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**The other Freud : Rethinking the philosophical roots of  
psychoanalysis**

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**THE OTHER FREUD:  
RETHINKING THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS  
OF PSYCHOANALYSIS**

Submitted by

**The Rev Donald Lewis PARKER**  
**B.A., L.Th., Grad Dip Arts (Psychology)**

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment  
of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

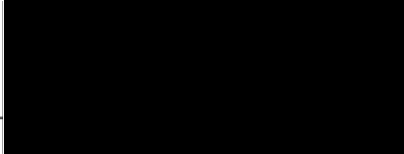
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No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Rev. Don Parker (Candidate)**

## DEDICATIONS

Foremost: to my dear Jill, whose love and support throughout our years together has been a gift 'beyond value'. May God grant us many more years to celebrate that gift!

To Craig, Alida and Caitlyn who have grown into remarkable adults over those same years.

To Bridget and John, whose zeal for life and limitless generosity have inspired me in ways that could not have been imagined when we met all those years ago. For introducing me to Jung and Freud I remain profoundly grateful.

To Stanley, whose contagious appreciation of 'the Imaginal' remains with me 30 years later.

Finally, to Richard, whose support and guidance throughout these eight years has been deeply humbling and utterly appreciated.

AMDG



14 October 2021

*Humanity has in the course of time had to endure from the hands of  
science*

*two great outrages upon its naive self-love.*

*The first was when it realized that our earth was not the center of the  
universe, but only a tiny speck in a world-system of a magnitude hardly  
conceivable ...*

*The second was when biological research robbed man of his peculiar  
privilege of having been specially created, and relegated him to a descent  
from the animal world...*

*But man's craving for grandiosity is now suffering the third and most  
bitter blow from present-day psychological research which is endeavoring  
to prove to the ego of each one of us that he is not even master in his own  
house.*

Sigmund Freud

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis inquires into the intellectual roots of Freudian psychoanalysis. In reemphasising the influence of British empiricist sources of Freud's early thought (especially before 1900), it offers an interpretation of his philosophical inspiration that contrasts with most contemporary accounts.

One major theme concerns the place of psychoanalysis within European intellectual history. Accordingly, Freud's evolving theory of the unconscious is set in the context of key themes in the 17-18th century Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment (Mendelssohn, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hamann). If Freud's determination to scientifically investigate the human mind was an indisputably 'enlightened' project, its results nonetheless challenged the capacity of Enlightenment reason to banish the darkness of the human soul.

This folds into the second major theme, concerning the identification of various "tradition lines" (Gödde's phrase) that fed into psychoanalysis. If Enlightenment rationalism was one such line, German Romanticism and irrationalistic vitalism also contributed, both implicitly before 1900, and more explicitly later. However, contrary to (but building on) Gödde's threefold schema, the thesis argues for a fourth ("Anglo-Scottish empiricist") tradition line that has been routinely overlooked.

After the Introductory chapter, that sets out the main thesis arguments and addresses issues of methodology, the thesis begins with an examination of the 17-18th century Enlightenment and European Rationalism, noting even here the early signs of an opening to a sense of the "non-conscious" recesses of the mind. It is in this context that Freud's various models of the unconscious throughout his career are considered.

From there, nineteenth century German thought is considered in terms of the way that the idea of the unconscious emerges powerfully in Romanticism (Schelling, Carus), as well as in the turn to drive-related theories of the unconscious that emerged slightly later (Schelling's middle period, Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and Nietzsche).

The following two chapters then focus in on the evidence for a largely overlooked fourth tradition line, including both the broader philosophical influences as well as the philosophical psychology of later nineteenth century British thought. These influences on Freud are many. From Brentano, Freud received an entrée into British empiricism, imbibed the principles of intentionality and immanentism, and was introduced to the problem of introspection via Brentano's debates with Henry Maudsley. J.S. Mill and the British associationists helped Freud develop his theory of thought and language. In William Hamilton's work, he found the outlines of a biology of unconscious thought and energetic responses. Bentham and the utilitarians provided him with a scientific model of pleasure and pain. William Carpenter's theory of unconscious cerebration also proved a major early influence. James Ward's notion of "attention" (that itself built on Locke and Dugald Stewart) informed Freud's accounts of reality testing and the "system preconscious". In John Hughlings Jackson's writings, Freud found ample grist for his theoretical mill concerning mind-body parallelism, regression (building on Hobbes), language, and dreams. It was James Braid's work on hypnosis, as much as Charcot's, that provided stepping stones to Freud's mature understanding of transference, a theory furthered by his reading of James Frazer.

The conclusion draws out some tentative implications (and openings for further research) on how this enlarged tradition-lines approach can serve as a helpful heuristic for understanding twentieth century and contemporary

psychoanalysis. The cognitive unconscious tradition-line is presented as being revitalised in contemporary epiphenomenalism and neuroscience more generally. The Romantic tradition-line inspired twentieth century figures such as Carl Jung and James Hillman. The drive-based irrational line was taken up in the work of figures such as Melanie Klein and Ian Suttie, as well as quite recent work on evolutionary psychiatry. There have also been new lines of tradition, such as the linguistic and structuralist turn associated most strongly with the work of Jacques Lacan.

## Introduction

This thesis is focused on the question of how best to understand the intellectual roots of Freudian psychoanalysis, and it thereby seeks to offer an interpretation of its philosophical character and significance. In doing so, it offers an interpretation of Freud's early work – and thus, of the birth of psychoanalysis – that is quite distinct from contemporary accounts of its development. As such, it provides a sketch of an “other” Freud: a young scientifically-minded research-orientated clinician, whose developing understandings of human psychic phenomena were powerfully shaped by British philosophical traditions in their nurturing of the fledging fields of cognitive science and psychotherapy.

As is the case with many other seminal thinkers, there is a vast range of perspectives that can be taken on the work of Sigmund Freud. There are thus *many 'Freuds'* that have been ‘rediscovered’ and put forward over the course of the last half century of scholarship on his work and legacy. It is not difficult to note just some of the many ‘new’ Freud interpretations that have emerged over this period. In no particular order we have seen Freud the misunderstood humanist<sup>1</sup>; Freud the nineteenth neurologist<sup>2</sup>; Freud the twentieth century hermeneutical “master of suspicion”<sup>3</sup>; Freud the theorist of religion and culture<sup>4</sup>; Freud the Hassidic mystical thinker<sup>5</sup>; Freud the atheistic

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Bettelheim. *Freud and Man's Soul*. London: Pimlico, 2001 (1982).

<sup>2</sup> Norman Miller and Jack Katz. “The Neurological Legacy of Psychoanalysis: Freud as a Neurologist”. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*. 30 (2), 1989, 128-134.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Ricoeur. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay of Interpretation*. Translated by D. Savage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> James DiCenso. *The Other Freud: Religion, Culture and Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> David Bakan. *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958.

Jewish thinker<sup>6</sup>; Freud the secret Schopenhauerian<sup>7</sup>; Freud the conspiratorial child abuse denier<sup>8</sup>; Freud the “reluctant philosopher”<sup>9</sup>; Freud, the post-Kantian idealist<sup>10</sup>; and many others besides. It is a testament to the enormous complexity of Freud as a thinker, that there are vital truths to be affirmed in each of these portraits, for so many of these aspects of his work intersect with others in surprising ways, while at other times co-existing in uneasy truces, or alternating at various stages in his thought.

This thesis will propose another important – and strikingly neglected – perspective on Freud’s work that involves a significant rethinking of the roots of psychoanalysis in terms of its philosophical underpinnings. The “other Freud” to be developed here is a figure who, in actively turning his back on much nineteenth century German thought during the early years of the development of his approach (that took early, but distinctive, shape by 1900), looked instead for decisive inspiration across the Channel in the work of English and Scottish philosophers and early psychologists. I will argue that in these early formative years, Freudian psychoanalysis was as much (or more) the outcome of Freud’s active reading and engagement with the literature of British empiricism, understood in the context of the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment, as it was with the counter-Enlightenment traditions of nineteenth century German thought.

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Gay. *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis*. (Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Young and Andrew Brook. “Schopenhauer and Freud”. *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. 75 (1), 1994: 101-118.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Masson. *The Assault on Truth: Freud’s Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Tauber. *Freud, the Reluctant Philosopher*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Matt Ffytche. *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Of course, in making a case for such a reading of early Freudian thought, the ambient influence of nineteenth century German counter-Enlightenment ideas on the young Freud, as well as his later (post 1905 and certainly post-1920) re-engagement with figures such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and other post-Kantian thinkers, are all acknowledged. Nonetheless, if Freud could recognise, in 1920, that he had indeed “steered [his] course into the harbour of Schopenhauer’s philosophy”<sup>11</sup>, the route he took to arrive at this destination was one quite distinct from the standard itinerary of philosophical Romanticism, Idealism or vitalism. For ironically, if Freud’s destination was indeed to share much in common with the Counter-Enlightenment conclusions of late nineteenth century German thought, the means by which he arrived at such a place was instead powered by an enthusiastic commitment to the Enlightenment project of scientific progress. In the chapters that follow, this paradox will be explored as the evidence for such a claim is presented and discussed.

## **The Question and Animating Concerns of the Thesis**

It is important at the outset to clarify the precise question with which this thesis is concerned, and those that are more tangential to its major foci. The key research question can be specified as follows: What kind of an intellectual movement was psychoanalysis at its inception? The thesis is thus a study of the *philosophy* of psychoanalysis in its originating historical context; or otherwise put, of the key philosophical underpinnings of Freud’s early work, and on the historical conditions of its emergence in the context of European intellectual history. In its concern with the intellectual roots of the *emergence* of Freudian psychoanalysis, the thesis is offered as a contribution to the history

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<sup>11</sup> SE XVIII, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 49-50.

of philosophy, with a particular focus on the final two decades of the nineteenth century.

Given this focus, the thesis is *less* concerned (though, as will be seen, certainly not *unconcerned*) with the direction of Freudian thought as it developed in the decades after the *fin de siècle*, or at least after the publication of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. The focus is rather on the intellectual currents that fed prominently into the formation of psychoanalysis in the decade and a half prior to that landmark book. Of course, in focusing on the *inception* of psychoanalysis, there is a sense in which the focus is on the nature of Freudian psychoanalysis as a whole; not as some kind of static essence, but as a dynamic and unfolding movement that for all Freud's innovations after *The Interpretation of Dreams* nonetheless retained key traces of its origins. But again, the discussion here is less concerned with the variety of forms of psychoanalytic thought as it was developed by key figures in Freud's independently minded inner circle, and nor is it concerned so much with developments across the psychoanalytic movement after Freud's death. Such questions will arise at certain junctures, mainly only at the margins, though they will be addressed more explicitly in the thesis conclusion.

If the major focus or research question is demarcated in this way, it is nonetheless the case that this framing incorporates two major and closely intertwined issues: one relating to the relationship of psychoanalysis to the European tradition of Enlightenment, and the other relating to the various strands of philosophical tradition that contributed to the psychoanalytic movement.

The **first** of these issues (which is tackled directly in the opening chapter) concerns the question of whether psychoanalysis should be understood as an expression of the Enlightenment, or as a counter- (or even anti-)



Enlightenment movement. Is psychoanalysis an unfolding of the inner logic of the Enlightenment in seeking to bring a rational approach to the understanding of the inner life of human individuals, dispelling the obfuscations of previous centuries in shining a light on areas that were once shrouded in darkness? Or is it to be understood as a pointing out (or even enacting) of the futility of the very attempt to bring the inner life of the mind into the domain of rational investigation? Alternatively, is psychoanalysis an expression of the *Sapere aude!* spirit (to use Kant's famous motto), or does it rather testify to the inherently arational (and even irrational) nature of the human psyche, by which self-knowledge is, at best, a fragmentary and temporary overcoming of the usual state of human ignorance?

Of course, the answer to this question cannot be an easy identification with one pole of this dichotomy over the other, and accordingly, in what follows, psychoanalysis will be presented as an ambiguous combination of both these apparent opposites. On one hand, there is no doubt that Freud is keen to portray psychoanalysis as a continuation of the Enlightenment quest. His work (particularly during its first decades) was devoted to the scientific method, and he saw great promise in the application of this method to the understanding the mechanics of the human mind and the treatment of human suffering. To enlighten human understanding in this way meant moving beyond old naïve superstitions, though resistance to this new insight would be inevitably met with horror and resistance.

In perhaps his most evocative passage on this theme (in his 1916 *Introductory Lectures* in which he looked back over his decades-long labours), Freud famously presented psychoanalysis as one of the major revolutionary advances in the western scientific tradition. "In the course of the centuries", he declared, "the naïve self-love of men has had to submit to two major blows at the hands of science", these being Copernicus' demonstration that "earth

was not the centre of the universe”, and the second being Darwin’s destruction of “man’s supposedly privileged place in creation”. In Freud’s estimation, psychoanalysis is the third such slight against “human megalomania”,<sup>12</sup> that similarly served to push back the naïve darkness of traditional pseudo-sciences, enlightening human understanding about its own place in the universe.

But on the other hand, even as Freud links psychoanalysis to Enlightenment progress, it is notable that his characterisation of all three sciences (including psychoanalysis) has none of the optimistic confidence seen in other expressions of Enlightenment science. To the contrary, the advance of science for Freud is a tale humankind’s intellectual and spiritual humiliation. The human has no place of privilege on any scale we might look to: within the universe, on the basis of life on earth, or even within our own inner psychic life. The self is not even “master of its own house”. There is thus something emphatically dark and disturbing about this Freudian “Enlightenment”, this vision human life that can only call forth a kind of stoic preparedness to shed all false illusions of rational self-command, and embrace the deeply fallible and internally divided creature that we are. If Freud is thus a figure that stands against humanistic naïve optimism, he is nonetheless a figure of the Enlightenment; albeit a “dark” Enlightenment that ironically utilises rational inquiry to expose the *irrational* underbelly of the deeply divided human soul.

The **second** major issue that the thesis confronts concerns the closely connected issue of the relationship between early Freudian thought (i.e., psychoanalysis in its formative years) and the broad intellectual milieu of European thought on which he drew, and to which he contributed. In confronting this matter, the thesis makes use of Günter Götter’s helpful

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<sup>12</sup> SE XVI, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis III*, 284-85.

notion of the “tradition-lines [*Traditionslinien*]” of the Freudian unconscious, which he presents as a way of clarifying the various threads of tradition that are implicated (to varying degrees) in the philosophical prehistory of the Freudian unconscious. However, even as Gōdde’s schema is taken up in what follows, a substantial development of his schema is proposed that looks to address a telling incompleteness at its core.

Gōdde specifies three connected but broadly distinct philosophical strands of Freudian thought: the “cognitive”, the “vital [*vitalen*]” and the “instinctively [*triebhaft*] irrational” unconscious.<sup>13</sup> Of course, as Nicholls and Liebscher themselves point out, it is important to recognise that these three tradition-lines should not be regarded as “completely independent”, and they are right that Gōdde sometimes does seem to give this impression<sup>14</sup>. Indeed some of the thinkers he discusses can legitimately be understood as crossing between these lines in what is in fact a complex matrix of interaction and influence in 17-19<sup>th</sup> century German intellectual circles.

The first of Gōdde’s suggested tradition-lines concerns what he calls the “cognitive unconscious”. This points back to the Enlightenment, and specifically to Leibniz’s notion of “*petites perceptions*” that relate to mental content not in the foreground of attention. He places the work of various other German philosophers within this Leibnizian tradition, including Johann Friedrich Herbart, who developed a theory of the (temporary) repression of mental content below the threshold of consciousness, as well as Gustav Theodor Fechner, Hermann von Helmholtz and Theodor Lipps. Gōdde is

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<sup>13</sup> Gōnter Gōdde. *Traditionslinien des ‘Unbewußten’: Schopenhauer - Nietzsche – Freud*. (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2009), especially chapter 1. He summarises his argument (largely this first chapter) in “Freud and Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Sources on the Unconscious”, in *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, ed. Andrew Nicholls and Martin Liebscher. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 261 – 286.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholls and Liebscher, *Thinking the Unconscious*, 2010, 24.

clear that he thinks Fechner was a primary source of Freud's developing commitment to a radical form of empirical method during the 1890s, especially his "consideration of the irrational on the one hand, and his strictly empirical-rational methodology on the other".<sup>15</sup>

Gödde's "vitalist" German Romantic tradition-line highlights the Counter-Enlightenment's reaction to the perceived lifeless rationalism of the movement. In this way, figures like Hamann, Herder, Goethe and Schelling developed approaches to the human soul that recalled the vital processes of nature, and the role of the emotions in human experience. Gödde notes the important part played by C.G. Carus in bringing together this body of thought as it relates to this a conception of the unconscious as speaking to the dark aspects of nature and the soul.

The third and final of Gödde's tradition-lines relates to the various drive-related theories of the late nineteenth century: philosophies of the "instinctual-irrational" will. Gödde sees this approach as emerging from Schelling's redefinition of the will as impulse (*Drang*), drive (*Trieb*), and desire (*Begierde*). Accordingly, the unconscious was associated with the potentially destructive human urges.<sup>16</sup> This approach is also associated with Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's categories of will, repression and remembering, and von Hartmann's unconscious.

There is no doubt that Gödde's distillation of the research into the prehistory of the Freudian unconscious provides a valuable insight into the key focus of this essay. However, this thesis will maintain that there is an important lacuna in Gödde's reading of the influences on Freud in the 1880-90s. On one hand, Gödde sees Freud as both highly influenced by contemporaneous

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<sup>15</sup> Gödde, *Freud and Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Sources*, 273.

<sup>16</sup> Gödde, *Freud and Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Sources*, 263.

representatives of the cognitive unconscious tradition-line (especially Fechner and Lipps), especially in their empirical approach to the mind (something that gelled with Brentano's approach). But on the other hand, he admits that the cognitive unconscious as such lacked the dynamic edge for which Freud was searching, and which came into effect with the development of his early topographical model. So from where did that additional impetus arise? The instinctual-irrational tradition-line could provide the needed well-spring of ideas to inspire such a transition, yet Gōdde admits that "the possible influence" of Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Nietzsche on Freud during the 1890s "is not positively verifiable, and must therefore be presumed to be of only peripheral significance".<sup>17</sup> That may or may not be so, but either way it does not preclude the importance of other philosophically important influences, especially if these can be demonstrated and elaborated from Freud's own writings.

In what follows, the key elements of the three tradition-lines that Gōdde identifies will be acknowledged, though in ways that look beyond his readings. In chapter one, some of the striking and unexpected precursors of the unconscious in the works of European Enlightenment thinkers will be surveyed, in connection with Freud's continually evolving idea of the unconscious. Chapter two then surveys some of the key eighteenth and nineteenth century German philosophical background that provides the intellectual backdrop – if not, as will be maintained, the key arguments for – early Freudian theory. This will address both the tradition of German Idealism and Romanticism (with a particular focus on Schelling and Carus), as well as the later drive-orientated and irrationalist philosophies (focusing on Schelling and Nietzsche).

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<sup>17</sup> Gōdde, *Freud and Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Sources*, 276.

For all the richness of this German philosophical backdrop, there is thin evidence for Freud's active interest in the German philosophical tradition during the formative years of the development of his early psychoanalytic theories prior to 1900. While it is undoubtedly true that Freud came to return to aspects of the nineteenth century German philosophical tradition later in his career (especially by 1920), it will be argued that the early development of psychoanalysis cannot be explained via this route, even when combined with earlier thinking of the Franco-German Enlightenment. Placing to one side the debates around whether or not Freud was being entirely truthful in his denials that he had read Schopenhauer before 1915, and acknowledging the many striking anticipations of Freudian theory in Schopenhauer's work (both of which are considered below), it will be maintained that there are compelling reasons to accept Freud's claim to have developed the details of his approach in relative independence from the key representatives of the German post-Enlightenment philosophy.

Consequently, beyond chapter two, the rest of the thesis will be devoted to an exploration of what Gōdde omits from consideration: i.e., the nineteenth century tradition of British empiricism. In making such a claim about the importance of British philosophy for Freud, it is important to note the way in which it runs against the grain of much recent scholarship on Freud's intellectual context, including some important English language scholarship of the last few decades that has pointed to Freud's debts to nineteenth century German philosophy, and specifically the legacy of thinkers such as Schelling, von Hartmann, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Is it the case that such German thinkers played a key role in the development and popularisation of the idea of the unconscious well before Freud? This is *certainly* the case. Freud was in no way the outright 'inventor' of the concept of the unconscious and its dynamic mechanisms (as one might be led to believe by such fawning

assessments as that offered by Lionel Trilling in his Introduction to Ernest Jones' *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*)<sup>18</sup>. To the contrary, as is now widely acknowledged, complex theories of the unconscious were in free and avid circulation in intellectual and popular circles in the German-speaking world (and as will be seen, in other parts of the European intellectual community) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer was widely read, as was von Hartmann's 1869 (first edition) *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, a popularisation of Schelling and Schopenhauer (and other German Romantics and Idealists)<sup>19</sup>

The question at issue is therefore *not* whether the concept and theorisation of the unconscious originated with Freud, for this is clearly not the case. The situation is much more complicated, as Matt Ffytche explains:

By the end of the century, [the idea of the unconscious] ... had in fact become so ubiquitous a concept that the question is not so much 'did Freud inherit the unconscious from earlier in the century', but *which versions of it did he inherit?*<sup>20</sup>

Yet in much recent scholarship (e.g., Gōdde, McGrath<sup>21</sup>, Fenichel<sup>22</sup>, Ffytche himself), the answer to that question invariably turns to German versions. In such scholarship, the putative lack of other major sources of the unconscious

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<sup>18</sup> Asserts Trilling: "Psychoanalysis is more clearly and firmly understood if it is studied in its historical development. But the basic history of psychoanalysis is the account of how it grew in Freud's own mind, for Freud developed its concepts all by himself. The intellectual distinction of his early coadjutors is not being denied if we say that none of them – with the exception of Josef Breuer, who was something other and more than a coadjutor – contributed something essential to psychoanalysis. The help they gave Freud consisted chiefly in their response to his ideas ... Freud [was] ... the one man who originated the science but also the man who brought it to maturity" (Ernest Jones. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol 1: The Young Freud 1856-1900*. London: Hogarth Press, 1972, 12)

<sup>19</sup> von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious*.

<sup>20</sup> Matt Ffytche. *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12, 7. Emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> McGrath, *The Dark Ground of the Spirit*.

<sup>22</sup> Fenichel, *Schelling, Freud, and the Philosophical Foundations of Psychoanalysis*.

(and its dynamics) for Freud's early thought assumes the status of something like self-evident truth. Freud's "main philosophical and cultural influences come from nineteenth-century Germany", Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher flatly state in their recent reflection on the reception of their superb *Thinking the Conscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought* (2010).<sup>23</sup> In the introduction to the 2010 volume itself, they do admit that "there exists in nineteenth-century British philosophy a number of thinkers – such as, for example, Herbert Spencer and William Hamilton – who discuss different levels of consciousness and forms of latent mental activity that might be described as unconscious". But this is immediately ushered aside with the (justified, but not immediately relevant) observation that "the idea of 'the unconscious' has, since Freud, often been received with skepticism in Anglophone philosophy".<sup>24</sup> If that is essentially true of much twentieth century Analytic philosophy, it is not the case (as will be demonstrated in chapters three and four below) for a series of nineteenth century British philosophers of mind, of whom Freud was an enthusiastic reader, and from whom (it will be shown) he took much conceptual inspiration.

It is in chapters three and four that the significant gap in Gōdde's tradition-line analysis will be explored at length. This 'missing' tradition-line, which has not received the attention it deserves in the scholarly literature more generally, helps explain the missing influence on Freud that allowed him to complete his move from scientific materialism to the dynamic theory of mind that had emerged by 1900. This the Anglo-Scottish tradition-line, as it has been dubbed here, is itself a broad tradition of thought that is distinct from but connected with the others Gōdde explores. This "other Freud" – this

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<sup>23</sup> Andrew Nicholls and Martin Liebscher. "Rethinking the Unconscious". *Intellectual History Review*, 23 (2), 2013, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholls and Liebscher, *Thinking the Unconscious*, 21.



“Anglo-Scottish Freud” – that emerges is not entirely new to the scholarship, yet it is an understanding that is invariably pushed to the margins of key works concerning the early development of psychoanalysis, including in the seminal work of Günter Gódde.

The main thrust of this thesis will be the development of such a counter-narrative that presents Freud’s early work (and thus the formative years of psychoanalysis) as – at origin – as much a development of certain trends in nineteenth century British empirical philosophy as it was an expression of themes in nineteenth century German thought. Of course, in keeping with the earlier observation that these tradition-lines need to be understood in their mutual *interaction*, the revived highlighting of the prominent influence of Anglo-Scottish empirical thought for Freud is continuous with a broader conception of the influence of these bodies of work on wider trans-European movements that nourished the scientific study of human psychic life in the later parts of the nineteenth century.

Not only will it be argued that this fourth tradition-line provides a crucial corrective in understanding the pre-history of Freudian psychoanalysis as it had emerged by 1900, but the suggestion (as sketched briefly in the Conclusion) is that it also helps explain the very different strands of psychoanalytic thought that developed beyond Freud himself. As will be seen, a great many themes in Freud’s early psychoanalytic theorising and clinical experimentation can be placed in new light when the influence of British philosophical ideas (much of them pursued quite explicitly by Freud) are taken into account.

Further, not only does this reading of Freud via the British empirical tradition of philosophy give us a new (or at least under-appreciated) Freud, it also provides novel angles of insight on 18-19<sup>th</sup> century British empiricism and the

Scottish Enlightenment. While the focus of this thesis is on the former, aspects of the latter are nonetheless identified throughout chapters three and four in particular.

Of course, these two central animating concerns of the thesis – i.e., the relationship of Freudian psychoanalysis to the Enlightenment, and the extent to which it drew from nineteenth German vis-à-vis British thought – are closely connected. If psychoanalysis is understood to have arisen out of the context of the previously mentioned currents in nineteenth century German thought (idealism, romanticism, vitalism, anarchic irrationalism), then it will be aligned with intellectual movements that are clearly in tension with key elements of Enlightenment. While (as will be explored in chapter one, below), there is no single set of Enlightenment “doctrines”, this movement did on the whole (with numerous caveats) promote a broad trust in the sovereignty of reason, the viability of sense experience as a basis for knowledge, and the primacy of individual liberty and social progress. But if psychoanalysis is seen rather more as a child of the British empirical tradition, then it will instead be understood more in line with key elements of the Enlightenment, including its Scottish phase. Again, nineteenth century British empiricism (and its earlier expressions) are not entirely consistent either on questions of rationality and its relationship to sense experience. But there is a clear trend in nineteenth century British thought – and one which seemed to attract the young Freud (as will be seen below) – towards a general confidence in the capacity of the human mind to understand the world, and itself; and in this way it projects a robust enthusiasm for scientific inquiry that is seen also in the early Freud.

## Methodological Considerations

Before going any further, it is important to address a range of methodological issues that are raised by the preceding outline of the major questions and concerns of this thesis. It is important to provide a clear sense of how they will be addressed or taken into account in the discussion to come.

The **first** of these issues concerns the very notion of “traditions” of thought in the history of ideas. A fundamental assumption or principle that comes to the fore here relates to the *continuity of thought*. All new beginnings build on strands of tradition that went before, reshaping them, making new connections, reemphasising certain themes, deemphasising others, and bringing what was only tacit earlier into sharper relief in a more explicit way. Accordingly, no new movement (in this case, the emergence of Freudian psychoanalysis in the final years of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth), is ever unprecedented.

In a sense, this principle is simply an expression of contemporary hermeneutical theory. All understanding is made possible on the basis of an already present world of meaning and significance. Despite the tendency of many of history’s great thinkers to make extravagant claims concerning their own unique importance for human thought (and Freud is as good an example of this tendency as any), no body of thought is truly *sui generis*. All thinking begins from a reservoir of thought that is bequeathed to the thinker in his/her own unique context in which the vastness of that reservoir is made available in piecemeal and partial ways.

Of course, this is not to suggest that there is never anything ‘new’ under the sun. To the contrary, the advent of the Enlightenment in Europe (however it is understood, in its many manifestations), and of subsequent movements connected to idealism, romanticism, vitalism and empiricism, all transformed

and enriched European intellectual life, and beyond Europe as well. They, in turn, with their own complex constellations of concerns, concepts and vocabularies made possible movements like Freudian psychoanalysis.

As Hannah Arendt argued, human action is “rooted in natality”. Each new generation of thinkers both preserve the world, and on that basis provide new ideas.<sup>25</sup> But this needs to be understood in the context of a fundamental continuity: “It is in the very nature of the human condition that each new generation grows into an old world”.<sup>26</sup> Or as Hans Georg Gadamer famously insisted, “our usual relationship to the past is not characterized by distancing and freeing ourselves from tradition. Rather, we are always situated within traditions”. This points to “the finitude which dominates not only our humanity but also our historical consciousness”,<sup>27</sup> a finitude that is productive specifically because it proceeds on the basis of pre-judgements which can, over time, be challenged by new engagements with other traditions, and the privileging of one over the other.

In a very concrete way, the clinical method of psychoanalysis is itself a consummate enactment of precisely this reality of the vast influence of past ideas and authorities on present thought and affect. Central to its techniques is the assumption that the influences of the past are never really past, but are unconsciously present in the life of each individual in the present moment, shaping the way that reality is experienced, and the future is approached. In this way, Freudian psychoanalysis is a hermeneutic science par excellence. For what Gadamer says of the finitude of human understanding has

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<sup>25</sup> Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Hannah Arendt. *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*. (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 177.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Transl. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975), 282, 276.

immediate resonances with the human situation read through the lens of early Freudian thought:

Is not ... all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, the idea of an absolute reason is not a possibility for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms ... In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life.<sup>28</sup>

Freud's early work was thus unthinkable without the precursors that will be explored in this thesis. Of course, this should not be seen as implying that his work is devoid of originality or genius, or that as such it was to become a vast resource for subsequent thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> (and 21<sup>st</sup>) centuries. But understanding its own intellectual context can nonetheless help us understand its nature and its contributions, both extant and to come.

Given that most general assumption of the research presented in this thesis, the **second** major issue concerns the possibility of thinking about traditions of thought as though they stood as a self-consistent whole. As has already been alluded to, a basic assumption of this thesis is the principle of *inherent complexity, and indeed, the inner rivenness, of major intellectual traditions of thought*.

As indicated above, one of the key themes in this work is the relationship of connectedness and distance between psychoanalysis and the Enlightenment; of their historical and intellectual proximity. But, of course, neither of these traditions is a homogeneous body of thought with clearly delineated doctrines and methods, thereby allowing them to be simply compared and

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<sup>28</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 276.

contrasted. Both name diverse bodies of theory and practice, developed by different kinds of thinkers in different contexts, and enclosing all manner of contradictions and paradoxes. Consequently, the ever-present challenge for this research is to pick out overall themes within each, and to show lines of continuity and discontinuity. Of course, what is meant by “the Enlightenment” and by “psychoanalysis” are by no means settled matters, even today. Both are themselves contested terms, and thus it is no accident that their relationship is a complicated one.

The endless controversies of Enlightenment thinking are well known, and from earliest times (as will be seen below) the very nature of this tradition qua “enlightenment” was at dispute from the very beginning. This also applies to their relationship to the keynote idea of unconscious thought, about which there are contra-indications even within the work of key individual Enlightenment figures. Someone like Descartes, for example, who seems entirely tone-deaf to anything like the unconscious in his best known works, shows himself to be open to such notions elsewhere in his writings. So too there are tantalising anticipations, if not yet full realisations, in other thinkers of the time such as Leibniz, Hobbes and Kant.

Similarly, the fractious and argumentative way in which the psychoanalytic tradition evolved and split – not only within Freud’s own lifetime of research, but in the work of those who followed after – will be obvious to all those with even a passing familiarity with it.<sup>29</sup> This problem is ameliorated – but not removed – in the narrowing of the focus here primarily to the formative years of Freudian psychoanalysis (the late 1870s-1900).

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<sup>29</sup> Richard Chessick has noted the way in which Freud’s early colleagues “all rode off in their own directions, more or less obscuring Freud’s vision and offering their own”, and that this trend towards dispersion and diffusion continues today at an even more dramatic pace”. Chessick, *The Future of Psychoanalysis*. (Albany: State University of New York), 2007, 174.

Finally, as indicated above, internal diversity in the rule in the case of the various lines of tradition identified by Gödde, and to which this thesis suggests an addition. For all these intellectual trajectories lack sharp lines of demarcation, even as they inform and cross-pollinate each other in intricate ways, while remaining resistant or blind to important insights in other respects. The situation is as McIntyre once described the complex “rationality of traditions”:

Traditions which differ in the most radical way in certain subject matters may in respect of others share beliefs, images and texts. Considerations urged from within one tradition may be ignored by [others] ... Yet in other areas what is asserted or enquired into ... may have no counterpart whatsoever in [another].<sup>30</sup>

A **third** issue concerns the relationship between *psychoanalysis and philosophy*, both in general, but more specifically in the case of Freud’s own attitude to this matter. The first thing to say more generally is that while psychoanalysis has had a place at the centre of western psychology and psychiatry since the time when the modern discipline of psychology first started to emerge as an intellectual and clinical movement separate from the long history of philosophical anthropology,<sup>31</sup> so too it remains a body of thought with profound philosophical implications. Indeed, it is a basic premise of this thesis that just as Anglo-Scottish traditions of philosophy were of great importance for the early development of Freudian psychoanalysis, so too the early history of psychoanalysis is important for a deepened understanding of the richness of nineteenth century British philosophy, and thus for philosophy

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<sup>30</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988, 350.

<sup>31</sup> While *always* controversial in various ways, the theories and therapeutic practices initiated by Sigmund Freud a century and more ago remain of ongoing importance for psychology and psychotherapy. That is despite the significant controversies and reactions over the last few decades which recently led Aner Govrin to reflect on the almost surprising survival of the psychoanalytic movement at all. (Aner Govrin. *Conservative and Radical Perspectives on Psychoanalytic Knowledge: The Fascinated and the Disenchanted*. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.)

as a whole. While the former theme must take precedence in this thesis, aspects of the latter dimension will emerge, especially in the discussions to come in chapters three and four. This matters greatly, since the place of psychoanalysis within philosophical history, and its potential to contribute to contemporary philosophical debate – concerning issues as diverse as the nature of consciousness, action, motivation, memory, self-understanding, inter-subjectivity, rationality, affectivity, and human development – remains surprisingly contested and obscure.

This whole matter is made much more complicated by Freud's own ambiguous relationship to philosophy. Freud always insisted that the development of psychoanalytic theory was a deeply empirical manner that followed the clues provided by clinical case studies to derive more general insights into human psychology. There is no reason to doubt the seriousness with which Freud was committed to this conception of the methodological unity of clinical practice (as a therapeutic method for dealing with psychological trauma) and psychoanalytic theory (as a theory of mind). Indeed, herein lies one of the rare points of consistency between Freud and his inner circle. Freud clearly took this deep empiricism at the heart of psychoanalysis as a defining point of difference to the metaphysical and speculative rationalism he observed in much of the German philosophical traditions of his day.

But if Freud's famous aversion to philosophy is well-known, it is not always clear what he meant by this, and whether it is actually reflected in his practice. In what follows, I take Tauber's characterisation of Freud as a "reluctant philosopher" quite seriously, and that means looking to present *both* what seems to have been the basis of this reluctance, *and* the senses in which his thought is nonetheless genuinely philosophical in important respects. On one hand, Freud was famously dismissive of philosophy, and in



this way consistently portrayed psychoanalysis as a purely 'scientific' approach to the psyche (as though scientific methodologies needed no philosophical underpinnings). But on the other hand, Freud's own writings in the 1880s-90s reveal a range of philosophical musings of his own, informed by philosophical texts of the kind explored below; and this well before his later more explicitly "meta-psychological" works.

The key to understanding this apparent contradiction, it will be suggested, is to note that Freud's working definition of "philosophy" seems to be aligned primarily to the very nineteenth century German traditions of thought that Göttinger and his like-minded colleagues identify as major contributing influences on Freud's own developing conception of the unconscious. However, as will be argued in the chapter three below, it would seem to apply far less to the British empiricist traditions of philosophy that look to have been major influences on Freud's early thought; traditions that the young Freud seems to have regarded as continuous with the fledging science of the mind that was preoccupying him at the time.

A **fourth** issue (and one already implicitly canvassed above) relates to the question of *mutuality of analysis*. While inevitably curtailed by space, the thesis seeks to place the traditions to be examined into a situation whereby they can examine each other. Accordingly, the dialogue between psychoanalysis and the Enlightenment goes both ways: each will analyse and interpret the other.

On one hand, psychoanalysis is itself made possible by Enlightenment rationality. The Enlightenment provides the very language and methods that psychoanalysis takes for granted; and as such, it makes psychoanalysis possible. The practice of 'analysis,' with its application of reason to psychodynamic processes cannot escape its 'enlightened' origins. Freud himself never ceases to present psychoanalysis as the application of reason to

psychic phenomena; and as a 'science' it is deeply indebted to a specific understanding of the progress of knowledge that is rooted in the early modern European intellectual tradition. Similarly, empiricism – that child prodigy of the Enlightenment – came to play a key role in Freud's early methodology: specifically, the use of case studies, and the method of inductively working from the trauma exhibited by individual patients to derive theories of a more general kind about human psychic life.

But on the other hand, it is also the case that the aspirations of the Enlightenment can be analysed and critiqued by psychoanalytic methods. Nascent concepts that originate in the Enlightenment are greatly clarified when reviewed from the perspective of the psychoanalytic unconscious. This includes the vague (but sometimes more explicit) 'causa sui' aspiration of Enlightenment reason, that failed to appreciate the contingent basis of thought; as well as the nagging idea of thoughts that are inaccessible to conscious subjectivity. If placed on the 'couch', the Enlightenment may yet be understood to reveal more about the European intellectual tradition through what it *didn't* discover than through what its "clear and distinct" concepts sought to represent. For the very fate of Enlightenment thought that passes through rationalism and empiricism to metaphysical and epistemological scepticism points toward a shadow side of this intellectual 'en-lightening' that is truly paradoxical. For all that is enlightened is not bright; there is indeed a chthonic aspect to this movement which Freudian psychoanalysis both inherits *and* helps us to analyse and evaluate.

**Fifth**, there is the issue of how to access and discuss the discourses and concepts that will drive the analysis to come. How is Freud's engagement with, development and redeployment of philosophical concepts and theories be understood, and how can this be studied? What methodological principles will be applied to facilitate understanding of the formation of psychoanalytic

discourses in relationship to earlier 17-19<sup>th</sup> c philosophical texts on which early Freudian thought drew? Clearly, there are complex hermeneutical questions at play here, but in essence a method of *conceptual archaeology* will be deployed in what follows. It should be noted that no explicit framing is intended here in terms of Foucault's sense of "archaeological analysis" in its differentiation from what he calls "the history of ideas". While there are various points of similarity concerning "the attribution of innovation, the analysis of contradictions, comparative descriptions, and the mapping of transformations"<sup>32</sup> that perhaps invite comparison, exploring such matters unfortunately point beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead the following description of the method of conceptual archaeology to be deployed here will need to suffice for time being.

In seeking to understand the various traditions that fed into early Freudian psychoanalysis, the thesis looks to excavate elements of Freudian thought as evidenced by his own writings, and those of the scholars he cites in his work (along with *their* contemporaries and sources). What is attempted here is not a totalising discourse about the 'true' Freud, stripped of his various sources, in order to provide a final 'birth certificate' that explains psychoanalysis' true identity. If the tradition of hermeneutics (from late Dilthey onwards) has taught us anything, it is the futility of claims that close textual analysis and historical research can ever uncover and expose the inner life of the author. Nonetheless, what can be made accessible through close readings of key texts are some of the more salient hints that provide important clues as to the network of reliances that have contributed to a tradition of thought.

Of course, here too there are some ironic twists insofar as psychoanalytic insights provide the reader with some key tools for undertaking such a

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<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 138-40.

reading, for it is important to pay close attention both to what the author (in this case Freud himself) says, as well as to what he does not say. Both are important. Here the thorny problem of the absence of the figures such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in Freud's writings arise in importance. But this issue is not one that should obscure the important evidence of those that Freud does cite, and whose work is explicitly unfolded in instructive ways.

In this way, this thesis is largely a work of archaeology in which the site of excavation are *both* Freud's own works and the texts that he himself references. Psychoanalysis is thus presented as a contingent historical product, and the goal is thereby to seek to understand its own conditions of possibility, *even as* (in line with the prior methodological principle) psychoanalysis itself helps to reveal the tensions that are at play within the network of ideas from which psychoanalysis itself sprang in the late nineteenth century.

In the main, the thesis stops short of a fully-fledged genealogical account of psychoanalytic practice in its clinical and social dimensions. Its focus is more historically diagnostic, focusing on the question of the *archē* of Freud's psychoanalytic unconscious, along with his intricately related understandings of its dynamic manifestations in the psyche's various defence mechanisms. Accordingly, various questions are broached in places, without coming to centre stage. These include the questions of how psychoanalysis, thus understood, developed in later Freudian thought; the way that its clinical method developed and influenced social and legal norms and practices; and the way that Freudian thought influenced later generations of thinkers. Where such questions arise at all, they are confined largely to the brief sketches provided in the thesis conclusion, where the implications of the analysis are considered, as well as how it can aid understanding of later twentieth century developments in psychology and psychodynamic therapies.

A **sixth** and final issue relates to the necessary *selectivity of focus* in this thesis. While any piece of research must inevitably grapple with the question of selectivity, this is a particular challenge in the case of a project like this one that is concerned with such an enormous sweep of intellectual history. In order to deal with this challenge, it has been necessary to strategically limit its scope to a range of key thinkers who embody or exemplify some key historical trends that shed light on the relationship between these two diverse movements. Given the thesis focus on the contribution of nineteenth century intellectual traditions to the development of Freudian psychoanalysis, the longer-term background (or 'deeper' layers of tradition) in the 17-18<sup>th</sup> century can receive less fine-grained treatment. The focus here is therefore on a series of prominent relevant themes elaborated by key 17-18<sup>th</sup> century thinkers, though even here it will be possible to prepare the ground for some of the complexities to come. The discussion of the nineteenth century German philosophical Romanticism and Idealism, which provides an important intellectual context for Freudian thought (albeit one not necessarily the primary one), is similarly selective in its focus by dwelling mainly on key themes in the work of a handful of central figures. It is on the basis of this preparation that a more detailed analysis has been possible in the case of nineteenth century Anglo-Scottish philosophy, given the particular focus in this thesis on the under-appreciated importance of this background to early Freudian thought.

