Freud defines his psychoanalysis as consisting of three elements: a procedure for investigating unconscious mental processes; a therapeutic method for treating disorders such as neurosis; and a body of psychological data obtained from its investigations and constituting a new science. It also provides a theory of mind (structured around the conscious/unconscious opposition in Freud's early work and, after 1920, around the triple structure of super-ego, ego and unconscious, or ‘id’); and a model of both ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ development, the difference between the two being one of degree rather than nature. The new science he refers to includes his writings on culture and art, which in turn provide the foundations for the many varieties of psychoanalytic criticism, often referred to as ‘applied psycho-analysis’.

Clinical psychoanalysis developed out of Freud's early work on hysteria and other neuroses, and his development of the ‘talking cure’. Hysteria, in which the patient presents inexplicable physical symptoms, can be investigated by listening to his or her accounts of dreams, by analysing slips of the tongue, jokes or bungled actions, all of which reveal motives and wishes that are contrary to the patient's conscious intentions, as when the reluctant chairman of a meeting opens proceedings by declaring it closed. Dreams — ‘the royal road to the unconscious’ — are a form of wish-fulfilment allowing the subject to give disguised expression to desires that are unacceptable to the ego and which have therefore been repressed into the unconscious. The hysteric's persistent cough, which cannot be cured by physical medicine, may, that is, be an unconscious wish for oral intercourse that has been repressed and converted into a distressing physical symptom. The unconscious is described as having no notion of the principle of non-contradiction and as being timeless: conflicting wishes can therefore coexist and childhood memories can merge with recent memories. The unconscious is the realm of drives or instincts, which are described as forms of circulating energy. Freud's theory is dualistic in that he speaks of self-preservative drives and sexual drives on the one hand, but he also, in his later work, speculates as to the existence of a destructive drive, or a wish to return to the state of inanimate matter. A further duality is introduced with the concepts of the conflicting pleasure and reality principles, one seeking immediate gratification, the other subordinating that principle to the demands of external reality.

The content of dreams is obviously determined by the circumstances and events of an individual life, but Freud also speaks of ‘typical’ dreams that appear to be universal. At times he speculates that they represent actual events that occurred in humanity's early history or prehistory. For the most part, however, he relates them to the development of mental structures. Typical Classical dreams relate to the Oedipus complex. In the Greek legend, Oedipus unknowingly murders his father and marries his mother. When he realizes what he has done, he blinds himself in a symbolic act of self-castration. According to Freud, the myth is an expression of a universal desire to have sexual relations with the parent of the opposite sex. Negotiating and ultimately dissolving the Oedipus complex is regarded as a crucial stage in individual development, and indeed in the development of civilization itself. This involves a successful identification with the parent of the same sex, a renunciation of incestuous desires for the mother, or father in the case of a girl, and, most crucially, the acceptance of sexual difference or the realization that it is the father and not the mother who has a penis. The hysteric's symptoms arise from his or her failure and inability to negotiate this difficult transition.

Although Freud's writings abound in literary references and allusions (mainly to classical German and English literature), references to the visual arts are surprisingly rare (there are virtually no references to music). Psychoanalysis is a ‘talking cure’, with the speech of the patient and the interpretations of the analyst as it sole medium, and so it does privilege the verbal over the visual, even though Freud often describes dreams as picture puzzles. The terms of Freud's analyses of art are as conventional as his personal tastes: traditional notions of ‘genius’ are invoked, and the concepts of form, content and expression are quite traditional and unproblematic. His frequent references to the ‘mystery’ of artistic
creativity reflect, for instance, a common theme in Romantic and post-Romantic thought. He admits in his ‘Moses’ paper that he is no art connoisseur; his tastes are those of a man of his day and his class. His general approach to works of art is to use them to explore the psychology of creation or the psychobiography of the individual artists, rather than to elaborate a formal aesthetics.

Freud’s most substantial discussions of art are to be found in the long essay on *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910) and the shorter ‘The Moses of Michelangelo’ (1914). The brief paper on ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming’ (1907) supplies a lucid introduction to Freud’s thinking about the arts and culture, and establishes an important parallel between the creative play of a child and the phantasy or daydreaming of the artist. Freud likens art to a dream, and so follows a path that leads him from the investigation of the dream to the analysis of the work, and then to the analysis of its creator. The underlying mechanism behind all creativity is that of sublimation, the transfer or displacement of sexual energy or libido into more socially or aesthetically acceptable forms. Leonardo's infantile curiosity about sexuality, for instance, first finds expression in his intense desire to look (described as an erotic instinctual activity) and is then sublimated into the adult artist's inexhaustible scientific curiosity and thirst for knowledge. The sublimation of the artist's libido also leads, however, to a declining interest in sexuality itself and to the stunting or atrophy of Leonardo's sexual life. It also explains the austerity of his lifestyle and his well-known inability to complete his innumerable projects. Here, Freud's analysis of an individual artist overlaps with this more general thesis that the price to be paid for the progress of civilization is the renunciation of the instinctual urge to satisfy sexual and other instincts. The study of Michelangelo’s statue *Moses* (in the church of S. Pietro in Vincoli, Rome) effectively makes the statue an allegory of the process of sublimation. Concentrating on the pose of the prophet, Freud argues that the statue depicts Moses at the point when he has held back from destroying the Tablets of the Law, despite his rage at seeing the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. The statue thus depicts a refusal to surrender to the passions of the moment and a resolve to devote mental energy to higher things.

