The Politics of Psychoanalysis

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The Politics of Psychoanalysis

An Introduction to Freudian
and Post-Freudian Theory

Second Edition

Stephen Frosh

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To Judith

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STEPHEN FROSH

Preface to the Second Edition

Returning to *The Politics of Psychoanalysis* thirteen years after I first wrote it has been, for me, a surprisingly affirming experience. Although it was the first book I wrote on my own, and I hope that I have tidied up my style and tempered my wilder speculations since that time, I have been pleased to find how much of it still seems to hold true and how enjoyable it is to read. The basic descriptions of major psychoanalytic theories remain robust and accurate and the attempt to derive social and political consequences from them still seems to me worthwhile and interesting.

That said, there have been many developments in critical psychoanalysis in the last decade or so and my own thinking has changed as a result. I have also produced a number of other books on related topics and have learnt a great deal from the research involved in that work. Still, trying to stay true to the original conceptualisation of this book as a critical *introduction* to psychoanalytic theory, I have tried not to burden the text with too many novelties, but instead to clarify and correct where necessary and to add in material related to what I regard as major new developments. This has meant, in particular, something of a revision of the assessment of object relations theory, my criticisms of which I think were over-stated in the first edition, and the inclusion of the feminist intersubjectivity theory associated with the work of Jessica Benjamin. I have also tried to clarify and develop the account of Lacanian and post-Lacanian psychoanalysis and included material on the engagement of psychoanalytic thinking with postmodernism. Some issues which I have dealt with at length elsewhere have only been lightly treated here (for example, questions of the scien-

tific status of psychoanalysis, its approach to homosexuality, its contribution to understanding racism and its therapeutic efficacy), but I have referenced these where appropriate so the work can be easily traced.

I hope that this new edition will please readers who appreciated my earlier efforts and will also be attractive to those coming fresh to the question of what psychoanalysis can offer social theory. Despite all the ambivalence which I regard as fitting for this topic, I remain convinced that psychoanalysis is a profound source of insights and challenges for those wishing to build social forms conducive to positive human development and enriching personal relationships.

STEPHEN FROSH