## **The Argument to Come**

On the basis of this preparatory discussion, the major phases of the discussion to come can now be outlined.

The **first chapter**, "The Unconscious in the 17-18th Century Enlightenment", focuses on the deep archaeology of Freudian psychoanalysis, by investigating

its relationship to key strands of the 17-18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment. Throughout, the question of the relationship between this internally-complex movement and the early history of Freudian psychoanalysis will be to the fore. The Chapter is divided into three sections.

After the scene is set, this first chapter begins by attending to the thought of Mendelssohn, Kant and Hamann concerning the very nature of the movement of which they (sometimes ambiguously) considered themselves to be contributing. What emerges as basic to all, even amongst their many differences, is a type of *Socratic* determination to leave no stone unturned in pursuit of the truth. Furthermore, this Socratic process highlights the possibility (or inevitability) of the uncovering of knowledge that is unpleasant or even revolutionary. In the second section, the view that Freud may indeed be considered a thinker in this long tradition of Enlightenment thinking is applied to some of the detail of Freud's models of the unconscious. As much as these models are shown to have evolved in significant ways across the span of Freud's career, they consistently embody a commitment to research, empiricism, and the general scientific *Weltanschauung* of the Enlightenment.

In the final section of the opening chapter, Gdde's tradition-line approach is broached for the first time as some key aspects of the work of Enlightenment rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) are examined in this context, as well as the thought of Kant. Key elements of a proto-psychoanalytic set of insights are identified in the way these thinkers develop the notion of what Gdde classifies as the "cognitive unconscious". This refers not to a developed notion of a dynamic *un*-conscious, but rather to the *non*-conscious elements of mind that are revealed through attention to various mental processes that are framed in epistemological (rather than psychological) modes. This non-conscious is not so much a region into which repressed and dynamic phenomena are pressed, but is rather a repository for that which is not

currently the subject of conscious attention. In the thesis conclusion, the interesting return of a sophisticated neurological version of this conception in contemporary research is noted.

The focus of the **second chapter** is nineteenth century German thought. Here, a connection is made to the other two tradition-lines of Gödde's schema: i.e., the Romantic unconscious, and the drive-related irrational unconscious.

Gödde, it will be maintained, is right to see both of these tradition-lines flowing in one way or other, from the work of F.W.J Schelling, in particular from his *Naturphilosophie* dating from the 1790s. It is in this way that the thesis argument connects most significantly with recent work that has looked to situate Freudian thought firmly within the context of nineteenth century German thought. The chapter is again divided into three sections

The first section focuses on German Romanticism, with particular reference to Schelling (who, as Gödde puts it, "invoked the unconscious in order to refer to the 'dark sides' of the nature of the soul"<sup>33</sup>) as well as C.G. Carus, whose writings provide a striking anticipation of prominent themes in twentieth century post-Freudian psychoanalysis. I note here the growth of recent work in this area on Freud in the context of nineteenth century German Romanticism and Idealism. In turning then to what Gödde refers to as the drive-related irrational tradition-line in the second section, it is necessary to again turn back to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, in which will as impulse (*Drang*), drive (*Trieb*) and desire (*Begierde*) raises the prospect of dangerous and destructive urges within the self that are not under the direct gaze of conscious awareness and control. The roles that Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Nietzsche play in linking Freud to this tradition-line are

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<sup>33</sup> Gödde, "Freud and Nineteenth-Century Philosophical Sources", 263.

considered in closer detail in this section, in ways that go beyond Gödde's own arguments.

In section three of this second chapter, we turn more specifically to Freud's own texts in order to survey what can be noted about his interactions with German Romanticism and philosophical drive theory. It is argued here that for all the resonances that can be found between Freud's thinking and that of these near-contemporaneous philosophers, important difference must also be noted. Further, this section challenges the common claim that Freud's own denials that he had directly imported key ideas from these philosophical texts should be simply dismissed. However, justification for the claim that there is good reason for taking Freud's word at face value on this, will need to await the arguments of chapters three and four.

In these two final chapters, the focus switches to consider the web of influences that are presented here as constituting a fourth tradition-line; one about which Gödde's model (and kindred contemporary scholarship) remains conspicuously silent. The claim is that this Anglo-Scottish empirical philosophical tradition heavily inspired early Freudian thought, and that he drew on many of its key concepts and modes of inquiry both directly (through avid reading of these texts) and indirectly (through their influence on European thought more generally), in developing his understanding of the unconscious and the dynamic mechanisms of the mind.

**Chapter three** introduces this "Anglo-Scottish Freud", first via a brief biographical sketch, before then focusing in some detail on the British empiricist tradition and its contributions to Freudian thought, including the associationist and utilitarian schools. The chapter contains five sections.

In the first section, the early biographical context serves to provide some compelling anecdotal evidence around Freud's self-attested love for the



British intellectual culture of his day, along with some specifics concerning his engagement with English literature and Anglo-Scottish philosophy. This scene setting is continued, though on a more textual footing, in the second section that turns to consider the formative influence on Freud of Franz Brentano, Freud's philosophical mentor at the University of Vienna. Brentano, himself was an enthusiastic advocate of British empiricist philosophy, was to be a powerful influence on the young Freud during his medical training, as well as being a conduit to Freud's own later excursions into British philosophy.

The following sections then look in detail at the work on which Freud drew. Section three turns to a detailed analysis of J.S. Mill and British Associationism. From Hobbes's "train of thought", to the work of David Hartley, associationist philosophy with the admixture of Hartley's Newtonian physicalism, provides a significant context for Freud's early meta-psychology. The equally crucial influence of William Hamilton – who clashed quite publicly with Mill over various aspects of their theories – is noted in the fourth section, particularly with reference to his Scottish "common sense" philosophy, and his categories of "unconscious thoughts" and "energetic responses". Then in the fifth section, attention is turned to the influence on Freud of Jeremy Bentham, his "pleasure principle" (that was to provide a quantitative foundation for Freud's notion of *cathexis*, the quota of affect or sum of excitation), and Utilitarianism more generally. In many ways, the differences between early Freudian theory, and the commitments of Benthamian and Millian utilitarianism are as instructive as the similarities.

**Chapter four** further pursues the rich vein of influences in early Freudian work stemming from British philosopher-psychologists, in particular the heavily empiricist nature of this work, and the influences of people like John

Hughlings Jackson, John Braid, William Carpenter, and others. This material is developed across three sections:

In the first section, the focus is on the influence of William Carpenter and James Ward. Carpenter, an English physiologist, hinted at the dynamic working in the unconscious via his notion of “unconscious cerebration” and its connection to the sleep state, an idea of which Freud was aware long before the appearance of his landmark study of dreams at the turn of the century. In the work of Ward, Freud found a “phenomenology of the mind”, a developed account of ego, and developed theories of “introspection” and instinct (that was soon by popularised by Darwin).

In the second section, the focus is on the significant influence on Freud of the work of English neurologist, John Hughlings Jackson. As has been noted previously, Freud’s early work, *On Aphasia*, shows a significant (largely unacknowledged) reliance on Hughlings Jackson’s work, which are retained in important ways even after Freud’s shift to a less neuro-biological model of the mind. Parallelism, psychic regression and speech – that also play important roles in Freud’s early neurological research – are illuminated in this context as well.

In the final section of this chapter, the origins and centrality of Freud’s keynote category of transference are considered, in light of its unpromising origins in Mesmer’s “animal magnetism”, and its rejuvenation and scientific reframing in the work of the Scottish surgeon James Braid’s technique of hypnosis. While Freud’s original experiments with hypnosis were short lived, its reframing through Freud’s development of the intricacies of the doctor-patient relationship were to remain a central aspect of both psychoanalytic clinical practice and its theory of mind. The chapter ends with reference to the works of James Frazer (yet another British source) that also engaged Freud’s

imagination and enabled him to glean sociological evidence of the transference.

The thesis **Conclusion** draws together the many threads and dimensions of the preceding argument, clarifying its significance, and applying it to understanding later Freudian thought, twentieth century post-Freudian developments in psychodynamic theory, and also elements of the contemporary situation of psychoanalytic psychology. In doing so, only the broadest brush strokes are possible.

It begins by clarifying the significance of the proposed fourth (Anglo-Scottish) tradition-line that fed into the development of Freudian psychoanalysis. Why does this matter, and what are some of the implications for the scholarship? Something of this importance will be sketched here – albeit in necessarily cursory ways – by showing its *potential* to help clarify the many strands within later twentieth century psychoanalytic thought, strands that draw in different ways on the various legacies that contributed to the development of psychoanalysis. These include Freud’s own characteristic emphasis on impulsive drive theory in his later work that draws on the third tradition-line, but which also shows the influence (as documented in chapters three and four) of aspects of the Anglo-Scottish line, with its empirical rather than philosophical background, even if Freud himself explicitly notes the surprising convergence of these two in the outcome of his work.

However, other schools of thought within of the broad psychoanalytic movement can be understood to pick up on different tradition-line strands. For instance, in the work of C.G. Jung and James Hillman, the second (German Romantic) tradition line is clearly perceivable in a way that is not as particularly evident in Freud’s own work. Further, it is possible to see in the self-consciously empirical and non-philosophical movement in contemporary

neurology, a return – albeit using the sophisticated technologies of contemporary brain science – to something like the first tradition-line of Gölde’s schema: the aptly named “cognitive unconscious”.

The conclusion ends with some comments about promising future directions for this research, particularly in terms of how the historical context provided here can be brought to bear on contemporary philosophical and psychoanalytic research.

# Chapter 1

## The 17-18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment and the Freudian Unconscious

This chapter focuses primarily on the beginnings of a developed conception of the unconscious in 17-18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment thought, on Freud's various theoretical models of the topology of the unconscious, and of the connection between the two. The focus is therefore on the deeper origins of a movement that was to take hold in various ways across Europe in the nineteenth century, before it took more developed clinical and theoretical form in the closing decades of that century in Freudian psychoanalysis and its immediate precursors. But in confronting this telling subplot in Enlightenment thought, not only will the nature of Freud's debt to this tradition come to the fore, so too will something of the dark underside of the Enlightenment itself be revealed. For as Plato's Socrates showed much longer ago, true wisdom ironically reveals the inescapable ignorance at the core of human understanding.

After a brief consideration of some of the more ancient precursors to the idea of the unconscious, and Freud's largely grudging acknowledgements of the same, the chapter considers the question of the nature of the early modern Enlightenment, as seen from the perspective of some of its most esteemed contemporaneous representatives who sought to answer this question in and for their own time. However, in relation to this question, *not* knowing will prove to be as important as knowing. The '*chiaroscuro*' of knowing and not-knowing (whether one is aware of one's 'not-knowing' or not) will be considered, and it is in this context that the question of psychoanalysis as a continuation of the Enlightenment tradition, in all its own complexities, will be considered.

The early modern rationalist tradition is then explored in terms of how the “cognitive unconscious” (to use G d de’s term for his first tradition-line of the unconscious) emerged in the work of Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Kant, but also how the seeds for a more dynamic and chthonic conception of mind was already implicit in these very works. In this way, the neatness of G d de’s presentation of this first line of tradition is shown to be more complicated. Starting as it did with a proposal concerning “non-conscious” elements of mind as a way of answering epistemological questions, the scene was set nonetheless for a more radical conception of a vast submerged landscape whose very existence can only be discerned by its profound impacts on the ‘enlightened’ conscious domains of mental life. In this way, the intricate connections between Socratic wisdom, the *chiaroscuro* of the Enlightenment, and the proto-psychoanalytic unconscious will be sketched.

Finally, attention is turned to Freud’s own continually developing understanding of the structure of the psyche. Here the topography of knowing and not-knowing is explored across a range of models, spanning the length of Freud’s career, and in this way it is possible more precisely to address the question of the status of psychoanalysis as an expression of the complicated legacy of the Enlightenment.

## **1.1 Ancient Precursors**

If (as will be seen) the stream of thought initiated in the European Enlightenment is in some ways the origin story of the psychoanalytic unconscious, it would be quite wrong to imply that the idea of the unconscious had no prior anticipations or descriptions in western thought (not to mention other intellectual and artistic traditions the world over). Recognition of the complexity of the human psyche, and its inner dividedness and conflicted nature, goes all the way back to the founding texts of western

philosophy. While space precludes dwelling on this matter in any detail, it will be helpful to set the scene somewhat for the analyses to come in this chapter, and beyond.

Perhaps foremost here is Plato's analogy, in the *Phaedrus*, of the soul as like "a team of winged horses and their charioteer", with the latter given the "painfully difficult business" of managing both the noble and the ignoble.<sup>1</sup> In senses that foreshadow his strange silence concerning nineteenth century German thinkers (considered below), Freud fails to acknowledge his debt to this common inheritance of the western intellectual tradition. Yet it is difficult to believe that this most Platonic of images did not occur to him as his early research culminated in his accounts of the internally divided psyche, with its censored, repressed and displaced ignoble wishes weirdly expressed in the strange inner landscape of dreams.<sup>2</sup> Even when, over three decades later, Freud made his most near-explicit reference to Plato's analogy in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, the name of his ancient forebear remains absent, even if its province would have been obvious to his audience:

The ego's relation to the id might be compared with that of a rider to his horse. The horse supplies the locomotive energy, while the rider has the privilege of deciding on the goal and of guiding the powerful animal's movement. But only too often there arises between the ego and the id the not precisely ideal situation of the rider being obliged to guide the horse along the path by which it itself wants to go.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Freud does allude to the work of "the divine Plato" in his landmark 1905 essays on sexuality, but he does this in the context of protesting that "anyone who looks down with contempt upon psychoanalysis from a

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, "Phaedrus", 246b, in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. by Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 524.

<sup>2</sup> SE IV *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part and V The Interpretation of Dreams II and On Dreams*.

<sup>3</sup> SE XXII, "Lecture XXXI – The Dissection of the Psychological Personality".

superior vantage-point should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psycho-analysis coincides" with Plato's *eros*.<sup>4</sup> While one might well make this connection, this is a very approximate parallel, for there are surely as many differences between Plato's *eros* and Freud's *libido* as there are similarities. Indeed, this would not be the only place where in finally acknowledging precursors to his own theories in the works of towering figures before him, Freud has chosen an example far less illuminating and relevant than the most obvious ones he might have mentioned.<sup>5</sup>

While not part of his written record, Freud was reported to have made the vague but striking admission that it was not him "but the poets [who] discovered the unconscious".<sup>6</sup> If somewhat more generous than his written accounts of this matter might indicate, such an assessment does nonetheless cohere with Freud's clear interest in literary sources in developing his own theories. Already in the first edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud makes full use of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* in developing his account of infantile sexuality, and he freely links this to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which "has its roots in the same soil".<sup>7</sup> Other Shakespearean plays, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*, also feature, along with references to Goethe's *Faust* (though some of those were added in later editions).

Of course, for Freud, the "discovery" of the unconscious by these poets and playwrights is of a different order to the discoveries he claimed in relation to his own researches. Whereas their skill was to utilise the imagination to posit truths about the human psychic life in ways that still need to be recovered

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<sup>4</sup> SE VII, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", 43.

<sup>5</sup> The case of Schopenhauer in this respect will be mentioned in the following chapter.

<sup>6</sup> This was part of a conversation reported by Phillip R. Lehrman in *Harofe Haivri* 1 (1940): 161-76., cited in Jeffrey Berman, *The Talking Cure: Literary Representations of Psychoanalysis*. (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 304, n. 40.

<sup>7</sup> SE IV, "The Dream-Work: The Work of Condensation", 282.



and thought, it is the role of psychoanalysis to apply its theoretical insight to identify what it is that is latently present in these texts. In this sense, it is the application of scientific investigation to the work of the poets that allows their otherwise obscure truths to emerge into the light of understanding.

However, in turning now to the Enlightenment's own understanding of itself – its own self-understanding and self-critique – the focus is turned to the tradition of thought that was to beget the kind of philosophical/ scientific thinking that was, in time and via various subsequent lines of tradition, to make psychoanalysis itself possible.

## 1.2 The Enlightenment's Thinking of Itself

The threat of reification is ever-present when broad intellectual movements in history are represented with a proper noun, and definitions for them are sought. Given that eighteenth century European philosophers were interested in the idea (or phenomenon) of '*enlightenment*', there is a danger in conflating this with the search for a single meaning of a thing such as '*the Enlightenment*'. Indeed, there is, never was, and never could be, a single such definition. This is closely associated with the observation made earlier concerning the complex nature of the Enlightenment as a movement: that it was a vast, complex and often internally riven tradition, characterised by fundamental disagreements, and covering a wide array of issues: epistemological, metaphysical, political, ethical, religious and aesthetical.<sup>8</sup> Yet, if the notion of Enlightenment is understood in the sense of a "family resemblance concept"

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<sup>8</sup> In doing justice to this diversity, it is not enough to merely paint broad brushstrokes across the various phases of the Enlightenment: e.g., of the French Enlightenment as political and revolutionary, the German Enlightenment as philosophical, and the Scottish Enlightenment as the impetus for empiricism. Such generalisations might contain kernels of truth, but they eventually conceal as much as they reveal.

that has its own characteristic language “game” (or network thereof),<sup>9</sup> it does seem possible to speak in a general sense of an intellectual tradition that was to have profound consequences for future developments of the kind under investigation here.

Fortunately, history provides a fortuitous contemporaneous posing of something like this very issue when, in December 1783 in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, the German theologian Johan Friedrich Zöllner (motivated by a concern over the advisability of purely civil marriages) sought considered answers to the question: “what is enlightenment?”.<sup>10</sup> The series of famous contributions to this debate provide substantial nourishment for the discussion to come.

### **1.2.1 Reinhold, Kant and Mendelssohn: Enlightenment as Rationality**

The responses of Karl Leonhard Reinhold and Immanuel Kant provide paradigmatic accounts of the Enlightenment as an era defined by the application of reason; and of the enlightened person as one marked by the capacity and the commitment to apply rational thinking methodically.

However, there is a subtlety to Moses Mendelssohn’s account of enlightenment that, while also placing rationality at the centre of concern, introduces elements that point in other broader directions.

According to Reinhold, enlightenment [*Aufklärung*], in a general sense, simply means “the making of rational men out of men who are capable of rationality”, and this capacity for reason is a “state of the soul”. Such an

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<sup>9</sup> The reference, of course is to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s suggested approach to the problem of naming in *Philosophical Investigations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Malden: Blackwell, 1997), §67, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Johann Friedrich Zöllner, “Ist es rathsam, das Ehebündniß nicht ferner durch die Religion zu sanciren?” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 2 (1783): 516. Reprinted in *Was ist Aufklärung? Beiträge aus der Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, 2nd ed., ed. Norbert Hinske (Darmstadt, 1977)115.

“enlightened individual” is one whose reasoning capacity is “above the ordinary”.<sup>11</sup> However, Reinhold is also quite clear about what he sees as the more specific (or “narrow”) meaning of enlightenment qua rationality: it is about the capacity to apply “the means that lie in nature to elucidate confused concepts [*verworrenen Begriffe*] into distinct [*deutliche*] ones”. What is required to resolve confused concepts into their constituents is “the power of representation [*Vorstellung*]”.<sup>12</sup>

Here is a classical statement of Enlightenment Rationalism that goes back at least as far as Descartes. As will be discussed below, for Descartes, certain knowledge was possible insofar as the mind perceived “clear and distinct [*clara & distincta*]” ideas, as opposed to ideas that are “obscure and confused [*potest & confusa*]”. Perceiving truths clearly and distinctly means grasping them in such a way that they are perceived as self-evidently true, and thus as logically incapable of being doubted.<sup>13</sup> This approach was a core commitment of 17-18<sup>th</sup> century German Enlightenment Rationalism, from Leibniz to Wolff and beyond, and it is this tradition that Reinhold draws upon in his own conception of the very meaning of Enlightenment. On this account the very enemy of the Enlightenment was thinking that dealt in “obscure [*dunkel*]” concepts, and following Descartes’ Latin, German Enlightenment thinkers from Leibniz to Kant to Wolff to Reinhold placed great importance on the primacy of “clear [*klar*] and distinct [*deutlich*]” representations.

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<sup>11</sup> Reinhold, *Gedencken über Aufklärung, Neue Teutsche Merkur*. August, 1784c, Weimar, 185. In James Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth Century Answers and Twentieth Century Questions*, ed. and trans. by James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 65-77.

<sup>12</sup> Reinhold, in Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 66.

<sup>13</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations - Trilingual Edition*, ed. David Manley and Charles S. Taylor (Wright State University, Core Scholar, 1996.)

<https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/philosophy/8> (Accessed July 2021).

Now of course, for any representation to be thinkable – let alone for it to be thinkable as a clear and distinct concept – it needs to be eminently accessible to the conscious mind, it needs to be re-presentable and available for critical rational inspection. Any mental content that is unavailable in this way, is at best only obscurely representable, if it is representable at all. In this sense, pre-conscious and unconscious mental content would seem – by definition – to be outside the bounds of Enlightenment reason. This is a pertinent issue that will be taken up later in this chapter vis-à-vis Kant’s own late twist on this theme in his final lectures on Anthropology (published in 1798). As will be seen, it is in the ambiguous ‘rehabilitation’ of obscure cogitations that the groundwork is laid for the transition from late Enlightenment rationalism to early German Romanticism.

Kant’s famous essay on the nature of enlightenment opens with a different emphasis.<sup>14</sup> For him, “[e]nlightenment is mankind’s exit from its self-incurred immaturity [*Unmündigkeit*]”, understood as “the inability to make use of one’s own understanding without the guidance of another”. It is in this light that he introduces his enlightenment motto: “*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!”<sup>15</sup> However, it quickly becomes clear that for Kant in this essay, the courage to use one’s own understanding, to think for oneself, just is the application of reason. What is therefore needed is for enlightened individuals to “spread among the herd the spirit of rational assessment”. The sole ingredient that is required for this to take effect is, in Kant’s estimation, freedom: “[t]he freedom to make *public use* of one’s reason in all matters”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Originally published as *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* Berlinische Monatsschrift 4 (1784): 481-494.

<sup>15</sup> Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 58. As Schmidt makes clear in his translator’s note, this motto is far from original with Kant. Originating with Horace, it was in widespread use in eighteenth century Europe, including in a letter Hamann wrote to Kant over a decade earlier (Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 64, fn.2).

<sup>16</sup> Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 59. Italics in original.

Placing to one side Kant's controversial discussions in the second part of this little essay concerning public and private uses of reason, it is notable that his contribution offers only a very thin notion of enlightenment rationality.<sup>17</sup> It is as though the free use of reason was challenged only by "lack of resolution" on behalf of the thinker, or by the ever-present danger of "immature" deference to external sources of authority. What is not evident here is any critical interrogation of the *sources* of human freedom, or human understanding, that issue forth from regions of mind that are not entirely accessible to human self-interrogation. Discussion of such "dark (or obscure) representations [*dunkle Vorstellungen*]", or "indirect (or mediated) [*mittelbar*] consciousness", will need to await his later lectures on anthropology, published over a decade later. It is to these lectures that we will return later in this chapter.

If Reinhold's account of the Enlightenment fits neatly within the absolutist rationalist camp, and Kant's provides nothing in itself to challenge this view, something more nuanced is seen in Mendelssohn's essay that was published a few months prior to Reinhold's. For Mendelssohn, enlightenment is indeed to be associated with "rational knowledge and ... rational reflection about matters of human life, according to their importance and influence on the destiny of man". However, for him, enlightenment (thus defined) was only one aspect of education (*Bildung*), for just as important in his presentation is culture (*Kultur*) that includes practical rather than theoretical matters, and is thus concerned with "goodness, refinement, and beauty in the arts and social mores". A person of culture shows "diligence and dexterity in the arts and

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<sup>17</sup> Later in the *Critique of Judgement*, though, Kant does expand and fills out this maxim with a three-part imperative: "(1) think for oneself; (2) think from the standpoint of everyone else; and (3) think always consistently. The first is a maxim of an *unprejudiced*, the second of a *broadened*, the third of a *consistent* way of thinking". Only proficiency in the first two maxims will allow proficiency in the third, i.e., what he called the "maxim of reason" (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans by Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987], 160-161.)

inclinations, dispositions, and habits in social mores". He thus concludes that "Enlightenment is related to culture, as theory to practice, as knowledge to ethics, as criticism to virtuosity", and he emphasises that both elements of *Bildung* "stand in the closest connection".<sup>18</sup>

Yet, even in offering such an account – of what might be thought to anticipate something of Dilthey's (rather than Windelband's) later distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*<sup>19</sup> – Mendelssohn appears to give enlightenment – which relates to "the destiny of man" per sé, rather than the "destiny of man as citizen" – precedence over culture. If the former is "essential [*wesentlich*]", the latter is "unessential [*außerwesentlichen*]" or "accidental" [*zufälligen*]. It is on this basis that he can declare: "In the absence of the essential destiny of man, man sinks to the level of the beast; without the unessential destiny he is no longer good and splendid as a creature". Both are important, but there is a clear emphasis on the former. This asymmetry is illustrated further via his claim that "[c]ertain truths that are useful to men, as men, can at times be harmful to them as citizens".<sup>20</sup>

Subsequently, Mendelssohn's tone – and his use of the term 'enlightenment' – changed. In a follow up essay in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, he distinguished two different types of "enlightenment": the civil (*Bürgeraufklärung*) and the human (*Menschenaufklärung*), and he emphasises that these two types will not always be complementary, since human enlightenment (the rational) must sometimes accommodate itself to the civil.<sup>21</sup> He took this further again in a later essay in which he attacked what he called "sham enlightenment", where

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<sup>18</sup> Mendelssohn, "Ueber die Frage: Was heisst aufklären?" *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 4, 1784, 193. In Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 53-54.

<sup>19</sup> See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Volume III: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.)

<sup>20</sup> Mendelssohn, in Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 54, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 5.

“everyone mouths a hackneyed wisdom, from which the spirit has already long vanished”. Of course, the focus of his attack here is not rationality, but pre-fabricated answers, “prejudices”, parading as rationality.<sup>22</sup>

In the final analysis, it is unclear whether there is anything in Mendelssohn’s thinking on this issue that is *necessarily* more open to the “obscure” recesses of the mind in the pursuit of cultural excellence, than is the case with the pursuit of the theoretical rational life of the individual. That is especially the case insofar as culture is understood in terms of social graces and morality.

Nonetheless, perhaps there is a subtle opening here – via an acknowledgement of the important role of arts and literature – towards modes of discourse that allow for the expression of non-rational elements in the human soul, even if (as Freud would put it), rational unpacking of the psychological insight of cultural productions is still needed to bring form and understanding to such obscure elements of mind.

### **1.2.2 Hamann: The Conceit of Enlightenment**

Johann Georg Hamann’s erudite but acerbic response to Kant’s essay – as set out in a letter to Christian Jacob Kraus (in December 1784) – continues some key elements of Mendelssohn’s reservations concerning the perceived rationalistic triumphalism of the various discourses on enlightenment understood as emancipation from ignorance through reason. The final paragraph of this letter sums up Hamann’s damning assessment, with lashing of intertextual word-play around the imagery of light and dark, day and night:

The enlightenment of our century is therefore a mere northern light, from which can be prophesied no cosmopolitical chiliasm except in a

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<sup>22</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, ““Soil man der einreissenden Schwämerey durch Satyre oder durch äussere Verbindung entgegenarbeiten?” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 5 (February 1785): 133-137 (Gesammelte Schriften 6/1:139-141), in Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 5.

nightcap & by the stove. All prattle and reasoning [*Raisonnieren*] of the emancipated immature ones, who set themselves up as guardians of those who are themselves immature, but guardians equipped with *couteaux de chasse* and daggers— all this is a cold, unfruitful moonlight without enlightenment for the lazy understanding and without warmth for the cowardly will— and the entire response to the question which has been posed is a blind illumination for every immature one who walks at *noon*.<sup>23</sup>

For Hamann, the putative concern for enlightened thinking is ephemeral (it is a “mere northern light” that will soon fade) and will bring about no more a significant second coming (the theological meaning of “chiliasm”) than can be trumpeted at the end of the day by a cosy fire in one’s pyjamas! The new guardians (presumably the recently enlightened) will set themselves over “the immature ones”, even as they carry hunting knives (“*couteaux de chasse*”) and daggers (being a likely allusion to French tax collectors employed during the reign of Frederick the Great, who is the subject of Kant’s obsequious approval late in his essay). The overtones of the exploitative and malevolent rule of “reason” are hard to ignore. Rather than basking in the “light” of enlightened thinking, there is merely a “cold, unfruitful moonlight” on offer here. So “the entire response” to the question of the meaning of enlightenment, is “a blind illumination for every immature one who walks at *noon*”, an apparent reference to the famous riddle of the Sphinx in the *Oedipus Rex* myth. The one who purports to be the mature one who walks upright in the full light of noon, turns out to be anything but that.<sup>24</sup>

In his Postscript, Hamann transfigures Kant’s definition of enlightenment. Instead of Kant’s “[e]nlightenment is mankind’s exit from its *self-incurred immaturity*”, Hamann suggests that “[*t*]rue enlightenment consists in an

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<sup>23</sup> Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 5 (1783-1785), edited by Arthur Henkel (Frankfurt, 1965), 289-292. Translated by Garrett Green, in Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 147.

<sup>24</sup> Others have suggested alternative allusions: e.g., Isa. 58:10 or 1 Thess. 5:12, either of which include all the right metaphors for Hamann’s case against Kant.



emergence of the immature person from a supremely *self-incurred guardianship*". What the individual is to be delivered from is thus no longer the ignorance of an immaturity to choose not to apply "enlightened" reason, but rather the conceit of enlightened reason itself, with its concealed manipulations. To this, Hamann protests that he prefers "immature innocence".<sup>25</sup> Like Mendelssohn, this includes a religious innocence – "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" – which is to be preferred to sneering rationalism that obscures the manipulations of state.

Hamann's biting critique of enlightenment rationalism, and Mendelssohn's increasingly strong reservations about the same, serve to illustrate the heterodoxy (or inner rivenness) at the heart of even the Enlightenment's own attempt at self-definition by some of its leading proponents. There should be no surprise that any historic intellectual movement would, on close inspection, show itself to be a network of diverse perspectives, with dominant themes complicated by discordant voices. Nonetheless, what is consistent shines through: the importance of reason, albeit tempered by humility.

Schmidt puts the matter this way:

Perhaps the most important thing the Enlightenment taught was that we are neither gods nor guardians who survey the world from outside but rather men and women who speak from within it, and must summon the courage to argue about what is true and what is false and what is right and what is wrong.<sup>26</sup>

There is something deeply Socratic in this innocence of trust in reason, alongside a preparedness to deal with the stubborn difficulty of all things worth reflecting deeply upon. Enlightenment is possible, but obstacles to its achievement are ubiquitous, and these include the conceit of paternalism, the blindness of hypocrisy, the confusion between prejudice and insight; and the

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<sup>25</sup> Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> Schmidt, *Enlightenment*, 31.

denial that the human condition is one constantly marked by ignorance. One might even venture to suggest that in Hamann's suspicion of charlatan guardians there resides a heightened Socratic awareness of the dangers of *presuming* to know.

Even before *the* Enlightenment becomes embedded in the collective Western consciousness as the triumph of reason over suspicion and religion, there is an understanding of the limits of its own capacity to understand, and a suspicion of its own ulterior motives in declaring the dawning of a light that sweeps away the darkness of ignorance. There is enough Socratic self-scepticism here to pave the way towards the possibility of quasi-psychoanalytic discernment. For to build on Schmidt's notion of enlightenment as "the courage to argue about what is true and what is false and what is right and what is wrong", one might consider other kinds of courage: to confront ingrained prejudices of mind; to challenge the legacy of memories; to release the tyranny of the past. One might say that to be an enlightened thinker, one *must* wrestle with such things, and many or most of them will not be addressed in the bright light of noontime syllogistic transparency. Is not this courage to leave no stone unturned in dialogue with oneself an authentic outcome of this Socratic interpretation of the legacy of the Enlightenment?

But further, to attend closer still to the dynamics of Kant's and Hamann's light metaphor play: what if this enlightened "courage to understand" revealed shadowy unpleasant truths? Then enlightenment becomes a means by which darkness is revealed, and revealed as what it is. Accordingly, the *courage to think* is simultaneously the courage to dwell in a space of both light *and* shadow. In this way, the Enlightenment becomes a dwelling within the *chiaroscuro* of analysis, something that requires courage indeed. Perhaps those later philosophers who had the courage to dwell in this space – those post-

Kantian Romantics and the philosophers of the irrational anarchic drives – are quite rightly described by Yirmiyahu Yovel as “philosophers of the dark enlightenment”<sup>27</sup>; those who bring to light truths that it takes courage to confront.

The inherent risks in unmasking uncomfortable truths were made real for Socrates. While Freud did not pay for his courageous enlightening of the darker elements of the human condition with his life, it would not be an easy journey.

### **1.3 Chthonic Elements within European Rationalism**

Given this examination of some key documents concerning Enlightenment thinkers’ own reflections on the nature of enlightenment as a phenomenon of mind, the focus now turns to their reflections more specifically on the nature of mind as such. In so doing, Gödde’s account of the “cognitive unconscious” tradition line will be extended by looking at senses in which the work of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant show varying insights into observations concerning what might best be called the ‘non-conscious’, observations that Freud would later build into a robust psychoanalytic account of the unconscious.

#### **1.3.1 Descartes and the Neurological Unconscious**

Considering the work of René Descartes may seem like an unlikely place to begin on a search for the philosophical roots of psychoanalysis. After all, Descartes’ account of the nature of consciousness and thought in his much-read *Meditations on First Philosophy* would seem to be a paradigm case of tone-deafness to anything like the notion of unconscious ways of knowing.

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<sup>27</sup> Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, the Adventures of Immanence*. Princeton, (Princeton University Press), 1989, 136.

In the second meditation of this work, Descartes is concerned with finding a single indubitable foundation for a new edifice of knowledge, and he describes finding this “Archimedean point” in the existence of his own mind, which cannot be doubted. Thus, the human being is, essentially, only a thinking thing [*sum res cogitans*]: “that is to say, a mind, understanding, or reason”, albeit where thinking has an apparently wide remit to include the activities of a being that “doubts, perceives, affirms, denies, wills, does not will, imagines ... [and] feels”.<sup>28</sup> However, in a pronouncement that will echo right through early modern rationalism to Kant, Descartes asserts that knowledge is possible only through the mind and its faculty of judgment (i.e., “clear and distinct ideas”) rather than through the evidence of the senses or the use of imagination (i.e., “imperfect and confused” ideas). The road to truth is through the use of rationality alone, since “it is prudent never to trust entirely those things that have once deceived us”.<sup>29</sup>

This leads Descartes in this work to place enormous confidence in the human individual’s ability to know their own mind (more than their body), a knowledge that is understood as ‘inner’ perception. This notion of inner perception is developed apparently on the basis of an unexamined rough and ready analogy with ‘outer’ perception, an analogy drawn often enough in subsequent philosophy, and yet one that seems to be based on a category error born of a conflation between sense perception and introspection. Nonetheless, Descartes’ conclusion is clear: since we have direct access to our own thoughts, and since this intellectual mode of perception provides a more reliable mode for knowing than sensory perception of the outside world, then knowledge of one’s own mind is secure. And this leads him to the

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<sup>28</sup> Descartes, René, *Meditations - Trilingual Edition*, §Meditation II,6, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Descartes, René, *Meditations - Trilingual Edition*, §Meditation I, 3.

extraordinary conclusion that “[t]here is nothing more easy for me to know than my mind”.<sup>30</sup>

There seems little sense here of anything concerning layers of mental activity, or of forms of knowing that are not immediately accessible to the conscious mind. The *Meditations* seem to be the work of a thinker developing a view of consciousness in which there are no hidden nooks or crannies; in which states of affairs are either known or not known; in which there is only truth or error. This Cartesian thinking mind seems to be marked, as Eshleman puts it, by a “perfectly self-transparent mental life”, in which “nothing can occur in its mind of which it is not conscious”.<sup>31</sup> On this account, consciousness just *is* thought; to think is to *be* conscious. This standard received understanding of Descartes’ theory of mind. Accordingly, as Paliyenko puts it, “Descartes does not distinguish conscious from unconscious mental activity ... for such a division within the mind would limit the authority of the conscious Cartesian knower”.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the suspicion of some commentators is not only that “Descartes fails to distinguish between conscious and unconscious mental life”, but worse, he “eliminates the very possibility of so doing”.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to this standard reading, and in line with an important emerging trend in Descartes studies, this is not the view taken here. For a start, the place of the *Meditations* in Descartes’ entire *oeuvre* needs to be examined, and its arguments need to be compared to others found within his work. When this is done, it is possible to place this little work in the context of Descartes’ much

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<sup>30</sup> René Descartes. *Meditations - Trilingual Edition*, §Meditation II, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew C. Eshleman, “The Cartesian Unconscious”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 24.3 (July 2007): 298.

<sup>32</sup> Adrianna Paliyenko, “Postmodern Turns Against the Cartesian Subject: Descartes’s ‘I’, Lacan’s Other”, *Feminist Interpretation of Rene Descartes*, ed. Susan Bordo (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). See also Tim Crane and Sara Patterson, *History of the Mind-Body problem*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 9.

<sup>33</sup> Eshleman, “Unconscious”, 297.

more extensive writings that develop a complex neurological model of mental functioning. These raise a series of matters that are glossed over in the *Meditations*. It is on this basis that Desmond Clarke has called for a complete reassessment of the *dualistic* Descartes of the philosophical textbooks.<sup>34</sup>

The diversion of the *Meditations* from the direction of Descartes' larger body of work is something that was noted at the time by Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes expressed concern that the *Meditations* was the work of a scholar who was betraying his own naturalistic philosophy in returning to a form of Scholastic thinking. "If Descartes were to show that the agent who understands is identical with the understanding", Hobbes protested, "we would return to the Scholastic way of speaking: the understanding understands, vision sees, the will wills, and according to the best analogy, walking – or at least the faculty of walking – walks"<sup>35</sup> Hobbes' criticism is quite understandable in light of Descartes' other work published between 1626 - 1640 that takes a strongly naturalistic approach (e.g., *Rules for Guiding one's Intelligence in Searching for the Truth* (c.1628); *A Treatise on Man* (c 1632); and *The World* (1633)).

There is every reason to conclude that the explanation for the departure of the *Meditations* is in Descartes' concerns around ecclesial oversight. Following the Lateran Council of 1512-17, Pope Leo X had issued a Bull condemning certain neo-Aristotelean philosophies and forcing an assimilation of Christian Theology and Scholastic Philosophy. In the wake of the Church's condemnation of Galileo's heliocentrism – a view espoused by Descartes in *The World* – Descartes stopped publication of that work. In subsequently published works (including *Discourse on the Method*, as well as three scientific essays: *The Diotropics*, *The Meteors* and *the Geometry*), Descartes withheld his

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<sup>34</sup> Desmond M. Clarke, *Descartes's Theory of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1 - 15.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991) 177.

name, a move not taken in the case of the *Meditations* that was addressed to “the Dean and Doctors of the Sacred Faculty of Theology of Paris” when it was published in 1641 (nor his *The Principles of Philosophy* (1644) or his *The Passions of the Soul* in 1649)).

This issue aside, it is important to look well beyond the *Meditations* to Descartes’ larger body of work. Here a statement he made early in his scientific career is very pertinent: that he would look for a theory of human mental abilities by studying animal physiology. In 1632, he wrote to Mersenne declaring that since he had “already written of the vital functions, such as the digestion of food, the heartbeat, the distribution of nourishment, etc., and the five senses” he was looking to press on to “dissect ... the heads of various animals, so that I can explain what imagination, memory, etc. consist in”.<sup>36</sup> There is more than a hint of the neurological about this research plan, even if fulsome advances in this field would not be possible for another 250 years around the time of Freud’s early work in this field in the 1890s (discussed below). Nonetheless, even Descartes’ *ambition* to explore human mental functioning in such a way is in strong tension with the approach taken in the *Meditations*.

Once the field of view of Descartes’ work is broadened in this way, new possibilities are opened concerning his more considered view of the mind, including perspectives on his understanding of the effects of mental contents that are out of reach of conscious awareness. One especially striking example of such an openness comes in Descartes’ letter to Chanut in 1647. Here we read the following:

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<sup>36</sup> René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol 3, *The Correspondence*, trans. By John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 40.

When I was a child I loved a little girl of my own age who had a slight squint. The impression made by sight in my brain when I looked at her cross-eyes became so closely connected to the simultaneous impression which aroused in me the passion of love that for a long time afterwards when I saw persons with a squint, I felt a special inclination to love them simply because they had that defect. At that time I did not know that was the reason for my love; and indeed as soon as I reflected on it and recognised that it was a defect, I was no longer affected by it.<sup>37</sup>

Descartes' recollection arises in the context of correspondence concerning the reasons for why humans find themselves in love with certain persons and not others. He is happy to admit that at the time he "did not know the reason". But what makes Descartes' confession all the more interesting is that he prefaces this vignette with a crude neurological account of just how this process of love works:

It consists in the arrangements of the parts of our brain which are produced by objects of the senses or by some other cause. The objects which strike our senses move parts of our brain by means of the nerves, and there make as it were folds, which undo themselves when the object ceases to operate; but afterwards the place where they were made has a tendency to be folded again in the same manner by another object resembling even incompletely the original object. [In this case, the cross-eyed girl of his childhood.]<sup>38</sup>

Both Descartes' neurological account of his love for a cross-eyed girl, coupled with the more psychological admission that he did not know that was the reason for his love, provide for the possibility of a conception of neurologically-based unconscious psychodynamics. Indeed, nascent in Descartes' case study is an almost early Freudian understanding of the transference: of the unconscious 'redirection' of emotional potencies from one person to another. As will be seen below, the early Freud also vacillated between a neurological and a psychological understanding of psychic

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<sup>37</sup> Descartes, *The Correspondence*, 322.

<sup>38</sup> Descartes, *The Correspondence*, 322. Brackets mine.



dynamics, and even while settling on the latter option, the legacy of the former continued into his later work.

### 1.3.2 Leibniz on *Petit Perceptions*

If Descartes' recognition of the complexity of human knowing has been largely overlooked in the scholarship until recently, the same cannot be said of the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who is widely recognised – including in Gödde's account of the so-called "cognitive unconscious" – as one who opened the door to the idea of unconscious cognitions in his own epistemological considerations.

