

# At ease with Sigmund Freud: York prof. seeks the man behind the couch

By PAUL STUART

"In the fall of 1964 I started to meet and interview everyone living who had ever known Sigmund Freud . . . By seeing more and more of Freud's pupils, relatives and enemies — he was known to them all simply as 'Professor' — I found that the great man began for the first time to live in my mind as a human being."

Paul Roazen  
*Brother Animal*

Beyond the childhood realization that great men and women are actual human beings who, like ourselves, eat, sleep, and go to the bathroom, most of us learn little of the people who make history.

Nevertheless, we remain insatiably curious.

When someone like York Social Science Professor Paul Roazen comes along and satisfies a portion of that curiosity, he becomes rather fascinating himself.

Last Friday, this reporter walked through the pale November sunshine to Roazen's Bethune College office, to become fascinated with the person who probably knows more about Sigmund Freud, the man, than anyone else in the world.

Roazen is an American, the son of a Russian Jew. He got his undergraduate degree at Harvard, where he taught political theory until he came to York in 1970.

## WANTED TO LEARN

While doing graduate work at the University of Chicago in '58-'59, he became interested in psycho-analysis. The neo-Freudian psycho-analyst and author, Bruno Bettelheim, was there and so "the unconscious was in the air; the ideas were in the air. I never met Bettelheim and I didn't know anything about the unconscious mind, but I wanted to learn."

Roazen didn't know anything about the unconscious because Freud, his followers and psycho-analytic enemies alike, were not included in the Harvard programme of classical political theory.

Furthering his graduate studies in England at Oxford's Magdalen College, Roazen again encountered orthodox academia's refusal to enter the psychological twentieth century, which Freud's discovery of the unconscious mind heralded.

"Here," he said with just a trace of a New England accent, "was a college which had just celebrated its fourth or fifth centennial anniversary — I'm not sure which — and Freud's books were not in the library. Nor, I was told, were they going to be."

Roazen chuckled as he remembered the



G. B. Gook photo

Paul Roazen, who came to York in 1970, first became interested in Freud while studying at the University of Chicago. He is now among the world's foremost authorities on the man.

"broad smile of pleasure" which appeared on the face of Anna Freud (the daughter of Sigmund, and an important psycho-analytic influence in her own right) when he told her of this in 1965. He said the story probably reinforced her image of herself as "a prophet spreading the truth to unbelievers."

Back at Harvard, Roazen decided to record the oral tradition on Freud.

"I'm a bookish person and I thought I knew Freud inside-out from his books," he said. "The I went to a conference and a little old lady was on the stage talking about Freud and what life had been like in old Vienna . . ."

A couple of interviews later Roazen became so interested that he began a long series of meetings on both sides of the Atlantic with scores of Freud's associates, almost all of whom are now dead.

The aging people who helped change our view of ourselves, co-operated eagerly, for here was a Harvard professor and a chance to "spread the gospel." And "gospel" it was, for the early Freudians were a far different lot from today's establishment

shrinks. Animated with a missionary zeal, they spread the psycho-analytic revolution in a hostile, puritanical Europe.

## OLD REVOLUTIONARIES

Interviewing these old intellectual revolutionaries, Roazen found they would tell him things about their own analysis with Freud, which they could only tell to an outsider. All the old analysts were very curious about what Roazen had learned from their friends.

He emerged with a deepened understanding of psycho-analysis (the notes were the raw material for three books), and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Freud stories and jokes, with which he regales his classes. For example: America — "It is a mistake."

"If you ask me," said Roazen, "I have to say I don't have one (favourite story), but this one comes to mind. Mark Brunswick, a psycho-analyst and his wife were visiting Freud's home. Brunswick said to him, 'Look at your dog — he's dreaming'. Freud's response was 'I've told them they're feeding him too much, I've told them, but they won't listen to me.' I mention that because it shows how he had completely compartmentalized his life. At home he was far less likely to make psychological judgements than you or I would be, even though he began the whole thing."

"Freud was a very reserved, private person and, though you have to be careful how you use the term, very much a Victorian gentleman."

Roazen doesn't know whether he would have liked Freud. "It would depend on his age when met him," he said. "That's like asking if I would have liked Karl Marx. They were both great men, but they were both difficult, crusty characters."

"In the end Freud lost most of his best students."

Freud thought Carl Jung, who broke with him just before W.W.I, was his best student. Jung founded his own psychoanalytic school, which has spent the rest of the century feuding bitterly with Freud's own. Jung eventually accused Freud of hating his patients.

After his interviews, Roazen settled in to write his books. His first, *Freud: Political and Social Thought*, was published in 1968.

Roazen writes in a straight-forward satisfying prose style as was demonstrated in the next book, *Brother Animal*, which centres on the story of an early, tragic associate of Freud's, Victor Tausk, and his relationship to the great man; one which drove him to suicide.

It includes the line: "Although Freud was urbane and ironic, his eyes remind us of how he could hate."

Roazen had no idea he would encounter the Tausk story when he began his interviews. He wrote *Brother Animal*, to get

the man and his contribution into the history books. "He was," said Roazen, "a non-person."

Freud and his Followers, the longest of the three books, includes much of Roazen's historical findings. Packed with photographs, it is a fascinating panorama — but its expensive, hard-voer price will prevent many from approaching it.

