970s. Perhaps from Peter Gay? The wording used in his 1961 paper, which is not as neat as the subsequent "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" variants, suggests the possibility of a still earlier inspiration, not from Freud but from Rudyard Kipling. Again, Gay's version is this: "After all, as Sigmund Freud once said, there are times when a man craves a cigar simply because he wants a good smoke" (1961, p. 676). Rudyard Kipling's similar lines, first published in 1885, are far more sexist than Freud ever was: "And a woman is only a woman, but a good Cigar is a Smoke" (Kipling, 1940, p. 49). Perhaps Gay or a previous writer preconsciously crossed Kipling's line with Freud's "What does a woman want?" to tell us that "a man craves a cigar simply because he wants a good smoke." Perhaps someone else just misremembered Kipling's original, replacing "woman" with "cigar" in the first part of his line: “And a cigar is only a cigar, but . . . ” Either or both possibilities seem to me as likely a derivation for the "Sometimes a cigar" quotation as any so far suggested.

A less likely but still possible source is even earlier than Kipling. Turgenev's pre-Freudian but very oedipal novel Fathers and Sons, published in

1862, includes a scene in which the liberated Madame Kukshin first meets the young nihilist Bazarov. When she offers Bazarov a cigar, their mutual friend Sitnikov says, "A cigar's a cigar [in Russian, “Sigarku sigarkoi”], but do let's have some lunch" (p. 71). So for all these years we may have been missing part of the apocryphal Freud quotation. Perhaps in full it should read something like, "A cigar is just a cigar, but a couple of pirozhki are a real meal."

As I mentioned earlier, "What do women want?" is usually quoted by Freud's critics, and "To love and to work" is usually quoted by his advocates. "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar" tends to be quoted by people who are ambivalent about Freud and who would like to find an exception to his strict motivational determinism--a way to deny the psychological implications of their own behavior, or of the behavior of someone important to them. Freud scorned such evasions. He spent much time and psychic energy revealing how his own dreams, as well as those of his patients, developed intricate disguises for the true significance of acts and impulses. It is still remotely possible that Freud tossed off the "cigar" statement in a weak moment. He was not so perfect that he never made what would be, from his usual perspective, such an irrational remark. But if anyone does come across firm evidence that Freud said it, I’ll still want to consider what the special circumstances may have been, and I’d suspect that Freud himself soon analyzed the unconscious reasons for his temporary aberration.

Now that we know something about the sources (or non-sources) and the contexts (or non-contexts) of these three very popular quotations, do I assume that people will stop using them inappropriately? By no means. The quotations have developed a life of their own, and for one unanalyzed reason or another, many people will go on believing that Freud said them. Whether a person reveres or resists his ideas, idealizes him or feels eager to bash him, a short and convenient set of quotations such as these offers a way to connect with Freud and simultaneously to communicate with others about him. Anyone who

wants to quote him more thoughtfully, however, should turn to Freud's own writings--to his many marvelous letters, more of which are becoming available each year, as well as to his formal essays and books. They contain enough wise, provocative, and truly Freudian quotations to carry us through at least another century.

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