Leibniz's seminal contribution is in important ways a response not only to Descartes' apparent conflation of being and thought in the *Meditations*, but also to John Locke's engagement with Descartes on this same issue. Seen in this way, there is a vital community of thought in seventeenth century European philosophy that helps give rise to the notion of thoughts inaccessible to awareness. Locke's position, as outlined in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*,<sup>39</sup> is that it is *not* possible for anyone to think and not be conscious of it. This stance is itself a reaction on Locke's part to Descartes' contention that the soul resides in the activity of thinking ("*Ego sum res cogitans*"<sup>40</sup>). The counter-argument that Locke proposes is that in the process of sleep a person often has no thoughts, and by virtue of these periods of non-thought one is surely implying that the soul (since, presumably it is enduring) cannot be continuously identified with thought. Leibniz' theory of monads is his way of declaring that no such Lockean gaps exist (i.e., periods of no

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<sup>39</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Batoche Books, 2000. See Book 2, Chapter 1, §§ 10-19.

<sup>40</sup> Descartes, René, *Meditations - Trilingual Edition*, §Meditation III, 1.

thought) since in his view, the soul is a monad and therefore constantly active and continually subject to perception – even when asleep.<sup>41</sup>

Having countered Locke's argument in this way, Leibniz gives a further account of the nature of perceptions themselves. For Leibniz, these perceptions vary in terms of their *clarity* and their *distinctness*, with the subject being unaware of certain types of perceptions. He states:

At every moment there is an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness of reflection; that is, of alterations of the soul itself, of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own.<sup>42</sup>

In both his *New Essays* and his *Monadology*, Leibniz clarifies this situation by stating that there are two 'types' of perceptions: *petites perceptions* (often just called 'perceptions') and *apperceptions*. Petite perceptions occur at the lower end of awareness and may go unnoticed, while apperceptions are those perceptions of which a subject is aware and might be simply described as conscious thoughts. For Leibniz, there are countless petites perceptions in the background 'noise' of daily existence, but without awareness or consciousness (apperception) of these they remain unnoticed. It appears that Leibniz' two types of perception appear on a continuum, so that at some (not clearly defined) point on that continuum, unnoticed perceptions become *noticed* perceptions.<sup>43</sup> Leibniz points out that there is an infinity of perceptions present to the mind at any one time, but that in our waking state we can only

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<sup>41</sup> Gottfried Leibniz, "Monadology", trans by Frederic Henry Hedge, in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. I, No. 3 (1867), section 14. Note that in what follows, the details of Leibniz' account of monads is placed to one side.

<sup>42</sup> Gottfried Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. by Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 53.

<sup>43</sup> At least one translator of Leibniz' *New Essays* uses this translation of *petites perceptions* vis-à-vis *perceptions*.

ever be conscious of certain ones among them. He employs the metaphor of waves at the seashore to make his point:

To hear this noise as we do, we must hear the parts which make up the whole, that is the noise of each wave, although each of these little noises makes itself known only when combined confusedly with all others, and would be noticed if the wave which made it were by itself.<sup>44</sup>

The suggestion seems to be that consciousness comes about when a certain *magnitude* is reached – the sound of so many waves together is noticeable, but the sound of individual waves is lost in the roar and therefore individually unnoticeable. The question must therefore be asked: *how many* individual waves are required before they cross the threshold of awareness? This is not a question that Leibniz addresses here, though it is one that needs to be considered by an empirical (indeed scientific) account of mind, which is one closer to Freudian theory than Leibnizian philosophy. Still, this question (which is misleadingly reminiscent of contemporary sorites paradoxes), is not simply a matter of vague predication, since it applies specifically to magnitudes or conditions *actually* required to tip unconscious (or pre-conscious) perceptions over into consciousness. As will be seen later in this chapter, that is almost precisely the question that Freud was grappling with in the mid-1890s.<sup>45</sup>

However, Leibniz also offers another metaphor to reinforce his distinction between different types of perceptions, but here he offers a second criterion for the possible conversion of a perception to conscious awareness:

Thus it is the habit that makes us take no notice of the motion of a mill or of a waterfall when we lived quite near it for some time. It is not that the motion does not always strike our organs, and that something no longer enters into the soul corresponding thereto, in virtue of the

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<sup>44</sup> Leibniz, *New Essays*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> See section 1.4.1, below (Model 1: The Quantitative Unconscious).

harmony of the soul and the body, but these impressions which are in the soul and the body, being destitute of the attraction of novelty, are not strong enough to attract our attention and our memory, attached to objects more engrossing.<sup>46</sup>

What Leibniz offers here is a criterion for the conversion to consciousness not based on quantity/ magnitude of the signal and its consequent ability to rise above the din of similar multitudinous perceptions, but something more qualitative: the mechanism of “the attraction of novelty”, or of what is “engrossing”. It is in this way that perceptions can migrate from vaguely registered perceptions of which we remain unaware, to those of which we become aware: apperception. Again, the details or mechanics of precisely what might make the difference is not something that Leibniz pursues. However, one thing would appear clear: he has in mind a view about the difference between *petites perception* and apperception that is less to do with differences of *type* than differences in *level*, be that quantifiable or qualitative level. They are not different types of perception as much as they are situated on different points of the same continuum of perception in general. Or as Nicholls and Liebscher put it, differences of “intensity, clarity and distinctness”<sup>47</sup>

Incidentally, Leibniz elsewhere makes the point that the human mind seems to thrive on a certain number of perceptions reaching the level required for apperception. Presumably, this is because it is only in this way that we can make sense of the world or achieve orientation within it. The alternative is a situation of overwhelming sensory input without sense. In a description that

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<sup>46</sup> Leibniz, *New Essays*, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher, “Introduction: thinking the unconscious”, in *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, ed. Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7.

perhaps provides a concrete example of Kant's later notion of blind "intuitions without concepts",<sup>48</sup> Leibniz describes a situation as follows:

But where there is a great number of minute perceptions, and where nothing is distinct, one is stunned, as when we turn round and round in continual succession in the same direction; whence arises a vertigo, which may cause us to faint, and which prevents us from distinguishing anything.<sup>49</sup>

In his 1684 work, *Meditationes de Cognitione, Veritate et Ideis*, Leibniz provides guidelines for distinguishing between true and false ideas or notions, and here he returns to the theme of *petites perception* vis-à-vis apperception, adding a complex set of categories with an exacting taxonomy of their own. At the highest level in his taxonomy Leibniz distinguishes between *obscure* and *clear* notions. (He prefers the language of obscure "notions [*notio*]", since he maintains that a cognition cannot be "obscure" in the precise sense in which he uses that term.) In Dietmar Heidemann's reading, obscure notions are not conscious because they fail what might be termed "the recognition test".<sup>50</sup> He goes on to make clarification: obscure notions are "those ideas that are not sufficient for recognizing something actually represented".<sup>51</sup> For example, if I remember an object that I have viewed before, such as a flower or a bird, but am unable to distinguish it from other flowers or birds, then the notion I have of that flower or that bird is *obscure*. This applies not only to perceptions and memories but concepts as well. In other words, the Leibnizian distinction

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<sup>48</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A51/B75, 193-94.

<sup>49</sup> Leibniz, "Monadology", section 14.

<sup>50</sup> Dietmar H. Heidemann, "The 'I Think' Must be Able to Accompany All My Representations", in *Kant's Philosophy of the Unconscious*, ed. Piero Gordanetti, Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi. Göttingen: De Gruyter: 2012. Heidemann is content to describe Leibniz's obscure notions as unconscious, although (as noted above), 'non-conscious' is a more accurate descriptor of Leibniz' constructs in this area. However, I have adhered to Heidemann's terminology when quoting his work.

<sup>51</sup> Heidemann, "The 'I Think'", 40.

between obscure notions and clear cognitions is ultimately grounded in the ability to *recognise* (i.e., which flower or bird is which).

However, clear cognitions may themselves be either confused or distinct. So, for example, it may be possible to distinguish between colours, tastes and smells without being clear on just what it is that is being seen, tasted and smelled. This is a confused cognition. Leibniz himself gives the example (which is rather closer to paradoxes concerning sorites): the idea of a heap of stones is confused, so long as the number of stones and other properties ascribed to the heap cannot be recognised. On the other hand, *distinct* cognitions enable us to tell reasonably similar things from others by their fine-grained markings etc., such as distinguishing one metal from another.

For Heidemann, Leibniz therefore actually demarcates two types of non-conscious ideas: *obscure* ideas and *confused* ideas. The former are the "*petites perceptions*" discussed earlier (e.g., the countless little perceptions that make up the sound of individual waves lapping on the shore). The latter, the *confused ideas*, are clear ideas that allow differentiation based on qualities (such as sight, taste and smell) but still not differentiate the thing itself from other things. While they can differentiate between things, they cannot tell us anything more than *that* they are different.

The bottom line here is that – contra Locke – Leibniz maintains that the soul (qua monad) is always perceiving, even if not all of them reach the level of conscious awareness. However, as Patricia Kitcher makes clear, Leibniz' concept of *petite perceptions* is not orientated towards any insight concerning the nature of a nascent unconscious. His reasoning would seem to be rather more metaphysical and strategic, related to avoiding the kind of objections relating to his theory of the soul (qua monad) that we made concerning Descartes' thinking soul:

If all perceptions had to be conscious, then his Monads would be liable to the same objections as Descartes' souls whose fundamental attribute was (conscious) thought: They would be annihilated by bouts of unconsciousness, including dreamless sleep.<sup>52</sup>

A kind of 'invention', one might say, seems to have been the child of a metaphysical argumentative necessity here. Nonetheless, this inadvertent theoretical breakthrough was to have long-lasting effects in its making possible a series of developments in the theory of mind over the forthcoming centuries. For towards the latter stages of his career, Kant – a student of Leibniz – was to move forward on his teacher's innovation, in this way providing his own fertile grounds for a more developed thinking of the unconscious (to use that paradoxical expression) in nineteenth century German philosophy.

### **1.3.3 Kant on Obscure Representations**

Until recently, Kant's understanding of the unconscious has been neglected in English language scholarship. However, recent work has sought to address this omission, noting its influence across various dimensions of Kantian thought, including the epistemological, anthropological/psychological and the moral. Of course, even then, there can be no suggestion that Kant offered any strong anticipation of a Freudian notion of an active dynamic unconscious. Yet what can be discerned are a number of key moves that were to intensify the developments in Cartesian and (especially) Leibnizian thought, and in this way pave the way for later thinkers.

Gödde's "tradition-lines" account (as outlined above), places Leibniz as the historical source of what he calls the "cognitive unconscious" tradition-line. In his account of the development of that line, Kant features very little.

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<sup>52</sup> Patricia Kitcher, "Kant's Unconscious Given", in *Kant's Philosophy of the Unconscious*, ed. Pierro Giordanetti, Riccardo Pozzo and Marco Sgarbi. Berlin, Walter de Gruyter: 2012,10. Italics and Brackets in original.

However, in what follows, it will be suggested that Kant's contribution is very significant, not only for what Götter demarcates as the "cognitive unconscious" line, but also for the Romantic tradition line.<sup>53</sup> This is an example of the interactions between the lines that is somewhat obscured in Götter's presentation.

In various ways, Kant continues Leibniz' typology of the non-conscious, albeit in amended form. He agrees with Leibniz' distinction between "obscure representations", that are had without our knowing it, and "clear representations", which are those of which we are aware. Like Leibniz, he argues that "the field of obscure representations is the largest in the human being". Further:

Clear representations, on the other hand, contain only infinitely few points of this field which lie open to consciousness; so that as it were only a few places on the vast map of our mind are illuminated".<sup>54</sup>

However, the point at which they diverge concerns Leibniz' distinct/confused distinction. For Kant (and this turns out to be far from merely a matter of semantics or grammar), the opposite of "distinct" is *indistinct* and not "confused" as Leibniz would have it. As Heidemann points out, for Kant, indistinct need not mean confused. For example, the perception one has of oneself fades out of direct consciousness (becomes indistinct) while engaged in a task requiring concentration. But that does not mean that self-representation is confused.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> This is an assessment supported by Nicholls and Liebscher, who suggest that aside from Leibniz, "Kant arguably determined the way in which unconscious phenomena were understood in nineteenth-century German thought more than any other philosopher of the eighteenth century" (Nicholls, Angus and Martin Liebscher, "Introduction: thinking the unconscious", 9).

<sup>54</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Translated by Robert Louden. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24 – 25.

<sup>55</sup> D. Heidemann, "The 'I Think'", 45: "In self-consciousness I can explicitly refer to myself as 'I', i.e., as the subject of my thought. However, I can equally direct the focus of my



The relevance of this Kantian way of distinguishing distinct and indistinct representations was revealed in his 1763 essay on “negative magnitudes” in which Kant explicitly applies this conception to the psychology of thought. Kant suggests here that the principle found everywhere in nature – that “only in so far as an equal but opposed real ground is combined with the ground of *a* is it possible for *a* to be cancelled” – can be applied to the problem of how it is that thoughts can simply disappear and be replaced by others.<sup>56</sup> Essentially, one thought is cancelled out by an equal and opposed thought. Or put in the Leibnizian language of clarity and distinctness:

In the case of the actions of the understanding we ... find that the clearer or the distincter a certain idea is made, the more the remaining ideas are obscured/ darkened [*verdunkelt*] and the more their clarity is diminished”.<sup>57</sup>

In this passage, Kant suggests that the replacement of one mental representation by another is essentially a matter of the obscuration or darkening of the prior thought by the latter. What Kant adds here to Leibniz’ notion of *petit perceptions* is a *two-way dynamism* of thought. It is not just a matter of whether a mental representation has a sufficient magnitude, or level of novelty, to force its way into consciousness; now there is a mechanism by which a conscious thought can be forced back into non-consciousness. To be sure, this is still a long way from any Freudian notion of sublimation, but it does amount to a two-way convertibility of mental content from darkness into

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consciousness on an activity I am performing, e.g., playing chess, and thereby not be constantly aware of the thought that it’s me who is performing, though I am, so to speak, in the background of my mental activity. In the first case, I have a distinct idea or representation of myself. In the second, the representation I have of myself is indistinct but not confused since “I” is a simple representation”.

<sup>56</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy” (1756), in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, trans. David Walford and Ralf Meerbore. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228. This passage is also discussed in Nicholls and Liebscher, “Introduction: thinking the unconscious”, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Kant, *The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics*, 234.

the light of consciousness and then back again into the obscurity of the non-conscious.

As Nicholls and Liebscher point out, this notion of “dark thoughts” (*dunkle Gedancken* and *dunkle Vorstellungen*) was later to be picked up by Christian Wolff and Ernst Platner respectively, and in this way was bequeathed to later German philosophy. But further, as will be seen below, the notion of dark thoughts will ultimately become the metaphorical impetus for German Romantic thinking on the unconscious.

Kant’s discussion of *dunkle Vorstellungen* in his later (1798) lectures on anthropology is somewhat better known, even if the roots of this conception in his pre-critical works are less appreciated. In §5 of his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* – a section with the telling title: “On the representations that we have without being conscious of them” – Kant, like Leibniz, challenges Locke’s denial of the possibility of having ideas without being conscious of having them. He gives two practical examples here. The use of microscopes or telescopes to aid our perception shows that sense-perception involves more than we are aware of by revealing detail that we would ordinarily overlook. Similarly, “[i]f I am conscious of seeing a man far off in a meadow, then, even if I am not conscious of seeing his eyes, nose, mouth, etc., the only proper conclusion I can draw is that this thing is a man”. In other words, sensory representations are routinely taken into account in our dealings in the world even when we are unaware of much of the content of those representations.<sup>58</sup>

For Kant then, the problem of not being able to know what you don’t know is addressed by reinforcing the distinction between indirect/mediated [*mittelbar*] consciousness and direct/unmediated [*unmittelbar*] consciousness. In the

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<sup>58</sup> Kant, *Anthropology*, 24.

second example just provided, the viewer cannot distinguish the facial features of the man standing at a distance in the meadow. Yet nonetheless, we routinely make the not unreasonable assumption that this is a man. The missing details are available to the viewer by means of *indirect* consciousness. These representations are “*obscure [dunkel]*”. On the other hand, unmediated or conscious representations are “clear and distinct”, and lead to knowledge, for they allow the individual to distinguish the object from its surroundings and discern how the object’s parts comprise the whole.<sup>59</sup>

The outcome of this line of analysis is the crucial distinction between (a) the conscious and unmediated, that lead to clear and distinct representations; and (b) the unconscious and mediated, that lead to obscure/dark representations. As will be seen in the next chapter, this latter category provided rich soil from which the German Romantic notions of the unconscious would grow throughout the nineteenth century.

Yet, Kant’s contribution to this early thinking of the unconscious is not yet done, for immediately following this section in the *Anthropology*, he provides a series of thoughts that are as profound in their quasi-psychoanalytic insight as they are brief. Kant notes that the vast field of obscure representations can only be perceived passively as a “play of sensations”, and that makes it difficult to subject to exacting analysis. The impossibility of precisely analysing such matters means that any such “theory of obscure representations belongs only to physiological anthropology, not to pragmatic anthropology”, and it is for this reason that he can say little more about such matters. It is almost as though Kant is tacitly anticipating the whole field of psychoanalytic studies, while simultaneously declaring the extreme difficulty of any such endeavour. Freud, one might suggest, would avidly agree!

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<sup>59</sup> Kant, *Anthropology*, 26.

Kant's few passing comments that follow are crucial. He suggests here the connection between obscure representations and the play of imagination, and he notes the power of these forces to make the individual into its own play thing:

We often play with obscure representations, and have an interest in throwing them in the shade before the power of the imagination, when they are liked or disliked. However, more often we ourselves are a play of obscure representations, and our understanding is unable to save itself from the absurdities into which they have placed it, even though it recognizes them ... and understanding illuminates them [...] as illusions.<sup>60</sup>

Further, Kant goes on to note – with uncommon perspicacity – the particular way in which this play of representations operates in the case of the tacit assumptions based on the way people dress, as well as the deceptions around sexual propriety. Such observations anticipate, if not Freud, then at least certain of Schopenhauer's observations on the subject:

Such is the case with sexual love, in so far as its actual aim is not benevolence but rather enjoyment of its object. How much wit has been wasted in throwing a delicate veil over that which, while indeed liked, nevertheless still shows such a close relationship with the common species of animals that it calls for modesty? [H]ere the power of imagination enjoys walking in the dark<sup>61</sup>.

It may very well be this passage to which Freud himself refers (albeit in a bit of a stretch!) in *The Interpretation of Dreams* when he comments:

Kant expresses the same idea in a passage in his *Anthropologie* [1798] in which he declares that dreams seem to exist in order to show us our hidden natures and to reveal to us, not what we are, but what we might have been if we had been brought up differently".<sup>62</sup> (p.98)

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<sup>60</sup> Kant, *Anthropology*, 25.

<sup>61</sup> Kant, *Anthropology*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> SE IV, "The Method of Interpreting Dreams: An Analysis of a Specimen Dream", 98. The content of Freud's remarks (i.e., the subject of the "same idea" remark) is telling in this connection. He is quoting Zeller's comments that, "A mind is seldom so happily organized as

Nonetheless, Kant's view of the unconscious came up against the limitations of his own thinking. As two eminent scholars recently commented, "[a]lthough the unconscious is a theme which runs through Kant's metaphysics, his moral philosophy, his anthropology, and his aesthetics, it never became an explicit question for consideration in any of Kant's works, precisely because it could not be further developed within the framework of [his] system".<sup>63</sup> Or, alternatively, as Nicholls and Liebscher put it: "Kant was more attuned to light than to darkness, and therefore shied away from direct consideration of the unconscious".<sup>64</sup>

#### **1.3.4 Spinoza on *Conatus* and Determinism**

Freud's relationship to the work of Baruch Spinoza is at least as complex as his relationships to the work of various nineteenth century German thinkers that will be considered in the following chapter, as well as the array of nineteenth century British philosophers, upon whose work Freud's debts are rather less acknowledged, whose contributions will be examined in chapters three and four.

On one hand, there is the usual relative silence concerning Spinoza in Freud's written works. But on the other hand, a strong degree of admiration for this seminal Jewish rationalist philosopher is evident in various largely solicited comments Freud is recorded to have made concerning Spinoza. On the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spinoza's birth in 1932, Freud was very

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to possess complete power at every moment and not to have the regular and clear course of its thoughts constantly interrupted not only by inessential but by positively grotesque and nonsensical ideas. Indeed, the greatest thinkers have had to complain of this dreamlike, teasing and tormenting rabble of ideas, which have disturbed their deepest reflections and their most solemn and earnest thoughts".

<sup>63</sup> Birgit Althans and Jörg Zirfas, "Die unbewusste Karte des Gemüts – Immanuel Kants Projekt der Anthropologie", *Das Unbewusste*, ed. Michael B. Buchholz and Günter Götde, vol. I (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2005), here 72. Translation by Nicholls and Liebscher in "Introduction: thinking the unconscious", 18.

<sup>64</sup> Nicholls and Liebscher, "Introduction", 13.

clear: "During my long life, I have had extraordinary respect for the person and work of the great philosopher Spinoza".<sup>65</sup> Freud went further when questioned by German philosophers in the 1930's about his indebtedness to Spinoza: "I readily admit my dependence on Spinoza's doctrine".<sup>66</sup> But what he then said is important not only vis-à-vis his debt to Spinoza, but also more broadly for his debt to various other philosophers considered in this thesis, whose work Freud declined to engage with, or reference:

There was no reason why I should expressly mention his name, since I conceived my hypotheses from the atmosphere created by him, rather than from the study of his work. Moreover, I did not seek philosophical legitimization"<sup>67</sup>

This notion of an "atmosphere created by" Spinoza is a telling one, and it might be suggested that there are various layers to this. The first relates to a quite visceral biographical connection between Freud and Spinoza relating to their heterodox Jewish identities and the way that this coloured the social reception of their ideas. Freud is quite frank about this in a 1924 essay:

Nor is it entirely a matter of chance that the first advocate of psycho-analysis was a Jew. To profess belief in this new theory called for a certain degree of readiness to accept a situation of solitary opposition – a situation with which no one is more familiar than a Jew.<sup>68</sup>

As Yirmiyahu Yovel noted, this was a feature of Freud's understanding of his own work, and it may explain something of his connection to Spinoza. "Like Spinoza", Yovel suggests, "Freud was the stranger within the gates":

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<sup>65</sup> Sigmund Freud Papers: General Correspondence, 1871-1996; Hessing, Siegfried, 1933: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss39990.02941/?sp=2&r=-0.359,-0.065,1.735,0.877,0> (24 October 2019).

<sup>66</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis, lecture 32", 107. See also Siegfried Hessing, "Freud et Spinoza", *Rev Philosophique* 102 (1977): 169.

<sup>67</sup> Hessing, "Freud et Spinoza", 168.

<sup>68</sup> SE XIX, "The Resistances to Psycho-analysis", 222.

This made him detached but not aloof [...] coupled with remarkable clear-sightedness, unmarred by devotion to ruling ideologies or by slavish respect for social and religious taboos. Such a person, by his situation, may be better placed to uncover the hidden layers of life and the mind.<sup>69</sup>

However, this biographical context aside, the “atmosphere” of Spinoza’s work might also be taken to apply to the revolutionary account Spinoza gives of the human, and the human’s relations with reality more generally: an atmosphere that was unflinchingly naturalistic as well as having a strong flavour of solemn determinism. This was a revolution that Yovel sees as linking a series of thinkers, Spinoza and Freud among them (and including also Machiavelli, Hobbes, Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger), all of whom he considers to be “philosophers of the dark enlightenment”.<sup>70</sup> What all these thinkers share is a propensity to “unmask accepted notions and established personal and social facades by digging into the unavowed motives and mechanisms behind them”.<sup>71</sup> In so doing, Spinoza, like Freud, was a social (as much as a religious) iconoclast, whose reading of reality, in its unmasking of (unconscious) ulterior motives was experienced as dire, stripped of the comforting scaffolding that reassures and instils confidence, whose only response was radical, hard-won and unadorned self-knowledge. Both versions of dark enlightenment involved what John Gray has called a “heroic refusal to flatter humankind”.<sup>72</sup>

Central to Spinoza’s diagnosis of the human condition – even in the context of the naturalistic yet rationalistic theological overlay of his thought – was the

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<sup>69</sup> Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, the Adventures of Immanence* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989), 137.

<sup>70</sup> Yovel, *Heretics*, 136.

<sup>71</sup> Yovel, *Heretics*, 109.

<sup>72</sup> John Gray, “Freud: The Last Great Enlightenment Thinker”, *Prospect*. 14 December, 2011. <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/freud-the-last-great-enlightenment-thinker>. (August 2021).

notion of humanity's "bondage" to the emotions. For Spinoza, rationality is rarely a match for the emotions that overwhelm the will and determine the mind in ways of which the individual is rarely aware. Part IV of the *Ethics* begins with the words:

I assign the term 'bondage' to man's lack of power to control and check the emotions. For a man at the mercy of his emotions is not his own master but is subject to fortune, in whose power he so lies that he is often compelled, although he sees the better course, to pursue the worse.<sup>73</sup>

Further, it is the very passivity of the emotions that is the secret of their strength, acting below the level of awareness. As he puts it "[t]he force of any passive emotion can surpass the rest of man's activities or power so that the emotion stays firmly fixed in him".<sup>74</sup>

Clearly, there is a similarity of "atmosphere" here that Freud would have recognised, for he too emphasises the sense of human bondage to the emotional life, especially insofar as these emotional impulses go underground, determining outlook and behaviour in ways that are invisible to conscious understanding. Further, these passional influences are basic. Like Spinoza, for whom all understanding of "good and evil" is naturalised ("Knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than the emotion of pleasure or pain insofar as we are conscious of it".<sup>75</sup>), there is no means by which the chthonic elements that drive the psychic life of the individual can be simply plucked out like a temporary malady; the condition of human "bondage" goes much too deep for that. All that is possible is a gradual coming to terms with one's inner landscape on the basis of particular pain points.

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<sup>73</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 320.

<sup>74</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 325. (IV, prop 6).

<sup>75</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 326. (IV, prop 8).



The comparison between Spinoza's key category of *conatus* and Freud's *libido* is an obvious one. The similarities run deep, as well as the differences. Spinoza's metaphysical and materialist psychology draws heavily on this idea of *conatus*, a concept with an ancient pedigree, and given new direction by Hobbes. In Spinoza's hands, it refers to the incessant striving of each being to persevere and thus to realise its essence.<sup>76</sup> In human beings, this striving is manifested psychologically in the efforts of human beings to satisfy desires, experience pleasure and minimise pain. As such, it is the ultimate motivation of human behaviour, prior to nobler moral motivations. As Spinoza puts it, "[n]o virtue can be conceived as prior to this one, namely, the *conatus* to preserve oneself."<sup>77</sup> Further, *conatus* is both a mental impulse, by which it is called "Will [*voluntas*]", as well as a psycho-somatic impulse, by which it is called "Appetite [*appetitus*]", and when appetite becomes conscious it is called "Desire [*cupiditas*]"<sup>78</sup> Ultimately, these are activated relative to pains and pleasures: "since hatred and love are emotions of pain or pleasure, it follows in the same way that the *conatus*, appetite, or desire arising through hatred or love is greater in proportion to the hatred and love".<sup>79</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine Spinoza's formulations being applied in a clinical setting as a way of understanding passionate action that might otherwise be regarded as bizarre. Consider, for example, Spinoza's principle that "the *conatus* of a man affected by pain is entirely directed to removing the pain".<sup>80</sup> There are also moments of quasi-psychodynamics in Spinoza's lays out in terms of relations with loved objects: "the images of things that posit the

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<sup>76</sup> "The conatus with which each thing endeavors to persist in its own being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself" (*Ethics*, 283, III, prop 7). "The mind's conatus, or power, is the very essence of the mind (*Ethics*, 306, III, prop. 54, proof.)

<sup>77</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 332. (IV, prop 22).

<sup>78</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 284. (III, prop 9, *Scholium*, 284).

<sup>79</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 297.

<sup>80</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 297.

existence of the loved object assist the mind's *conatus* wherewith it endeavours to imagine the loved object;"<sup>81</sup> and that individuals endeavour as much as possible to "imagine the object loved as bound to him as intimately as possible", with appetite "fostered if he imagines someone else desires the same thing for himself".<sup>82</sup> Of course, Spinoza was no actual clinician, nor a theorist of psychic defence mechanisms and so on. As Jerome Neu points out, "we must remember that whatever Spinoza may say about the unconscious desires he does not fit them into a larger theory of unconscious mental processes that explain their origins and mechanisms".<sup>83</sup> Still, it might be suggested, he provides ample inspiration to do so.

The comparison of Spinozistic *conatus* and Freudian *libido* is a complex matter, not least because of the variations in Freud's own account during the course of his writings. As Yovel points out, Freud's *libido* tends to be presented more as a psychic energy than an ontological principle, and there are also moments (post 1920) where it is presented in more dualistic terms (e.g., as *eros* and *thanatos*). Nonetheless, as an "atmospheric" influence, Spinoza's approach provides a strikingly apt precursor, for like Freud the human is framed in its nature as a fundamentally "finite and striving (or desiring)" being.<sup>84</sup>

Further, however similar the Spinozist and Freudian *diagnoses* of the human condition may be, there is also the issue of difference in terms of their *prescription*. In this sense at least, the difference between them seems significant. In Yovel's assessment:

Freud's ambitions were far more modest than Spinoza's. He was not concerned with salvation but with therapy. Freud lacked Spinoza's

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<sup>81</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 289.

<sup>82</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 289 and 296.

<sup>83</sup> Jerome Neu, "Emotion, Thought and Therapy: A Study of Hume, Spinoza and Freud on Thought and Passion" (Ph.D. diss., Bodleian Library, Oxford, 1974), 112.

<sup>84</sup> Yovel, *Heretics*, 146.

semireligious pathos and [yet was] better acquainted with the depths of human irrationality".<sup>85</sup>

It is perhaps telling that one of the few explicit references to Spinoza that Freud makes in his written works relates to Leonardo da Vinci. Here Freud comments on the processes implicit in da Vinci's creative work, and he compares them to "Spinoza's mode of thinking".<sup>86</sup> What is this mode of thinking? In mapping the dual influences of "passion" and "the instinct for research" in this paper,<sup>87</sup> Freud comments on da Vinci's remarkable ability to thoroughly research anatomy and then translate those findings into timeless art, and he likens this inner wrestling match – between the need for empirical research and the passion inherent in artistic creativity – as something like an historic case study for psychoanalytic theory. Again (as was the case with Plato and Schopenhauer), in the case of such a rare reference to a major preceding figure, one would have thought that Freud could have chosen a much more illuminating point of reference to Spinoza.

But here it is worth returning to the other point Freud made when asked about his scant references to the work of Spinoza (and here this might be extended to his comments on other philosophers to come): i.e., that he did not "seek philosophical legitimization". There is a legitimate argument to be made about the reasonableness of acknowledging the "atmosphere" created by the work of a philosopher – Spinoza, but as will be seen, also Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and others – that provided an essential context within which later empirical work could flourish, even as one declines to name or acknowledge that prior philosophical work. Nonetheless, Freud's point is clear: he wants his work, including the empirical and clinical sources

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<sup>85</sup> Yovel, *Heretics*, 150.

<sup>86</sup> SE XI, 75. "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood"

<sup>87</sup> SE XI, "Leonardo", 74 - 76.

for his hypotheses, to stand on its own merit, rather than to be seen as a second-hand reworking from earlier philosophical sources. One might well suggest that more frank acknowledgement should have been given, but his point is nonetheless, not without its own merit.

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Undoubtedly, the European rationalist tradition provided rich soil for the development of the thinking of the unconscious that was to develop rapidly throughout nineteenth century German thought, even as a different more empirical approach was being developed in nineteenth century (and earlier) British thought. If the Leibniz-Kant line relating to *petit perceptions*/ obscure representations could be seen as a source for later Romantic approaches to the unconscious, Spinoza's *conatus* principle would seem to be a potential source (at least in terms of its overall sense) for later drive-orientated approaches to the unconscious, ironically (given Spinoza's on "geometric method" in the *Ethics*) in an anarchic or counter-rationalist sense.

Analysis of the latter will be entered into in the following chapter. However, first it will be helpful to examine in more detail the way that Freud's understanding of the unconscious developed itself over the course of his career.

## **1.4 Freud's Concept of the Unconscious**

If, as is contended, Freud may be seen as a "philosopher of the dark enlightenment" in Yovel's sense of this term, then psychoanalysis is surely a *philosophy* of that dark enlightenment. Perhaps the key concept of that philosophy is the unconscious, a notion that seems to delight in its own Socratic irony. After all, the un-conscious is that of which – by definition – we cannot be aware; it is a place of the *unknown* that we seek (at least partially) to know. To come to know that which is unknown, one must come to dwell

attentively in the *chiaroscuro* of the psyche. This is, in a sense, to enter fully into the ambivalences of enlightenment reason.

In turning, then, to Freud's various attempts to map this "undiscovered country" of the unconscious, the tone of the discussion will change. Freud's writings eschew the exacting abstractions of Kant and Reinhold, the reconciliatory breadth of Mendelssohn, and the erudite word-play of Hamann, and the logicist naturalism of Spinoza, for the scientific register of his day.<sup>88</sup> This tone, complete with its scientific modelling and language, is consistent with the strongly *empirical* nature of his research into the unconscious, rooted as they were in his clinical practice. Freud would always maintain that his theory of psychoanalysis was built precisely upon the basis of empirical discoveries gained through his clinical practice. If Freud's enthusiastic usage of a natural scientific register tends to neutralise the imagery just surveyed, the Socratic/ Enlightenment task of 'knowing courageously' is not lost – just reborn in a late nineteenth century quasi-biomedical guise.

#### **1.4.1 Freudian Models of the Unconscious**

As Jean LaPlanche notes, Freud's use of the term "unconscious" is essentially "topographical and dynamic" in nature.<sup>89</sup> Both of these emphasises might be combined in insisting on the *systemic* nature of Freud's approach. Aspects of the system are not therefore to be understood as 'places', but as elements within a series of *processes* that when taken together provide insight into the workings of the human psyche.

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<sup>88</sup> The question of Freud's naturalistic-scientific register is the subject of discussion in chapter 3, below, particularly in the context of Strachey's translation of Freud's *Standard Edition*.

<sup>89</sup> Jean LaPlanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "The Language of Psychoanalysis", trans by Donald Nicolson-Smith. *The International Psychoanalytical Library*, 94 (1973): 475. LaPlanche is quoting from *SE XII*, 262.

As LaPlanche also notes, Freud used the term 'unconscious' in two distinct ways. Both are encompassed by the German *Unbewusst* but are abbreviated differently to establish separate meanings. On one hand, he sometimes writes of "the *system* Unconscious", a usage that is marked by "Ucs". (which translates *Ubw.*), as well as by "the Preconscious" [*Pcs*] and "The Conscious" [*Cs*]. But on the other hand, he also uses these terms in an adjectival sense, and accordingly he writes of *unbewusst* as "*ubw*" (in English, *ucs*). When speaking of an actual *structure* Freud would refer to the *system* unconscious (*Ucs.*), but when discussing and describing the *contents* of this structure he would use the adjectival unconscious (i.e., *ucs.*).

However, Freud's modelling of the unconscious underwent a process of considerable evolution through his career. For example, the nomenclature just described is predominant in his first topographic model that features the three *systems* (the Unconscious, the Pre-conscious, and the Conscious), while in his later thinking this systems model would be largely subsumed within the revisions of his model. As significant changes to his modelling are introduced that include new topographical categories (especially after 1920), the three systems approach struggles to maintain currency. What follows is a brief mapping of the evolution of Freud's topography of the human psyche that largely follows Strachey's footnote to this effect in the *Standard Edition*.<sup>90</sup>

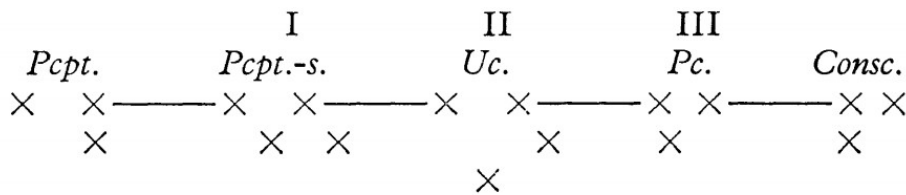
### **Model 1: *The Quantitative Unconscious***

This first pre-psychoanalytic model, which dates to 1896, and belongs to the era of his (shortly thereafter shelved) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, is an artefact of Freud's early materialist and physiological account of the human psyche that is driven largely by a quantitative theory of nervous excitation. The concept of neurones was drawn from a theory which (building on earlier

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<sup>90</sup> SE XIX, "The Ego and the Id", 24, n. 1.

work) first appeared in the work of Heinrich Wilhelm Gottfried von Waldeyer-Hartz several years earlier.<sup>91</sup> As Strachey explains, Freud used the new science of neurones here in an attempt to draw together two distinct neurological theories that were present in his day in quite an original contribution. On one hand, he drew on the approach of the Helmholtz school (of which Freud's teacher, Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke was a prominent figure) with its account of neurophysiology as being governed by chemico-physical laws, according to which the nervous system looked to maintain a constant level of excitation. On the other hand, Freud looked to combine this with the neuro-anatomist theory that had each neurone acting quasi-independently insofar as it had no direct anatomical continuity with other adjacent neurones.<sup>92</sup> In a letter to his collaborator Wilhelm Fleiss, Freud represented his theory as follows:



**Figure 1:** from: *Letter to Fliess, number 52. 6 December 1896, SE I, 234.*

In this account, individual neurones are denoted by 'X'. The model provides a mechanism by which perceptions (external stimuli) are increasingly integrated and consolidated as they pass along a route of internal excitation from bare registration all the way through to becoming conscious. Flowing from left to right, there is a progressive movement from: (a) a bare perception that appears without being remembered (*Pcpt.*) (noting that for Freud

<sup>91</sup> Heinrich Wilhelm Gottfried von Waldeyer-Hartz, "Über einige neuere Forschungen im Gebiete der Anatomie des Centralnervensystems", *Berliner Klinische Wochenschrift* 28 (1891): 691.

<sup>92</sup> See Strachey's account in SE IV, "Editor's Introduction", xvii.

consciousness and memory are mutually exclusive); to (b) the registration of the perception on the basis of association (*Pcpt-s.*) in which this registration is not yet conscious; to (c) registration for a second time by which it is lodged in the unconscious (*Uc.*); to (d) the activation of the preconscious (*Pc.*) via verbal images; and then, provided *cathexis* takes place (according to certain rules), (e) the movement of the neurone to consciousness (*Cons.*)

The essentially quantitative nature of this model is seen in the fact that the fate of the perception is a function of the level of neurone excitation, which either sees the current passed along to the next neurone (via what would later be referred to as the synapse), or not. Only at the point where the excitation passed into the level of consciousness did the move from a quantitative system to qualitative sensations and feelings occur, the distinction between which is a central theme in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.

Significantly, given its strongly quantitative orientation, this highly physiological or cognitive scientific account of the registration of perception and its possible consolidation as conscious content provides a perfect late nineteenth century neurological version of the phenomenon that Leibniz described, in the early eighteenth century, as *petite perceptions* (as considered above). After all, on Freud's account, given the open continuity from *Pcpt* to *Cons.*, mental content that is not yet conscious could just as easily be described as "non-conscious". There is nothing specific about the content as such other than its level of excitation.

Nonetheless, even though Freud would shortly thereafter abandon this work as an ongoing project given his inability to make decisive progress with his model, it was to have ongoing significance for his thought. For even as Freud shortly thereafter shifted his interests from the neurological to the psychological and clinical, it is striking just how much of the formal



modelling of the earlier neurological excursions survived into his psychological works. Indeed, according to Strachey, Freud “never gave up his belief that ultimately a physical groundwork for psychology would be established”, and much of the earlier work is directly perceivable in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

[M]uch of the general pattern of the earlier scheme, and many of its elements, were carried over into the new one. The systems of neurones were replaced by *psychical* systems or agencies; a hypothetical ‘cathexis’ of psychical energy took the place of the physical ‘quantity’; the principle of inertia became the basis of the pleasure (or, as Freud here called it, the unpleasure) principle. Moreover, some of the detailed accounts of psychical processes given in the seventh chapter owe much to their physiological forerunners and can be more easily understood by reference to them. This applies, for instance, to the description of the laying down of memory traces in the ‘mnemic systems’, to the discussion of the nature of wishes and of the different ways of satisfying them, and to the stress laid upon the part played by verbal thought-processes in the making of adjustments to the demands of reality.<sup>93</sup>

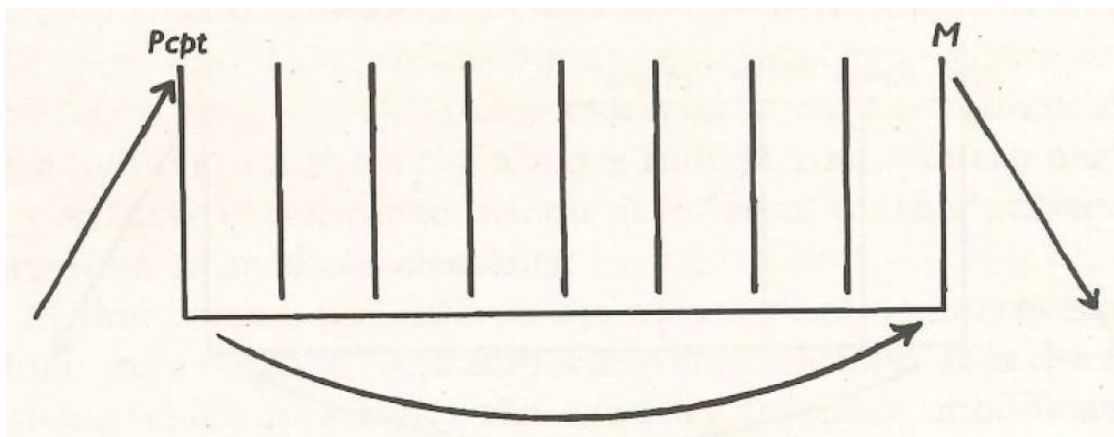
Nonetheless, it is striking that even by 1896, Freud’s model of the unconscious remains at such a comparatively low level of sophistication, barely more developed than what was already available in the philosophical theories of Leibniz and Kant. While Freud has clearly rejected is anything like the unity of thought and consciousness, the nature and significance of perceptions that have not ascended to the level of consciousness remains obscure. Certainly there is no sense yet of the potency of the *Uc*, or *Pc*. to influence the *Cons*, let alone in ways that might undermine its efficacy.

