

## INTRODUCING FREUD:

# Sexuality

**Tutor: Keith Barrett BA PhD**

**Saturday October 5th 2019**

### Session 1

In the last third of the nineteenth century, as a result of the Darwinian revolution in biology, the scientific study of human sexuality began with the work of such figures as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld – now known as the first sexologists. Freud built on the work of these pioneers but went completely beyond them, putting forward a radical re-thinking of the nature of human sexuality in his *‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’* (1905). We will examine his new thinking, focussing on how it differs from the work of the sexologists, and explore his new conception of sexual attraction and arousal – summed up in the term: ‘psychosexuality’. Freud’s approach to understanding human sexuality is premised on the notion of ‘Infantile Sexuality’ – and we will carefully examine what he meant by this notion, and by the distinction he makes between the erotic, or sexual, and the genital. We will also study the stages of psychosexual development described in his work, and the way he sees these reflected in adult character and sexuality, and in sadism and masochism, fetishism and voyeurism.

### Session 2

‘Infantile sexuality’ culminates in the Oedipus Complex – Freud tells us in the *‘Three Essays’* – and this is perhaps his most famous idea. We will carefully examine how Freud understood the ‘Oedipus Complex’, and follow the history of the development of the Oedipal hypothesis, from its first announcement in the context of his self-analysis, to the middle period of Freud’s career, when it became central to his understanding of the personality and to his vision of psychoanalysis. In the course of doing so, we will consider the criticisms of the Oedipal hypothesis put forward by later psychoanalysts, and others. We will also examine Freud’s thinking on relationships (including the role and significance of sexuality in adulthood), explore his ideas on love, and review his thinking on male and female homosexuality.

### Session 3

Focusing on Freud’s later papers on *‘Femininity’* and *‘Female Sexuality’*, we will explore his final theory of the difference between the sexes, reviewing the long-running controversy within the psychoanalytic movement over his views on this issue. This will lead into an examination of contemporary intellectual debates on human sexuality, provoked by the powerful and widely influential critique of Freud’s view of sexuality put forward by Michel Foucault, and by Lacan’s fundamental re-interpretation of Freud’s ideas. We will conclude by exploring the current standing of Freud’s theory of sexuality in the work of Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler.