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Book review : Sigmund Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: Conquistador and Thinker by Paul Schimmel

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My suggested headline: Psychoanalysis as a science

Publication title: Sigmund Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: Conquistador and Thinker

Author: Paul Schimmel

Publisher: Routledge

Year of publication: 2014

Paperback price: £18.99

In this book Paul Schimmel provides a very clear and well-written account of how and why Freud became interested in developing a psychoanalytic scientific approach. He explains how Freud began his career as a medical student, then moved onto the study of neurology, hypnotic experiences and then later on why he developed a psychoanalytic approach to study the mind. Freud actually underwent 'self-analysis' and used those experiences to conceptualise his psychoanalytic approach to therapy as well as to attempt to make sense of his own emotional difficulties. On some occasions Freud even used cocaine to get rid of his migraines. What Schimmel does wonderfully well in this biographical and personal account of Freud is to undertake a psychoanalytic reading of his letters to key people such as Fliess and Charcot. The words in the book title 'conquistador' and 'thinker' refer to what Schimmel considers as two oppositional aspects of Freud's personality, the first aspect as relating to Freud as a conquistador and being adventurous, daring and curious and the second aspect as relating to Freud as a thinker in terms of being scientific, observing and thoughtful. To conclude, Schimmel provides an excellent psychoanalytic reading of Freud's journey into developing a psychoanalytic approach to the study of the mind. I think that the book would be of great interest to Freudian scholars, psychoanalysts and students interested in learning more about psychoanalysis.

Word count: 230