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<sup>93</sup> SE IV, xvii-xviii.

## Model 2: Regression and the Unconscious

The next steps are taken quite rapidly thereafter, in the final section of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In "The Psychology of Dream Processes",<sup>94</sup> Freud gave what he called a "crude hypothesis" for understanding the mental apparatus. The three figures below (figs 2.1 – 2.3) are, Freud admitted, "[q]uite imperfect [but] analogies of this kind are only intended to assist us with our attempt to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible"<sup>95</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear from Freud's letters to Fliess from the time that his struggles to apply a neuro-biological account of the mind to the subject of dream psychology was not progressing well. As Gödde also notes, Freud was most enthusiastic concerning the possibilities of applying the work of Gustav Fechner to the problem.<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 2.1:** The Regression Model, *SE V*, 537

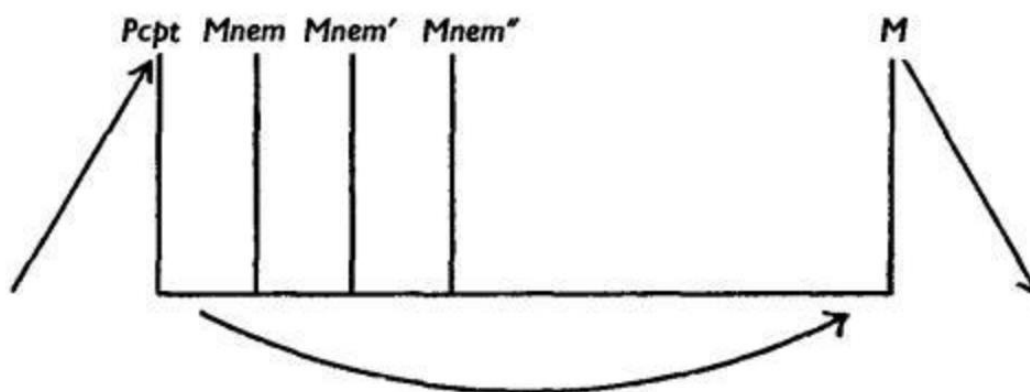
<sup>94</sup> *SE V*, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes", 509 f.

<sup>95</sup> *SE V*, "Dream-Processes: Regression", 536.

<sup>96</sup> *SE V*, "Dream-Processes: Regression", 536, n.1. The paper concerned is Gustav Fechner, *Elemente der Psychophysik*, Vol 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Hartel 1889), 520-1. See Freud's letter to Fliess, February 9, 1898, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess*, 299; *Briefe an Wilhelm Fliess*, 325. A concise version of Gödde's discussion is in his "Freud and nineteenth-century philosophical sources on the unconscious", in Nicholls and Liebscher, 2010, 272-73.

In this first of three models Freud states that “all our psychological activity starts from stimuli (whether internal or external) and ends in innervations”.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the perception (*Pcpt*) starts at what Freud calls the “sensory” side of the apparatus, and in the normal course of events advances to the ‘Motor (*M*)’ side of the apparatus. Essentially, this first model in the series confirms a basic assumption held by Freud: that the psychological apparatus is essentially a *reflexive* one.

Freud then develops the next model as a means of giving an account of *memory*:



**Figure 2.2:** The Regression Model, *SE V*, 538

This second apparatus must be, according to Freud’s understanding, *behind* the first apparatus. This is his way of dealing with a conceptual problem: memories, to perform their function, must have a permanent effect on the psychic apparatus. The problem here for Freud is that with countless memories having a permanent effect on the psychic apparatus, how will that

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<sup>97</sup> *SE V*, “Dream-Processes: Regression”, 537, *n.2*. Strachey indicates that Freud uses the word ‘Innervation’ in different ways. In this context it refers to “[a]n *efferent* system, [t]hat is to say, a process tending towards discharge”. (Italics in original, brackets mine.)

same apparatus remain open to new and fresh perceptions? The answer is to have this second and separate apparatus that lies *behind* the first.

Clearly then, “memory-traces” (memories) make permanent modifications to the psychic apparatus itself. The *Pcpt* (“The Perception System”) itself has no memory, for if it did, the accumulative effect of countless past perceptions would cripple the system’s ability to take on fresh perceptions. “Mnemic systems” (memories, denoted in fig 2.2 as *Mnem*, *Mnem’* and *Mnem’’*) work on rules of association. The first rule of association is ‘simultaneity in time’, so, in this model Freud is referring to things that happen at the same time. Other kinds of coincidence also form associations. Freud sums up his key viewpoint here:

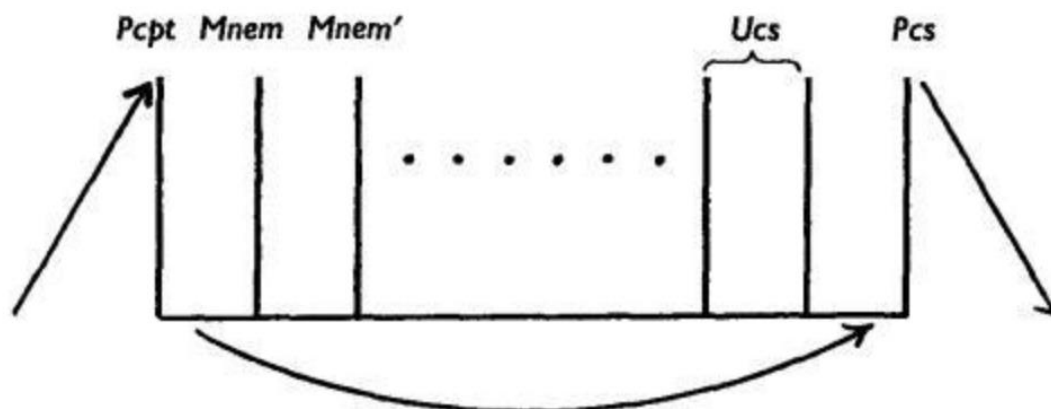
We must therefore assume the basis of association lies in the mnemic systems. Association would thus consist in the fact that, as a result of the diminution in resistances and a laying down of facilitating paths, an excitation is transmitted from a given *Mnem.* element more readily to one *Mnem.* Element than to another.<sup>98</sup>

It is at this stage the Freud outlines his understanding of the conscious and the unconscious. First, for reasons discussed, The *Pcpt* (the perception system) has no capacity for memory. Second, the *Pcpt* provides our consciousness with a large array of perceptions. Third, our memories, except for the more profound ones, are unconscious. They can be made conscious but even in the unconscious they can produce the full effects of the original perception. When made conscious, memories exhibit greatly reduced ‘sensory qualities’ than those that accompanied the original perception.

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<sup>98</sup> SE V, “Dream-Processes: Regression”, 539.

At this juncture, Freud acknowledged that he had not yet addressed the role that Dreams play in the psychic apparatus, and therefore he moves on to the third of his diagrams:



**Figure 2.3:** The Regression Model, *SE V*, 541

In this model Freud moves to the “motor end” of the psychic apparatus (i.e., the righthand side of the figures 2.1 and 2.2 above). Here we are introduced to the *preconscious* (*Pcs*). Freud appears to be moving to a more linear depiction of the psychic apparatus, but it is by no means complete.<sup>99</sup> In this diagram we learn that “the unconscious system” (*Ucs*) has no access to consciousness except through “the preconscious” (*Pcs*). Dream-formation starts in the *Ucs* and can only proceed to the *Pcs* because “[t]here is a lowering of the resistance that guards the frontier between the unconscious and the preconscious”.<sup>100</sup> In simple energetic terms, Freud describes how the reversal of “current” in the psychic apparatus provides a theory for the basis of what goes on in dreams. He calls this process “regression”, stating:

During the day there is a continuous current from the *Pcpt.* system flowing in the direction of motor activity; but the current ceases at

<sup>99</sup> Consciousness, denoted by Freud as *Pcpt.=Cs*, is discussed in the figures that follow.

<sup>100</sup> *SE V*, “Dream-Processes: Regression”, 542.

night and could no longer form an obstacle to a current excitation flowing in the opposite sense.<sup>101</sup>

### Model 3: *Repression*

The following two decades saw enormous development in Freud's working model, from this simple yet still largely neuro-biological account of dreams (1900) to a psychodynamic theory of regression (1923) that relates to neuroses and other phenomena in ordinary life.

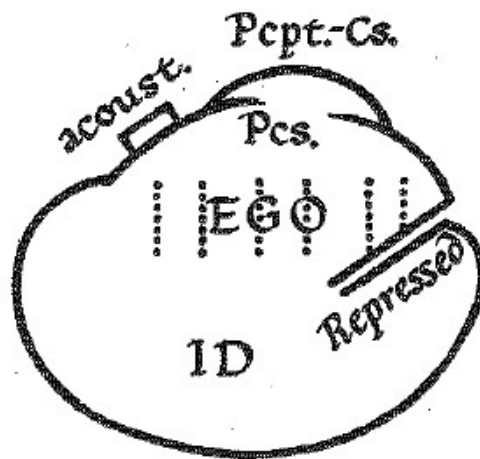


Figure 3: "The Ego and the Id", SE XIX, 24

In this model Freud is seeking to describe the relationship of the Ego (*das Ich*) to the Id (*das Es*), and he does so using the "Platonic" analogy of horse and rider that was discussed earlier. Accordingly, the ego is charged with the task of "hold[ing] in check the superior strength" of the id, and sometimes is "obliged to guide it where it wants to go".<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile, the ego is said to be "ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body".<sup>103</sup> Further, the "cap of hearing" (*Hörkappe*) – seen in Figure 3 as "acoust". – is reminiscent of Freud's 1891 work, *On Aphasia*, a further striking example of the continuity between Freud's early neuro-biological models and his later psychodynamic thought. In that work, Freud

<sup>101</sup> SE V, "Dream-Processes: Regression", 543.

<sup>102</sup> SE XIX, "The Ego and the Id", 25. Brackets mine.

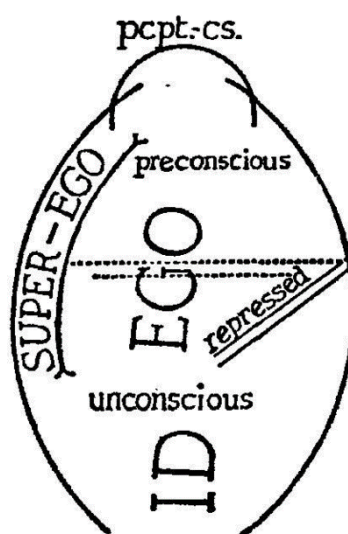
<sup>103</sup> SE XIX, "The Ego and the Id", 26. n. 1.

concluded that auditory perceptions are the primary sense source for the preconscious.<sup>104</sup>

#### **Model 4: *The advent of the Superego***

While Freud had introduced the topic of the superego in his paper in 1923, he had not incorporated it into his modelling of the psychic apparatus.<sup>105</sup>

However, in 1933, as figure 4 illustrates, Freud attempted (imperfectly, by his own admission) to show “the structural relations of the mental personality”.



**Figure 4:** “Dissection of the Personality”, *SE XXII*, 78

On this account, the superego has a number of functions. Its primary role is to act as the conscience, but since the ability to judge and evaluate is part of its function, it is also involved in self-observation as well. The superego essentially takes over the role originally played by the external power and authority of the parent. With growth and maturity this external parental authority is internalised and “[t]he superego takes the place of the parental

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<sup>104</sup> See Chapter 3 below.

<sup>105</sup> See “The Ego and the Superego”, *SE XIX*, 28 – 39.

agency and observes, directs and threatens the ego in exactly the same way as earlier the parents did with the child".<sup>106</sup>

The *id* is described here as functioning purely quantitatively, for it is *dominated by the* pleasure principle. Freud declares that "all there is in the *id*" are "[i]nstantial cathexes seeking discharge".<sup>107</sup> While the ego is concerned with qualitative entities (i.e., everyday ideas), the *id* functions qualitatively and mechanistically through the discharges of energy. It is notable, however, that while the system *Unc.* is dominated by the *id*, "the other agencies of ego and super-ego also have an unconscious origin and unconscious portion ascribed to them."<sup>108</sup>

#### **1.4.2 Freud's Socratic "Dark Enlightenment"**

From beginning to end, Freud saw psychoanalysis as an empirical scientific activity. So, when Freud follows the Enlightenment imperative to "dare to know", he is first and foremost seeking to do so via a scientific world view. In his 1932 paper, "The Question of *Weltanschauung*", he states this unequivocally,<sup>109</sup> and he goes on to give a detailed account of what he means:

Psycho-analysis, in my opinion, is incapable of creating a *Weltanschauung* of its own. It does not need one; it is part of science and can adhere to the scientific *Weltanschauung*. This, however, scarcely deserves such a grandiloquent title, for it is not all comprehensive, it is too incomplete and makes no claim to being self-contained and to the construction of systems. Scientific thought is still very young among human beings; there are too many of the great problems which it has not been able to solve.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Lecture XXIX", 22.

<sup>107</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Lecture XXXI", 74.

<sup>108</sup> "Unconscious", LaPlanche, 476. See also, "The Ego and Id", SE XIX.

<sup>109</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Lecture XXXV The Question of a *Weltanschauung*", 158 – 182.

<sup>110</sup> SE XXII, "Lecture XXXV", 181 – 2.



For Freud, the value of psychoanalysis is the contribution that it makes to science, which he states quite clearly as being “[p]recisely in having extended research into the mental field”.<sup>111</sup> Yet, there is perhaps a touch of Socratic caution in Freud’s reservations concerning the scientific *Weltanschauung*, to which he is nonetheless so committed. Accordingly, even in “daring to know”, the limitations of the scientific *Weltanschauung* – limitations that are being progressively pushed back through time – still need to be taken into account.

There is a deep paradox to the nature of psychoanalysis as a fruit of the Enlightenment, for in a very important sense, *only* an Enlightenment science is capable for pointing the way through the midst of its devotion to enlightened reason to show the inevitable helplessness of reason itself at a certain point. Very like Socrates, Freud came to show the limits of human reason, *even as* he continued to believe in and assume its unsurpassability and necessity. Enlightenment reason, he might have said, is no ultimate panacea, but still it’s all we have.

Freud always took his method of psychoanalysis as being unflinchingly orientated toward assisting analysands to fulfil the Delphic Oracle’s lofty dictum to “know thyself”. And yet, equally central to his conclusions (shown time and again clinically, and incorporated into his theories) is the eventual impossibility of the full realisation of that calling. The darkness of the human soul would always prevail, even if strategic victories were still possible. Freud’s famous reflection in *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-95) that psychoanalysis could only hope to achieve the transformation of “hysterical misery into common unhappiness”<sup>112</sup> was to hold true throughout the voluminous stages

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<sup>111</sup> SE XXII, “Lecture XXXV”, 159.

<sup>112</sup> SE 2, “Studies on Hysteria”, 305.

of his thought. It is through the light of reason that human individuals can be freed from ignorance and contradiction, but that victory is never complete. Further, its incompleteness is not a function of any contingent failures to see therapy through to its culmination; rather, it is a reflection of the nature of the human psyche itself that is essentially and constitutionally hidden from the full transparency of reason. Indeed, reason, along with the activity of consciousness itself, is only ever the emergent outcome of primal psychic depths whose secrets are only ever very partially revealed, and at great effort.

There are various other senses in which Freud followed the key intuitions of Socratic thought, not the least of which concerns his devotion to the outcomes of focused attention and dialogue as a method of attaining something like truth (or at least as a way to banish untruth). In the present context, here is another fundamental Socratic motif: Freud too understood that there was wisdom – indeed, “enlightened” insight – in understanding the inescapable *limits* of one’s own wisdom. Full transparency of the human soul is never a possibility, either for the neurotic individual whose intractable psychic conflicts leads to suffering and misery, or for the analyst who tries to understand and aid – “midwife” like – in the dawning of understanding, as well as the difficult but essential process of “working through”.

If – as will be seen in the next chapter – the nineteenth century philosophical reaction to the Enlightenment also appealed to the hidden depths of the human soul that are beyond the reach of reason narrowly conceived, it will be argued that Freud’s own method of making this point was not through a *rejection* of the Enlightenment, but through its *promotion*. It is through his very devotion to the Enlightenment project, his quest to bring the unconscious into the transparency of conscious scrutiny, that Freud was able to demonstrate the limitations of the Enlightenment and the unconquerable dominion of the dark unconscious.

## Concluding Remarks

This brief discussion of seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalist philosophy has pointed the way towards the possibility of a psychoanalytic unconscious, even if their approaches were more to do with the non-conscious than the active unconscious. There is certainly not yet any attempt to develop a systematic understanding of the dynamics of the unconscious. This is not surprising, given that their forays were motivated by other concerns.

This point notwithstanding, it is clear that the notion of obscure or dark representations of mind would inspire German Romantic philosophy that reacted to perceptions of the lifelessness of rationalistic thought, as well as the third tradition-line that also emerged from Schelling's work, and was developed by a range of other key things considered in the next chapter. Chapters three and four will then seek to describe other influences on Freud's *Weltanschauung* by exploring the possibility of a hitherto unexplored *Anglo-Scottish* tradition-line.

## Chapter 2

# The Nineteenth Century German Unconscious

The previous chapter provided an examination of key themes in 17-18<sup>th</sup> century European philosophy relating to non-conscious operations of the mind, from the various tones of Cartesian thought in the mid seventeenth century, through the seminal German essays on the nature of enlightenment in the late eighteenth century, to Kant's late lectures on anthropology close to the dawning of the nineteenth century. What emerges is a sense of growing complexity (and perhaps perplexity) concerning the understanding of human psychic life. Was it possible to maintain a commitment to the spirit of the Enlightenment whilst at the same time acknowledging the strange realities that were being noted concerning liminal and even outright chthonic elements of human mental functioning? Could the apparent influence of non-conscious mental processes be accommodated alongside a rationalist approach to such matters, and might such insights actually amount to the *fulfilment* of the Enlightenment quest to understand; or rather, does a robust sense of a dynamic unconscious amount to an *anti*-Enlightenment turn? What, eventually, should be made of a "dark [or obscure] Enlightenment", to use Yovel's phrase?

Set against this backdrop, the final part of the chapter surveyed Freud's early and late attempts to capture his evolving sense of the topography of the psyche in a series of his published diagrams. It is almost possible to see at work here a classical Enlightenment thinker, seeking to be faithful to, and enact, the scientific *Weltanschauung* of his day, while also looking to take into account (for reasons consistent with the empirical Enlightenment tradition itself) the strange evidence concerning the obscure corners of the mind.

In exploring the eighteenth century roots of the idea of the non-conscious, this first chapter was also an engagement with Günther Gödde's tradition-lines theory of the unconscious. In doing so however, it took an approach that drew the lines of Gödde's "cognitive unconscious" somewhat more broadly than he does in his proposal, and in the process it looked to show how the lines between Leibniz's conception of *petit perceptions* blur tellingly with Kant's account of obscure representations in such a way as to provide the grounds for the development of nineteenth century Romantic notions of the unconscious. Further, the geometric rationalism of Spinoza provided a notion of elemental *conatus* that reshaped the terrain of the philosophical significance of the passions, and in so doing lit the way toward a more drive-based and anarchic sense (or "atmosphere") of the unconscious which, as Gödde notes (though without giving Spinoza much focus), is also a clear influence in Freudian thought.

In what follows in this chapter, the focus will be turned to the main terrain of Gödde's second and third tradition lines. In the first section, the focus will turn to the German Romantic tradition-line, focusing on especially on Schelling and Carus, in light of the question as to whether there is evidence of proto-psychoanalytic thinking in nineteenth century German philosophy. The focus will then turn to what Gödde describes as the drive-related irrational tradition-line, focusing again on Schelling (with some focus on the work of Jakob Böhme), as well as Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Nietzsche. The chapter ends with some reflections on Freud's own instinct/ drive theory in light of the foregoing analyses.

Nonetheless, by the end of the chapter, the question will remain as to whether Freud's own intellectual inheritance is to be entirely summed up within this world of German Romantic and drive-related philosophy (along with its earlier Enlightenment precursors). It is that question that will establish the

basis for the second half of the thesis that will consider the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Scottish legacy, and the case that can be made for a fourth tradition-line of the unconscious via that quite distinct (itself internally diverse and externally connected) line of thought.

## 2.1 The German Romantic Tradition-line

In his theory of the tradition-lines of the unconscious, Günther Gösde traces the Romantic tradition-line back to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, noting Freud's own recollection of his having been deeply moved by a lecture he attended in 1873, as a school boy, in which a fragment of the poem, *Die Natur* – thought at the time to have been composed by Goethe – was read.<sup>1</sup> Without going as far as Paul Bishop, who suggests that we cannot “understand Freud – as well as, by extension, the concept of the unconscious in the nineteenth century – until we are able to understand his relation to Goethe”,<sup>2</sup> Gösde acknowledges the enormous influence of Goethe on nineteenth century German Romanticism, from the *Sturm und Drang* era through Weimar Classicism, and in his influence on later thinkers.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, Freud was an admirer of Goethe, quoting him often in his work. But for Gösde it is F.W.J Schelling who is the major theorist of not only the Romantic tradition line, but the drive-related one as well. It is difficult to disagree with this assessment,

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<sup>1</sup> SE XX, “Autobiographical Study”, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Bishop, “The Unconscious from the Storm and Stress to Weimar Classicism: The Dialectic of Time and Pleasure” in *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, ed. Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Angus Nicholls has quite feasibly suggested that while the “broad cultural influence exerted upon Freud by [Goethe] (and especially the Goethe of *Faust*) is profound and multifaceted ... this influence arguably belongs not to the epistemology, but rather to the rhetoric of psychoanalysis”, and he suggested that Freud's invocations of Goethe were perhaps more a way of lending “cultural legitimacy” to his own work than acknowledging any theoretical or scientific debt. (Nicholls, Angus, “The Scientific Unconscious: Goethe's Post-Kantian Epistemology”, in Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher (eds), *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 107.)

such is the fecundity and the mercurial nature of his thought across its many eras.

Over the last couple of decades, Schelling's work has been the subject of much renewed interest, and in what follows Göttinger's intuitions on the importance of Schelling for understanding the Romantic tradition-line (as well as the drive-related line) will be echoed. Indeed, so long as we are talking about German thought and its wider influence, Sean McGrath makes a valid point when he declares Schelling to be "the philosopher with the greatest claim to being the original theoretician of the unconscious".<sup>4</sup> Of course, having such a profile in relation to the development of this idea in *German* philosophy is not the same thing as saying that he is the ultimate founder of the theory of the unconscious as a whole, especially if other sources that were to be crucial for the development of the Freudian unconscious (as discussed in chapters three and four below) are also taken into account. These matters will be examined further in what follows, and in considering the "Romantic unconscious", the other figure to be examined here is C.G Carus, whose 1846 book, *Psyche*, provided such a compelling template for later thought.

### **2.1.1 Schelling on Nature, Freedom and the Unconscious**

The details of Schelling's trajectory from his early start within the Fichtean movement, to becoming such a pioneering thinker for a range of different areas of nineteenth century thought is clearly not a matter that can be done any justice here. Nor will it be possible to add substantially to the growing literature (including various contributions in Anglophone scholarship<sup>5</sup>) to the

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<sup>4</sup> Sean J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of the Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*. Hove: Routledge, 2012, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Of particular note here are: Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy, An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1993; Sean McGrath, *The Dark Ground of the Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*; and Matt Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud, and the Birth of the Modern Psyche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

way that the idea of the unconscious developed out of the heart of his thought. Nonetheless, Schelling's account of the unconscious has a key place within the narrative being developed within this thesis, even if – as is being maintained here – the direct lines of influence to early Freudian thought at few.

Recent scholarship on the early Schelling has found that Goethe himself was very influential in turning the young Schelling away from the influence of Fichte, thereby setting him free to pursue his early philosophy of nature.<sup>6</sup> His response to the transcendental idealism of his day was his *Naturphilosophie* (1797) and *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) in which he looked to address the relation between transcendental consciousness and the thing in itself. As Bowie put it, the problem for Schelling was that “as long as the rigid distinction between matter and life in the metaphysical grounds of natural science was held to, transcendental philosophy would be unable to explain its own emergence”.<sup>7</sup> While a rigidly mechanistic scientific account could describe nature in its regularities, it could say nothing about what had brought nature into being in the first place. Further, what does it say about nature that it makes possible self-reflective subjectivity? For him, these lacunae left the philosophical door open to the necessity of rethinking the understanding of nature. Not only was Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* to be a critique of mechanistic thought that interpreted all natural processes in a deterministic way and then had to shoe-horn in an anomalous sense of human freedom, but it also looked to overcome this dualism by reclaiming a dynamic and holistic sense of nature in which human freedom has a ‘natural’ place.

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<sup>6</sup> See Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, 80.

<sup>7</sup> Bowie, *Schelling*, 35.



In thereby rejecting Fichtean idealism, Schelling rejected the reduction of nature to the rational transcendental subject. In doing so under the influence of the early Romantic movement, the whole field of the study of nature was opened, in all its many general and specific aspects, in its own right. A theory of “world soul”, as the active presence of nature, was developed, and what emerged was a lasting conception in his thought of what Ffytche calls the “reciprocal relation between nature and subjectivity ... the presentiment that nature and mind are held in dynamic tension”.<sup>8</sup> Rather than to enclose nature within the subject of transcendental idealism, subjectivity was now understood in the context of the wider unfolding of nature. This was no simple reversal of Fichteanism by reducing the subject *to* nature, but was rather a matter of placing the two in a tension that generated a series of polarities, even while the two sides of the polarity remain joined in an overall commonality. These polarities are, as McGrath puts it, among the central “leitmotifs” of Schelling’s thought, early and late:

Schelling remains convinced, from his earliest treatises to his last lectures, that all intelligible structure, mental or material, physical or metaphysical, finite or divine, is characterized by polarity, opposition, and the creative and dynamic tension between incommensurables ... [However] all polarities are undergirded by a concealed commonality, a deep ground of unity that makes the opposites possible, for only that which is in secret alliance, according to Schelling, can be truly opposed.<sup>9</sup>

Nature, on this account, is the “dark ground [*dunkler Grund*]”;<sup>10</sup> it is Spirit [*Geist*] prior to the emergence of self-consciousness. As such, *nature is the unconscious*, pure and simple. And as the unconscious, nature is impenetrable

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<sup>8</sup> Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, 79.

<sup>9</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 2. Schelling’s enduring ‘kinship in opposition’ with Hegel is perhaps here most evident.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006, 44 and *passim*.

to (conscious) reason, even as it leaves its traces everywhere in the material things of the world, but also within the human subject. It is not difficult to conceive of clinical applications here, since for psychoanalysis the unconscious also contains its inscrutable truths that are not immediately available to consciousness, even if the traces of the unconscious are everywhere to be found. Yet, for Schelling, human subjectivity can only be made comprehensible in terms of its manifestation of nature in its absoluteness, and this includes human freedom itself, which too is a gift of this dark ground. Mind and nature thus reflect each other:

Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature. Here then, in the absolute identity of Mind in us and Nature outside us, the problem of the possibility.<sup>11</sup>

But if the rejection of transcendental philosophy made possible *Naturphilosophie*, it was his metaphysics of nature that made possible Schelling's account of the unconscious. In his *Naturphilosophie* (but also through other phases of his thought), nature is the "productive". Recalling Spinoza's characterisation of "*natura naturata*" (i.e., nature *naturing*, nature as producer; as distinct from nature *natured* or as product<sup>12</sup>), natural things are the products of a productive source; they are those items that empirical science might know. We may always have empirical access to the products of nature, but we cannot know the productivity as such: the vast organic stream behind all nature that is not in any way separate to it. Even words like 'behind' are misleading since they denote position and separation. Yet, even if this productivity outside of consciousness cannot be known, it is the unseen force at work within nature. Further, not only is conscious and free

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<sup>11</sup> Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. by Errol Harris and Peter Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 42.

<sup>12</sup> See Spinoza, *Ethics*, 234 (I, 29 *Scholium*).

subjectivity itself a product of this dark ground, but the unconscious regions of the psyche are a direct expression of this dark ground of nature.

It is for this reason that Schelling, in unison with the Romantic movement more generally, was so fascinated by art and creativity, for a high quality piece of art is nothing less than a spontaneous expression of the dark ground of the unconscious (or nature); it is nature momentarily revealing itself by taking tangible shape. Creativity is an absolute principle of nature and is thus also an authentic principle of subjectivity. This conception goes back to Schelling's Jena period and the influence of thinkers like Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, for they too saw art as the route by which that which was beyond consciousness could be known. Art is an empirical object like all others, but it plays an important role that would distinguish it from other knowable objects. He sees art as a product of the productivity, or put in other terms, something of a doorway to the unconscious:

{A}rt is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious. Art is paramount to the philosopher, precisely because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if a single flame, that which in nature and history are rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought, must forever fly apart.<sup>13</sup>

By opening "the holy of holies" to the philosopher, art makes the unknowable knowable. A work of art is a type of portal to the monistic organic absolute, for it exposes the underlying absolute within the contingent; the unconscious to the conscious. Although the artwork in question exists in objective form (and therefore relates to the conscious mind) its significance is in its unique

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<sup>13</sup> Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. by Peter Heath. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001, 231. Henceforth referred to as *STI*.

capacity to give access to the unconscious. Similarly, the rational philosophical production “directs itself immediately inwards, in order to reflect it in intellectual intuition”.<sup>14</sup> However, rather like a metaphor – that works by being evocative and vital rather than precise or scientific, and which loses its vitality and revelatory power if it is too ruthlessly rationally analysed – art reveals the unconscious in ways that cannot be matched by rational analysis:

[Art] ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form, namely the unconscious element in acting and producing, and its original identity with the conscious<sup>15</sup>

McGrath puts the role of the artist for Schelling very nicely when he refers to the Schellingian artist as “the shaman of the absolute”:

Like a somnambulist, she knows what she is doing without knowing what she is doing, and her activity is unhampered by the reflection that splits the absolute self into subject and object.<sup>16</sup>

The reference here to occult-like performance is apt, since this brand of “dark Romanticism” was rife with a fascination also with “the gothic, the magical and the mysterious”.<sup>17</sup> Schelling himself indulged his own fascination with psychological disorders (understood as troublesome manifestations of the unconscious natural), parapsychological experiences, and the so-called supernatural (which in Schelling’s case would be the ‘natural’, for the human soul is entirely *within* nature). If these interests were perhaps related to the death of his wife Caroline,<sup>18</sup> it must also be seen in the context of the times in which there were concerted medical and quasi-medical research programs

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<sup>14</sup> *STI*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> *STI*, 231.

<sup>16</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> See Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke* 9, 1 – 110. Translated as: *Clara or, On Nature’s Connection to the Spirit World*, trans. by Fiona Steinkamp. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2002.

afoot studying everything from prophecy, to dream phenomena, clairvoyance, intuition, animal magnetism, trance-like states, and somnambulism. What united these research programs was the contention that these states were not so much pathological conditions as higher-order states of mind and unconscious performances that gave a peek behind the veil into the dark ground of consciousness itself. At the same time, they demonstrated the poverty of rationalistic psychologies (and the epistemologies that undergirded them) that preached a gospel of self-mastery and subjective self-transparency. It is difficult to think of a clearer opposition to Reinhold's "enlightened individual" who deals only with "clear and distinct concepts".

A tradition of what might be called psychiatry thus emerged, grounded in this Schellingian conception of the dark ground of nature, that looked to study these phenomena (if perhaps also to treat their symptoms).<sup>19</sup> In a sense, Carus's *Psyche* (discussed immediately below) fits into this tradition as well. So too does Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert's *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (1814),<sup>20</sup> published almost a century before Freud's own landmark study of dreams, in which he claims that in the dream state the soul expresses itself most directly in the language of symbolism. In this way, dreams express "the night-side of nature", in which "the poet 'hidden in us' re-activates the original language of consciousness".<sup>21</sup> Another aspect of this movement was the surprisingly long-lived 'science' of mesmerism that originated with Anton Mesmer in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and was transformed into Braid's science of

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<sup>19</sup> Sean McGrath develops this idea in interesting ways: "The dark ground has a crucially positive role to play in the economy of the Schellingian self: ground without existence is schizophrenic, lost in a world of its own; existence without world is a hysteric, its life is always abnegated, deferred and carried by the other, to whom it can only say Yes" (McGrath, *The Dark Ground of Spirit*, 180).

<sup>20</sup> Gotthilf von Schubert, *Die Symbolik des Traumes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 17 (including McGrath's own Schubert translations).

hypnosis by the middle of the nineteenth century, itself a revealing episode (and one of significance in relation to the early Freud) that will be examined in more detail below.

The question might now be asked as to the relationship between Schellingian thought (and the Romantic movement more generally that he helped drive), and the roots of Freudian psychoanalysis. The connection is complex but far from direct. The complexity relates to the fact that Schellingian Romanticism was a key part of a movement that created a vast *Zeitgeist* in which Freud was clearly immersed in one way or another, and which provided him with a rich reservoir of possibilities to guide thought. In this sense (as will be discussed further below), the *historical* significance is clear. However, it is another thing entirely to see Freudian psychoanalysis as directly *drawing from* this tradition or its descendants. Schelling was – as McGrath has aptly noted – a perverse kind of Augustinian thinker (“the Schellingian heart is restless until it rests in God”<sup>22</sup>) in the sense that immanence is a participation in the deeper life of (divine) nature itself. But it is difficult to think of a guiding philosophy that is more anathema to Freud than such a historical immanentist metaphysic. True, they share an anti-rationalism that rejects a static essentialist metaphysics – temporality is key to both – but the very *meaning* of temporality is utterly different for Schelling and Freud.

It is telling that – even in a text in which he makes a strong case for the Schelling to be “the original theoretician of the unconscious” – Sean McGrath himself makes almost precisely this point. Having suggested that Freud’s and Schelling’s conceptions of the unconscious share much in common (in this case regarding Freud’s theory of death drive), McGrath then points out that

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<sup>22</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 188.

whereas Schelling's erotic principle is "distributed throughout a living cosmos", Freud's is concentrated within an atomistic object oriented ego:

The difference is decisive, for it marks the exact place where Freud departs from organicism, asserting instead the arbitrary and ultimately tragic nature of individual life ... The consequence of Freud's concentration of *eros* in the ego is the human being no longer belongs to the greater whole. But is ultimately an absurd eruption of self-reflective and self-interested life in a mindless universe.<sup>23</sup>

Schelling's understanding of the human psyche is steeped in teleology, for consciousness is an unfolding of what is latent in the dark ground of the unconscious; it is part of the itinerary of nature as it develops itself in history en route to the absolute. In contrast, Freud is a committed (almost programmatic) anti-teleologist; he is (as Yovel termed him) a philosopher of the "dark enlightenment" – *not* the dark ground of spirit, but the *absence* of such illumination. If teleology looks to explain immanence by reference to an unfolding principle that exceeds it, Freud rejects both the metaphysical underpinnings of any such idea, as well as the theological (be it naturalistic or revelatory) atmosphere that such an idea breeds. The method of Freudian psychoanalysis is to undertake an *archaeology* of the psyche, but he has no interest in an theories of psychological *teleology*. Again, this is a point that McGrath fully concedes: if the Schellingian unconscious infuses the psyche of the subject with a taste of the absolute, the Freudian unconscious is of an utterly different kind:

The Freudian unconscious is a residue of the past, not a forerunner of the future; it does not unfold, but reacts ... The work of classical Freudian analysis is primarily one of unearthing the frustrated desires of infancy, of bringing them into language ... so that the primitive energy they harbour ceases to obstruct civilized life ... [so there can be a movement from] neurotic suffering to ordinary unhappiness.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 92-93.

<sup>24</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 183-84.

It is not for nothing that Freud brackets his own science of psychoanalysis with Darwin's destruction of theocratic biology and Copernicus' destruction of the theocratic cosmos, each of which undermined the ideal of the Divinely-sanctioned unfolding of the natural world. In opposing what he sees as the "human megalomania" of creationism and egocentrism, Freud similarly rejects any notion of human suffering as having any underlying significance than the impact of contingent "whips and scorns of time".

### **2.1.2 Carus on the Development of the Unconscious Soul**

The work of Carl Gustav Carus (mentioned above), was, by his own account, inspired by his encounter with Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*:

That the movement of the stellar bodies, the orbit of the planets and comets and moons, was in just the same measure an annunciation of life itself as were the metamorphoses of plants and the circulation of the blood corpuscles in the animal spirits – in this insight I had experienced the liberation of my spirit from the dark cramped ideas of a dead mechanism, and the desire to proclaim the triumph of this knowledge and bring it to the attention of the world motivated me above all other things.<sup>25</sup>

No more clearly is this influence seen than in Carus' work, *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul*, the first part of which deals with the theme of the unconscious.<sup>26</sup> This work is a remarkable and highly influential fusion of a Romantic sensibility, a broadly Schellingian view of the unconscious, Aristotelian teleological metaphysics, and contemporaneous empirical biology. These diverse threads are brought together in an outline of the

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Bell, "Carl Gustav Carus and the Science of the Unconscious", in *Thinking the Unconscious*; eds Nicholls and Liebscher, 163. Bell is quoting Carl Gustav Carus, *Mnemosyne: Blätter aus Gedenk- und Tagebüchern*. Pforzheim: Flammer und Hoffmann, 1848, 442.

<sup>26</sup> Carl G. Carus, *Psyche: On the Development of the Soul, Part 1 The Unconscious*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Carlos Drake, A.K. Donoghue, Thomas Logan and Murray Stein, trans. by Renata Welch. Thompson, Conn: Spring Publications, 2017.



various evolutionary stages of the soul's passage from primitive forms of life to the human psyche.

In introducing his theoretical framework, Carus declares himself to be a *monist* from the outset, firmly rejecting proliferating dualistic theories where “[t]he soul had to be considered a stranger introduced into this shell [the body] at a later stage”.<sup>27</sup> In Carus’ thinking, from the moment of conception, the divine spark is so thoroughly infused into each and every human cell that at no stage could one talk of the soul as being separate to the organism which is the growing human being. The role that the soul exerts in the monistic model is one of shaping or forming in the Aristotelian sense, and in his Introduction Carus cites *De Anima* 11.1: “The soul is the primary act of the physical body capable of life”. He then identifies the soul with the “life force” or “formative instinct”. Again, in the Aristotelian sense, it is self-moving. Carus is not interested in making theological statements but it is clear that by making the soul and the life force one and the same, and identifying this term as “essentially unmoved, moving itself and others from itself” that “it must share in the divine”.<sup>28</sup>

This is the point at which Carus drifts into more metaphysical arguments in his *Psyche*, but through it the clear purpose of his whole argument becomes apparent: “All attempts to separate the soul from the palpable organism and distinguish it from organic life will fail”.<sup>29</sup> Carus’ distinctive view of the unconscious is built on this monistic principle, for in his approach the role of the soul is always one of *shaping* and *forming* the organic elements of the

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<sup>27</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 22.

human person. The soul is never considered as a separate entity to those organic elements.

Importantly, Carus' theory relies on the empirical sciences of his day (especially with regard to cellular biology), and consequently, even with its debt to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, it is a theory of the unconscious that is closely aligned with the empirical sciences of his day. For him, the role of the unconscious in this scientific psychology is clear: "Psychology's most important task is to penetrate into regions where the life of the soul is entirely unconscious".<sup>30</sup> This serves to highlight one of the more distinctive elements in Carus thinking on the relationship of the conscious to the unconscious: "[T]hat the ability to transfer skills and knowledge from consciousness into the unconscious truly belongs to the height of human perfection".<sup>31</sup> He draws on the example of the pianist who in rehearsal concentrates on every key, placing fingers carefully in the right places with the right amount of pressure. Eventually, with sufficient repetition, the required movements sink back into the realm of the unconscious. It is this *sinking back* that is significant, since Carus sees "all mental characteristics that come to the surface later in conscious life" as having been "present in the soul of the embryo". Thus, the conscious life of the soul lies in the region of the unconscious and emerges from it".<sup>32</sup>

There is an Aristotelean *entelechy* at work at the heart of Carus' understanding of the unconscious. Just as the mighty Oak tree is already present in the acorn, so all that we become as adults is already in the embryo, and in fact, even further back (applying the latest biology of his day) to the very cellular structure of all human beings. Combining the metaphysical and the

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<sup>30</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 30. Italics in original.

<sup>32</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 32.

biological, Carus sees “the first unconscious working of the divine idea that is to become the soul” stemming from the very biology of procreation itself.<sup>33</sup>

This unconscious force serves two functions in the biological organism: first, it ensures that the one and the same basic form are maintained throughout the life of the organism (rather than splintering into a number of different forms at different stages of life). Second, this work of the soul, as unconscious force, serves to determine the whole entity (so that, for example, the acorn grows into an Oak, and not a Maple).

There is a striking fusion of metaphysical language with empirical biology here, for while the unconscious soul is presented as the individual manifestation of the Divine spark, it is also the very principle of the consistency and continuity of organic form. Indeed, the contemporary reader cannot help but be struck by the similarities between Carus’ understanding of the role of “the unconscious force” and that of current-day DNA theory.<sup>34</sup>

When considering the composition of cells, Carus states clearly: “[t]he original life idea of the organism is ... realized in its own unique way in each of these countless cells”.<sup>35</sup>

Carus goes on to reinforce this building-block-of-life notion throughout *Psyche*. The shaping process undertaken by the unconscious soul is responsible for the formation of a number of organic systems within all living organisms, but it is the nervous system in particular that he singles out as “the true and proper psychical system, since only the higher concentration of its

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<sup>33</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> It would be over thirty years after the publication of *Psyche* before the Swiss Biologist Friedrich Miescher would isolate DNA in cellular material, and not until the ‘double helix’ theory of Watson and Crick developed in the 1950s, that the full significance of the role of DNA in inheritance would be understood.

<sup>35</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 36.

sentiences can develop into consciousness".<sup>36</sup> For Carus, it is this organic development of the nervous system that enables the development of consciousness in human beings.