Freud’s analysis of Leonardo begins with the artist's ‘childhood memory’, as recorded in his notebooks, of being repeatedly struck on the lips by the tail (coda) of a vulture. Freud interprets the so-called memory as a phantasy about passive oral intercourse, developed at a later period of life (coda is also slang for ‘penis’, and ‘to bird’ is a common expression for male sexual activity) and grafted on to a memory of the oral gratification of being suckled. The same blissful memory is put forward as an explanation for the *Mona Lisa*’s enigmatic smile. Thanks to a series of associations and analyses of mythology, Freud is thus able to explore the unconscious oral sexual phantasies that, when sublimated, enable Leonardo to create his art. Critics point out that Freud is relying upon a mistranslation: the ‘vulture’ is in fact a kite, but it is only the word ‘vulture’ that allows Freud to relate Leonardo’s phantasy to myths about a bisexual Egyptian mother-goddess. The imagery of the painting *Madonna and Child with St Anne* (Paris, Louvre) is analysed as a fusion of two female figures, reflecting the fact that the artist had two mothers, having been brought up by his biological mother and then by a stepmother. The folds in the clothes of one are then described by Freud (following the suggestion of a colleague) as reproducing the shape of the vulture in the notebooks. The painting can thus be said to contain a synthesis of the childhood of Leonardo; to be a record of his attempts to come to terms with his infantile sexual experiences and phantasies.

The major trends in post-Freudian psychoanalysis are ego-psychology, object-relations theory, and Lacanian psychoanalysis (an important figure here is Julia Kristeva), and all have developed their own theories of artistic creativity, though they again tend to apply primarily to literature rather than to the visual arts. Ego-psychology holds that the content of the unconscious can be made conscious and integrated into a rational ego, which is then amenable to integration into social norms. This is achieved at the cost of resistance to the instinctual demands of the unconscious and their repression. For ego-psychologists such as Ernst Kris, art is one of the activities that help the ego master the unconscious. It allows, that is, the relaxation of controls on the unconscious or a form of regression that serves the interests of the ego. Art allows the creator to experience forms of pleasure or gratification that are not
permissible in real life thanks to the ego's manipulation of the mechanisms of sublimation and a sort of vicarious regression. The reader's or viewer's vicarious identification with the artist is, in its turn, the source of his or her pleasure.

Object-relations theory, derived largely from the work of Melanie Klein and now the dominant tendency within British psychoanalysis, concentrates largely upon the mother—child relationship. The mother is an object to the child in the sense that one speaks of the 'object of one's affections', and one of the child's overwhelming fears is that its aggressive feeling towards the mother and phantasies of destroying her may have done her real damage. The process of reparation or ‘making good’ that damage is seen as the source of creativity. Adrian Stokes is one of the leading figures in the application of Klein's ideas to the visual arts.

Freud's essay on Leonardo posits the existence within a painting of an unconscious meaning of which the artist is unaware but which can be recovered through an applied psychoanalysis. It is that meaning, and the unconscious resonance it has for the viewer, that explains the emotional power of the work of art. The idea that there can be a correspondence between an unconscious inner world and a conscious world, and that creative activity can provide access to the former, is integral to the many forms of art therapy used in clinical psychiatry. It is also basic to forms of play therapy developed (by both Anna Freud and Melanie Klein) for use with children whose verbal skills are insufficiently developed for a true ‘talking cure’. In that sense, the play of the preverbal child is quite literally an equivalent to the phantasy of the adult and the creativity of the artist.

Although Freud himself showed no interest in the contemporary arts, psychoanalysis has had considerable influence on the visual arts, from the Surrealists and their attempts to use automatic writing and drawing to liberate and explore unconscious desires and meanings, to the dreamlike scenes painted by Paola Rego. The collaborative work undertaken by the psychoanalyst Grace Pailthorpe and the artist Mednikoff from the 1930s onwards (Sluice Gates of the Mind), together with that of the analyst Marion Milner [Joanna Field] (1950), provides fascinating insights into the relationship between psychoanalysis and the visual arts.

In summary, then, Freudian psychoanalysis has been used, with varying degrees of success, in three principal ways: to provide insights into the personality of specific artists (and, it is presumed, their works); to explain the creative process; and, less commonly, to explore the ways in which viewers react to and interpret artworks (an aspect of reception theory). Among those who have developed Freud's ideas as tools of analysis for the visual arts are Ernst Kris, Anton Ehrenzweig, Peter Fuller, Sarah Kofman and Richard Wollheim. Jacques Lacan's version of Freudian psychoanalysis has influenced such figures as Julia Kristeva, and has made an important impact on film theory. While psychoanalytical approaches to art have perhaps never been popular in academic circles, many early results seeming crudely reductive, there has been a revival of interest, this time led not by analysts using artworks merely to illustrate theories, but by art historians who in their use of psychoanalytical insights can also draw upon a keen appreciation of the art-historical contexts that condition the creation and the interpretation of artworks.

Biography
Sigmund Freud. Born Freiburg, Moravia (now Slovakia), 6 May 1856. Freud studied medicine in Vienna between 1876 and 1882, and in Paris with Charcot in 1885—6. He worked at the Brücke Institute in 1881—2, and at Vienna General Hospital between 1882 and 1885. He collaborated with Joseph Breuer on the use of hypnotism in the late 1880s. Freud developed his private practice in Vienna from 1886, and was Professor of Neuropathology at the University of Vienna from 1902 to 1938. In 1902, with others, he formed a discussion group that in 1908 became the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society. He published The Interpretation of Dreams in 1900, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality in 1905, and Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood in 1910. He fled Nazi Germany in 1938 and spent the rest of his life in the UK. He died in London on 23 September 1939.