My Review of: *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis* (by Adolf Grunbaum, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) first appeared in *California Review,* June 1985.

Conservative and other rightist scholars have often been accused of misusing science for their hidden agendas. One thinks here, for instance, of recent attacks on IQ research, eugenics, and sociobiology by such writers as Steven Jay Gould, Carl Sagan, Ashley Montague, and so on. Indeed, seemingly intellectual movements like eugenics are often quite ugly and without scientific merit.

What has often gone unnoticed, however, is the abuse of science by liberal and leftist scholars. Steven Gould, so distressed by shoddy IQ research which has allegedly contributed to discrimination against blacks, is curiously unperturbed by Marxism, which surely has contributed to the killings of tens of millions of innocent people of every color. The social sciences have been especially useful for achieving leftist hidden agendas. It is clear by now that Margaret Mead's research on the Samoans was greatly distorted by her "progressive" political and social views. Sociology in particular has become the training camp for apologists of the Welfare State.

The reason one hears more often about rightist than leftist abuse of science is that the majority of historians, philosophers and popularizers of science are of left/liberal inclination. However, balance is being restored, although slowly and without much fanfare. The book under review contributes to the restoration of that balance.

It is almost impossible to overestimate the impact of Freudian psychoanalytic theory upon the intelligentsia and the public at large. Like Marxist theory, Freud's thought had great impact upon the thinking of writers, artists, and scholars in the first half of this century. Needless to say, the Freudian world-view is sex-oriented; from Freud's perspective, the lives of people, at their worst and at their best, revolve around sex. To be a well-adjusted person (the liberal equivalent of being a virtuous person) is to be sexually well-adjusted; to be badly-adjusted is to be "neurotic", i.e., to be sexually "hung-up."

Freud himself was arguably the first of the Great Psychobabblers. Not content to conduct a research program with empirical investigations, or (more daring) devise a method of treatment of psychological ailments, Freud did not hesitate to apply his ill-proven theory to other domains. He wrote, for example, that deplorable psycho-biography of Woodrow Wilson. And he certainly encouraged the use of his alleged insights in other disciplines. In no time at the entire world had to endure a parade of Freudian novels, poems, histories, movies, and even paintings (for instance, Salvador Dali — familiar to you younger readers from his recent phone company commercials).

However, Freudian theory has had from the beginning many critics, critics who have raised valid doubts about its scientific merits. Accusations have been made that Freud suppressed evidence or deliberately constructed a theory that is vacuous and untestable. Supporters have replied that Freudian theory is a genuine theory of the mind, and so brilliantly well-confirmed that Freud should be ranked in the Annals of Science with Newton and Einstein.

In the face of such radical disagreement about the status of psychoanalytic theory, Adolf Grunbaum has written a most valuable book. *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis* is a very clear, very probing examination of the theory in question.

Grunbaum is one of the most highly respected philosophers of science around today, and he has written many articles specifically about Freudian theory, so he is well-qualified to undertake the task of critically evaluating it. Actually, Grunbaum's work harkens back to the days when philosophers of science viewed themselves as sort of umpires, referees who had the job of critically examining various putatively scientific theories, and by open-minded probing distinguishing science from pseudo-science. The idea that philosophers of science can be neutral judges of scientific claims fell out of fashion in the 1960's, when logical positivism was eclipsed by the views of T.S. Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, N.R. Hanson and others. I find Grunbaum's work a refreshing move back to a more normative, less purely descriptive philosophy of science.

Grunbaum's exploration of the epistemic nature and status of psychoanalytic theory is tremendously clear-minded. Much of his book consists of clearing away the obscurity and confusion surrounding that theory. To begin with, Grunbaum examines and obliterates the so- called "hermeneutic" construal of psychoanalytic theory, a view put forward by Jurgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, George Klein and others. These hermeneuticists (or whatever they please to call themselves) feel that mental phenomena call for a special sort of understanding: a person's motives and. intentions are not natural causes to be analyzed the way science normally analyzes causes. To attempt that would make one—dear me!—"scientistic,'' "crudely reductionist," "behaviorist" or some other such vile thing. Instead, a person's psychic life must be viewed as a text and "decoded."

Grunbaum dissects with surgical precision such arguments as are offered by the hermeneuticists, and calmly refutes them. He shows that there is no reason to deny that motives for actions can't also be causes of actions, and subjected to the normal sorts of causal analysis.