There is, however, a region in the life of the organism that is inaccessible to the light of consciousness in Carus' theory, and this is the *absolute unconscious*. In the embryonic stage, when development was the sole task of the *entelechy*, then one might say that the unconscious "spread over the whole reign of the idea within us".<sup>37</sup> This might be further defined as the *general absolute conscious*. With human maturity comes consciousness, and thus the dominance of the absolute unconscious is now partial, but even then: "all the forming, destroying, and life recreating processes still remain completely outside of consciousness".<sup>38</sup> This view of the relationship between the *partial* and *general absolute unconscious* again underscores the monism of his model. Moods and thinking itself can be influenced by physical symptoms like an upset digestive process or changes in blood pressure. So close is the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious that they are indeed "different aspects of the same divine unity".<sup>39</sup>

Despite Carus' highly dynamic conception of the unconscious, there is also an interesting throw-back to something like the Leibnizian notion of *petit perceptions* in Carus' idea of *relative unconscious* which he designates as the "largest area of the mind's world in a fully mature soul".<sup>40</sup> Essentially this area acts as an unconscious storage area for all those things which cannot be held in consciousness at any given time. Yet this points to the importance of

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<sup>36</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 59.

<sup>37</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 69-70.

<sup>38</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 70. Italics mine.

<sup>39</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 71.

<sup>40</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 70.

*reciprocity* in the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious.

While the effect of the absolute unconscious on the conscious life of the individual is profound, the opposite is also the case. For those (once) conscious feelings and cognitions that are stored in the relative unconscious until required by consciousness affect the absolute unconscious as well.

If there is a dominating characteristic of the unconscious in Carus' thinking it is that of *necessity*, and here "the opposition between the ego and the outside world, like that between necessity and freedom, comes into prominence".<sup>41</sup>

The shaping force of the unconscious is inexorable. However, freedom, individuality, and "a sense of uniqueness" do emerge with the development of self-consciousness. In this, "a certain separation from the world as a whole is felt". However, most of the time, this freedom from the necessity of the unconscious is a wavering and unstable freedom, and counter to this growing separation of individuality, the absolute unconscious maintains constant connectedness since "all threads linking the individual to the whole remain unbroken in the unconscious".<sup>42</sup>

Carus' commitment to *Naturphilosophie* is profound. Not only is his unconscious the "*primordial source of life*", but it is also "intimately merged with the life of the universe".<sup>43</sup> It is thus also relentless in its activity. While all conscious processes eventually require rest and recuperation, "[i]n the entire realm of the soul, *fatigue does not exist*".<sup>44</sup> Once again, Carus is true to his biological model when he uses the indefatigability of the constantly pumping

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<sup>41</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 78.

<sup>42</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 78. C.G Jung acknowledges Carus' ideas in his paper "The Origin of the Hero" in *Collected Works*, V, 258.

<sup>43</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 83.

<sup>44</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 74. Italics in original.

heart, the tireless working of the lungs and the secretions of the glands as examples of the constant activity of the unconscious soul.

There is a sense in which Carus' strongly empirical scientific account of the unconscious – his considerable effort (and skill) in integrating his view of *Naturphilosophie* with the strictures of contemporary medical science – brings his work into the general neighbourhood of the Freudian *Weltanschauung*. However, a poignant moment is reached when his method prompts him to ask about the possibility of *pathologies of the unconscious*. Notably, in the case of the absolute unconscious, he concludes that such illness is precluded: neither “the concept of illness nor of evil in the moral sense exist in divine reaches of the unconscious”. This is because the *entelechy* of the soul cannot be thwarted. Pathologies of the body are of course possible, but even here Carus points to the self-healing properties of the body which he sees as the work of the unconscious “underly[ing] everything that combats illness and strives constantly to restore health”.<sup>45</sup> From the body's ability to combat fever, to the clotting of blood to stem blood loss, to the mending of broken bones, all this is evidence of the unconscious at work.

Here the *necessity* of the unconscious is at play, but in a highly idealist fashion. While the idea of the unconscious as a force for necessity running counter to conscious freedom is a point of commonality with the Freudian unconscious, other features reiterate the gulf seen earlier in the case of Schelling. For Freud's anti-teleological sense clashes head on with Carus' strongly teleological (indeed Aristotelian) grand narrative concerning the unconscious. Freud's early training in experimental psychology, coupled with the stern injunctions from Franz Brentano during his early university years to

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<sup>45</sup> Carus, *Psyche*, 87.

shun Romantic Philosophy (matters examined in the following chapter), held sway throughout Freud's career.

Further, and at least as profound, is the overall character of Carus' unconscious as a cosmic principle of something like benevolence. What McGrath observed about Schelling – that he “had no such concept of repression [and] nor does he need one ... [since] there is nothing intrinsically horrible about life for Schelling”<sup>46</sup> – might equally be applied to Carus. For there is an almost unqualified generosity about Carus' unconscious soul that provides a stark contrast to the sinister lurking, and at times malevolent threat, of the Freudian unconscious.

## **2.2 The Drive-Related Irrational Tradition-line**

In moving on now from the German Romantic tradition-line of the unconscious (at least in terms of two of its most powerful advocates), we turn now to what Gödde described as the “drive-related irrational” tradition-line. Here the work of Schelling returns in the context of his (re)definition of will as drive and desire, as well as how this aspect of Schelling's work was developed in the work of Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Nietzsche. It is in these contexts that Freud's own Instinct/Drive (*Trieb*) theory will then be examined.

### **2.2.1 Schelling's Middle Period, Böhme and the Emergence of Drive theory**

Schelling's work takes a somber turn in the ‘middle’ years of his thought (during the *Weltalter* period, named after the title of the unfinished *Ages of the World* project (1809-1827), that was published posthumously). Commencing with his 1809 *Freedom* essay, and emerging more strongly in *Clara* (1810) (in the wake of the loss of Caroline in 1809), Schelling's thinking moves away

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<sup>46</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 183.

somewhat from its emphasis on impersonal immanentism towards a renewed focus on transcendence and the tragic. This hallmark of Schelling's middle period is accompanied by a new kind of duality. McGrath's summation of the transformation seen in *Clara*, captures this mood well:

[N]ature is characterized as a fallen order which fills us with equal parts wonder and horror, the monstrous product of the failure of the dark ground to adequately found spirit. The split in nature, its antagonism to its own truth, cuts through the self: the Schellingian personality is divided against itself. The dark ground is not the self-equilibrating cosmos of the nature-philosophy but the unruly, dangerous, even sick underbelly of being, as likely to drive us mad as to launch us into a personal relationship with God ... [Nature] is both home and horror, cosmos and catastrophe.<sup>47</sup>

This changed view of the larger picture of the cosmos also has implications for understanding the nature of human subjectivity. For we too then are an outcome of this new dualism. Schelling suggests that there are two principles in tension within us: "an unconscious, dark principle and a conscious principle".<sup>48</sup>

Personal tragedy acknowledged, the 'middle period' was also a time when Schelling would fall under the influence of Franz von Baader, the early nineteenth century German Catholic philosopher-theologian and physician who would expose Schelling to a considerable body of theosophical and occult literature, but also the alchemico-theosophical thought of the seventeenth century figure Jakob Böhme. Indeed, noting the extent of Böhme's influence on Schelling in this period, McGrath (who has played a major role in furthering scholarly attention to this matter) has even suggested that Böhme might reasonably be described therefore as "the origin of the

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<sup>47</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 83.

<sup>48</sup> Friedrich W.J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter*, ed. M. Schröter. Munich: Biederstein, 1946, 4.



psychodynamic notion of the unconscious”<sup>49</sup> (a claim that while not without merit, is – as will be argued below – somewhat overly fixated on the German tradition). While some have contested the link between Böhme (and Theosophy in general) with Schelling, it is clear (despite Schelling’s scant acknowledgement of his sources) that he had read Böhme as early as 1799 (the early Romantics being somewhat obsessed with the works of theosophy), and in depth during the 1806 to 1809 period. So clearly does Schelling’s *Freedom* essay reflect Bohemian ideas, that in their English translation of the work, Love and Schmidt go so far as to include a translation of Jakob Böhme’s *Mysterium Pansophicum*, thereby clearly accentuating the important role that Böhme’s Theosophy played for the work.<sup>50</sup> In McGrath’s assessment, it is through Schelling’s *Freedom* essay that “theosophical themes first enter mainstream nineteenth-century philosophy (if they are not already there) and contribute, through philosophy, to the psychodynamic horizon of late nineteenth-century Europe.”<sup>51</sup>

The critical philosophical service that Theosophy seems to have performed in the hands of Schelling during his middle period is that (as Gödde points out in his sketch of the third tradition-line) there is a redefinition of the will as impulse (*Drang*), drive (*Trieb*), and desire (*Begierde*). Again, McGrath puts the matter pithily: “On the theosophic view, personality is primarily the product of drive and desire rather than representation and knowledge.”<sup>52</sup> Here we have moved a long way from the mainstream German Enlightenment’s ideal of “clear and distinct concepts”.

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<sup>49</sup> Sean J. McGrath, *The Dark Ground of the Spirit: Schelling and the Unconscious*. Hove: Routledge, 2012, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Schelling, *Freedom*, 85 – 98.

<sup>51</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 45. Brackets in original.

<sup>52</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 46.

If Böhme's *Mysterium* provided some key starting points for Schelling's departure from his early period thinking, a major influence concerned the issue of theodicy: the problem of how one can account for evil at the hands of a loving God. Showing the influence of the Kabbalah, Böhme postulated an "abyss" or "unground" [*Ungrund*], which he describes as an "eternal nothing". This nothing is not a 'thing', but is a pervasive reality that shapes all things. Böhme explains:

[The non-ground] forms an eternal beginning as a craving [*Sucht*]. For the nothing is a craving for something, the craving is itself a giving of that which is indeed also a nothing as merely a desiring [*begehrende*] craving.<sup>53</sup>

This "nothing" is then described as a craving that forms in itself the *will* to something. However,

[T]he will rules over the craving; thus we recognise the will as the eternal omnipotence. For it has no equal, and though the craving is in fact an arousal of attraction or desire, it is, however, without understanding, and it has a life but without intelligence ... we thus recognize the eternal will-spirit as God and the stirring life of the craving as nature...<sup>54</sup>

The sense in which this text (dated May 1620) anticipates the key themes in nineteenth century German thought (across a range of thinkers discussed here, and beyond) cannot be doubted. Schelling's *Freedom* is likewise a work of theodicy. In terms not greatly dissimilar to Böhme's, Schelling too sees creation in terms of a great endless struggle orientated toward addressing imbalances. Yet, for both, this tumult is not so much a negative or destructive force but a restlessness that is the crucible through which life and creativity

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Schelling, *Freedom*, 85.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Schelling, *Freedom*, 86.

emerge. The alternative is a flat sameness that is the opposite of life. In his 1815 draft of *Die Weltalter*, Schelling puts it this way:

All life must pass through the fire of contradiction. Contradiction is the engine of life and its innermost essence. From this it follows that, as an old book says, all deeds under the sun are full of trouble and everything languishes in toil, yet does not become tired, and all forces incessantly struggle against each other. Were there only unity and everything were in peace, then, truly nothing would want to stir itself and everything would sink into listlessness.<sup>55</sup>

Neither *Freedom* nor the subsequent *Ages of the World* represent efforts on Schelling's part to provide a doctrine of the unconscious. The former work is a bold attempt to re-map theodicy while the latter revises the former with the language of the "doctrine of potencies". Still, McGrath underscores the unique contribution made by Schelling to the notion of the unconscious in both these works, noting that in the *Freedom* essay Schelling succeeds in separating 'spirit' and 'consciousness', two notions that were hitherto conflated in Western thinking. In fact, in *Freedom*, Schelling even makes the theodically radical argument that Spirit itself is fundamentally un-conscious, with no sense of its own character or its own creative activity. As McGrath outlines the issue here:

Just as "self-revelation" comes out of the unground's separation into two wills, consciousness emerges out of but (does not precede) its fundamental choice. To be conscious is to be aware of who you have become, and by means of consciousness of having become someone, to have a past for the first time. The decision by which an individual becomes the person he or she is destined to be separates time into a finite period prior to the decision (the eternal past) and a present that begins with the decision. Such an act must remain unconscious; to make it conscious would be to undo consciousness itself.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, trans. Jason Wirth. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 90.

<sup>56</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 15.

It helps to recall that in *Freedom*, Schelling is attempting to address the subject/object divide that is at the heart of transcendental philosophy. After all, judgements about the world are only possible if these two are connected in a robust way, since it would not be possible for the transcendental subject to make such judgements if there was a complete disconnect. His claim is to deny that there is any gulf to be bridged here; that *in a sense* judgement and the thing judged are *already* be the same. Of course, the 'in a sense' matters here, for this is not to claim absolute uniformity. Otherwise, everything would be the same as anything else, which is precisely the view of the utter uniformity of the Absolute that Hegel famously alluded to in his *Phenomenology*: of the Absolute "as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black", in which "cognition [is] naively reduced to vacuity".<sup>57</sup>

Whereas in his early work Schelling conceived of the unconscious (that also resides within the unconscious subject) as both non-representable and pre-cognitive, after 1806 his thinking changes under the influence of Böhme. What he finds in Böhme is the *volitional* unconscious. This is no longer an epistemological matter that was prefigured in Kant's notion (considered above) of "obscure representations", but rather a matter of the basic drivenness of the cosmic unconscious Absolute. Schelling (following Böhme) thus divinise both *drive* and *desire*, making them cosmic ultimates. Drive (as McGrath puts it) is "at the foundation of the divine life, the impulse toward self-revelation that sets the unground into motion", while desire is "the means by which the unground accomplishes its goal".<sup>58</sup>

However, if this Theosophic vision of the anarchic driven and desiring nature of the Divine Absolute emerges (in adapted form) during Schelling's middle

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<sup>57</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 9. Preface, §16.

<sup>58</sup> McGrath, *Dark Ground*, 181.

period, the tradition-line that emerges from it in later nineteenth century German thought tended to be a stripped-down secularised version of it, as will be seen in what follows. Nonetheless, there is a case to be made that Freud's own dynamic drive theory can be understood as a kind of distant relative to the Schelling's middle period thinking, even if he never acknowledged any such debts to Schelling or the theosophical tradition. Certainly, his own physicalist-materialist stance would have made any such acknowledged debt highly unlikely.<sup>59</sup> But further, there is also the possibility (to be fleshed out in detail below), that Freud had his own largely independent lines of tradition that while inevitably influenced by these major currents in German thought, had their own more empirical roots.

For now, however, the focus turns to the way in which subsequent German thinkers themselves adapted this second Schellingian legacy, shaving away the more mystical and gnostic elements. This secularising task is a key feature of the work of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann, as they convert this drive theory into a set of ideas more palatable to the secularising spirit of late nineteenth century German philosophy. But it also falls to Nietzsche to draw out some of the more radical elements of this approach, in a context in which any more traditional notion of the Divine is declared to be entirely absent.

### **2.2.2 Schopenhauer on Will and the Fragility of Consciousness**

If there is an obvious point of continuity between Schelling's middle period and Schopenhauer's more naturalistic philosophy, it is the ambitious cosmic 'canvas' that they each seek to sketch. For Schopenhauer's vision in his *The World as Will [Wille] and Representation [Vorstellung]* (first edition, 1819),

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<sup>59</sup> In stark contrast to Freud's position, C.G. Jung's Analytic Psychology embraces the work of Theosophy, and even Alchemy, at considerable length. See especially Carl G. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 13, *Alchemical Studies*, and vol. 14, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967. This is an issue that will be considered in the thesis Conclusion, below.

makes of the category of Will the ultimate principle of reality that explains every facet of existence, including the most basic principles of the human psyche. Schopenhauer's Preface, that opens his great work, begins with the observation that in it he seeks to "convey a single thought",<sup>60</sup> and the notion of this blind cosmic striving he calls "*Wille*" is that thought.

In this regard, a central to Schopenhauerian contention is the non-uniqueness of humanity in relation to this one overwhelming cosmic principle. For human beings are as driven by the principle of Will as any other being in the cosmos, even if in their case this unconscious principle resides powerfully beneath a veneer of conscious rationality that emerges from it, while being no match for its primitive source. As Schopenhauer puts it:

Unconsciousness is the original and natural condition of all things, and therefore is also the basis from which, in particular species of beings, consciousness appears as their highest efflorescence; and for this reason, even then unconsciousness still always predominates.<sup>61</sup>

For Schopenhauer, the unconscious Will is the primary element in all human beings. The intellect on the other hand, is utterly secondary: "[I]n all beings the will is the primary and substantial thing; the intellect, on the other hand, is something secondary or additional, in fact a mere tool in the service of the will".<sup>62</sup> In Schopenhauer's hands, willing becomes the summative category to understand "all desiring, striving, wishing, longing, yearning, hoping, loving, enjoying, rejoicing and the like" of all living things, including humans".<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. by Judith Norman, et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. by E.F.J Payne. New York: Dover, 1958, 142

<sup>62</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 204.

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*, trans. by Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 38.

Consequently, the extolling of rationality, or even of basic deliberation in acting, is revealed to be an illusion.

This “will to life [*Wille zum Leben ...*] manifests itself in reference to the individual as a hunger and fear of death; in reference to the species, as sexual impulse and passionate care for the offspring”.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Schopenhauer’s strongly anti-dualist position (that in a very different register recalls the hylemorphism of Carus), means that “[t]he whole body is nothing but objectified will”.<sup>65</sup> So wanting, striving and trying (i.e., acts of the Will) are not things that happen separate to our bodies, but they *are* the body actualising Will; the body *is* the Will in action. For example: “[t]eeth, gullet, and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse; grasping hands and nimble feet correspond to the more indirect strivings of the will which they represent”.<sup>66</sup> Will and action are thus not related by cause and effect, but are “one and the same thing”.<sup>67</sup> As Christopher Janaway puts it, if a conscious rational decision is made to act, this, for Schopenhauer, is no “different in principle to the beating of the heart, the activation of the saliva glands, or the arousal of the sex organs. All can be seen as an individual organism manifesting will”.<sup>68</sup>

For Schopenhauer, the Will is, in Kantian terms, *the thing in itself*. As such, there is no causal link between the activity of Will and the empirical world as experienced. It is *prior to*, and *the basis upon which*, the world is experienced. It is the summative category par excellence. In this way, his undermining of

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<sup>64</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 484 – 5.

<sup>65</sup> Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, trans. by E.F.J Payne New York: Dover, 1958, 100.

<sup>66</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 107.

<sup>67</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 1. trans. E.F.J. Payne, 98.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer, A Very Short Introduction* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 35.

Enlightenment adulation of rationality is almost total. Schopenhauer need not *deny* rationality – indeed, he can allow that human beings make conscious rational choices, and act in accord with them, all the time – but rather he *subsumes* what we call and experience as rationality within the orbit of the operation of will. As Schopenhauer puts it: “[t]he will is the innermost, the kernel of every individual thing and likewise of the whole: it appears in every blind operation of a force of nature: it also appears in deliberative human action”.<sup>69</sup> We can consciously tell ourselves all manner of stories about our rational motives, but in fact rationality comes too late to explain our actions: eventually, it is Will that is driving all.

This is the context for Schopenhauer’s famously rich proto-psychoanalytic insights into the interplay of unconscious Will and conscious thought, and in particular the covert operations of the Will that dominate and manipulate consciousness. There is something of a paradox. On one hand, there is in Schopenhauer a near complete eclipse of teleology (something that brings his thought into much closer connection to Freudian psychoanalysis than to any *Naturphilosophie*. Will is blind: a “blind impulse [*Drang*], a dark, dull driving [*Drang*]; a “purely blind impulse to exist, without purpose or goal”.<sup>70</sup> In plants, Will shows itself as a “purely blind impulse to exist, without purpose or goal”, in animals it shows itself in slightly more developed ways, and in humans “it is clothed in so much cognition and veiled so thoroughly by the capacity for deception that their true essence comes to light almost by accident or in isolated incidents”. But through it all, it is the same blind Will at work.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 135.

<sup>70</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 174.

<sup>71</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 181.



But on the other hand, Schopenhauer's Will is nonetheless capable of what appears to be strategically complex and manipulative operations. *Prima facie*, the strategic action by a blind force seems paradoxical. Of course, the same paradox exists within Freudian thought *visa-vis* the "genius" of the unconscious that seems much 'smarter' than the hapless and naïve conscious ego. Not only is Plato's "rider" out-muscled by the ignoble horse it needs to guide, but (it would seem), he is no match for the horse's guile either.

That issue aside, if Will literally explains all, then Schopenhauer lavishes much attention on revealing how this is so even in humans, despite the layers of obfuscation we erect in believing our conscious life to be the whole story of our thinking and acting. In this way, he reveals the ubiquity of sexual desire; Will's prohibition of representations that may arouse emotions of a certain kind; of our constant self-deceit concerning how we feel about others; as well as all kinds of psychopathologies that can be traced back to what Freud would later call the repression of painful memories, and the substitution of other content in their place.

Indeed, the senses in which Schopenhauer's work anticipated many of Freud's key ideas are many. There is, of course, a clear anticipation of Freud's concept of *repression* and along with it the link to trauma and psychopathology. For Freud, repression (as he puts it in 1919) "lies at the basis of every neurosis, as a reaction to trauma".<sup>72</sup> Schopenhauer has a similar trauma-aetiology, based on a similar notion of repression. To take just one example:

[T]his will...makes its supremacy felt in the last resort. This it does by prohibiting the intellect from having certain representations, by absolutely preventing certain trains of thought from arising, because it knows, or in other words experiences from the self-same intellect, that

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<sup>72</sup> SE XVII, "Introduction to Psycho-analysis and the War Neuroses", 210.

they would arouse in any one of the emotions previously described. It then curbs and restrains the intellect and forces it to turn to other things ... We often do not know what we desire or fear. For years we have a desire without admitting it to ourselves or even letting it come to clear consciousness, because the intellect is not to know anything about it, since the good opinion we have of ourselves would invariably suffer thereby. But if the wish is fulfilled, we get to know from our joy, not without a feeling of shame, that this is what we desired.<sup>73</sup>

It is also not difficult to perceive significant similarities between Schopenhauer's *Will* with Freud's *Id*. As Young and Brook note, both are unconscious and ungovernable, "seeking satisfaction endlessly and insatiably, [both] provide the most powerful motives in human life, [both] cause rationality and conscious mind to come to be, [and both] are needed to explain thought, feeling and action".<sup>74</sup> Schopenhauer's account of Will can accordingly be compared with Freud's account of the Id in the *New Introductory Lectures* (1933):

It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality [...] We approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations [...] It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization [...] only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle.<sup>75</sup>

Young and Brook also point out that Schopenhauer articulated the psychic mechanism that Freud would later call *resistance*. For example, Schopenhauer refers to "this resistance on the part of the will to allow what is contrary to it to come under the examination of the intellect is to be found in the place

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<sup>73</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, vol 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne, 208.

<sup>74</sup> Christopher Young and Andrew Brook, "Schopenhauer and Freud" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 75 (1994): 111.

<sup>75</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis XXXII: Anxiety and Instinctual Life", 105-6.

where madness can break the mind".<sup>76</sup> Of course, the power of Will (as also Id) to resist the intellect (or conscious ego) is prodigious in both cases.

There is also a keen sense in which Schopenhauer's works prefigure something of the theory underlying psychoanalytic therapy with regard to the therapeutic worth of bringing unconscious psychic material into the conscious realm where it can be addressed, albeit with difficulty:

Every new adverse event must be assimilated by the intellect, in other words, must receive a place in the system of truths connected with our will and its interests...As soon as this is done, it pains us less, but this operation itself is often very painful, and in most cases, takes place only slowly and with reluctance.<sup>77</sup>

This is not the place to closely analyse these and many other striking examples of Schopenhauer's anticipations of psychoanalytic ideas and mechanisms. Better at this stage to go directly to Freud's own writings on these matters, and to build an assessment on that basis.

In his earlier psychoanalytic works, there are a few scattered allusions to Schopenhauer. In the first edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* there are a small handful of references, including two to "dream formation",<sup>78</sup> and one to "insanity" drawing an analogy to dreams,<sup>79</sup> but the details are quite sketchy. By 1905, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud shows an awareness of Schopenhauer's prior work on the priority of sexuality in human psychic life. "Arthur Schopenhauer, the philosopher", he writes, "showed mankind the extent to which their activities are determined by

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<sup>76</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, Vol 2, 400. (Payne.)

<sup>77</sup> Schopenhauer, *Will*, Vol 2, 400. (Payne.)

<sup>78</sup> *SE IV*, "The Scientific Literature Dealing with the Problems of Dreams: The Moral Sense in Dreams", 68, and, "The Scientific Literature Dealing with the Problems of Dreams: Postscript 1909", 94.

<sup>79</sup> *SE IV*, "Method of Interpreting Dream: An Analysis of a Specimen Dream", 115.

sexual impulses – in the ordinary sense of the word”.<sup>80</sup> That much, of course, would have been common knowledge to his readers, and there is little more here to indicate a more substantial acknowledgement of Schopenhauer’s extensive anticipations.

It is only after 1914/15 that Freud’s references to Schopenhauer become more explicit and frank in acknowledging the significant extent of Schopenhauer’s prefigurings. In a 1917 essay, Freud directly addresses the connection between Schopenhauer’s Will and Freud’s own drives: “There are famous philosophers who may be cited as forerunners – above all the great thinker Schopenhauer, whose unconscious ‘will’ [*Wille*] is equivalent [*gleichzusetzen*] to the mental instincts [*seelischen Trieben*] of psycho-analysis”.<sup>81</sup> There are also at least two occasions in which Freud acknowledges the similarity but indicates not having read Schopenhauer until after his own theory of psychoanalysis had been developed. In his 1914 *History of the Psycho-analytic Movement* (which seems like a perfect place to reflect on such matters), Freud makes the very frank admission that “what [Schopenhauer] says about the struggle against accepting a distressing piece of reality coincides with my conception of repression [*Verdrängungsbegriffes*] so completely that once again I owe the chance of making a discovery to my not being well read”.<sup>82</sup> He makes essentially the same point in his 1925 “Autobiographical Study”. Writing there of the “large extent to which psycho-analysis coincides with the philosophy of Schopenhauer”, Freud admits that “not only did he assert the dominance of the emotions and the supreme importance of sexuality but he was even aware of the mechanism of repression”. However, this is “not to be

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<sup>80</sup> SE VII, “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality”, 134. Note that this remark comes immediately after he implicates Plato in the same move to ‘normalise’ his own claim about the primacy of sexuality.

<sup>81</sup> SE, XVII, “A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis”, 143-44

<sup>82</sup> SE, XIV, “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement”, 15.

traced to my acquaintance with his teaching”, since he had “read Schopenhauer very late in life”.<sup>83</sup>

Much has been written about Freud’s responses (as well as his silences) concerning this matter, and there has certainly been much doubt expressed about whether his claims to have not been familiar with Schopenhauer’s works is believable. After their own inquiry into the feasibility of Freud’s claims, Young and Brook conclude that while “[t]here is no definitive way to settle the question”, they consider that the weight of circumstantial evidence would suggest that “the deep similarities in their theories were not just a coincidence”.<sup>84</sup> What there can be no doubt about is that the general ideas of Schopenhauer would have been known to Freud, but the question of his serious reading of his works is another question. Here there is a similar issue to Freud’s acknowledgement of his reliance on the “atmosphere” of Spinoza’s work. Young and Brook provide a wealth of circumstantial evidence to justify at least this claim, and perhaps also this: “Freud’s claim that he made his discoveries without being influenced by Schopenhauer would be like someone today claiming that she or he discovered dynamic psychology without being influenced by Freud!”<sup>85</sup> The discussion, of course, relates to just what “influenced” needs to mean here.

There is another way to look at this issue, however, and that is to suppose a wilful strategic ignorance on Freud’s part along the lines of his 1931 comment to Lothar Bickel concerning his active decision *not* to read Nietzsche, lest it confirm his own empirical research.<sup>86</sup> This would, of course, only make sense

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<sup>83</sup> *SE*, XX, “An Autobiographical Study”, 59.

<sup>84</sup> Young and Brook, “Schopenhauer and Freud”, 18.

<sup>85</sup> Young and Brook, “Schopenhauer and Freud”, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Young and Brook’s observation that Freud owned an *uncut* version of Schopenhauer’s doctoral thesis makes for an interesting circumstantial piece of evidence concerning just such an approach. (Young and Brook, “Schopenhauer and Freud”, 18.) The volume in question is the only work of Schopenhauer to be found in his library: Arthur Schopenhauer, *Ueber die*

if Freud did actually have a genuine alternative route by which he might have arrived at similar conclusions. This is precisely the argument that will be mounted in the second half of this thesis vis-à-vis the British empirical tradition and its own resources to inspire his theoretical work on the basis of his clinical experience. If this hypothesis has merit, then it should cause us to look again at Freud's declaration in 1920 that upon reflecting on his theory of the death drive, he "cannot remain blind" to the observation that he had "unwittingly steered [his] course into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy".<sup>87</sup>

Just how "unwitting" his discovery was is another matter. But it is nonetheless feasible to consider that Freud is here acknowledging a common point of arrival (Schopenhauer's harbour) having taken a very different sea route to arrive. If Schopenhauer sailed via the route of late German Romanticism (a route that, incidentally, given his own disparaging of Schelling, he would have no doubt also denied), Freud could be said to have sailed predominantly via the route of late nineteenth century cognitive science inspired by ideas from British philosophical empiricism. These two schools of thought are, after all, extremely different in argumentative style and structure, and in evidential standards.

But further, assuming that there are more routes (more philosophical traditions) than one that will point in similar directions toward solidly grounded conclusions, then one would *expect* a common (or similar) destination to be reached. In that case, to forge one's own route, and not to simply give up on one's own research program (i.e., to metaphorically to

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*vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde. Eine philosophische Abhandlung.* Ed. Julius Frauenstadt. Aufl. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus 1875. XVI, 160 p, ill. Even if we are to work on the principle that "not all books that have been read are in a library, and not all books in a library have been read", this is not an unimportant piece of circumstantial evidence.

<sup>87</sup> SE XVIII, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", 49 – 50.

hitch a ride on another's ship, or to follow their map), should not be a cause for complaint. Indeed, the decision *not* to consult other maps – regardless of one's known or unknown ulterior motives for doing so – would seem a reasonable way to secure the integrity of one's own approach. One can almost hear something of this kind of retort coming through in Freud's remarks in the final decade of his career:

You may perhaps shrug your shoulders and say: "That isn't natural science, it's Schopenhauer's philosophy!" But, ladies and gentlemen, why should not a bold thinker have guessed something that is afterwards confirmed by sober and painstaking detailed research?<sup>88</sup>

In essence, there seems little doubt that Freud imbibed the "atmosphere" of the drive-related vitalist metaphysics of Schopenhauer, and perhaps also behind him (middle period) Schelling, in varying levels of directness and indirectness. Certainly, there are compelling continuities between them, and Freud's later work. One might also make a case for the inclusion of Spinoza within this group (something Gödde does not suggest). As noted earlier, Spinoza is indeed an odd combination. Despite the rationalistic metaphysical superstructure of the *Ethics*, there is a strong vitalist drive-related core that gathers around his central notion of the "*conatus*" (through which "each thing endeavours to persist in its own being", and is "nothing but the actual essence of the thing itself"<sup>89</sup>). The comparison with Schopenhauer's Will (a "purely blind impulse to exist, without purpose or goal") is a rich one, which is all the more surprising given their vastly different historical and cultural contexts.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> SE XXII, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: XXXIV Explanations, Applications and Orientations", 140-41.

<sup>89</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 383. (III, prop 7).

<sup>90</sup> It is perhaps telling that Schopenhauer's various references to Spinoza in *The World as Will and Representation* invariably focus on his rationalism, overlooking his *conatus* principle.

To this list of drive-related theorists can also be added the idiosyncratic syncretism of von Hartmann and the epoch-making visceral polemics of Nietzsche.

### **2.2.3 von Hartmann's Teleological Unconscious Will**

In his landmark 1869 work, *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Eduard von Hartmann developed an enormously popular and timely hybrid approach that looked to steer a middle course between various opposed positions.<sup>91</sup> His was an effort to draw together natural science and metaphysics, and to do so by providing an extensive amount of empirical evidence in *The Unconscious*. This ambition is announced in the book's subtitle: "Speculative Results", but delivered via "the Inductive Method of Physical Science". So too he looked to do justice to both Will and reason, and in this way to build middle positions between some of the major intellectual figures of his day, particularly Hegel and Schopenhauer, Kant and Darwin.

The attempted *via media* von Hartmann sought between Hegel and Schopenhauer (of all people!), was perhaps his most remarkable highwire act. In looking to reconcile these very different approaches, he is critical of both for opposite reasons. If Hegel was wrong, argued von Hartmann, for subordinating Will to Absolute Reason (Idea), so Schopenhauer was wrong for making Reason (or Idea) utterly subordinate to Will. Both Will and Idea are essential, he argued, and it is futile to subordinate one to the other. Thus, contrary to Schopenhauer, he views the unconscious as having a *telos*: "One of

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<sup>91</sup> Hartmann's 1869 book was followed by a second and enlarged edition in 1870, and many further editions appeared in response to public demand for several decades; the 11th edition of 1904 was the last published in Hartmann's lifetime.



the most important and familiar manifestations of the unconscious is instinct, and the conception of instinct rests on that of purpose".<sup>92</sup>

Von Hartmann's arguments for the teleological come down to elaborate (and often obscure) references to natural phenomena. These include examples drawn from human anatomy (e.g., the working of the eye) and from plant and animal life, and he makes recourse to statistical analyses that show regularity in nature. He even advocates a return to a doctrine of final causes, updated to draw on the latest science:

[F]inal causation, is by no means something existing by the side of or even despite causality, but that it is only a particular combination of different kinds of causality, such that the first and last terms are identical, only the one ideal and the other real, the one presented in the willed idea, the other in reality. Far from destroying the exceptionless character of the law of causation, it rather presupposes it, and that too not only between matter and matter, but also between mind and matter, and mind and mind. It denies freedom to the single empirical mental act and brings it too under the necessity of the law of causality.<sup>93</sup>

However, while looking to establish purposefulness and intelligence in nature, von Hartmann was also keen to avoid the contemporary contempt for anything smacking of *Naturphilosophie*. So too, he was keen to avoid any dualistic sense, for the unconscious Will is not an element separate to nature, is the telos that is immanent within nature. He gives ample examples of this immanent Will: instinctive behaviours, reflex responses, the way our internal organs work, etc. All of these demonstrate a teleology where physical phenomena and Will come together as one. Gardner summarises von Hartmann's view: "[W]herever there is teleology, there is a corresponding

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<sup>92</sup> Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious: Speculative Results According to the Inductive Method of Physical Science*, trans. by William C. Coupland. London, England: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company, 1893, 43.

<sup>93</sup> von Hartmann, *The Unconscious*, 45.

mechanical physiological process, and this latter process is an instance of the *unconscious willing* of the end which the process serves".<sup>94</sup>

Another aspect of von Hartmann's mediatory work was his attempted reconciliation between Kant and Darwin. During the 1860s, Darwinism was a powerful force in German philosophy. Indeed, as Frederick Beiser puts it, "Darwin throws a long shadow over the *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, and it is not least because of him that Hartmann laboured so mightily to build his case for the unconscious".<sup>95</sup> He looked to steer a middle course between Kantian rationalism and Darwinian mechanistic empiricism. Inevitably, his solution didn't appeal to either side. In particular, Darwinists rejected von Hartmann's notion that physiological processes somehow mirror the actions of the overarching teleological principle of Will.

Given this, while clearly fitting with the drive-related approaches that Götde's approach gathers under his third tradition-line of the unconscious, it is doubtful that von Hartmann's syncretic approach is consistent with the second half of Götde's "*triebhaft-irrationale*" designator for this tradition-line. For in his approach, far from being a principle of the irrational, the unconscious was the focus of quite a strong *return* to the teleological.

The question is then raised as to whether von Hartmann's work can hardly be viewed as proto-psychoanalytic in any serious way. On the whole, the answer would appear not. Von Hartmann's metaphysical idealism (albeit with a strong empirical twist) is of a kind that Freud was to avoid, as encouraged by his philosophy teacher Brentano (as discussed below). Further, he expends little space developing anything like a working psychic model of the human.

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<sup>94</sup> Gardner, "von Hartmann", 176. Italics in original.

<sup>95</sup> Frederick C. Beiser, *Weltscherz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860 – 1900* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 128.

One place that he does do so is in a chapter titled “The Unconscious and Thought”, but here is an exception that serves to demonstrate just how far from Freudianism von Hartmann’s approach turns out to be. Here he offers examples of the operation of the unconscious element of mind. For example, he quotes, with approval, the work of contemporaneous psychologist, Jessen, who described the role of the unconscious in problem solving: “After a shorter or longer time, we then suddenly awake, as from a dream, and usually at that same moment the result of our meditation appears clearly and distinctly in consciousness, without our ever knowing how we have reached it”. All this because we have fallen into “a state of entire unconsciousness”. For von Hartmann, this is evidence of the “notion of the unconscious as principle of thought apart from a brain”.<sup>96</sup>

This illusive, apparently hard-to-train unconscious also plays a determinative role in helping one change one’s deeply held opinions. Borrowing Schopenhauer’s term “unconscious rumination”, von Hartmann explains how the unconscious, over a period time, helps him to digest the opinions of others (even if he finds them unattractive) and may even help him eventually adopt these contrary positions.<sup>97</sup> This is consistent with its teleological – and *not* subversive – role, as one finds in Freud. The unconscious is a problem solver and answer-finder but in these duties, it is *not* a subverter, as per Freudian mechanisms such those involving slips of the tongue or other

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<sup>96</sup> von Hartmann, *The Unconscious*, 320-21.

<sup>97</sup> C.G. Jung uses the term *Enantiodromia* to describe the same capacity of the unconscious to reconcile us to thoughts and opinions which run counter to our own originally held convictions. As Jung says, “I use the term enantiodromia for the emergence of the unconscious opposite in the course of time”. He notes, “This characteristic phenomenon practically always occurs when an extreme, one-sided tendency dominates conscious life ... Good examples of enantiodromia are: the conversion of St Paul ... the self-identification of the sick Nietzsche with Christ ... and the transformation of the Swedenborg from an erudite scholar into a seer, and so on”. See C.G. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol 6, para 709.

“psychopathologies of everyday life”.<sup>98</sup> As a reliable-but-unseen master, the unconscious is not cast in some dark or troublesome role in von Hartmann’s work.

Even if Freud did seem to heed Brentano’s warning off the likes of von Hartmann, it is notable that he does seem to have read him later in life, around the time he says he started to finally read Schopenhauer and others. For example, there is a lengthy footnote in his 1914 edition of *The Interpretation of Dreams* where Freud notes a significant point of agreement with von Hartmann concerning the role played by the unconscious in artistic creation.<sup>99</sup> Such forays aside, it would seem that von Hartmann played a very minor role indeed in the roots of Freudian psychoanalysis.

#### **2.2.4 Nietzsche and Freud on *Trieb* and *Instinkt***

In turning to Nietzsche, the focus is moving to a thinker who – despite having no developed theory of the unconscious – was as much as anyone in the German tradition other than Schopenhauer, a genuinely proto-psychoanalytic thinker in many respects. However, the issue of Freud’s disavowing any specific knowledge of the Nietzsche’s work is one that will be returned to after it has been possible to examine the central point of interest in their relationship: i.e., the question of drive or instinct, and the relation of that question to the unconscious. While the issue of drives/instincts is a matter of enduring interest for Freud, it came to particular prominence with the development of his metapsychological models after 1915. In the case of Nietzsche, this is an issue central to his thought, early and late.

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<sup>98</sup> SE VI, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.

<sup>99</sup> “It was not until later that my attention was drawn to the fact that Eduard von Hartmann takes the same view ...” (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 531-32).

If the theme of the unconscious is rarely explicitly developed in Nietzsche, the shadow of the concept is found in many different places in his work. Central to his approach is a virtual inversion of the standard western philosophical tradition in the precedence that it gives to consciousness. Indeed, as Liebscher explains, for Nietzsche, it is consciousness (rather than the unconscious) that is problematic:

From the beginning, Nietzsche did not try to understand the unconscious *ex negativo* as a lack of consciousness, as the philosophers of the Enlightenment had suggested it to be. Instead he tried to reverse this understanding of Western thought: according to Nietzsche, consciousness is an inadequate adaptation to the environment which is derived from organic processes that were originally unconscious ... Consciousness is a secondary phenomenon. According to Nietzsche the world is nothing other than will to power, from which it follows that the actual agents of life are unconscious processes of power.<sup>100</sup>

However, if Nietzsche would agree with von Hartmann (whose work he knew well) about the pervasive influence of the unconscious, he utterly disagreed with his teleological account of it, especially as the “telic principle of world redemption” that went with it. For Nietzsche, this was nothing other than von Hartmann’s “attempt to plunder Schopenhauer’s originality”.<sup>101</sup>

The relation of drives and instincts in Nietzsche, is closely connected to his sense of the unconscious. Liebscher draws the link this way: Given that “the world is nothing other than will to power, from [that] it follows that the actual agents of life are unconscious processes of power”. So individual human beings live this willing in their selves, partly consciously and partly

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<sup>100</sup> Martin Liebscher, “Friedrich Nietzsche's Perspectives on the Unconscious”, in *Thinking the Unconscious*, eds. Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher, 255. Liebscher quotes Nietzsche’s to illustrate his point: “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a mighty commander, an unknown sage - he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body. There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom. And who knows for what purpose your body requires precisely your best wisdom. (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961, 62.)

<sup>101</sup> Liebscher, “Nietzsche's Perspectives”, 246.

unconsciously in their various drives (*Trieben*).<sup>102</sup> It is worth noting in this respect that Nietzsche's *Trieb* (generally translated as "drive"), and *Instinkt* ("instinct") refers to a great many phenomena related to "a more or less constant and active movement towards some end, and one that always carried a value".<sup>103</sup> Sometimes drives exert a will to power, as hinted at in *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche is declaring that knowledge is but an instrument of something deeper and that "fundamental impulses (drives)" are at work.<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, *Instincts* are viewed as regular and predictable behaviours that provide determinates for an organism's type.

For Nietzsche, there can only ever be an incomplete understanding of the instincts that are at work within the human being. It is for this reason that the conscious part of the human being cannot be trusted: we simply cannot know what instincts are at work within us at any time. Furthermore, the relationship between our conscious understanding of our motives (i.e., instincts) and those instincts in the unconscious is tenuous. We may think that we know what drives us, but this is a delusion. As Paul Katsafanas notes, "there are both unconscious and conscious motives (i.e. instincts) and the conscious motives will in some way be superficial or falsified versions of the unconscious ones".<sup>105</sup>

It is almost as though the Delphic imperative to "know thyself" is thus a cruel joke. In *The Dawn of the Day*, he writes:

To however high a degree a man can attain to knowledge of himself, nothing can be more incomplete than the conception which he forms of

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<sup>102</sup> Liebscher, "Nietzsche's Perspectives", 255.