## SYMPATHETIC TO FREUD

Roazen is sympathetic to Freud, and though his interest in the man no doubt springs from a deep psychological affinity, he has his criticisms.

Asked if women's liberationists are fair in portraying Freud as their chauvinistic bogey-man, he said he believes them to be "entirely right."

"An example is one of his most famous case-histories — Dora. Dora is a young girl whose father is having an affair with a married woman, and the woman's husband begins to court her. Dora finds him repugnant and so her father drags her in to Freud's office for treatment."

Freud suspended his usual rule of accepting only voluntary patients in Dora's case and, Roazen continued, "Freud analyzed Dora's 'problem' as finding the man repugnant — he asks 'Why is she repulsed?' as if it were her fault."

Yet, as anyone who has heard Roazen lecture for a year can testify, Freud was a complex man, who was not all repressive.

"And, while Freud may have had these views about women, what women don't acknowledge is how well they have done in psychoanalysis as a profession. The early women analysts were a superior breed, engaged in bucking contemporary trends and they went right to the top in psychoanalysis," said Roazen.

"Of course," he added, "while they partly benefited from following Freud's ideas, it may have been at the expense of their own development."

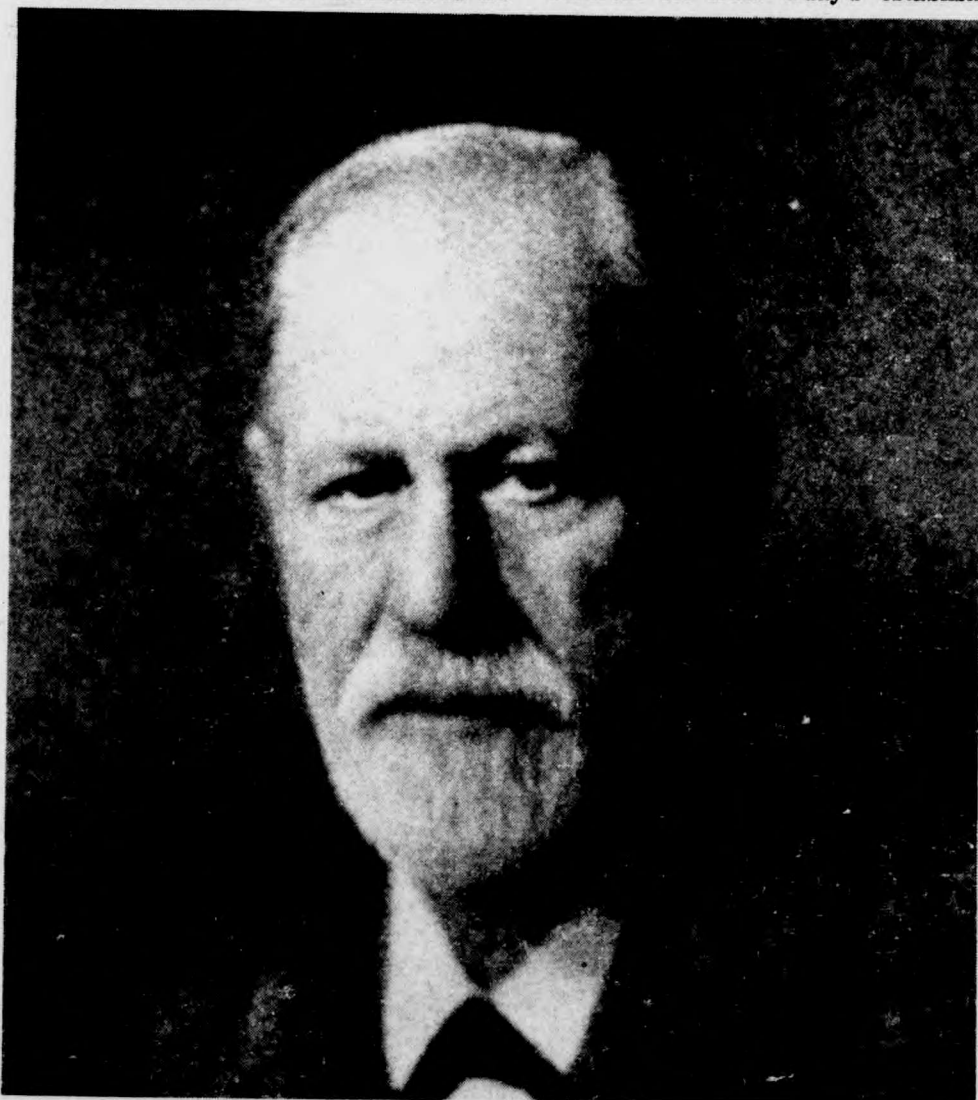
As the interview drew to a close, I mentioned my own dislike of conventional psycho-analytic therapy, the idea that it goes on too long with scanty results. I asked what he thought of newer forms of treatment like Gestalt and Primal therapy and he said, "I really don't know too much about them."

While Roazen agreed that many analysts keep their patients on far too long (15 or 16 years in some cases), he remains optimistic.

"What attracts me to Freud is his rationalism," he said.

"It seems to me that the ideal expressed in Freud's *Future of an Illusion* (his critique of religion) is a very memorable one: the hope that through intelligence we can master human suffering."

"I think Freud's strength was his belief that through reason people can overcome themselves."



Sigmund Freud: his eyes remind us of how he could hate.