Moreover, a person can quite consistently maintain that mental causes are irreducibly mental—certainly a person need not be driven to behaviorism or any such view. Grunbaum has read Freud infinitely more thoroughly than the hermeneuticists have. Grunbaum shows that while Freud very early on equated his theoretical constructs (such as repressed desires or the id itself) with neuro-physical states, he very rapidly abandoned that quick reductionism for a less constrictive view, one that subjects mental phenomena to causal analysis without taking a stand on the metaphysical status of those phenomena. In short, the hermeneutic approach deals with straw men, and succeeds in "saving" Freud only by emasculating him, as it were.

Grunbaum likewise defends Freud from an unduly quick dismissal at the hands of the Popperians. Karl Popper has argued that there is no way to empirically test Freudian theory, and that therefore Freudian theory is vacuous and unscientific. Grunbaum has a devastating reply to the Popperian line of attack: he simply shows how Freudian theory can indeed be tested. To take just one example, Freud conjectured that repressed homosexual love is causally necessary for the occurrence of paranoid delusions. As Grunbaum notes, this is quite testable: we could simply determine whether or not the incidence of paranoid delusions is lower among openly practicing homosexuals. If paranoia proves to be virtually unknown among openly practicing homosexuals, it would confirm Freud's theory. If the rate of paranoia is the same for openly practicing homosexuals as it is for the rest of the population, then that fact would tend to disconfirm Freud's theory.

Having thus made sure that he is not setting up a straw man, Grunbaum turns to an examination of the evidence for Freudian theory, taking the theory as seriously as Freud meant it to be taken. Grunbaum shows quite convincingly that there is no substantial evidence for it at all. Essentially, Grunbaum argues that the chief evidence offered for psychoanalytic theory is clinical (the reports of Freudian therapists about their patients) as opposed to experimental (controlled experiments in laboratories or statistical studies of the population at large). (Grunbaum does note that some attempts have been made to experimentally prove the theory, but those attempts have not been very successful.) He established two points about clinical data: first, that such data is fatally flawed as evidence; second; that even if it were not fatally flawed, it would be inherently logically inadequate to confirm the theory.

Regarding the first point, Grunbaum points out something that Freud realized but was unable to refute. What a patient reports on the couch almost always is what the analyst wishes to hear. That is, clinical "data" is in fact the result of suggestion on the part of the analyst. Thus the theory is "confirmed" but only by the evidence its adherents manufacture.

Regarding the second point, Grunbaum points out that even if we could rely on the data produced in therapy sessions, such data would be logically insufficient to prove Freud's theory. It is a truism of elementary logic that simply adducing cases, in which A and B occur together does not entitle one to infer that A causes B. For example, if we examine bald men and discover that every one of them has a mother, we cannot logically, conclude that having a mother causes baldness. At the very least, we have to look at cases of non-bald men to determine whether or not there is some factor which is present in bald men and lacking in non-bald men. However, clinical data is data about people who have "neuroses"; well- adjusted people presumably don't go to the shrink. Thus even if every patient with neurosis N reveals to the therapist some repressed desire or memory R, and we accept the dubious claim that R was not an artifact (i.e.: the result of suggestion on the part of the therapist), it still would be fallacious to claim that R cause N.

I find only two faults with Grunbaum's fine book. To begin with, the prose is unfortunately rather dull and repetitious. That is unfortunate because it will limit the book's audience to academics, whereas Grunbaum's critique deserves to be understood by a much wider audience.

A second and more troubling problem is the rather subdued conclusion at which the book arrives. If Freudian theory is bereft of any significant evidential support, then why not just advocate that Freud be consigned to the dustbin of history—the history of failed sciences? There is no shame in being an alchemist in an era when alchemy seemed to be justified; but to be an alchemist today would be unreasonable. Should we not say the same thing about being a Freudian? The only reply one detects in Grunbaum's book lies in the comments he makes to the effect that Freudian speculations are ''heuristic" and "brilliantly imaginative." But Grunbaum’s own work shows that Freudian theory has not led to any significant psychological discoveries. And Poe had brilliant imagination, too — but so what? When I read *A Cask of Amontillado* I get a vision of what it is to have a thirst for revenge, but that hardly qualifies Poe as a great scientific genius.

I doubt that Freudian theory will lose its deceitful allure any time soon, despite the good work of Grunbaum and others to expose its glaring inadequacies. Far too many practitioners derive money and power from psychoanalytic theory. And far too many intellectuals enjoy the cheap and easy illusion of understanding that psychoanalytic theory gives them. What makes Freud's theory pseudoscience is not so much anything Freud did, as it is the way people now continue to believe it: in defiance of evidence, rather than because of evidence.

**Gary James Jason**

**Department of Philosophy**

**San Diego State University**