<sup>103</sup> Douglas Burnham, "Instinct", *The Nietzsche Dictionary, Bloomsbury Philosophical Dictionaries*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 187.

<sup>104</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin, 2003, 6.

<sup>105</sup> Paul Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 77. Brackets mine.

the instincts constituting his individuality. He can scarcely name the more common instincts: their number and force, their flux and reflux, their action and counteraction, and, above all, the laws of their nutrition, remain absolutely unknown to him.<sup>106</sup>

We may be quite confident in what we believe is the motive at work in our decision-making but, declares Nietzsche, “I cannot know what motive has in the end proved to be the victor”. Furthermore, the role that unconscious motives play is overlooked entirely. This brings Nietzsche to proclaim: “our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastic commentary of an unknown text, one which is perhaps unknowable but yet felt”.<sup>107</sup>

Part of the reason for the irrecoverably opaque nature of the knowledge of our drives and instincts is that they are not a function of the conscious intellect, but are a deeply *embodied* feature of our selves. In the human self, drives are the *embodied unconscious*, jostling amongst themselves for expression on the basis of their clashing motivations. The conscious self only discovers the outcome when action occurs. In Nietzsche puts the situation as follows:

[I]n short, there come into play motives in part unknown to us, in part known very ill, which we can never take account of beforehand. Probably a struggle takes place between these as well, a battling to and for, a rising and falling of the scales – and this would be the actual “conflict of motives”: something quite invisible to us of which we would be quite unconscious.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Dawn of the Day*, trans by John M. Kennedy. New York: MacMillan, 1911, 119.

<sup>107</sup> Nietzsche, *Dawn of the Day*, 119.

<sup>108</sup> Nietzsche, *Dawn of the Day*, 129.

These embodied drives seem to have lives of their own, or as Katsafanas puts it, “agents-within-agents, homunculi with ends of their own”.<sup>109</sup>

The almost literally embodied or somatic sense of these drives is accentuated in Nietzsche’s choice of language during the 1880s. As noted in the quotation above, the reference to “flux and reflux ... nutrition” suggests a theme of appetite and digestion. Instincts need “to be fed”, a satisfaction that is only ever met on a random basis. In an 1881 letter to Heinrich Köselitz, Nietzsche compares the process of thinking as something that happens “unconsciously” like a healthy human being’s digestion.<sup>110</sup> This may be a simile, but more than that it seems that bodily appetites and digestive processes give form to what Nietzsche means by instincts and drives. Furthermore, this provides a clue to Nietzsche’s view of the unconscious: i.e., processes that go on ‘in there’, and rightly without our knowing much about it.

Nietzsche’s comments on *dreams* are also set in the context of embodied instincts. If instincts fail to find suitable “nutriment” during the events of the day, they may well feed at night: i.e., they will find their satisfaction in dreams. Of course, strong drives or instincts, e.g., hunger, “cannot be satisfied with imaginary dishes”, but less intense instincts can find their satisfaction in this way. It would seem that for Nietzsche dreams are a space where the instincts can have their freedom to find their discharge. Dreams are a type of play-space for the instincts. The constantly changing content of our dreams from night to night is the result of different instincts competing for discharge.

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<sup>109</sup> Katsafanas, *Nietzschean Self*, 77-78. It is worth noting that the post-Jungian philosopher, James Hillman, appears to employ this Nietzschean concept as a way of remapping the Jungian view of the psyche. See *Re-Visioning Psychology*.

<sup>110</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin and Munich : Walter de Gruyter and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag , 1986, Vol 6.77. Translation found in: Liebscher, “Friedrich Nietzsche's Perspectives on the Unconscious”, 252.



That one or other succeeds in this task, and others don't succeed, is in Nietzsche's view, a roll of the physiological dice.<sup>111</sup>

Nietzsche is very clear that the instincts possess greater power than consciousness, even if we have a "ridiculous overestimation" of its level of development. We mistakenly hold that consciousness "constitutes the kernel of man, what is abiding, eternal, ultimate, most original in him". As a direct result of this hubris, this "over-estimation", consciousness is revealed to be a poorly developed facet of the human psyche. Indeed, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche states:

If the preserving alliance of the instincts were not so much more powerful, if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish with open eyes of its misjudging and its fantasizing, of its lack of thoroughness and its incredulity - in short, of its consciousness; or rather, without the instincts, humanity would long have ceased to exist!<sup>112</sup>

Consciousness, thinks Nietzsche, is undeveloped, and it has stayed that way because humanity, in a state of hubris, has been able to kid itself that consciousness is much more developed than it really is. Fortunately, the instincts are much more powerful and have been able to save humanity from premature destruction by what is termed "the preserving alliance of the instincts". Escape from this lamentable situation can only occur when "[t]he *task of assimilating knowledge* and making it instinctive" is much more advanced. In the meantime, the sway and influence of consciousness must be kept in check because so far only "our *errors*" have been made instinctive, and

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<sup>111</sup> Nietzsche, *Dawn of the Day*, 119.

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. by Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 1.11.

consciousness is captive to these.<sup>113</sup> Only once our higher forms of knowledge are assimilated into the instincts will humanity be safe from itself!

In 1887, in his essay on the development of what Nietzsche terms “bad conscience”, the role of instincts is elaborated further, with specific regard to their impact on the development of morality. With reference to an evolutionary process of evolution from water-based creatures to land-based creatures he suggests that the movement from unconscious innocence to the tyranny of consciousness has led to the development of the “bad conscience”:

[As] perfectly adapted as they were to the savage life of war, prowling, and adventure—suddenly all their instincts were rendered worthless and “switched off” [...] confronted with this new and unknown world they had no longer their old guides—the regulative instincts that had led them unconsciously to safety—they were reduced, were those unhappy creatures, to thinking, inferring, calculating, putting together causes and results, reduced to that poorest and most erratic organ of theirs, their “consciousness”.<sup>114</sup>

The instincts that had once served the water creatures so well were now useless, yet their demands for satisfaction continued despite the environment change. Now, no longer finding suitable avenues for their satisfaction, the *unsatisfied* instincts develop a very different behaviour – one succinctly stated by Nietzsche in his edict: “All instincts which do not find a vent without, *turn inwards*”.<sup>115</sup> This “internalization process” is responsible for the coming into being of the human soul.

As implied by this cautionary tale, Nietzsche favours a life that is responsive to the instincts. Such lives are superior, and emblematic of his “transvaluation of all values”. In *Twilight of the Idols* (1888) Nietzsche declares that when

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<sup>113</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1.11. Italics in original.

<sup>114</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans by J. M. Kennedy, Vol 13 *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy. Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1913, 2.16.

<sup>115</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 2.16. Italics in original.

society “is going to the dogs” – i.e., disavowing a healthy reliance on the instinctual – then they will undoubtedly “perish through vice and luxury”. The vice does not cause the decline; the latter is merely evidence of that which has already happened: i.e., estrangement from the instincts.<sup>116</sup>

Clearly, there is much in Nietzsche’s presentation that anticipates key aspects of Freudian theory, particularly the theme of the dominance of unconscious instincts (translation of Freud’s *Trieben*<sup>117</sup>) in the life of the individual. Another relates to the intrinsically somatic nature of the instinct. In 1915, Freud remarks:

[C]onsidering mental life from a *biological* point of view, an ‘instinct’ appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for the work in consequence of its connection with the body.<sup>118</sup>

Nonetheless, the difference in methodology between Nietzsche and Freud is striking: Nietzsche firing off creative works, versus Freud’s arduous reflection on clinical notes. As a result, the development of Freudian theory is of a different order.

Freud’s use of the term *Trieb* and its derivatives is developed relatively late in his writing. Yet, as Strachey points out, this is merely a matter of terminology

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<sup>116</sup> Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1911, “The Four Great Errors” 2.

<sup>117</sup> Strachey’s translatory practice in the *Standard Edition* is to render *Trieb* not as “drive” but as “instinct”. “Drive”, he thinks, would have been an anachronistic rendering of *Trieb*, since the word was not used in this way in English at the time of Freud’s writing, and there are also too many complexities to Freud’s use of *Trieb* to allow for such a direct translation. He consequently chose to go with “instinct” since he took it to be “an obviously vague and indeterminate word” (SE I, xxiv – xxvi). On the other hand, Freud’s use of *Instinkt* is comparatively rare, and in these cases the context is usually clear that Freud is referring to something like animal instincts.

<sup>118</sup> SE XIV, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, 121 – 122.

since Freud used different terms, from as early as 1895, to express the same concept: terms such as “excitations, affective ideas, wishful impulses, endogenous stimuli, and so on”.<sup>119</sup> Thus, while Instinct theory was something of a later development, the undergirding theory of energy excitation and discharge was a present foundation from his early 1895 work.<sup>120</sup> An example of this can be seen in Freud’s early attempts to provide a neuro-physiological aetiology for psychological activity.

With an [increasing] complexity of the interior [of the organism], the nervous system receives stimuli from the somatic element itself – *endogenous stimuli* - which equally have to be discharged. These have their origin in the cells of the body and give rise to the major needs: hunger, respiration, sexuality. From these the organism cannot withdraw as it does from external stimuli ... They only cease subject to particular conditions, which must be realised in the external world. (Cf., for instance, the need for nourishment.)<sup>121</sup>

With a nod to the complexity that evolution has bestowed upon the human organism, Freud is outlining his early understanding of the instincts (in this case referred to as “endogenous stimuli”) as the basic biological needs of such an organism. Hunger, respiration and sexuality are the internal sources of a type of nervous energy (named “Q” and variations thereof by Freud). Unlike *external* stimuli, these endogenous demands cannot be avoided and must find satisfaction in certain actions (e.g. food for hunger). At this early stage of Freud’s thinking, the instincts, although not yet clearly labelled as such, are clearly biological and the source of internal neurophysiological energy (“Q”). The nervous system is conceived of as employing “the principle of constancy”, and is therefore predisposed to return to a quantitative level of

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<sup>119</sup> SE XIV, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes: Editor’s Note”, 114.

<sup>120</sup> SE I, “Project for a Scientific Psychology”, 283 – 392, is Freud’s ultimately unsuccessful attempt to map psychic energy as he saw it at that time. See Chap 3 for further discussion on this topic.

<sup>121</sup> SE I, “General Scheme. Second Principal Theorem: the Neurone Theory”, 297. Brackets in the original.

'Q' that equals zero. The internal energy of the instincts – being unavoidable – must be discharged or satisfied.<sup>122</sup> However, while it is possible for these endogenous stimuli to be demanding (they are, after all, unavoidable), they are not so unpredictable as to being totally subversive. They have a purpose (to keep the human being alive and to propagate the human species) and if this end is frustrated then the resulting neurosis becomes a predictable by-product.

Until his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905)<sup>123</sup> the tension responsible for causing psychoneuroses was described without reference to the concept of 'instinct'. During this early period psychoneuroses were seen by Freud as resulting from the tension between the ego and sexuality. The term "libido" was used frequently pre-1905 but, consistent with the physicalist materialism that typifies Freud's earlier thinking, it was an expression of somatic sexual tension and ultimately a neuro-chemical process. In his *Three Essays* the libido is, for the first time, clearly marked as an expression of the *sexual instinct*, and wedded, as always, to a biological-materialist framework. Freud states:

The fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a 'sexual instinct', on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition, that is of hunger. Everyday language possesses no counterpart to the word 'hunger', but science makes use of the word *libido* for that purpose.<sup>124</sup>

Strachey makes the interesting observation that "[t]he other party to the conflict, 'the ego', remained unrefined for much longer".<sup>125</sup> Apart from a brief

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<sup>122</sup> For further discussion on "The Principle of Constancy" see also Chap 3.

<sup>123</sup> SE VII. *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays n Sexuality and Other Works*.

<sup>124</sup> SE VII, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The Sexual Aberrations", 135. Italics mine.

<sup>125</sup> SE XIV, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes: Editor's Note", 115.

introduction to his notion of “the Ego” in his *Project* (1895)<sup>126</sup> - where the Ego is seen as an “organisation” that performs an inhibiting (self-preserving) and repressive role against the “psychic primary processes” of “wish attraction” – little is said about the nature of the ego. The protracted silence that followed these early introductory remarks is broken when Freud introduces the term *ego-instincts* in his “The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision” (1910),<sup>127</sup>

In this paper, for the first time, Freud states:

[A] quite specially important part is played by the undeniable opposition between the instincts that subserve sexuality, the attainment of sexual pleasure, *and those other instincts*, which have as their aim the self-preservation of the individual – *the ego instincts*.<sup>128</sup>

Freud’s notion of The Ego is now firmly identified with *the self-preserving instincts* as well as the role of repression. With this theoretical development, a dualism emerges in Freudian theory between two instincts that are in tension within the individual: The libido and the ego instincts.

However, in his paper “On Narcissism: An Introduction” (1914) the neatness of this equation would be somewhat obscured. The notion of the ego is elaborated in such a way that it is now divided into two new refined concepts: The *ego-libido* (or *narcissistic libido*) and the *object-libido*.<sup>129</sup> The *ego-libido* cathects the ego and the *object-libido* cathects objects. For Freud the cathexis (psychic energy) of both types of libido cannot be shared – one depletes the other and vice versa. His view of narcissism is that at an early stage of development both types of libido exist together but that they are indistinguishable with the psychoanalytic tools available. Almost

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<sup>126</sup> SE I, “Project for a Scientific Psychology: Introduction of the ‘Ego’”, 322 – 324.

<sup>127</sup> SE XI, “The Psycho-Analytic View of the Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision”, 211 – 218.

<sup>128</sup> SE XI, “Psychogenic Disturbance”, 214. Italics mine.

<sup>129</sup> SE XIV, “On Narcissism: An Introduction”, 76.

immediately Freud realised that he has created a theoretical problem for psychoanalysis.

It is in his “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920),<sup>130</sup> that Freud seeks to resolve the looming theoretical problem by significantly reshaping his theory of the instincts. In his work with war veterans, dealing with what he terms “War Neuroses” he is confronted with problem of repeating nightmares which he sees as demonstrating the “compulsion to repeat”. This phenomenon is not consistent with his instinct theory to this point, so Freud links instincts and the repetition compulsion with key statement:

*It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things with the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces”.*<sup>131</sup>

Freud’s view of instincts is that they are internal forces, and he therefore makes a second key statement:

If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons – becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be compelled to say that “the aim of all life is death” and, looking backwards, that “inanimate things existed before living ones”.<sup>132</sup>

Freud’s significant restructuring of his theory of instincts now comes to rest on a re-established dualism: those now described as “life instincts” (*eros*) and the death instincts. He then provides further elaboration in his *The Ego and the Id* (1923) where he talks of “two classes” of instincts:

[W]e have to distinguish two classes of instincts, one of which, the sexual instincts or Eros, is by far the more conspicuous and accessible to study. It comprises not merely the uninhibited sexual instinct proper and the instinctual impulses ... but also the self-preservative instinct ...

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<sup>130</sup> SE XVIII, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, 7 – 64.

<sup>131</sup> SE XVIII, “Pleasure Principle”, 36. Italics in original.

<sup>132</sup> SE XVIII, “Pleasure Principle”, 38. Italics in original.

The second class of instincts was not so easy to point to [but] on the basis of theoretical considerations, supported by biology, we put forward the hypothesis of the death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state; on the other hand, we supposed that Eros, by bringing about a more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed, aims at complicating life and at the same time, of course, at preserving it.<sup>133</sup>

These two instincts, now described by Freud in primal terms, have the function of re-establishing the state of affairs that existed before life itself disturbed the situation. In effect, they work out their primal tug-of-war in the human psyche and this new dualistic concept of the instincts would now become the basis for Freud's reviewed model of the psyche that will now include the ego, the id and the super ego.

In this overview of Freud's evolving theory of instincts there is one key factor that Strachey seeks to underscore as a constant throughout: "Freud expresses with particular definiteness his belief that mental phenomena are ultimately based on physical ones".<sup>134</sup> Freud's physicalist materialism is the unwavering constant in his evolving theoretical constructs, from beginning to end.

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The preceding examination of the long period of development of Freud's theory of instinct, places his decision not to read Nietzsche in interesting light. As with the case of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche was another philosopher (perhaps also with Spinoza) with whom he was clearly acquainted to a degree (he could not *not* have been), but whose writings he claimed not to have read. Freud's reported remark to *Lothar Bickel* (in June 1931), is well known:

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<sup>133</sup> SE XIX, "The Two Classes of Instincts", 40.

<sup>134</sup> SE XI, "The Introduction" to "The Psycho-analytic view of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision", 210.



I have rejected the study of Nietzsche although – no, because – it was plain I would find insights in him very similar to psychoanalytic ones.<sup>135</sup>

Here we have again a claim of deliberate strategic ignorance that was dedicated to the preservation of an independent line of inquiry. There is no evidence that Freud did make a concerted study of Nietzsche during the early formative years of psychoanalysis. However, as with the case of Schopenhauer, he seems only to have started reading much later. When, in 1923, Freud introduced the term “id [Es]”, he brought it into explicit connection with Nietzsche, who, he said, “habitually used this grammatical term for whatever in our nature is impersonal and, so to speak, subject to natural law”.<sup>136</sup> At this late stage, by his own implication, he does seem to be drawing on at least some of Nietzsche’s work. In the following year, he proclaimed Nietzsche to be a philosopher “whose guesses and intuitions often agree in the most astonishing way with the laborious findings of psycho-analysis”.<sup>137</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

This chapter has given considered evaluation to both the Romantic and drive-related antecedents to psychoanalytic theory. As has been identified, there are clearly a number of common points that can be discerned in both of Gödde’s identified tradition-lines and their proto-psychoanalytic influence.

It has been important to take this tour through the nineteenth century German background to the unconscious, because this background matters for understanding the deeper roots of the idea of the unconscious. In this sense,

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<sup>135</sup> Reported in Peter Gay, *Freud, a Life for our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2006, 46, *n*.

<sup>136</sup> *SE*, XIX, “The Ego and the Id”, 23, *n*. 3.

<sup>137</sup> *SE*, XX, “An Autobiographical Study”, 60.

there is great value in Matt Ffytche's noting the importance of giving what he calls "a new and more complex account of the emergence of the idea of a psychic unconscious, and so to explore the possibility of giving psychoanalysis a much deeper historical context". So too, there are "good grounds for locating this moment historically at the threshold of the nineteenth century in Germany, under the wings of Romanticism and post-Kantian idealism".<sup>138</sup>

However, while it is the case that this nineteenth century German philosophical background was absolutely crucial for the development and popularisation of the basic idea of the unconscious, it is also the case – as documented throughout this chapter – that there are compelling dissimilarities between their broad conceptions of the unconscious and that of Freudian psychoanalysis, especially in its early stages. At some points, there seems to be as many dissimilarities as similarities. Perhaps this is less so in the case of the Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean unconscious, but even here (as also discussed above), deep dissimilarities are to be identified too. Further, as Götter himself notes, the evidence for Freud's use of these sources in his early development of his theories prior to 1900/1905 are at best anecdotal.

So while this background is indeed essential for any archeology of the unconscious, and while it is clearly a history of which Freud himself was aware, this does not mean that it should necessarily be taken to be *the* direct line of intellectual inheritance that made Freudian psychoanalysis possible. To the contrary, in what follows in the next chapters, it will be argued that the philosophical intellectual pioneers to whom Freud turned were at least as much, and in some senses perhaps more so, the English and Scottish

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<sup>138</sup> Ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious*, 3

empiricist thinkers of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries than the German Rationalist and Romantic thinkers that have been examined in this chapter, and the one prior.

This approach looks to answer the question of just where Freud's often overlooked particular brand of physicalist-positivist philosophical framework arose from, an approach that sets him apart from many of his German contemporaries. The chapters that follow make some suggestions about a possible answer to that question. It puts forward an argument that what is so far missing from the analysis (both to this point in the thesis, and in the wider scholarship) is an analysis of proto-psychoanalytic antecedents in the work of what will be referred to as the "Anglo-Scottish philosophical tradition-line". These chapters will claim that the influence of British empiricism holds an under-appreciated influence on Freud's life and thought, and that it is this indispensable tradition-line that makes for fuller and rounder view of the philosophical roots of Freudian psychoanalysis.

## Chapter 3

### Anglo-Scottish Freud: British Empiricism, Associationism and Utilitarianism

As discussed above, the influence of nineteenth century German Idealist, Romanticist and voluntarist thought on Freud's thinking have rightly received considerable attention in recent scholarship. However, there is evidence of other prominent influences on Freud's thinking which have received far less attention to date than they deserve. In what follows, I will maintain that this other "traditional-line" (to use Gödde's phrase) had arguably an even greater influence on the development of Freud's conception of the unconscious, and consequently on the character of the early psychoanalytic movement as a whole. I refer here to the striking importance of Anglo-Scottish empiricism for the early development of Freudian thought. While the young Freud's generally favourable disposition toward English and Scottish people, history, and politics has been often acknowledged, the significance of this for understanding the major developments in his thought has been underplayed. In arguing for a *fourth* historico-philosophical tradition-line feeding into Freud's formulation of what was to become the psychoanalytic unconscious, the focus here will be on Freud's thinking and writing during the crucial formative years of the 1890s and the first decade of the 1900s. In charting some of the major contours of this *Anglo-Scottish* tradition line, I will suggest that crucial aspects of the genealogy of psychoanalytic thought are thereby revealed in sharper focus.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide a brief overview of some of the more salient biographical aspects of the early Freud's intellectual and familial context, noting his deep and organic roots in the Anglo-Scottish intellectual milieu. Second, I survey the formative influence of Franz Brentano

on the young Freud, noting Brentano's powerful anti-German Idealist and Romanticist bent, and the way in which he offered trajectories for Freud that pointed strongly towards the intellectual resources of Anglo-Scottish empiricism. The importance of Brentano's notion of intentional consciousness looms large here, opening the way to the proto-phenomenological methodology of psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice. From here, third, I turn to consider the powerful influence on Freud's thinking of the nineteenth century British Associationist movement, seen especially in the work of J.S. Mill (with which Freud was deeply and directly familiar) and Sir William Hamilton. The influence of British Utilitarianism, with its focus on the pursuit of happiness and the management of pleasure will also be considered.

### **3.1. The Early Biographical Context: Freud's Anglo-Scoto-philía<sup>1</sup>**

A brief survey of Freud's early life and career provide a number of key insights into the organic nature of his intellectual and cultural connections with scholarly currents in Britain, and the broad scientific empiricism they engendered across late nineteenth century Europe.

The first point worth noting in this context concerns immediate family connections. Freud's parents were of Galician origin (modern day Ukraine). His father, Jacob, had two sons by his first wife, and Sigmund was the oldest son of his third wife, Amalia. Both Freud's half-brothers, Emmanuel and Philip, emigrated to Manchester shortly before the rest of the Freud family moved to Vienna (1860). In this move, Emmanuel's son, John, was separated from the young Sigmund, John having been apparently the "inseparable

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting the irony that "Scoto-philía" (otherwise, nyctophilia) has the literal meaning of a "love of darkness". This seems strangely appropriate for a "philosopher of the dark Enlightenment".

playmate"<sup>2</sup> of Freud's early childhood. Emmanuel's other children were born in Manchester, and included Solomon (known as Sam), with whom Sigmund corresponded regularly over many years. This family connection with Manchester is important for understanding the young Sigmund Freud's formative connections with the English language and people. He visited his half-brothers and their families in England twice, in 1875 while still a student, and again in 1908. Freud's contact with his nephew Sam was maintained via a correspondence that extended right through until 1938 when the two met again in London when Freud finally moved from Vienna.

In his contemporaneous correspondence, Freud's first visit to Manchester as a student is presented as immensely uplifting. In the summer of 1875, aged just nineteen at the time, Freud wrote in glowing and idealistic terms of the England he was encountering. In a letter to his childhood friend Eduard Silberstein, he wrote enthusiastically of his foray into England and pledges an allegiance to the new land:

I have brought back only a few books, but the acquaintance with English scientific books I made over there will always ensure that in my own *studies I shall always be on the side of the Englishmen* in whose favour I am now highly prejudiced: Tyndall, Huxley, Lyell, Darwin, Thomson, Lockyer, et al.<sup>3</sup>

As will be seen, Freud's high esteem for the British empiricist and scientific elite continued and grew over the coming decades, though this list of names is already highly significant. Thomas Huxley and John Tyndall were members of the so-called "X Club", a dining club of nine men (formed by Huxley in 1864, and which met for nearly thirty years), the intellectual focus for which was the new science of Darwinian biology, but more generally, the "devotion

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Gay, *Freud, a Life for our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2006), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud to Eduard Silberstein*, ed. Walter Boehlich, trans. By Arnold J Pomerans (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1990), 128.

to science, pure and free, untrammelled by religious dogmas". In fact, it seems likely that Freud's enthusiasm for this brave new intellectual world of endeavour reflects the influence of Carl Claus (1835 – 1899), Freud's Zoology lecturer at the time. Claus, a specialist in marine zoology, was in Peter Gay's estimation "one of Darwin's most effective and prolific propagandists in the German language". It is clear that Freud was a favoured student of Claus since he was granted the opportunity to engage in research at the Marine Institute at Trieste not long after returning from his trip to Manchester. The research undertaken by Freud was to take three months and commenced in March 1876. It involved the dissection of hundreds of eels to find the male sex organs and was ultimately unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the British inspired scientific empiricism that Freud developed in these years was to stay with him in powerful ways for decades to come.

Freud's longing for England would surface once again at a crisis point in his early career. In the Autumn of 1876, aged 20, Freud entered *The Institute of Physiology*, Vienna. Here he engaged in neurological and histological research under the renowned director, Ernst Wilhelm von Brücke, (1819 -1892). On 31 March 1881, after a six-year delay, Freud was finally awarded his medical degree. Its immediate impact was rather limited as he continued to work in the *Institute* with a minor promotion to the role of *Demonstrator* – a role which seemed to entail some teaching responsibilities (and one about which little is known from Freud's memoirs). He remained in this position until July 1882.<sup>4</sup> By this latter stage it had become clear to Freud that his chances of promotion (and therefore increased remuneration) were slim.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol 1: The Young Freud 1856-1900* (London G.B., Hogarth Press, 1972), 65-66.

<sup>5</sup> Jones hints at a strain of anti-Semitism endemic in the system of appointments to such positions as the one Freud was hoping for at the *Institute*, and he comments on this in *Freud, Vol 1*, 65-6. This may have added weight to Freud's calculations about his future at the

It is in this context – accentuated by his betrothal to Martha Bernays, announced in June of that year – that the young Freud grew understandably anxious about the future. Tellingly, it is toward Britain that his thoughts turned. According to Jones, even when Freud was interviewing for research positions after leaving the *Institute*, he declared his intention to Martha to settle in England, “or perhaps America or Australia”, if his efforts to establish himself as a doctor in Austria failed due to lack of capital.<sup>6</sup> However, this was no merely pragmatic set of contingency plans. To the contrary, Freud’s letter to Martha in August of that year as he departed from the Institute provides a striking account of his glowing intellectual and personal longing for all things British. Freud writes:

I am aching for independence, so as to follow my own wishes. The thought of England surges up before me, with its sober industriousness, its generous devotion to the public weal, the stubbornness and sensitive feeling for justice of its inhabitants, the running fire of general interest that can strike sparks in the newspapers: all the ineffaceable impressions of my journey of seven years ago, one that had a decisive influence on my whole life, have been awakened in their full vividness. I am taking up again the history of the island, the works of the men who were my real teachers – all of

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Institute. Certainly, Freud himself, perhaps naively, does not attribute such negative motivations to his reasoning and nor does he bear ill-will towards Brücke for the prompting to seek his fortunes elsewhere. Peter Gay, *Freud*, 21, provides a useful context for anti-Semitism in Austria at the time by quoting younger contemporaries of Freud. Since 1848 the legal position for Jews in the Habsburg empire was one of equality both in the practice of religion and the ownership of land. Those contemporaries comment that “Jew-hatred... was neither respectable nor dangerous” with the rise of a more politicised anti-Semitism only revealing its ugly self in Austria from the 1890s.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, *Freud*, Vol 1, 196. If the role of anti-Semitism is somewhat unclear, then the role of finances in Freud’s year of uncertainty is much clearer. These were times of considerable financial restraint for Freud so any advice that might improve his lot needed serious consideration, more so if that advice was to come from such a respected source. Besides, there was now the added incentive of marriage and family building, since on 10 June of that year Freud’s betrothal to Martha Bernays was announced. As part of the unsettled year Freud’s wander lust began to reassert itself. For a young man in a constrained financial upbringing he had still managed to travel widely in Europe (Jones, 198.) Freud was nineteen when he first travelled to Britain. His half-brothers in Manchester had become relatively prosperous merchants at the time.



them English or Scotch; and I am recalling what is for me the most interesting historical period, the reign of the Puritans and Oliver Cromwell with its lofty monument of that time—Paradise Lost, where only recently, when I did not feel sure of your love, I found consolation and comfort. Must we stay here, Martha? If we possibly can let us seek a home where human worth is more respected. A grave in the *Centralfriedhof* is the most distressing idea I can imagine.<sup>7</sup>

Career prospects (or lack of them) were now forcing the soon-to-be-married doctor to seriously consider his values and his allegiances. However, what is most striking here is not simply the emotional longing Freud emphasises for the life, culture and history of Britain and the British people (a love that is demonstrated in Freud's naming his second son, born in 1891, after Oliver Cromwell!), but his emphasis on the strong continuity between his present intellectual interests and those that were kindled during his English 'sojourn' seven years earlier. Tellingly, he speaks of "[t]he works of the men who were my real teachers—all of them English or Scotch". In many senses, British scholars remained Freud's most influential teachers over the decades to come (in ways that will be traced below), even though Freud would visit Britain only once more before settling in London in June 1938, some fifteen months before his death in September 1939. Clearly, the idealistic identification of his British intellectual heroes following his return from Manchester in 1875 was no transient youthful flourish, but an enduring fascination. Indeed, it was to grow strongly, even from a Viennese base.

Beyond family connections and intellectual yearning, a third, and essential, element in Freud's affinity with an Anglo-Scottish tradition is his fluent familiarity with the English language. Ernest Jones reminds us that:

[Freud] was especially fond of English and he told me once that for ten years he read nothing but English books. Shakespeare, in particular, whom he started reading at the age of eight, he read over and over

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<sup>7</sup> Letter: Freud to Martha Bernays, Aug 16, 1882. Quoted in: Jones, *Freud, Vol 1*, 195.

again and was always ready with an apt quotation from his plays. He admired his superb power of expression and, even more, his extensive understanding of human nature.<sup>8</sup>

It is one thing to be enamoured with a culture after a brief visit, but quite another to be able to understand the nuances and traditions of that culture in depth, particularly the subtleties of its philosophical and scientific discourse.

The extent of Freud's facility in English made such an impression upon his renowned Philosophical mentor, Franz Brentano (about whom more to come), that he recommended Freud to the Austrian publisher, philosopher and classical scholar, Theodor Gomperz, as a translator of four of the works of John Stuart Mill. Thus, it came to be that Freud was able to stave off the boredom of a military exercise in 1879 by translating four of J S Mill's papers: i.e., *The Subjection of Women* (translated as "*Über Frauenemancipation*"), *Grote's Plato* (translated as "*Plato*"), *The Claims of Labour* (translated as "*Arbeiterfrage*"), and *Socialism* (translated as "*Socialismus*").<sup>9</sup> Beyond the obvious faith shown in Freud's English reading and translation skills by both Brentano and Gomperz, it is worth noting the assessment of Michael Molnar (himself a translator and scholar of the Pre-Psychoanalytic writing of Freud) concerning the quality of the translations. For Molnar, the worst criticism that he can levy at Freud's translation is that it was almost too precise:

I was disappointed to find how exact and faithful Freud's version actually is. In fact, it is as near word for word as possible [...] there are very few deviations from Mill's text, even in terms of sentence structure, subordinate clauses etc<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jones, *Freud*, Vol 1, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, *Freud*, Vol 1, 61. There are two of J S Mill's volumes in Freud's library in London. One of them is Freud's translation of J S Mill's work and the second is a copy of Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, on which, more below.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Molnar, "John Stuart Mill Translated by Sigmund Freud", in *Pre-Psychoanalytic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Gertrudis Van D Vijver, Filip Geerardyn and Duncan Barford (London: Karnac Books, 2002), 116.

Freud was only twenty-three at the time of his work on J S Mill, with most of his researching and writing career to come. The question of how this intense familiarity with Mill's writings and the philosophical matters they raised aside (a matter to be taken up later in this chapter), it is sufficient at this point simply to note the untrammelled access that Freud had to the world of British philosophical and scientific literature made possible by his fluency in the English language.

The matter of Freud's facility with the English language is relevant not only to his ability to access and comprehend the writings (and complexities) of the late nineteenth century British empiricists, but also, conversely, to the question of the fidelity of the translations of Freud's own writings into English. Is the scientific positivist tone of the English *Standard Edition* of Freud's works, for example, one that Freud himself would have approved?<sup>11</sup> I would suggest that there is every reason to think that it would have received such approval.

Of course, not all have agreed with such a conclusion. Perhaps the strongest advocate for the view that the tenor of Freud's thought is misrepresented by the tone of *The Standard Edition* is Bruno Bettelheim, who famously argued that Strachey's translation "makes Freud's direct and always deeply personal appeals to our common humanity appear to readers of English as abstract, depersonalised, highly theoretical, erudite, and mechanized – in short, "scientific" - statements about the strange and very complex workings of our mind".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There are a number of extant translations of Freud's work. However, *The Standard Edition* is the only translation authorized by Freud himself.

<sup>12</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul*. London: Pimlico, 2001, 4-5.

This is not the place to enter into detailed assessments of Bettelheim's many arguments about *The Standard Edition* translation. Suffice for now just to note the many senses in which the perceived scientific empiricism and positivism of the translation is not especially out of place with Freud's own known preferences in this respect. Whilst it is impossible to know Strachey's reaction to such criticism of his translation (he died in 1967) there is evidence that he chose the style of English used in the *Standard Edition* quite deliberately. Indeed, there is evidence that Strachey specifically chose to present Freud's work in the language of an "[E]nglish man of science of wide education born at the middle of the nineteenth century". According to Cheshire and Thomä, "[t]radition has it that he had in mind as a role-model Ernest Jones's brother-in-law, the surgeon Wilfred Trotter, who also ventured into the field of social psychology with a book on 'the instincts of the herd'".<sup>13</sup>

If Strachey had been left to adopt a style of English for translating Freud's work at his own discretion, then Bettelheim's claims about the systematic distortion of Freud's own works in the *Standard Edition* might be seen to hold water. It might even be noted that the earliest volumes of the *Standard Edition* did not appear in print until 1956, well after Freud's death, thereby raising the issue of how much influence Freud could have exerted on the translation of his work. In the end, however, Peter Gay makes a very strong case in favour of the style and accuracy of *The Standard Edition*, maintaining that growing scepticism engendered by Bettelheim *et al*, with regard to the style of English in *The Standard Edition*, is without foundation. As he states:

Of the various English translations of Freud's major works to appear in his lifetime, only one was authorized by Freud himself: *The Standard*

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<sup>13</sup> Neil Cheshire and Helmut Thomä, "Metaphor, Neologism and 'Open Texture': Implications for Translating Freud's Scientific Thought", *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 18 (1991): 433. Trotter's book was titled, *The Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War, 1916-1919* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

*Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* under the general editorship of James Strachey.

Freud approved the overall editorial plan, specific rendering of key words and phrases, and the addition of valuable notes, both bibliographical and explanatory. Many of the translations were done by Strachey himself; the rest were prepared under his supervision. The result was to place the *Standard Edition* in a position of unquestioned supremacy over all other existing versions.<sup>14</sup>

This emphatic statement, coupled with the fact that Anna Freud was consulted during the translation process (and her faithfulness to her father's legacy is without question) renders it highly unlikely that Freud's work, in the *Standard Edition* at least, was translated in a way that diverged significantly from Freud's intentions. Freud knew English well enough to note any such undue slanting of his work by tone-deaf or disingenuous translators. This was, after all, a matter of his legacy in the English-speaking world, and from earliest days of his career, given his mastery of the English language, he would have been well able to push back if he detected any such wholesale distortion of his work.

As will be seen below, Freud's early training and practice was shaped by neurological and physiological models of thinking that remained with him throughout the evolution of his thought.<sup>15</sup> There is also lesser-known evidence of Freud's commitment to positivism from the early days of his career. A striking example is Freud's decision to lend his enthusiastic support to a 1911 public "appeal" – along with thirty three other "eminent people" including Albert Einstein and Ernst Mach<sup>16</sup> - to "raise interest in the foundation of a

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<sup>14</sup> See Peter Gay's comments on the back cover of: Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition* (London: W.W. Norton and Company: 1989). This later series sees a number of Freud's papers republished individually with Gay's comments on the back cover of each paperback.

<sup>15</sup> See 3.5 below.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Waldfried Josef Wenzel Mach (1838-1916) was the most prominent advocate of positivistic philosophy in Vienna at the time.

Society for Positivist Philosophy".<sup>17</sup> Freud's 'positivist credentials' were never a secret, and were genuinely held. Thus, contra Bettelheim, while Freud can and should be recognised as a man with a developed cultural sensitivity, this aspect of his nature should not be understood as a bar to an earnest embrace of the empirical science of his day. As Cheshire and Thomä put it, the evidence shows "the view that the *Standard Edition* gratuitously gives to Freud an *alien* air of positivism is simply mistaken."<sup>18</sup>

To sum up, the evidence of Freud's enthusiasm for British life and thought, his fond family links to England, and his intimate familiarity with the English language all set the scene for the discussion to come concerning the deeply formative influence of Anglo-Scottish scholarship on the early foundational development of Freudian psychoanalysis. As will be seen in what follows, the picture that develops is of a young scholar who, while residing in the German speaking milieu of Vienna, was influenced more by the philosophical and scientific world of British scholarship and its influence on the continent, than by the German Idealist, Romantic and voluntarist legacy as surveyed in the previous chapter. While the similarities are undeniable, the evidence that Freud did indeed independently and "unwittingly [steer his] course into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy"<sup>19</sup> rather than simply follow the lead of his Germanic predecessors, turns out to be compelling.

### **3.2 The Formative Influence of Franz Brentano**

To this point we have been able to observe the Anglo-Scottish influences on Freud as stemming from multiple sources. First, there are the strong family ties to Britain. Second, Freud's early zoological studies demonstrate a strong

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<sup>17</sup> Cheshire and Thomä, "Metaphor", 451. See Appendix 1 below

<sup>18</sup> Cheshire and Thomä, "Metaphor", 433. Italics mine.

<sup>19</sup> SE XVIII, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", 49-50.

affinity with the British Empiricists, with Freud's Professor, Carl Claus, being a champion of Darwin's work in German academia. Third, Freud was intimately familiar with the work of British empiricists in the English language, of which he had a strong command. In what follows, more substantial evidence of Anglo-Scottish influence on the early Freud's thinking will be presented, with a view to building a cumulative case for what I am calling the "Anglo-Scottish Freud".

### **3.2.1 Freud as a Brentanian Thinker**

Freud's university studies are most revealing in this regard. Freud enrolled at the University of Vienna in 1873, at the age of 17. While clearly inclined toward the natural sciences, he equivocated over the specific direction of his studies and his preferred professional career. Writing to his friend Emil Fluss (1 May 1873), the student-to-be Freud declared: "I [am] determined to become a natural scientist ... I will examine the millennia-old documents of nature, perhaps personally eavesdrop on its eternal lawsuit, and share my winnings with everyone willing to learn".<sup>20</sup> As late as 1875, Freud was still thinking of "acquiring a Doctorate of Philosophy based on philosophy and zoology",<sup>21</sup> though of course it was medicine that would ultimately win the day.

However, given the many legends of Freud's aversion to Philosophy, it is important to note that his early academic studies were marked by an avid study of the field, albeit in a sense thoroughly consistent with his strongly empiricist and positivist methodological leanings. Here the renowned figure of philosopher Franz Brentano (1838 – 1917) looms large. Freud attended lectures by Brentano (1838 – 1917) up to three times per week from the winter

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<sup>20</sup> Freud, Sigmund, "Some Early Unpublished Letters of Freud", *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 50 (1969): 424.

<sup>21</sup> Gay, *Freud*, 25-26.

semester of 1874 through to the summer semester of 1876. He did so under his own volition, as Philosophy was no longer a requirement for medical students at the University of Vienna. It is worth noting that these were to be the only non-medical courses taken by Freud while a student at the university. His study under Brentano is recorded as consisting in the following:

1. Semesters 3, 4 and 5 ( i.e. Winter 1875/6, Summer 1875 and Winter) *Readings in Philosophic Writings.*
2. Semester 4 (Summer 1875) – *Logic.*
3. Semester 6 (Summer 1876) – *The Philosophy of Aristotle.*<sup>22</sup>

Brentano is an absolutely key figure for understanding the British empiricist roots of Freud's early thought, influences that were to have major implications for the development of the idea of the psychoanalytic unconscious, and psychoanalysis more generally. Brentano, formerly a Catholic Priest, came to the University of Vienna in 1874, the same year that he completed his magnum opus: *Psychologie vom Empirischen Standpunkt*. There are several dimensions to Brentano's role in shaping the early Freud that are crucial here: his Aristotelianism, his empiricism and his non-materialism.

First, Brentano's work fits strongly within, and contributed powerfully toward, the nineteenth century Aristotelian Renaissance in Germany, that featured a number of new translations and commentaries on Aristotle's works.<sup>23</sup> Brentano himself produced what was deemed to be a fresh and original interpretation of Aristotle in his doctoral thesis (1862): *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*.<sup>24</sup> The influence of

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<sup>22</sup> Philip Merlan, "Brentano and Freud – A Sequel", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10. 3 (Jun 1949): 451.

<sup>23</sup> Liliana Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism. An Introduction to Brentano* (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 43.

<sup>24</sup> See: Aristotle, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. by Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).



Aristotelian thought on Brentano appears to have continued throughout his life and his work on 'intentionality' or 'intentional reference' clearly stemmed from this principle influence. While Aristotelianism as such was not to be a dominant legacy taken on by Freud, this notion (rooted in Brentano's reading of Aristotle) of the intentionality of consciousness was to have a lasting impact (as will be seen below).

