

APPENDIX A LETTER FROM FREUD TO THEODOR REIK

April 14, 1929 .

. . I have read your critical review of my Dostoevsky study with great pleasure. All your objections deserve consideration and must be recognized as in a sense apt. I can bring forward a little in my defence. But of course it will not be a question of who is right or who is wrong.

I think you are applying too high a standard to this triviality. It was written as a favour to someone and written reluctantly. I always write reluctantly nowadays. No doubt you noticed this about it. This is not meant, of course, to excuse hasty or false judgements, but merely the careless architecture of the essay as a whole. I cannot dispute the unharmonious effect produced by the addition of the Zweig analysis; but deeper examination will perhaps show some justification for it. If I had not been hampered by considerations of the place where my essay was to appear, I should certainly have written: 'We may expect that in the history of a neurosis accompanied by such a severe sense of guilt a special part will be played by the struggle against masturbation. This expectation is completely fulfilled by Dostoevsky's pathological addiction to gambling. For, as we can see from a short story of Zweig's . . . etc.' That is to say, the amount of space given to the short story corresponds not to the relation: Zweig-Dostoevsky, but to the other one: masturbation-neurosis. All the same, the outcome was clumsy.

I hold firmly to a scientifically objective social assessment of ethics, and for that reason I should not wish to deny the excellent Philistine a certificate of good ethical conduct, even though it has cost him little self-discipline. But alongside of this I grant the validity of the subjective psychological view of ethics which you support. Though I agree with your judgement of the world and mankind as they are to-day, I cannot, as you know, regard your pessimistic dismissal of a better future as justified.

As you suggest, I included Dostoevsky the psychologist under the creative artist. Another objection I might have raised against him was that his insight was so much restricted to abnormal mental life. Consider his astonishing helplessness in face of the phenomena of love. All he really knew were crude, instinctual desire, masochistic subjection and loving out of pity. You are right, too, in suspecting that, in spite of all my admiration for Dostoevsky's intensity and pre-eminence, I do not really like him. That is because my patience with pathological natures is exhausted in analysis. In art and life I am intolerant of them. Those are character traits personal to me and not binding on others.

Where are you going to publish your essay? I rate it very highly. It is only scientific research that must be without presumptions. In every other kind of thinking the choice of a point of view cannot be avoided; and there are, of course, several of these . . .