

# Sigmund Freud

(1925). *Standard Edition*, (19):271-276

## Preface to Aichhorn's *Wayward Youth*

Sigmund Freud ⓘ

271

### Editor's Note

James Strachey ⓘ

(a) German Editions:

1925 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* In August Aichhorn, *Verwahrloste Jugend*, 5-6, Leipzig Vienna and Zurich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag. (1931, 2nd ed.)

1928 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* G.S., 11, 267-9.

1948 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* G.W., 14, 565-7.

(b) English Translations:

1935 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* In Aichhorn, *Wayward Youth*, v-vii, New York: Viking Press. (Reprinted 1936, London: Putnam.) (Tr. unspecified.)

1950 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* C.P., 5, 98-100. (Under the title 'Psycho-Analysis and Delinquency'.) (Tr. James Strachey.)

1951 Preface to Aichhorn's *Verwahrloste Jugend* In Aichhorn, *Wayward Youth*, vii-ix, London: Imago Publishing Co. (Revised reprint of 1935 edition, but with Freud's Preface tr. James Strachey.)

The present translation is a very slightly corrected version of the one first published in 1950.

A biographical study of August Aichhorn (1878-1949), by Dr. K. R. Eissler, appears in the 1951 edition of the English translation of *Wayward Youth*. Aichhorn's book was first published in July, 1925. Freud made a further short

reference to it in a footnote to Chapter VII of *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930a).

A fuller discussion of the relations between psycho-analysis and education was given by Freud in a long passage in the middle of Lecture XXXIV of his *New Introductory Lectures* (1933a).

272

### **Preface to Aichhorn's *Wayward Youth***

None of the applications of psycho-analysis has excited so much interest and aroused so many hopes, and none, consequently, has attracted so many capable workers, as its use in the theory and practice of education. It is easy to understand why; for children have become the main subject of psycho-analytic research and have thus replaced in importance the neurotics on whom its studies began. Analysis has shown how the child lives on, almost unchanged, in the sick man as well as in the dreamer and the artist; it has thrown light on the motive forces and trends which set its characteristic stamp upon the childish nature; and it has traced the stages through which a child grows to maturity. No wonder, therefore, if an expectation has arisen that psycho-analytic concern with children will benefit the work of education, whose aim it is to guide and assist children on their forward path and to shield them from going astray.

My personal share in this application of psycho-analysis has been very slight. At an early stage I had accepted the *bon mot* which lays it down that there are three impossible professions—educating, healing and governing—and I was already fully occupied with the second of them. But this does not mean that I overlook the high social value of the work done by those of my friends who are engaged in education.

The present volume by August Aichhorn is concerned with one department of the great problem—with the educational influencing of juvenile delinquents. The author had worked for many years in an official capacity as a director of municipal institutions for delinquents before he became acquainted with psycho-analysis. His attitude to his charges sprang from a warm sympathy with the fate of those unfortunates and was correctly guided by an intuitive perception of their mental needs. Psychoanalysis could teach him little that was new of a practical kind, but it brought him a clear theoretical insight into the justification of his way of acting and put him in a position to explain its basis to other people.

It must not be assumed that this gift of intuitive understanding will be found in everyone concerned with the bringing-up of children. Two lessons may be derived, it seems to me,

[PEP] *This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 14, Page 565*

273

from the experience and the success of August Aichhorn. One is that every such person should receive a psycho-analytic training, since without it children, the object of his endeavours, must remain an inaccessible problem to him. A training of this kind is best carried out if such a person himself undergoes an analysis and experiences it on himself: theoretical instruction in analysis fails to penetrate deep enough and carries no conviction.

The second lesson has a somewhat conservative ring. It is to the effect that the work of education is something *sui generis*: it is not to be confused with psycho-analytic influence and cannot be replaced by it. Psycho-analysis can be called in by education as an auxiliary means of dealing with a child; but it is not a suitable substitute for education. Not only is such a substitution impossible on practical grounds but it is also to be disrecommended for theoretical reasons. The relation between education and psycho-analytic treatment will probably before long be the subject of a detailed investigation. Here I will only give a few hints. One should not be misled by the statement—incidentally a perfectly true one—that the psycho-analysis of an adult neurotic is equivalent to an after-education.<sup>1</sup> A child, even a wayward and delinquent child, is still not a neurotic; and after-education is something quite different from the education of the immature. The possibility of analytic influence rests on quite definite preconditions which can be summed up under the term 'analytic situation' it requires the development of certain psychical structures and a particular attitude to the analyst. Where these are lacking—as in the case of children, of juvenile delinquents, and, as a rule, of impulsive criminals—something other than analysis must be employed, though something which will be at one with analysis in its *purpose*. The theoretical chapters of the present volume will give the reader a preliminary grasp of the multiplicity of the decisions involved.

I will end with a further inference, and this time one which is important not for the theory of education but for the status of those who are engaged in education. If one of these has learnt

[PEP] *This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 14, Page 566*

<sup>1</sup>*[Freud had used this comparison as early as in his lecture 'On Psychotherapy' (1905a [1904]), Standard Ed., 7, 267, where the word 'Nacherziehung' is inaccurately translated 're-education' instead of 'after-education'. See also a passage towards the beginning of Lecture XXVIII of the Introductory Lectures (1916-17).]*

274

analysis by experiencing it on his own person and is in a position of being able to employ it in borderline and mixed cases to assist him in his work, he should obviously be given the right to practise analysis, and narrow-minded motives should not be allowed to try to put obstacles in his way.

*[PEP] This page can be read in German in GESAMMELTE WERKE Vol 14, Page 567*

275

276

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