Second, as announced in its title, Brentano's *Psychologie vom Empirischen Standpunkt* was also part of the vanguard of the growing empiricism in German psychology at the time. Indeed, in the same year that Brentano's *Psychologie* was published, so too was Wilhelm Wundt's *Prinzipien der Physiologischen Psychologie*. Brentano's pervasive empiricism is seen not only in his method, but in the dismissal of metaphysical speculation, a notable hallmark of his teaching and clearly one of which the young Freud enthusiastically approved.

In the contrast between Brentano's *Psychologie* and Wundt's *Prinzipien* a third key characteristic of Brentano's legacy to Freud emerged. At this time in which philosophy and psychology were still intertwined in a disciplinary sense, the methodological chasm between these two works serves as a clear illustration of how the 'soul' of psychology was being fought over at this time. Both *Psychologie* and *Prinzipien* were publicly acclaimed, and both works showed allegiance to the "empirical" method in psychology, or more specifically, the school of 'experimental psychology'. Brentano, however, rejected the materialist implications of the physiological underpinnings of much of the experimental psychology School. Rather, in the words of Albertazzi, Brentano's *Psychologie* was "a first attempt to construct psychological theory without having to accept reductionist hypotheses of any kind; or in other words, without having to relate psychic phenomena directly

to physical, chemical or physiological ones".<sup>25</sup> Rather than go over the already well-trodden ground of psychophysiology, Brentano (as Albertazzi puts it) concentrated on "[t]he phenomenal appearances that arise on the basis of physiological products".<sup>26</sup> Brentano, in other words, provided Freud with a unique and strongly contrasting alternative to the more standard materialistic approach that he would receive under Brücke in later years, and even under his other major mentor during his University studies, Carl Claus.

For Brentano, then, Psychology should treat psychological phenomena *empirically* – seeking to discover the laws that govern them – but without thereby reducing psychological phenomena to purely physiological processes. Indeed, in a language that was soon to pass out of the standard 'scientific' psychological lexicon, Brentano was content to restate Aristotle's definition of psychology as the 'science of the soul':

In modern terminology, the word 'soul' refers to the substantial bearer of presentations [*Vorstellungen*] and other activities which are based upon presentations and which, like presentations, are only perceivable through inner perception. Thus, we call soul the substance which has sensations such as fantasy images, acts of memory, acts of hope or fear, desire and aversion.<sup>27</sup>

Until recently, Freud's biographers have tended to underestimate the effects of this time of exposure to Brentano's philosophical teaching. Jones claims that Freud merely took "a passing glance" at Brentano's lectures.<sup>28</sup> Peter Gay, while acknowledging the initial impact of Brentano's philosophy on Freud, down-plays its long-term effect. After Freud's very positive reflection on the experience of his first trip to Britain, Gay states that "[g]radually, the

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<sup>25</sup> Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism*, 94.

<sup>26</sup> Albertazzi, *Immanent Realism*, 94. Italics in original.

<sup>27</sup> Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, ed. O. Kraus, trans. by Antos C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell and Linda L. McAlister (London: Routledge Classics, 2015). 5.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, *Freud*, Vol 1, 41.

teachings of Brentano were fading into the background".<sup>29</sup> What seems to be assumed in such dismissals is that Freud's freshly-kindled passion for British empiricism along with that tradition's disdain for speculative metaphysics somehow indicated a rejection, on Freud's part, of philosophy *in general*. However, this assessment is much too sweeping. Indeed, the publication of Freud's letters to Eduard Silberstein have seen a reassessment of the significance of Brentano's influence on Freud.<sup>30</sup> In the same movement, the oft-asserted Freudian disdain for 'Philosophy' has been revised: it has become clear that Freud's disdain is not for philosophy *in its entirety*, but is rather a matter of his "following Brentano in a rejection of the *speculative metaphysics* of Hegel, Schelling and Fichte".<sup>31</sup> Freud was no metaphysician, but he was hardly a despiser of philosophy *tout corps*. Freud, it seems, viewed metaphysics as a sort of hangover from an outdated world view, and the sophisticated *theist* philosophy of Brentano did challenge (unsuccessfully) his long-established atheism. Despite his atheistic position, Freud was still able to admire Brentano's work, writing: "[Brentano] is a remarkable man (a believer, a teleologist (!)) and a Darwinian, and a damned clever fellow)".<sup>32</sup> Philosophically speaking, it appears that Brentano's Aristotelian empiricism would enable Freud to eventually think empirically about the 'soul' (i.e. 'the psyche') though this is not a connection that either Jones or Gay acknowledge.

If Brentano can be seen to bequeath to Freud a respect for empirical philosophy in its contribution to psychology (in ways to be detailed shortly), it should be noted that his mentor's leanings were as anti-German Idealist and

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<sup>29</sup> Gay, *Freud*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> Aviva Cohen, "Franz Brentano, Freud's Philosophical Mentor", in *The Pre-Psychoanalytic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed Gertrudis Van De Vijver, Filip Geerardyn and Duncan Barford (London, GB: Karnac Books, 2002), 89.

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, "Brentano", 89.

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, "Brentano", 90.

Romanticist as they were pro-Empiricist, strongly inspired (as will be seen) by the British tradition. Brentano held no sympathy for the *Naturphilosophie* of the day, especially the work of Schelling. Whilst in lectures he was typically respectful of other philosophical positions, it is clear that he was keen to warn the young student Freud away from the more abstract metaphysical strands of eighteenth and nineteenth century German thought. In a letter to Silberstein, Freud paints a vivid picture of Brentano's assessments (offered to Freud and a student colleague during a visit to Brentano) concerning the relative value of the writings of various philosophical figures:

Brentano then launched into a polemic...and recommended that the two students read Descartes, but avoid Spinoza; as for Leibniz, Locke, Hume and Kant, Brentano insisted they were required reading. The German idealists – on the other hand – he dismissed as 'swindlers'.<sup>33</sup>

If Brentano is a seminal figure in the development of Freudian thought, it is clear that he did so by turning Freud onto the Anglo-Scottish empirical tradition of philosophy (no doubt building on an existing preference and disposition in the young student), while also directing him away from (and reinforcing an existing dislike for) the German Idealist tradition. It is in this context that the undoubted resemblances between Freud's later thought and German philosophy needs to be understood at least as a possible case of convergence rather than origination. In other words, Freud's much later claim to have "unwittingly" found himself in Schopenhauer's harbour might be taken more at face value than is unusually the case.

However, if Brentano's empirical psychology is to be claimed as a seminal influence on the early evolution of Freudian thought, a series of questions are posed. The first concerns Brentano's relationship to the idea of the unconscious, and the impact on Freud's early conception. The second relates

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<sup>33</sup> Freud, *Letters to Silberstein*, 104.

to the significance of the notion of intentionality for Freud. The third needs to consider the implication of both of these for Freud's seduction theory.

### 3.2.2 Brentano contra Maudsley

Brentano's confrontation with the notion of an unconscious in his *Psychology*, takes place in strong reaction to the work of Henry Maudsley (1835-1915), and particularly to his *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*.<sup>34</sup> Of course, Brentano would always insist that the methods used by philosophy should be as rigorous and exact as the methods of the natural sciences, and he clearly brought this same rigor to his empirical approach for his understanding of psychology. Yet in doing so, Brentano forged a quite unique *via media* between the two horns (as he saw it) of physiological materialism and metaphysical idealism. Brentano's approach to the nature of the *unconscious* reflects this middle way.

Brentano opposes Maudsley's understanding of the unconscious for two major reasons. The first objection relates to Maudsley's physiological view of psychology, which Brentano took to entail a critical opposition to any *introspective* psychology. Maudsley firmly maintains that "*material conditions are the basis of consciousness*",<sup>35</sup> but furthermore, that self-conscious introspection is an indication of mental ill-health. As Maudsley puts it: "[h]e whose brain makes him conscious that he has a brain is not well, but ill; and thought that is conscious of itself is not natural and healthy thought".<sup>36</sup> Maudsley's notion (that in some senses anticipates contemporary neuroscience) of the brain as having a *vegetative life* – "assimilating available

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1868).

<sup>35</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 13. Italics in original.

<sup>36</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 23.

material from the blood by the nerve cells"<sup>37</sup> – underscores his materialistic view of the foundations of consciousness. In opposing such a view, Brentano became a champion of *introspection*. In Maudsley's account, as Brentano would see it, *inner consciousness (awareness)* appears to have been made redundant.<sup>38</sup> Contra Maudsley, Brentano maintains that introspection is not a sign of pathology, but rather of healthy psychic functioning. The implications of this stance on Brentano's part appear to have borne fruit in the later development of Freudian psychoanalysis, where the role of introspection is significant; for after all, without the capacity to develop an awareness of one's inner thoughts, the analysand would indeed be considered *unwell*. Introspection, and *deep* introspection at that, is essential if the pathogenic mental content underlying neurosis is to be identified and dealt with therapeutically.

However, if Brentano's advocacy for introspection foreshadowed Freudian concerns, his opposition to the idea of the unconscious is rather more ironically significant. Perhaps the most exhaustively argued point in Brentano's critique of Maudsley's work, is the rejection of the notion of unconscious mental acts. Brentano turns his attention to Maudsley's view of dreams as evidence of "unconscious cerebral action".<sup>39</sup> He quotes a passage from Maudsley where dreams are cited as evidence of the unconscious:

Let anyone take careful note of his dreams, he will find that many of the seemingly unfamiliar things with which his mind is then occupied, and which appear to be new and strange productions, are traceable to the unconscious appropriations of the day. There are stories on record like that well-known one which Coleridge quotes of the servant girl, who in the ravings of fever, repeated long passages in the Hebrew language, which she did not understand, and could not repeat when

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<sup>37</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 13

<sup>38</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 117-8.

well, but which, when living with a clergyman, she had heard him read aloud.<sup>40</sup>

Brentano maintains that Maudsley's argument from dreams is an insufficiently substantial basis for his claim about unconscious mental acts. Quite simply: "From the fact that the servant girl did not understand the sense of the words which she was hearing, it certainly does not follow that she heard without being conscious of hearing".<sup>41</sup> It might be that the servant girl was too distracted by her duties to notice that she was indeed hearing the clergyman recite Hebrew in proximity to her; not noticing something does not constitute a basis for presuming the unconscious.

Brentano acknowledged that figures as esteemed in his estimation as Leibniz and Kant held a notion something like "non consciousness" (as surveyed in chapter one above), and that such a notion could even be traced back to Aquinas.<sup>42</sup> However, he condemns Maudsley for uncritically accepting that unconscious acts occur, and worse, going on to use these as a basis for his physiological view of psychology. Against Maudsley (and all those who held to the notion of unconscious mental acts), he maintains that while certain phenomena may suggest the idea of the unconscious, this is indicative only of a lack of understanding:

Even if we admit in certain cases that we are unable to understand a phenomenon without the hypothesis of the influence of unconscious mental phenomena, the argument would have little force as long as such inability can easily be explained on the basis of the deficiency of our knowledge of the area concerned.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 25.

<sup>41</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 119.

<sup>42</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 108-109.

<sup>43</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 121.

Yet it is important to correctly understand what is at stake here for Brentano and understand the paradoxical way in which it may indeed be seen to feed into Freud's own early account of the psychoanalytic unconscious. For Brentano's rejection of unconscious mental activity is not as indiscriminate and sweeping as it first appears, for two important reasons.

First, it is crucial to note what Brentano actually means by 'unconscious'. The notion of "unconscious" that he is addressing is seen in the passive use of the word, i.e. "[s]peaking of a thing of which we are not conscious".<sup>44</sup> He dismisses the notion of *consciousness which is not conscious* – seeing it in strict philosophical terms as a contradiction. But for Freud, the whole point of the *un*-conscious is precisely that it is *not* conscious; it is not mental content that is the subject of an intentional act. It only *becomes* so when it is brought into the realm of conscious awareness through the achievement of overcoming repression. On this point, Freud would presumably agree with Brentano that "unconscious *awareness*" is a contradiction. Of course, just what unconscious content *is* (i.e., its essential cognitive status) is another question entirely, but not one on which it is necessary to see Brentano and Freud in dispute.

Second, the main thrust of Brentano's criticism of "unconscious mental acts" is not only pitted against Maudsley but also that growing number of nineteenth century philosophers who were interested in propagating the notion of the unconscious.<sup>45</sup> One of the strongest arguments used by this philosophical cohort to prove that the unconscious was in fact a valid concept, was the argument of 'infinite regression'. Such arguments progress along these lines:

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<sup>44</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 108, n.1. Brentano rejects the active sense of 'unconscious' since he holds that the expression "unconscious consciousness" would be a contradiction in terms.

<sup>45</sup> Brentano gives specific criticism for the way Von Hartman had gone so far as to build up a complete "Philosophy of the Unconscious" – *Psychology*, 109.



[i]f every mental act is an object of which the subject is conscious, then every mental act is infinitely complicated. That is to say, in order to be conscious, for example, of something red, I would have to be conscious that I am conscious of something red, and conscious that I am conscious that I am conscious of something red, and so on *ad infinitum*. But it seems that my mental acts are not all that complicated. More importantly, it seems a matter of principle that nothing can be that complicated, since there can be no infinite regress. Therefore at some point that there is a mental act of which one is *not* conscious: this is most probably an act of sensation, since we do not see that we see, nor hear that we hear.<sup>46</sup>

The only way to mitigate this *ad infinitum* problem was, according to Brentano's opposing cohort, to argue that there was an unconscious that provided a bulwark against infinite regression. But Brentano is quite clear this was not required. The problem can be addressed, he maintained, by employing his notion of intentionality. He maintains, for example, that the act of hearing, and the object of the act of hearing (i.e. the sound), are the same thing; although in his terminology he would call the sound his "primary object" and the act of hearing the "secondary object".<sup>47</sup> With this argument Brentano believes that he has eliminated the infinite regression argument and therefore, more importantly, the need for an unconscious. He states triumphantly: "Far from having to absorb an infinite series of representations which become more and more complicated, we see that the series ends with the second member (i.e. "secondary object")".<sup>48</sup>

Thus far, in countering Maudsley (and indeed Comte and Lange), Brentano has provided two key notions: firstly, that there are no unconscious mental

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<sup>46</sup> Susan Krantz, "Brentano on 'Unconscious Consciousness'", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50:4 (June 1990): 747. Italics mine. Krantz provides an excellent summation of Brentano's criticism of what he considers to be the four essential groupings arguments *in favour* of an unconscious. The fourth of these groupings provides the most substantial platform for Brentano to build his case against such a notion as the unconscious.

<sup>47</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 135. Brackets mine.

acts (his immanentism view has seen to that) and secondly, that inner perception is infallible. However, these very points are not above criticism. For example, as Susan Krantz has pointed out, in the physical process of seeing we are *not aware* of the action of light on the optic nerve:

Since physical objects can be taken into the mind only as perceivable or knowable, and not entitively, that is, not as they exist in the real world (it is only figuratively that we can have rocks in our heads), it follows that part of the physical interaction of the sense organ with physical objects (e.g. the action of light on the optic nerve) is something which the sense organ itself cannot sense.<sup>49</sup>

Brentano does not address this, but it is interesting to note that he does allow for *degrees* of intensity of consciousness, with matching degrees of intensity of the mind's awareness of these acts. On this basis he concludes that we *might* speak of an unconscious mental event when strictly speaking we should speak of a conscious event of *very low intensity*. It would appear that once again we are approaching Leibniz' concept of *petite perceptions*. That is, the unconscious can only be a place where things that are not noticed reside and certainly not a place where unconscious mental acts can be found.

Of course, in this sense, Brentano's 'thin' version of something like a 'cognitive unconscious' is a long way from what would become Freud's mature *dynamic unconscious*, with all its profound and powerful implications for understanding the individual's conscious life. It is hardly surprising that such arguments do not directly impact upon Freud's work in any obvious way. If anything, Brentano's position provided Freud with important training in the use of 'Occam's Razor', for dispensing with unnecessary assumptions and constructs would come to serve the development of psychoanalysis very well in the decades that followed.

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<sup>49</sup> Krantz, "Unconscious Consciousness", 749.

### 3.2.3 Brentanian Intentionality and Freud's Early Theorising

Of seminal importance for the young Freud was Brentano's theory of intentionality as such, and indeed of the whole methodological framework that the theory makes possible. Scholars of early Freudian thought, such as William McGrath<sup>50</sup> and Michael Frampton<sup>51</sup> have long noted this crucial linkage. Indeed, so important does Paul Ricoeur consider this link, that he goes as far as to conclude that Freud and Edmund Husserl (who's tutelage under Brentano followed shortly thereafter) are, even in their quite different respective uses of this theory, the true heirs of Brentano.<sup>52</sup>

In elucidating his principle of intentionality, Brentano writes as follows:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) in-existence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing [*Realität*]), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as an object within itself, although they do not do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence [of an object] is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical object exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those which contain an object intentionally within themselves<sup>53</sup>

A thorough unpacking of the many implications of this famous passage is clearly beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a few key observations

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<sup>50</sup> William McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psycho-analysis: The Politics of Hysteria* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 124.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Frampton, "Considerations on the Role of Brentano's Concept of Intentionality in Freud's Repudiation of the Seduction Theory", *The International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 18 (1991): 30.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay of Interpretation*, trans D Savage (Hew Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 367 ff.

<sup>53</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 88 – 89.

will be important for what is to come. First, it underscores Brentano's keynote differentiation of 'mental' from 'physical' phenomena. Accordingly, while the existence of external objects in the world as correlates of a mental acts of perception is not at issue here, the object is understood to exist *in the mental act itself*; or otherwise put, content and object are the same thing. The "object is immanent in the sense that it is 'in' the mental act itself ... unlike 'transcendent' Platonic forms, which belong outside the world of experience"<sup>54</sup>

Further, there is a certainty associated with mental phenomena that is not so of the perception of external objects. Whereas "the phenomena of the so-called external perception cannot be proved true and real"<sup>55</sup>, inner perception is "immediately evident" or "infallible in its self-evidence". This is because, unlike external perception, there is *no* other (external) phenomenon being represented and therefore no chance that the perception is inaccurate. Mental phenomena alone "possess real existence as well as intentional existence"<sup>56</sup>.

Leaving to one side the very many metaphysical questions concerning (and implications of) Brentano's notion of "intentional in-existence"<sup>57</sup>, what is of central interest here is the very clear principle of *mental immanence* that suffuses his account. All ideas concerning states of affairs that are external to, or independent from, objects as they are consciously intended are – to use a Husserlian trope – placed in *epochē*; the intended object just *is* the 'real object', and thus the question of its relationship to reality 'beyond' consciousness is ruled out of immediate consideration. Indeed, in this way, the usual distinction between 'real' and imaginary objects and events (or actual and

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<sup>54</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, ix.

<sup>55</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 96.

<sup>56</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 96.

<sup>57</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 102.

fictitious ones) is put to one side. An object is 'real' insofar as it is intended, and if it is intended, it is – by definition – real. As a 'first-person' theory of mind, what is distinguished is not, as Jacquette notes, real and imaginary, but rather "thought and nonthought, mind from nonmind and the psychological from the nonpsychological".<sup>58</sup>

The implications for the early Freudian theory of mind are immense, not the least point of which is the operational agnosticism concerning the reality of *external* objects. Freud's own method enacts this very 'existential agnosticism' insofar as psychoanalysis is essentially unconcerned with the question of the metaphysical reality of mental phenomena, and the independent truth value of phenomenal experience. On the other hand, no such agnostic stance is required of *internal* perceptions, i.e. the perception of mental acts. Indeed, for Brentano, this is the triumph of his whole method. "[A]s they appear to be", he says of mental phenomena, "so they are in reality". It cannot be denied, he claims, that "this constitutes a great advantage of psychology over the natural sciences?"<sup>59</sup>

The influence of Brentanian immanentism may also be seen in Freud's focus on dream analysis, which from at least the mid-1890s was a cornerstone of psychoanalytic practice, indeed as he famously put it, the "royal road to knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind".<sup>60</sup> It is this very influence that can help explain how a practice as seemingly arcane and foreign to a modernist scientific theory of mind as dream interpretation might be able to find itself at the centre of Freud's practice. Freud's exposure to Brentano's philosophy of *perception* would have provided a respectably

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<sup>58</sup> Dale Jacquette, "Brentano's Concept of Intentionality", in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, ed. Dale Jacquette (Cambridge GB: Cambridge University, 2004), 99.

<sup>59</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 20.

<sup>60</sup> *SE V*, "Psychology of the Dream Processes", 608.

credentialed foundation for the theoretical primacy of dreams and the clinical centrality of dream work. For dreams are concerned, par excellence, not with “external perception” (in Brentano’s sense), but with “inner perception [Innere Wahrnehmung]” In a manner reminiscent of Descartes’s *Cogito*, one may doubt the ‘reality’ or ‘actuality’ - Brentano uses these terms imprecisely - of what one is *thinking about*, but one cannot doubt the actual act of *thinking itself*.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.2.4 Intentionality and Seduction Theory

Of course, while such a methodological commitment was to be a central importance for the development of Freudian psychoanalysis, there were clearly some darker implications of such a stance. Michael Frampton has shown the compelling relevance of this aspect of Freud’s Brentanianism for the evolution of his keynote seduction theory as it moved from a theory of the pathogenic results of historical sexual abuse to one that primarily concerned psychodynamic phenomena.<sup>62</sup>

The shift in Freud’s account is striking. In three papers published in 1896 (“Heredity and the Aetiology of Neurosis”, “Further Remarks on the Neuro-psychoses of Defence”, and “The Aetiology of Hysteria”), Freud declared a *causal link* between actual physical acts of sexual abuse and the later development of neurosis in the abused individual.<sup>63</sup> While exploring both the “hereditary” and “special” agents and their respective roles in the aetiology of neurosis, Freud provided a clear statement of his literal understanding of link between abuse and pathology:

The event of which the subject has retained an unconscious memory is a *precocious experience of sexual relations with actual excitement of the genitals, resulting from sexual abuse committed by another person; and the period of life*

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<sup>61</sup> Cohen, *Brentano*, 93.

<sup>62</sup> Frampton, *Considerations*, 31 – 33.

<sup>63</sup> SE III, *Early Psycho-Analytic Publications*.

at which this fatal event takes place is earliest youth- the years up to the age of eight to ten, before the child has reached sexual maturity. A *passive sexual experience before puberty*: this, then, is the specific aetiology of hysteria.<sup>64</sup>

In another of these papers, Freud is even clearer about his clinical diagnosis of pathogenic sexual abuse:

[T]hese sexual traumas must have occurred in early childhood (before puberty), and their content must consist of an actual irritation of the genitals (of the processes resembling copulation). I have found this specific determination of hysteria-sexual passivity during the pre-sexual period – in every case of hysteria (including two male cases) which I have analysed.<sup>65</sup>

Yet within a year of such an unambiguous diagnosis concerning sexual abuse of children, Freud's interpretation of such evidence evidently underwent a major shift. In a letter dated September 1897, Freud confided to Fliess that he now feels the need to privately renounce this theory of aetiology due to a number of causes which are pressuring him to change his mind.<sup>66</sup> First, Freud admits to Fliess that, to this point, he has not been able to *complete* a single case: his patients "are running away" even after having been thoroughly engaged in the analysis for some time.<sup>67</sup> Freud's second admission is that had the literal abuse theory been true in every case of analysis the he would have

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<sup>64</sup> SE III, "Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses", 152. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>65</sup> SE III, "The 'Specific' Aetiology of Hysteria", 163. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>66</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*, trans and ed by Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge MA, Belknap Press, 1985), 264. Letter of September 21, 1897. Wilhelm Fliess, 1858 – 1928, was an Otolaryngologist who had settled in Vienna in the Autumn of 1887. At Breuer's suggestion he had attended Freud's lectures on neurology in November of the same year. Initially a critic of Freud's work, he would eventually become a lifelong confidant and friend. Fliess' ideas, especially those linking the nose to the genitals, and therefore the cause of neurosis, have generally been discredited. Fliess did collaborate with Freud on his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895). However, it is clear that Fliess' work has long been dismissed by the medical fraternity. Frank J. Sulloway, (in *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992, 142, maintains that it was Freud's very close friendship with Fliess that would make him blind to the former's quackery.

<sup>67</sup> Freud, *Letters to Fliess*, 21 September 1897, 264.

had to accuse *the father* (including his own) of being the literal cause of the hysteria.<sup>68</sup> This is problematic, he reasons, simply on the basis of what this small sample would imply about the prevalence of child sexual abuse in his society, and how unthinkable it would be to take this evidence at face value. “Surely”, he reasons, “such widespread perversions against children are not very probable?”. Third, and most significant for the connection with the method of intentionality, Freud admits to Fliess that he has no way of distinguishing external and internal ‘reality’ in such cases; i.e., the difference between unconscious fantasy (of psychoanalytic significance) and historical fact. As Freud says, “there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect”.<sup>69</sup> Freud appears to have wavered somewhat over the following years between what might be called the ‘literal’ and ‘psychodynamic’ explanations for the phenomena he was confronting in his patient reports.<sup>70</sup> Unambiguous public renunciation didn’t really arrive until his 1914 paper, “*The Psychoanalytic movement*”, where in his review of the development of Psychoanalysis to this point Freud states:

Influenced by Charcot’s view of the traumatic origin of hysteria, one was readily inclined to accept as true and aetiologically significant the statements made by patients in which they ascribed their symptoms to passive sexual experiences in the first years of childhood- to put it bluntly, to seduction. When this aetiology broke down under the weight its own improbability and contradiction in definitely ascertainable circumstances, the result at first (for Psychoanalysis) was helpless bewilderment. Analysis had led back to these infantile sexual traumas

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<sup>68</sup> Freud was not accusing his father of this behavior, rather, he was observing that the literal aetiology of hysteria would implicate even his own father.

<sup>69</sup> Freud, *Letters to Fliess*, 21 September 1897, 264.

<sup>70</sup> Freud, *Letters to Fliess*, 5 November 1897, 277. Even before the end of that year (1897), Freud reports to Fliess that he had “[r]ecently ... had occasion to take up again an old and already published idea about the choice of neurosis, namely, that hysteria is connected with sexual passivity; obsessional neurosis, with activity”.



by the right path, *and yet they were not true*. The firm ground of reality was gone.<sup>71</sup>

Freud is more explicit still in his mature reflection where he appears to chide himself for his own over-valuing of (external) reality and his low evaluation of the 'reality' of fantasy, for example in a footnote added in 1924 to his essay, "The Aetiology of Hysteria", where he comments that "[i]t must be remembered that at the time I wrote it I had not yet freed myself from my overvaluation of reality and my low valuation of fantasy".<sup>72</sup>

The key point of relevance here for the significance of Brentano in the development of the early Freudian theory is not simply Freud's dawning awareness of the unconscious' *inability to distinguish* between fact or fiction, but even more crucial, the *irrelevance* of this very question for psychoanalytic theory and practice. When a patient reveals a piece of pathogenic mental content involving paternal seduction, his account does not need to have *actually* occurred historically in order for it to be 'real' for the unconscious of the patient. After all, as per Brentano's understanding of intentionality, there is *no* other (external) phenomenon being represented, and therefore no chance that the perception is inaccurate. Indeed, for Freud, unconscious phenomena might be seen to be *more real* than external perceptions about which we can never be entirely certain.<sup>73</sup> This points to a major philosophical struggle at the heart of the whole methodological approach of psychoanalysis, and it is one that seems to have been firmly decided by the logic of Brentano's theory of intentional consciousness.<sup>74</sup> Unconscious mental content is *sui generis* and is thus not in need of verification by external reality.

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<sup>71</sup> SE XIV "On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement", 17. Italics mine.

<sup>72</sup> SE III, "The Aetiology of Hysteria", 205, n.1. (Footnote added in 1924.)

<sup>73</sup> Brentano, *Psychology*, 96.

<sup>74</sup> Various scholars have made a not dissimilar claim concerning the relationship between Brentano's theory and Freud's eventual ahistorical seduction theory. For example, Aviva

The implications for psychoanalytic practice are obviously profound in terms of the way this plays out in practical epistemology. Accordingly, all that the patient would reveal in analysis was 'real'. If there is mental content of seduction, then that seduction *is real* and needs to be taken as relevant (even if ahistorical) data for the purposes of analysis. But its relation to 'external' reality that lies outside of the '*epochē*' of psychoanalysis is a completely different question that is not relevant to the clinical work itself. In essence, the question of the historical needs to be suspended by the analyst in order to truly respect the revealing power of the unconscious. Indeed, to this day, a distinguishing hallmark of psychoanalysis is *its steadfastness in treating phantasy as operational reality*. Perhaps we might go further and say that the success of any analysis depends largely on the analyst's ability to hold the real (intentional) world of the unconscious respectfully separate from the so-called real world of day-to-day reality.

### **3.2.5 The Legacy of Brentano's Immanentism**

To conclude, then, Brentano clearly stands as a key figure for understanding the philosophical framing of early (and indeed, I would argue, therefore middle and late) Freudian theory; he is, to quote Aviva Cohen, "Freud's philosophical mentor".<sup>75</sup> But what kind of mentorship was this, vis-à-vis the many other philosophical influences from which Freud may have drawn? Three key conclusions emerge.

First, Brentano does not neatly 'fit' into any of Gödde's three tradition lines as outlined earlier, and in most senses he stands positively opposed to the vast

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Cohen argues that it was specifically in Brentano's sense "that he [Freud] did not accept the hysteric's claim that the seduction as real ... That is, he attributed the judgement of reality not to a physical event, but to a mental act". (Cohen, *Brentano*, 99.) In this paper, Cohen, adds weight to the above argument, specifically in relation to when considering Freud's *A Project for a Scientific Psychology*, and other metapsychological works.

<sup>75</sup> Cohen, *Brentano*, 88.

scope of this whole heritage of thought represented by G dde’s three lines. If there is a minor sense in which Brentano might be compared to the early roots of G dde’s “cognitive unconscious tradition- line” (e.g., in his vague ascent to something like a Leibnizian notion of “*petites perceptions*”), he stands strongly opposed to all that is represented by the “swindlers” comprising the other two tradition lines . What is highlighted here is a very significant omission from G dde’s threefold model of the roots of Freudian thought, an omission that will be addressed in what follows.

Second, Brentano does show a strong affinity with the general methodology of philosophical empiricism, without necessarily always agreeing with their diverse philosophical conclusions. Undoubtedly, it was this very method that attracted Freud to Brentano’s lectures in the first place, for such an approach fitted neatly with the young Freud’s passionate interest in the natural scientific research. However, in ways just surveyed, it is also clear that Brentano’s particular style of philosophical empiricism was to be a strong influence on Freud’s own thinking.

Third, Brentano was more than willing to entertain and analyse the work of the Anglo-Scottish thinkers, and in various ways it seems that he was a key influence on the young Freud’s introduction to that world of scholarship across the English Channel, among them key figures that will be discussed in more detail below, such as Hamilton, Bain, Spencer, Lewes, Bentham, Mill and Jackson. There was a similarity of method here that appealed to Brentano and Freud alike, and even when their conclusions were occasionally rejected – as seen already in the case of Maudsley - they invariably provided leverage for further thought.

Brentano is widely acknowledged as “the teacher of the founder of phenomenology”,<sup>76</sup> with reference to his impact on Edmund Husserl. However, far less attested are acknowledgements of Brentano as the philosophical teacher of the founder of psychoanalysis. Indeed, the impact of Brentano on Freud (1875-76) pre-dated that of Husserl (1884-86) by several years, yet the impact and legacy of that mentorship was arguably at least as great. Of course, Freud would travel a different path after leaving university, one that (unlike Husserl) did not require explicit philosophical engagement with Brentano’s teachings. Yet, there is a keen sense in which Brentano can be regarded legitimately as ‘grandfather’ to both phenomenology and psychoanalysis, which in this light can be understood in their commonality as two divergent approaches to the theory of consciousness. Further, even given the complete absence of any reference to Husserl or phenomenology in Freud’s voluminous works, there is a sense in which Freud’s clinical approach can be regarded as a type of *phenomenological psychotherapy*. Psychoanalysis, as much as phenomenology, is dedicated to returning to “the things themselves”, understood noetically, and to maintain an unflinching fidelity to this content as *die sache selbst* for investigation.

### **3.3 The Legacy of J S. Mill and British Associationism**

To this point we have considered the salient biographical and career-based incidents that have been shown to be significant influences on the thinking of Freud, at least with regard to the Anglo-Scottish influences (3.1). We have also argued that these factors have predisposed Freud to the Anglo-Scottish empiricism that plays an important role in the thinking of Franz Brentano (3.2). Brentano’s concept of ‘Intentionality’ has been explored as one of those key influences on Freud’s early psychoanalytic theories, including the

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<sup>76</sup> Robin D. Rollinger, “Brentano and Husserl”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Brentano*, ed. Dale Jacquette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 255.

seduction theory. We have noted too that Freud's engagement in philosophy as a student contradicts widely held assumptions about his anti-philosophy stance. Following Brentano, if Freud may have been anti-*metaphysical* in his philosophical orientation, he was clearly very favourably disposed towards the Anglo-Scottish empiricism. The focus of this section concerns more specifically the *nature* of this Brentanian philosophical influence on early Freudian thought. In particular, the focus of discussion will concern the 'Associationist', the 'Common Sense' and Utilitarian movements as seen in the work of J S Mill, William Hamilton, and other Anglo-Scottish thinkers.

From his earliest student days, Freud was exposed to the work of the British Utilitarians and the Associationists. As Kaltenbeck recounts, at the end his second year at university (1874-5), Freud engaged with two specific series of lectures delivered by Brentano, the first on J S Mill's *Utilitarianism*, and the second on the broader topic of *metaphysics*.<sup>77</sup> While the topics of both of these lecture series would exert considerable influence on Freud's thinking, it is the indirect influence of John Stuart Mill that now begs consideration and more specifically, Brentano's role in seeding, encouraging and mediating this influence. Although the influence of Mill on Freud's intellectual trajectory

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<sup>77</sup> Franz Kaltenbeck, "On Freud's Encounter with Brentano", in *The Pre-Psychoanalytic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed Gertrudis Van De Vijver, Filip Geerardyn and Duncan Barford (London, GB: Karnac Books, 2002), 103. With regard to Brentano's lecture on metaphysics, it is evident that from the outset Freud was not comfortable with Brentano's proof for the existence of God, finding such arguments, especially when used in the same context as empirical inquiry, somewhat disquieting. As he goes on to write to Silberstein (Freud, *Freud to Eduard Silberstein*, 104) "He [Brentano] demonstrates the existence of God with as little bias and as much precision as another might argue the advantage of the wave over the emission theory". In the same letter, Freud states that he is content to be a "Theist by necessity," and yet history will show that he would be most content with the stance of atheism. For Brentano, if not for Freud, the laws of causality would require the existence of God. For all this, Freud is full of praise for his lecturer and writes enthusiastically to his young correspondent in glowing terms (Freud, *Freud to Eduard Silberstein*, 70-71.)

would come to take a number of significant twists and turns in Freud's academic life, it is his student days that reveal the origins of this journey.

Brentano's own interest in Mill was strong and formative. Mill's work is referred to by name 35 times in his *Psychologie*, surpassed only by Aristotle at 62 references and Kant with 41. Certainly, Freud must have 'caught' this interest in Mill since, as has been noted earlier, he was pleased to undertake translation work of four of Mill's works, courtesy of Brentano's recommendation to the publisher. Today the volume of these translations, as well as Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, can be found in Freud's London library. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that either Brentano or Mill would be mentioned often in Freud's works; oddly, in the *Standard Edition*, each is named only twice.<sup>78</sup> Yet if explicit announcements of influence are rare, the dependencies are nonetheless demonstrable.

One place where this intellectual heritage is obviously expressed concerns the very notion of *association*. It is no co-incidence, of course, that one of the key concepts undergirding Mill's "Laws of the Mind" are the "Laws of Association".<sup>79</sup> As is characteristic of nineteenth century thought at a point before the great divergence between the natural and human sciences, the philosophical and the psychological were tightly correlated in Mill's thinking, and this footing is not lost to early Freudian thought. To the contrary, the lens provided by the theme of association helps reveal the tight relationship

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<sup>78</sup> On Brentano, see *SE VIII*, "The Technique of Jokes", 31 *n.* 6 and "APPENDIX: Franz Brentano's Riddles", 237-8. In 31, *n.* 6 Freud is making rather obscure reference to a minor work published by Brentano (under the pseudonym 'Aenigmatius') on different types of riddles. The booklet of some 200 hundred pages, published in 1879 was titled *Neue Räthsel* ("New Riddles"). Strachey attempts to explain Freud's references by translating several of the riddles in the appendix on 237-8. On Mill, see *SE XIV*, "The Unconscious", 213-4.

<sup>79</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VIII - A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation (Books IV-VI and Appendices)* ed. John M. Robson, Introduction by R.F. McRae (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 853.

between mind and language at the very heart of psychoanalysis as *both* a theory of mind, *and* as a clinical therapy, for associative linkages are central to both. The mind works through linkages between psychic elements, and it is for this reason that the method of prising open and examining these linkages is so central to psychotherapeutic intervention.

The principle of the association of ideas is a key motif that not only links Mill to Freud (his translator, in more ways than one), but also to a much older tradition within British philosophical psychology concerning the operations of mind. It is seen, for example, in Thomas Hobbes' remarkable reflections in the early pages of his *Leviathan* that deal with the operations of imagination, memory and dreams as remnants of sensory experience of objects; and subsequently to the development of language, understanding and Science.<sup>80</sup>

Hobbes begins on the basis of a thoroughly empiricist set of assumptions that are inspired by Aristotle (whose psychology is marked by its own discussion of the rules of association), and which were to be foundations for mainline British philosophy to come: viz, "there is no conception in a man's mind, which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original".<sup>81</sup> However, it is imagination that comes to centre stage as a preservation of sense, and as the condition of knowledge. First: "the longer the time is, after the sight, or sense of any object, the weaker is the imagination". But imagination is never singular: images combine and reproduce. "[C]ompound imagination" operates where decaying memories are pieced together in diverse ways. It is for this reason that he makes the revolutionary claim that "imagination and memory, are but one thing". Further, dreams are a continuations of this same compound

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. See especially chapters 1-5 in Part I: "Of Man".

<sup>81</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 9.

imagination, even during sleep as “the agitation of the inward parts of man's body” continue, even with “the organs of sense being now benumbed”.<sup>82</sup>

However, Hobbes is interested in the ‘logic’ of the progression of these imaginative elements in their compounding, or as he terms it, the “consequence, or train of thoughts”. Here is seen – if not in so many words – some of the earliest roots of what was to become the ‘associationist’ theme in early modern British philosophy:

By *Consequence*, or TRAIN of thoughts, I understand that succession of one thought to another, which is called (to distinguish it from discourse in words) *mental discourse*. When a man thinketh on any thing whatsoever, his next thought after, is not altogether so casual as it seems to be. Not every thought to every thought succeeds indifferently ... All fancies are motions within us, relics of those made in the sense: and those motions that immediately succeeded one another in the sense, continue also together after sense.

Hobbes suggests that some trains of thoughts are guided, - with “design”; with “passionate thought, to govern and direct those that follow, to itself, as the end and scope of some desire”<sup>83</sup> – and others not. Yet in their coming together is the origin of thought and thus speech, which “consisting of names or appellations, and their connexion; whereby men register their thoughts; recall them when they are past; and also declare them one to another”.<sup>84</sup>

This interest on the rules of association is continued by John Locke in his own epistemological cogitations. In ways that develop Hobbes’ thinking on the matter, Locke notes the mercurial and seemingly arbitrary ways that thought develops through the eccentric association of elements that can be understood only through ideological factors impinging on individual circumstances. Yet

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<sup>82</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 10-13.

<sup>83</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 20.



once connected, these associations remain stubbornly in place and return as if by mental reflex:

Ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds, that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it [...] and hence it comes in different men to be very different, according to their different inclinations, education, interests, &c. Custom settles habits of thinking in the understanding, as well as of determining in the will, and of motions in the body; all which seem to be but trains of motion in the animal spirits, which once set agoing, continue in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading, are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy, and, as it were, natural.<sup>85</sup>

David Hume continued and developed this tradition of thought along similar lines even as he added further sophistication in terms of the principles of association. Like Hobbes and Locke, Hume links mental ideation with sense impressions: "All our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions"; they are "the faint images" of impressions.<sup>86</sup> However, simple ideas are routinely conflated to make complex ones that do not correspond with any particular sense impression, and it is this process by which "simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases"<sup>87</sup> that leads to his famous account of the qualities that produce association: viz, resemblance, contiguity and causation.

This rich heritage was certainly available to Jeremy Bentham in the nineteenth century, and thus also to his student, John Stuart Mill. However, a further figure who was of great importance to the development of this tradition – and in ways that are even more telling for understanding the development of

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<sup>85</sup> Locke, John, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

<sup>86</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature, A Critical Edition*, Ed David F. Norton and Mary Norton Vol 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), 7-9.

<sup>87</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 12.

Freudian thought – was the eighteenth century English philosopher and doctor, David Hartley. Hartley – a contemporary of the better known Scottish and Irish Associationist, Hume and Berkeley – was the most systematic representative of associationist psychology during the period, and indeed Peter Gay has described him as “perhaps the most inventive and ... influential psychologist of the eighteenth century”.<sup>88</sup>

What sets Hartley’s work apart is the way in which his psychological associationism was also at the same time a physiology of the mind, and in this the anticipatory comparisons with the early Freud are striking. On one hand, he was a follower of the philosophical accounts of mental association prevalent at the time (mentioning Locke and Berkeley explicitly, as well as John Gay<sup>89</sup>). But on the other hand, he was a faithful follower of Newtonian science, in this way sought, as much as Hume, to develop a “science of man”. This was enacted in his system by his physiological account of “vibration”. Accordingly, sense impressions occur by the stimulation and vibration of the nerve, and in this one movement, ideas have their origin. Or as he puts it at the very outset of his *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, And His Expectations*, “whatever changes are made in [t]he white medullary substance of the brain ... the corresponding changes are made in our ideas; and vice versa”.<sup>90</sup>

As contemporary as such a “dual aspect” philosophy of mind appears even now, of more importance for present purposes is to note the commitment seen here, at this key moment of eighteenth century psychology, to the unity of the physiological and the psychological. Even if the details of Hartley’s

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol 2 (New York: Knopf, 1969), 181.

<sup>89</sup> David Hartley, *Observations on Man* (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facimilies & Reprints, 1966), 361.

<sup>90</sup> Hartley, *Observations on Man*, 8.

physiology were to be quickly surpassed, the revolutionary nature of his methodological commitment certainly justifies Gay's assessment of Hartley's importance for future philosophical psychology. In fact, it is this very commitment that was to be the cause for others of a more Romantic intellectual complexion to reject Hartley's synthesis. The case of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a prime case in point: initially a great admirer of Hartley, Coleridge came to reject what he saw as the mechanistic and deterministic nature of this 'Newtonian psychology' that was seen to deny freedom and creativity of mind.<sup>91</sup>

Significantly, Freud's very early and abandoned efforts – in his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* – to link the concept of association with regard to mind is also approached physiologically, albeit in the updated neurophysiology for the late nineteenth century. The tenor of Freud's account is strongly and deliberately materialistic, and begins with the proclamation:

The intention of this project is to furnish us with a psychology which shall be a natural science: its aim, that is, is to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determined states of specifiable material particles and so to make them plain and void of contradictions.<sup>92</sup>

The "material particles in question" are the neurones of the brain, and their relative state of excitation is to be regarded purely in terms of "a quantity (Q) subject to the general laws of motion". Psychic phenomena such as dreams, and psychopathologies such as hysteria, are understood in terms of cathectic quantities (charges of psychic energy). In this sense, associations *just are* patterns of circulation of energy within the neuronal network of the brain. At points of neural junction, these excitations tend to take the path more travelled by previous excitations. In this way, the *Project* builds up a neuro-

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<sup>91</sup> See Huguelet's Introduction to *Observations on Man*, v-xvii.

<sup>92</sup> SE I, "Project for a Scientific Psychology", 355.

physiological analogue to the more psychological picture presented by the philosophical Associationists. As LaPlanche comments of Freud's approach in the *Project*, "there is no question of images in the sense of mental or neuronal impressions bearing a resemblance to the actual object: to begin with ... [Rather] everything is seen in terms of 'neurones' and 'quantity'".<sup>93</sup>

Of course, this empirical/scientific conceptualisation seems very distantly related to the later psychoanalytic meaning, and clinical use, of the concept of free association. However, as will be seen, the basic logic and language of *cathexis* remains central – albeit in a less reductionistic sense – well into Freud's middle and mature work. Nonetheless, Freud quickly sees for himself that this strongly materialistic line of inquiry needs to be heavily supplemented if it is to be anything other than a dead end, and he admits to a need for a more *qualitative* treatment of the subject.<sup>94</sup> As he puts it in the *Project*: "our conscious furnishes only *qualities*, whereas science recognises only *quantities*".<sup>95</sup> In moving away from biological reductionism toward a more holistic mental/physiological account of mind, Freud was in many ways retracing the efforts of Hartley himself (150 years earlier) to develop what might now be understood as a more 'compatibilist' account of the life of the mind.

In any case, the broader British empiricist sense of associationism certainly remained a formative force in Freud's early thought, and it set the stage for psychoanalytical notion of *association* that is both consistent with philosophical tradition and distinctive in its pivotal role in the psychoanalytic

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<sup>93</sup> Jean LaPlanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "The Language of Psychoanalysis", trans by Donald Nicolson-Smith. *The International Psychoanalytical Library*, 94 (1973), 42. See also SE I, "Project for a Scientific Psychology".

<sup>94</sup> SE I, "Project for a Scientific Psychology", 305-310.

<sup>95</sup> SE I, "Project for a Scientific Psychology", 309. Emphasis in the original.

understanding of the unconscious. Again, the vital proximal influence here was the work of John Stuart Mill, mediated through Brentano. For Mill, the subject of Psychology “[i]s the uniformities of succession, the laws, whether ultimate or derivative, according to which one mental state succeeds another”.<sup>96</sup> In his *System of Logic*, he gives examples of these ‘general laws’, followed by examples of the laws that govern secondary mental states, or, as he also refers to them: “Laws of Association”. Mill’s general laws of psychology state that once a ‘state of consciousness’ has been excited in us then it will always be possible to reproduce the same state in the future, albeit at lesser intensity:

If we have once seen or touched an object, we can afterwards think of the object though it be absent from our sight or from our touch. If we have been joyful or grieved at some event, we can think of, or remember our past joy or grief, though no new event of a happy or painful nature has taken place. When a poet has put together a mental picture of an imaginary object, A Castle of Indolence, A Una, or a Hamlet, he can afterwards think of the ideal object he has created, without any fresh act of intellectual combination.<sup>97</sup>

Mill is making two important points here, both of which are already part of the long tradition of associationism, going back to at least Hobbes, just surveyed. First, any event (impression) can be recalled, although with lesser impact than the first event. Second, an imagined or created event (say, in the form of a poem or song) can be recalled without having to go through the laborious process of creating it afresh. In this, Mill acknowledges his debt to Hume by paraphrasing the latter’s dictum: “every mental *impression* has its *idea*”<sup>98</sup>, or as Hume himself put it, “*all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv’d from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they*

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<sup>96</sup> Mill, *System of Logic*, 852.

<sup>97</sup> Mill, *System of Logic*, 852.

<sup>98</sup> Mill, *System of Logic*, 852. Italics in original.

*exactly represent*".<sup>99</sup> Mill's three laws of association are also heavily reliant on Hume: that "similar ideas tend to excite one another"; that "when two impressions have been frequently experienced (or even thought of) either simultaneously or in immediate succession, then whenever one of these impressions, or the idea of it, recurs, it tends to excite the idea of the other"; and third, that "[g]reater intensity in either or both of the impressions, is equivalent, in rendering them excitable by one another, to a greater frequency of conjunction".<sup>100</sup>

The emergence of Freud's psychoanalytic notion of mental association reverberates through this rich history of British empiricist associationism. Following Mill – and behind him, Hume, Hartley, Locke, Berkeley, Hobbes and others – there is something determining about the way that associations become linked and continually re-emerge. The linkages do not form as a result of the free action of the subject; rather the subject simply finds itself in the midst of the associations – thoughts and their emotional content – as already formed. But on the other hand, such associations are not 'necessary': they are rather highly idiosyncratic. They are seemingly arbitrary, even as they are also the result of regular 'laws' of association.

It is this very network of paradoxes with which the psychoanalytic practice of examining the analysand's mental associations deals, by allowing them to freely emerge and be vocalised within the analytic setting. Free association is a technique for *externalising* the stubborn regularities of mental association in their very idiosyncrasy and arbitrariness, while at the same time bringing into sharp relief their determining nature. Only thus can their ability to determine be questioned through a reorganisation of the associations that otherwise

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<sup>99</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature, A Critical Edition*, vol 1, ed. David F. Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), 9. Italics in original.

<sup>100</sup> All three 'laws' may be found in Mill, *System of Logic*, 852.

retain their unquestioned and automatic power over alternative associations. Resemblances are *only* resemblances; they are not the thing itself. Contiguities can be purely random; they *need not* have the determining significance they are taken to have. Lines of assumed causation can be questioned, since correlation *need not* imply causation. To freely vocalise one's associations is to externalise and thus make contingent a process that is otherwise internal and (once set in train) seemingly necessary. Or put differently, what seems unquestionably so can be revealed as having a history. Agency returns once association is recognised in its temporal dimension. In this sense, the psychoanalytic method of free association can be appreciated as a clinical application of the British empiricist conceptualisation of mental association. In recognising the idiosyncratic and arbitrary nature of the association of ideas and the emotional layering that characterises them, even while appreciating the striking patterns of psychic regularity that make them possible, Freud's technique exploits their nature as *non-necessary* in order to allow the possibility of a breakthrough to the reorganisation of associations, or the adoption of new ones.

LaPlanche makes a similar point concerning Freud's associationism. Rather than being bound by passive *Laws of Associationism* as expounded by Mill, he argues that for Freud, from very early on:

[t]he subject is not a 'polyptych of images' [rather] the groupings of associations, their possible isolation, their 'false connections', their chances of acceding to consciousness – all play part in the *dynamics* of the defensive conflict specific to each person.<sup>101</sup>

The operative term here is *dynamics*. Freud's use of association would evolve into a dynamic understanding of such laws and the roles they would play in the mental life of his patients. Following the personal disappointment of the

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<sup>101</sup> LaPlanche, "Language". Italics mine.

*Project 'cul-de-sac'*, in its inability to provide a satisfactory framework for his nascent theories, this dynamism becomes evident in Freud's collaboration with Josef Breuer in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1895)<sup>102</sup> Here Freud was able to re-employ association in more dynamic and original ways explicitly through the notion of *free* Association, whereby the patients themselves became the guides to their own personal inner inquiries.

In sum, Mill's influence on Freud, as facilitated in important ways by Brentano's lectures and writings –and behind Mill, the long tradition of British empirical associationism – were all extremely significant for the development of Freud's early thinking. The concept of psychic association was to have a profound shaping impact on both the theory and clinical practice of Freudian psychoanalysis.

### **3.4 William Hamilton: Unconscious Thoughts and Energetic Responses**

The influence of nineteenth century Anglo-Scottish empirical philosophical psychology on early Freudian thought extends well beyond what has been so far considered, and in Mill's case it far exceeds the matter of associationism alone. Further important insights can be gained through an examination of the debate between Mill and the then celebrated Scottish philosopher, William Hamilton, the key themes of which were to have important influences on the young Freud. As noted above, Freud kept a copy of Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* on his bookshelf.<sup>103</sup> Whilst Mill's critique of Hamilton's work is harsh – Mill seeks to defend his own empirical stance aggressively – there can be found strong echoes, perhaps even *stronger* echoes,

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<sup>102</sup> SE II, *Studies on Hysteria* by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud.

<sup>103</sup> John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and the Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in his Writings, Vols I and II* (Boston: Wm. V. Spencer, 1865).



in Hamilton's thoughts and ideas that were to shape Freud's concept of the *pleasure principle*. We know too that this work of Mill did not just gather dust on the shelf, as it is quoted in Freud's *On Aphasia*.<sup>104</sup>

It is worth noting that for a short while the intellectual profile of Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) rivalled that of Descartes, Kant and Hegel, only to then quickly wane apparently in no small part due to Mill's critiques.<sup>105</sup> While one of the earliest British interpreters of post-Kantian German philosophy, Hamilton was a strong proponent of Thomas Reid's (1710-1796) philosophy of 'Common Sense' that stood largely opposed to transcendental philosophy. However, in his *second Edinburgh Review* he does seek to correct two of what he considers to be major faults in Reid's philosophy. First, Hamilton maintains that consciousness is not just one more faculty of the mind, like perception, memory and imagination, but rather it is a type of generic descriptor of *all* such faculties together. Second, he opposes Reid's denial of imagination and memory as being "of necessity and mediate", instead insisting on a more traditional representative theory according to which "[p]erception tells us about the world around us; imaginary objects are in the mind only"<sup>106</sup>

It is upon this amended view of Reid's work that Hamilton would lay his philosophical reputation. In essence, Hamilton's project was to attempt to bridge the gap between the Kantian principle that we can never have knowledge of things-in-themselves and Reid's 'common sense' principles that maintained that the real world can be directly apprehended. (Hamilton

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<sup>104</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 78.

<sup>105</sup> John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 48.

<sup>106</sup> Gordon Graham, *Scottish Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 55.

named his suggested *via media*, 'Natural Realism'). However, Hamilton's attempts to address the shortfalls in both sides of this intractable issue satisfied neither the idealist (Kant) nor the presentationist (Reid) camp.

The nub of Mill's attack was the claim that Hamilton had sailed much too close to the 'common sense' boundary in his work. In his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, Mill devoted much of his critique (in fact six of the fourteen chapters) to the concept of psychology inherent in Hamilton's work. Needless to say, Mill's empirical sensibilities were offended by Hamilton's willingness to accord objective authority to subjective convictions and to build philosophical theory on the so-called 'principles of common sense'. As Graham helpfully recounts, Mill "thinks that Hamilton's 'interpretation of consciousness' is an unscientific mix of psychological introspection and *a priori* speculation, resulting in questionable generalizations about the human mind that are then lent a specious authority by being declared the universal deliverances of 'Common-Sense'".<sup>107</sup> Mill's attack is thus directed toward a central methodological tenet of Common Sense philosophy: that the reliability of consciousness must be assumed.

Hamilton certainly had his defenders. How, they argued, can the testimony of consciousness ever be systematically doubted? Without this key assumption, no form of psychology is possible. Indeed, argued Henry Mansel, one of Hamilton's erstwhile supporters, "[I]t is only on the basis of such a psychology that it was possible to achieve a philosophy of man as a free and personal agent", and he contrasts this with Mill's alternative: a "science of the uniformities of succession; the laws, whether ultimate or derivative, according to which one mental state succeeds another".<sup>108</sup> Here again we see

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<sup>107</sup> Graham, "A Re-examination", 60.

<sup>108</sup> Henry Mansel, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned*. (London and New York: Alexander Strahan, 1879), 61.

associationism portrayed as a force for necessitation vis-à-vis other approaches that seek to defend human freedom. In any case, such defences did not stop the growing momentum against the common-sense philosophy of Reid, Hamilton and indeed the whole 'Scottish School'. The label 'anti-scientific' was applied to this body of thinking and in this context his legacy was undone.

Importantly for present purposes, it is clear that Freud paid these Anglo-Scottish philosophical skirmishes more than just passing attention during his formative years. In his *On Aphasia* (1891),<sup>109</sup> he quotes Mill's critique of Hamilton's position in the context of his own search for a new neurological model for understanding the effects of brain lesions on speech.<sup>110</sup> In a rare doffing of the cap to philosophy, and indeed, to Mill in particular, he borrows a working definition of perception:

According to philosophical teaching, the idea of the object contains nothing else; the appearance of a "thing", the "properties" of which are conveyed to us by our senses, originates only from the fact that in enumerating the sensory impressions perceived from an object, we allow for the possibility of a large series of new impressions being added to the chain of associations (J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*).<sup>111</sup>

As late as 1891, then, Freud's thinking was clearly aligned with the J S Mill's 'uniformities of succession' empiricist standpoint, and in this way, he seemed to be siding with Mill in the latter's critique of Hamilton. That is to say, in terms of the attempts made by Hamilton to bridge a philosophical gap, it

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<sup>109</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 78, n 1.

<sup>110</sup> For further analysis of *On Aphasia* and its significance in the development of Freud's thinking see Chapter 4.

<sup>111</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 78.

would be the more 'scientific' philosophical model of J S Mill that appealed to Freud.

However, Freud's thinking seemed to undergo a significant change after the abandonment of his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* after 1895. Freed somewhat from the strictures of Millian orthodoxy Freud appears to show, in the theoretical development of psychoanalysis, a greater awareness of Hamilton's thinking than was evident earlier. While there is no direct textual evidence for this claim, there are nonetheless striking similarities between some of Hamilton's ideas and those that would become familiar in psychoanalytic thinking.

One programmatic example is Hamilton's extraordinarily daring and poignant concept of the *unconscious*, as he develops it in his *Metaphysics*. Here he gives consideration to the different levels of the unconscious ("three degrees of latency") and how each function, with each level involving claims more audacious than the former. The first level is eloquently described as follows:

The riches, the possessions of our mind are not to be measured by its present momentary activities, but by the amount of the acquired habits. I know a science, or language, not merely while I make a temporary use of it, but inasmuch as I can apply it when and how I will... Thus, the infinitely greater part of our spiritual treasure lies always beyond the sphere of consciousness, hid in the obscure recesses of the mind.<sup>112</sup>

In a manner that befits the mantle of *petite perceptions* of Leibniz, Hamilton appears to be outlining the ability of the skills not to be fully mentally present

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<sup>112</sup> William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, vol. 1, ed. H.L. Mansel and John Veitch (Edinburgh, William Blackwood and Sons, 1865), 236. The pagination of this printing matches Mill's references and has therefore been used as the source document here and in subsequent citations. The number of editions and printings of this work no doubt points to its popularity and influence.

but still to be operative on a day to day basis. However, Hamilton's description of the "second degree of latency" is even more noteworthy:

The second degree of latency exists when the mind contains certain systems of knowledge, or certain habits of action, which it is wholly unconscious of possessing in its ordinary state, but which are revealed to consciousness in certain extraordinary exaltations of its powers. The evidence on this point shows that the mind frequently contains whole systems of knowledge, which, though, in our normal state, they have faded into absolute oblivion, may, in certain abnormal states, as madness, febrile delirium...flash into luminous consciousness.<sup>113</sup>

Here Hamilton nails his colours to his mast in terms of the contentious issue at the time concerning the notion of such 'hidden' bodies of knowledge. But he also goes a step further by linking such unconscious "systems of knowledge" to pathological behaviours such as "madness [and] febrile delirium". The conceptual anticipation of Freud and Breuer's theories concerning hysteria are almost palpable here. Still, as contentious as this claim was in its day, his third and final level was audacious in the extreme, easily matching the not dissimilar claims of Schopenhauer, but cast in the language of British empiricism and with none of the latter's melancholic framing:

I hesitate to maintain, that what we are conscious of is constructed out of what we are not conscious of, that our whole knowledge is made up of the unknown and the incognizable.<sup>114</sup>

Fully aware that this statement would draw fire, Hamilton goes on to provide three separate 'proofs' for what many of his day – including Mill - would find nonsensical or intolerable.<sup>115</sup>

His first proof is provided by reference to the senses, giving examples of perception from the senses of sight and hearing, with less attention, but

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<sup>113</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 236.

<sup>114</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 241.

<sup>115</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 242 – 253.

similar treatment, of smell and taste. When viewing a wood from afar, we can see and be conscious of the green colour of the woods we are observing. However, this is a type of impression given by countless leaves which cannot be perceived individually, twig by twig, branch by branch, from a distance. Thus, “the total impression of which we are conscious, is made up of an infinitude of small impressions of which we are not conscious”.<sup>116</sup>

His second example from auditory perception makes reference to the sound of the waves at the seashore. He argues, in a similar vein to Leibniz (but without acknowledgement) once again that the noise that is heard is the sum of the sounds of the waves crashing on the shore. We do not hear the *individual* waves but rather the general roar of turbulent surf. Other examples of the senses are also covered briefly. Smell or Taste: the aroma of a dish of food may be pleasant or unpleasant and its taste likewise. The individual elements of the aroma or the taste of the dish are lost in favour of broader categories of sweet or sour etc.

Tellingly, Hamilton then relates his theory of the unconscious back to the theme of mental association, and indeed, he sees the fact of such associative links as evidence for the foundational and pervasive nature of the unconscious. As he astutely observes:

Now there are cases we can generally discover...that two thoughts, though not themselves associated, are each associated with certain other thoughts; so that the whole consecution would have been regular, had these intermediate thoughts come into consciousness, between the two which are not immediately associated.<sup>117</sup>

His example of three ideas, ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ makes the point very clearly. Associationism requires that the entirety of mental activity is subjected to

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<sup>116</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 243.

<sup>117</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 244.

very clear and determinate laws. There can, in short, be no hidden or unconscious elements in the chain of associations. However, it is often the case that elements of connection cannot be identified: e.g., when 'A' and 'C' are linked by association, but 'B' (that which is the occasion for the linkage) is missing. In the strict terms of the determinative laws of association 'B', if not evident, simply does not exist. But here Hamilton provides a cogent analogy: of energy transmitted through a line of perfectly aligned billiard balls. In this case, the energy used in striking the ball at the end of the row is not dissipated through the balls that make up the line – but only the ball at the opposite end of the line is impelled. "Something like this seems often to occur in the train of thought", Hamilton suggests. "One idea mediately suggests another into consciousness ('C' associates with 'A') - the suggestion passing through one ('B') or more ideas which do not themselves rise into consciousness".<sup>118</sup> The intermediate idea 'B' - represented by the flow of energy imperceptibly through the line of balls - may be unconscious but it is no less significant as an idea of association. Here, much to the consternation of critics like J S Mill, Hamilton believes that he has demonstrated the undeniability of the conclusion that consciousness might emerge from unconsciousness.

Finally, Hamilton looks to *acquired dexterities and habits* as a way of affirming the important role of the unconscious. A habit or skill (like playing the piano) is learned very slowly at first with a great deal of conscious effort. Eventually, with the passing of time the act of playing the piano improves and each individual act so slavishly learned now "drops one by one from

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<sup>118</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 245.

consciousness, as we [recalling his earlier image] lose the leaves in retiring further and further from the tree".<sup>119</sup>

If Hamilton's approach here seems strikingly close to Leibniz's conception of *petite perceptions*, this connection is confirmed by Hamilton's remarks that follow shortly afterwards in which he (finally) praises Leibniz's insights (acknowledging also Kant's *Anthropology*) that far exceed that of the Cartesians. And he chides the lack of openness in Britain and France to the very idea of unconscious perceptions and thoughts:

The Cartesians made consciousness the essence of thought ... But what was not maintained by the Cartesians, and even in opposition to their doctrine, was maintained by Leibnitz. To this great philosopher belongs the honor of having originated this opinion, and of having supplied some of the strongest arguments in its support.<sup>120</sup>

In an important sense, then, Hamilton – a rare Germanophone among British philosophers of his day – is a bridge from the early modern German Enlightenment to British empiricism. Here we have a Scottish philosopher who sits at the heart of scholarly debates concerning the British associationist and Common Sense philosophical establishment, who provided important clues for the young Freud concerning a range of themes that were to become central to the early psychoanalytic movement. It would be speculative to pronounce an explicit relationship between Hamilton's ideas and Freud's later (post-1895) psychanalytic theory – as much as it would be to draw a straight line from Schelling or Schopenhauer - but given Freud's considerable familiarity with Mill's work, and his knowledge of the debates with Hamilton, it is not at all far-fetched to suggest significant lines of influence in this regard.

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<sup>119</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 257.

<sup>120</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics I*, 251.



This plotline thickens still further when Hamilton's theories concerning the ego, feelings, and pleasure and pain are taken into account.<sup>121</sup> Distinguishing between three classes of mental phenomena – cognition, feeling and conation – Hamilton develops an unconventional conception of ego that is almost tantalising with its undeveloped possibilities. More significant still is his development of an *energetic* model of mental activity.

For Hamilton, in cognition “consciousness distinguishes an *object* known from *subject* knowing”.<sup>122</sup> The object is either *different* to the ego or it modifies the ego (or subject) itself. If the object is *different* to the ego it is called: “object-object”. If it is the case that the object and the ego are the same, then it is called “subject-object”. For Hamilton, the ‘essential peculiarity of Cognition’ lies in the ego’s ability to ‘project’ the subjective phenomenon from itself; for the ego to distinguish itself even when it has over identified with the object in question. It appears that the ego can objectify the subject as a means of discrimination of self from self.; to distance itself from its psychic life and reflect upon it.

In turning to his second class of mental phenomena, feeling, Hamilton then provides a psychic/energetic account of pleasure and pain. Here we learn that there is *no* object that is different from self when it comes to feelings. In effect the ego and feelings are one and the same, and one is only able to talk about pleasure and pain because they are objects of reflection, or, to use Hamilton’s phrase: “they are not feelings, but only reflex cognitions of feelings”.<sup>123</sup>

Hamilton develops his account of feelings specifically through a detailed *energetic* theory of human existence. He commences by declaring: “In a word,

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<sup>121</sup> William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic*, vol. 2, ed. H.L. Mansel and John Veitch (Edinburgh, William Blackwood and Sons, 1865), 431 – 443.

<sup>122</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics II*, 432. Italics mine.

<sup>123</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics II*, 432.

life is energy, and conscious energy is conscious life". What is more, this energy can only act in certain ways or modes, i.e. through the *powers, faculties, capacities, dispositions* and *habits* that we all have. This energy is not free roaming but is channelled through these modes alone.<sup>124</sup> Hamilton then argues that humanity is the subject of pleasure and pain, themselves a "concomitant" of the faculties and capacities that an individual may have. Pleasure and pain are "opposing contraries", not "opposing contradictions", which appears to indicate that they are on some sort of continuum which allows for the increase of one or the other without the complete negation of the opposite. If the details of Hamilton's account are somewhat sketchy, the energetic dynamics of the relation of these two contraries is never in doubt: "Pleasure is the reflex of the spontaneous and unimpeded power, of whose energy we are conscious. Pain, a reflex of the overstrained or repressed exertion of such a power".<sup>125</sup>

Once again, the ground looks to be laid in telling ways for Freud's own later energetic model, not only in terms of his neuro-physiological materialist account in the *Project*, but far beyond it well into his mature thought. Even when Freud looks to go "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", the dynamics of psychic forces and energy flows are not far from the surface. Indeed, an investigation of Freud's energetic model as seen throughout the *Standard Edition* reveals evolving conceptualisations – all clearly owing their origins to the earliest *quantitative* viewpoint, at least in terms of their underlying structures of thought. As Moore and Fine have pointed out the principle of pleasure and unpleasure is at the core of psychoanalysis, since for Freud:

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<sup>124</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics II*, 435.

<sup>125</sup> Hamilton, *Metaphysics II*, 440. Note also that this the very definition that J S Mill objects to in his *An Examination*, 480 (see page 38 above.)

[T]he aim of all psychic activity is to seek pleasure and avoid unpleasure. This idea rests on another set of conceptions: that there are quantities of energy operating within the mind and that an increase in energy levels or drive tension is unpleasant while elimination of drive tension is pleasant. The pleasure principle regulates the need to recreate by action, or by fantasy, any situation which has afforded satisfaction through the elimination of drive tension. Its regulatory role in mental functioning is also seen in conjunction with the ego's response to signal anxiety, which is a warning of perceived danger.<sup>126</sup>

Another example of the energetic model and the key role it played across the breadth of Freud's thinking, is the concept of 'cathexis' (*Besetzung*). First used in the *Project*<sup>127</sup>, it was used by Freud to refer to a "a quantum of psychic energy invested in the mental representation of a thought, feeling, wish, memory, fantasy, or person".<sup>128</sup> However, as Strachey points out, even though the term makes its debut in 1895, the concept it points to was already in use in earlier Freudian thinking, implicit as it is in *Cathexis* phrases such as "*Cathexis mit einer Erregungssumme behaftet*" (loaded with a sum of excitation) (1894a); "*munie d'une valeur affective*" (provided with a quota of affect) (1893); and "*Verschiebungen von Erregbarkeit im Nervensystem*" (displacements of excitability in the nervous system).<sup>129</sup>

From 1905, however, Freud disguised the physiological origins of the meaning of *cathexis* under a more psychological guise, now referring to relative intensity of interest, attention, or emotional investment in a given mental content or activity.<sup>130</sup> As with the pleasure principle, *cathexis* would

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<sup>126</sup> "Psychic Energy; Reality", *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*, eds. Burness Moore and Bernard Fine (New York, Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>127</sup> *SE*, I, 297-298

<sup>128</sup> "Cathexis", *Psychoanalytic Terms and Concepts*", eds. Elizabeth L. Auchincloss and Eslee Samberg (New York, Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>129</sup> *SE*, II, "Editor's Introduction", xxiii. Brackets mine.

<sup>130</sup> Auchincloss and Samberg maintain that Freud repudiated the use of the term *Cathexis* in any but a psychological sense in "Three essays on Sexuality" (*SE* VII, 123-246) It is argued

remain an enduring but evolving Freudian concept – one Strachey suggested of Freud’s most fundamental hypotheses<sup>131</sup> – and, as with the pleasure principle, it too would span Freud’s transition from neurophysiology to psychology in a broader sense.<sup>132</sup>

### 3.5 Bentham, Utilitarianism and the Pleasure Principle

What this analysis reveals is a picture of the young Freud seemingly immersed within the world of British associationism (particularly as it is summed up in the work of JS Mill and common sense philosophy as reconfigured by William Hamilton). However, to these two influences, powerfully mediated as they were through the lens provided by Brentano, need to be added the work of Mill’s great teacher, Jeremy Bentham.

As is the case with philosophical influences in general, Freud’s explicit mentions of utilitarianism, much less the figure of Bentham, are very few. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that Freud was directly conversant with Bentham’s philosophy. As mentioned above, he was well acquainted with Utilitarianism as a philosophy through the lectures of Brentano. As Aner Govrin has noted, his translations of Mill’s essays for Gomperz included one on John Grote’s *Plato* in which Bentham’s thought is dealt with “extensively”.<sup>133</sup> When combined with the obvious commonality of interest between Mill, Bentham and Freud in quantitative measures of pain and

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that when Freud developed his drive theory, the energy involved in *cathexis* was reconceptualized as originating in libidinal and, later, aggressive drives.

<sup>131</sup> SE III, “APPENDIX: Emergence of Freud’s Fundamental Hypothesis”, 63.

<sup>132</sup> Strachey notes the irony that in “Studies on Hysteria” Breuer declares his intention to treat Hysteria from a *psychological* perspective - SE, II, 185, while Freud at the same time was seeking explanations for hysteria in *physiological* and *chemical* terms – SE, II, xxiv. Both seem to cross sides with Breuer actually providing patently physiological descriptions of the aetiology of hysteria and Freud confessing that “the case histories I write...read like short stories, and that, as one might say, the lack the serious stamp of science” – SE, II, 160.

<sup>133</sup> Aner Govrin, “Some Utilitarian Influences in Freud’s Early Writing”, *Psychoanalysis and History* 6 (1 2004): 6.

pleasure as key categories for understanding human affairs, it is not difficult to see some robust lines of influence at play in the early years of the emergence of Freudian metapsychology and principles of clinical practice.

Certainly, 'pleasure and pain' play a significant part in Bentham's moral philosophy, as the well-known opening lines to his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals* attest:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.<sup>134</sup>

Bentham's approach to understanding the dynamics of pleasure and pain are captured in his so-called hedonistic or felicific calculus, a system that weighs the *quantity* of pleasure against the *quantity* of pain incurred in any action. Measurement of each involved taking into account the "intensity" of the pleasure or pain, its "duration", its "certainty or uncertainty", its "propinquity or remoteness", its "fecundity" and its "purity".<sup>135</sup> Notoriously, such measurements are to be unflinchingly mathematical in their framing – concerning "the degree or *quantum*...of sensibility"<sup>136</sup> – even if Bentham acknowledged that complete precision of measurement would always be impractical.

For Bentham, any incident which causes pain or pleasure is "an *exciting cause*".<sup>137</sup> However, the quantity of pleasure or pain provided by this exciting cause can be at odds with what individuals experience. To give Bentham's example: "From the same injury, for instance, one man may feel the same

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<sup>134</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: London, 1907), 1

<sup>135</sup> Bentham, *Introduction*, 30.

<sup>136</sup> Bentham, *Introduction*, 43. Italics in original.

<sup>137</sup> Bentham, *Introduction*, 44. Italics in original.

quantity of grief and resentment together as another man: but one of them shall feel a greater share of grief than of resentment: the other, a greater share of resentment than of grief".<sup>138</sup> Bentham maintains that the causes of these variations are "circumstances influencing sensibility", and he then proceeds to offer a list of thirty two "circumstances which can be found to influence the effect of any exciting cause", ranging from "Moral biases", "Bodily imperfections", "Religious biases" to "Pecuniary Circumstances".<sup>139</sup>

It is tempting to consider at this stage that Bentham might be making room for unconscious factors that might cause individual experiences of pain and pleasure to differ, even though the causes are the same. However, a close examination of the thirty-two circumstances influencing sensibility suggests no such recourse. The rich sense of unconscious dynamics that are advocated in the work of Hamilton are nowhere to be found in the narrow utilitarian rationalism of Bentham.

Nonetheless, a different line of influence, or at least striking commonality, is evident between Bentham's notion of "excitation" and Freud's concept of *cathexis* (*Besetzung*), with which it shares various similarities in their description and dynamics. To use Freud's most pithy description of *cathexis*, it relates to "a quota of affect or sum of excitation – which possesses all the characteristics of quantity (though we have no means of measuring it), which is capable of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge, and which is spread over the memory-traces of ideas somewhat as an electric charge is spread over the surface of a body".<sup>140</sup> The sense here of quantitative excitation that is at the core of mental functioning is similarly at the heart of Bentham's

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<sup>138</sup> Bentham, *Introduction*, 43.

<sup>139</sup> Bentham devotes a whole chapter to these "circumstances influencing sensibility", see: *Introduction*, 43 – 69.

<sup>140</sup> *SE III*, "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence", 60.

conception of pleasure and pain that guide human functioning: "Any incident which serves as a cause, either of pleasure or of pain, may be termed an exciting cause: if of pleasure, a pleasurable cause: if of pain, a painful, afflictive, or dolorific cause".<sup>141</sup> Further, for both Bentham and Freud, excitation is to be regarded as autonomic insofar as it proceeds without conscious effort by the ego, and is only occasionally amenable to conscious manipulation. As noted above, while Freud's understanding of excitation (or *cathexis*) moved from neurological to psychological modelling during his development of psychoanalytic theory, it all the while maintained a mechanistic (energetic) dynamic that shares Bentham's original notion.

Second, both Bentham and Freud give accounts of the variables that cause the individual to react differently to the same 'quantity' of external stimulus (Pleasure/Pain). For Bentham these variables are encapsulated in his thirty-two "circumstances influencing sensibility", while for Freud, variables are accounted for through the influences of early childhood development, with the interplay of the oedipal complex. Both clearly acknowledge that the aetiology and impact upon the individual, and thus the level of excitation, may vary in relation to the individual concerned.

Of course, as is well known, J S Mill would not be satisfied with the narrowly quantitative nature of Bentham's account of pleasures and pains, and he sought to broaden Bentham's approach to include *qualitative* differentiations as well, seeing this as a natural extension of the principles of Utilitarianism: "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be

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<sup>141</sup> Bentham, *Introduction*, 44.

supposed to depend on quantity alone".<sup>142</sup> However, there are few explicit indications in Freud's writings that indicate sympathy for the addition of normative considerations into his technique of providing a descriptive psychodynamic theory. If his move away from the restrictive neurophysiology of his early explorations involved an embrace of qualitative factors, these were in service to a more rounded methodology for understanding associations rather than to normative assessments of value. In this more limited sense that looks to embrace the qualitative (if not the normative), Freud would much later (1924) comment:

Pleasure and unpleasure, therefore, cannot be referred to as increase or decrease of a quantity (which we describe as 'tension due to stimulus'), although they obviously have a great deal to do with that factor. It appears that they depend, not on this quantitative factor, but on some characteristic of it which we can only describe as a qualitative one. If we were able to say what this qualitative characteristic is, we should be much further advanced in psychology. Perhaps it is the rhythm, the temporal sequence of changes, rises and falls in the quantity of stimulus. We do not know.<sup>143</sup>

However, an important contrast between the Utilitarian and psychoanalytic enterprises as a whole concerns the relationship between pleasure and happiness. In contrast to the clear link in both Bentham and Mill's theories between the two, throughout his career Freud showed scant regard in his theoretical writings to the notion of happiness as such.<sup>144</sup> For Freud, happiness

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<sup>142</sup> John S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009). 16.

<sup>143</sup> SE XIX, "The Economic Problem of Masochism", 160.

<sup>144</sup> In the rare cases where Freud does make reference to happiness in his theoretical writings, these invariably come well after the formative period that is the focus of attention here. An example is in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (SE XXI, 76): "What [do] men themselves show by their behaviour to be the purpose and intention of their lives[?] What do they demand of life and wish to achieve in it? The answer to this can hardly be in doubt. They strive after happiness; they want to become happy and remain so" Yet even here, Freud quickly links such a notion back to the psychodynamics of pleasure and pain: the quest for happiness "aims, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and unpleasure, and, on the other, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure. In its narrower sense the word 'happiness' only relates to the last ... As we see, what decides the purpose of life is simply the programme of



is not the issue, and thus there is a striking decoupling of happiness and pleasure. Pleasure relates to the treatment of neurosis/psychosis and not to the achievement of happiness *per se*; it is essentially (a la Hamilton) simply a matter of the *reduction in tension*. There is a remarkable consistency in this view, and this speaks to the way in which Freud never entirely abandoned models which had their genesis in nineteenth century physiological (quantitative) models for understanding psychology.

There is another pervasive difference – not of methodology so much as research interest – that distinguishes the Freudian project from those of the British philosophical psychologists and moral philosophers. While Bentham, Mill, Hamilton and others each sought to clarify the role of pleasure in both its individual and social ramifications, motivated by a strong interest in legislative and penal reform, Freud's use of this concept of pleasure is directed for the most part at the psychology *of the individual*. Furthermore, while Bentham and Mill were engaged in the creation of a radical new ethical philosophy, this is an agenda which Freud simply did not share. Freud's work was always to remain profoundly descriptive and therapeutic, lacking any serious normative or ethical charge. The very practice of psychoanalysis embodies this reluctance to prescribe actions or solutions for the individual patient. Rather, the patient is allowed the pain of free association and radically independent thought. To this extent Freud's interests are robustly clinical rather than philosophical, even if his psychological theories and clinical practices have roots in common with those philosophies.

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the pleasure principle. This principle dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start".

# Aufruf!

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Eine umfassende Weltanschauung auf Grund des Tatsachenstoffes vorzubereiten, den die Einzelwissenschaften aufgehäuft haben, und die Ansätze dazu zunächst unter den Forschern selbst zu verbreiten, ist ein immer dringenderes Bedürfnis vor allem für die Wissenschaft geworden, dann aber auch für unsere Zeit überhaupt, die dadurch erst erwerben wird, was wir besitzen.

Doch nur durch gemeinsame Arbeit vieler kann das erreicht werden. Darum rufen wir alle philosophisch interessierten Forscher, auf welchen wissenschaftlichen Gebieten sie auch betätigt sein mögen, und alle Philosophen im engeren Sinne, die zu haltbaren Lehren nur durch eindringendes Studium der Tatsachen der Erfahrung selbst zu gelangen hoffen, zum Beitritt zu einer Gesellschaft für positivistische Philosophie auf. Sie soll den Zweck haben, alle Wissenschaften untereinander in lebendige Verbindung zu setzen, überall die vereinheitlichenden Begriffe zu entwickeln und so zu einer widerspruchsfreien Gesamtaufassung vorzudringen.

Um nähere Auskunft wende man sich an den mitunterzeichneten Herrn Dozent M. H. Baega, Friedrichshagen b. Berlin, Waldowstraße 23.

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<sup>145</sup> Cheshire, Neil and Helmut Thomä. "Metaphor, Neologism and 'Open Texture'", 426, appendix. Freud's name appears in the middle column, second from the top.

## **Translation:**

### ***APPEAL!***

*The need to prepare a comprehensive worldview, based upon the factual material which the individual branches of learning have amassed, and to disseminate the beginnings of such a view among the researchers themselves in the first instance, has become ever more urgent, above all for scholarship and science, but beyond that for our times in general, which only thereby will make an acquisition of what we possess.*

*Yet only the joint work of many people can achieve this aim. We therefore call upon all researchers with an interest in philosophy, in whatever fields of learning they may be active, and all philosophers in the narrower sense who hope to arrive at tenable theories, solely through penetrating study of the empirical facts themselves, to enrol in a Society for Positivistic Philosophy. Its purpose is to establish a lively contact between all the sciences, to develop the unifying concepts everywhere, and thus to advance to a consistent overall view.*

*For further information contact Herrn Dozent M. H. Baege, one of the signatories, Friedrichshagen b. Berlin, Waldowstrae 23.*

## Chapter 4

# Freud, Hughlings Jackson, Braid, and Nineteenth Century British Empirical Psychology

The previous chapter sketched an outline of the beginnings of Freudian psychoanalysis understood against the backdrop of a range of key currents in 17-19<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Scottish philosophy and psychology, ironically mediated in the first instance by Franz Brentano (Freud's philosophy teacher at the University of Vienna) and through him the work of John Stuart Mill. In this way, a case was made for a crucial fourth "tradition line" to add to the three Germanic linages that were so helpfully sketched out by Günter Gödde in his "prehistory" of the Freudian unconscious. Accordingly, the young Freud's familial and intellectual linkages with Britain were noted, as were his early readings of figures such as Mill, Hamilton, Bentham and others that provide a compelling window into what were to become key themes in Freud's mature theoretical and clinical concepts.

The current chapter will build on this foundation by analysing a series of other aspects of formative Anglo-Scottish influence on Freud and the early psychoanalytic movement. First, the work of late nineteenth century British materialist psychologists will be considered, with specific attention paid to the work of William Carpenter's conception of the unconscious and James Ward's theory of attention and introspection. This provides a broad introduction to the focus of the second part of the chapter where the formative impact of British neurologist John Hughlings Jackson on Freud's early thinking is considered. This influence is first evident in Freud's earliest work, and these will be considered closely. Key Freudian notions like regression will be considered, along with their Hughlings Jacksonian origins. Finally, Freud's idea of the transference is considered vis-à-vis the influence

of British hypnotherapy led by James Braid, and anthropology led by a range of figures including William Robertson Smith and James Frazer.

#### **4.1 Carpenter, Ward and Themes in British Psychology: 1870-1914**

Through the work of Brentano, we have been able to view the impact of associationist and utilitarian thinking in the second half of the nineteenth century philosophy and its spill-over into the environment that shaped Freud's early thinking. Even the compelling work of William Hamilton, with its blend of associationist and 'common sense' philosophy, fell prey to the Millian juggernaut of that era. However, there was much more to the philosophical environment of nineteenth century British thought than these schools of thought alone. Indeed, in the exploration of other strands in what is to come, further elements to the Anglo-Scottish roots of Freudian thought will be uncovered, in ways that enrich understanding of the very nature of the psychoanalytic movement.

The latter part of the nineteenth century was something of a watershed era when psychology began to be more clearly defined. More specifically, the period 1870-1914 saw the birth of what was to become the modern discipline of empirical psychology in differentiation from what might better be called philosophy of mind. A number of factors contributed to this transformation. Quantitative studies were now becoming more frequent in areas of sensory physiology and psychology.<sup>1</sup> The taxonomies that included psychology were being redrafted, greatly aided by the fact that the lines between, psychology, physiology, philosophy and medicine were more porous than they were to become. For example, 'psychology' in the second half of the nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Hatfield, "Psychology: Old and New", in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy 1870–1945*, ed. Thomas Baldwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93-94.

century might often be located in schools or faculties of philosophy, while 'philosophy' itself still largely included 'natural philosophy', prior to the redefinition of the latter as 'natural empirical science'. Psychology itself was, as Hatfield notes, sometimes considered to be a specialisation within "metaphysics (Lotze 1881 [1886]), sometimes as an autonomous division of philosophy (J. S. Mill), but most often as an empirical natural science (Beneke; Wundt)". Further, its very naming varied along similar lines: as "'moral science', 'mental science', 'theory of the mind', 'physiology of the mind', and 'Seelenlehre' (theory of the soul)".<sup>2</sup>

It was in this fluid and developing philosophical situation that Freud's pre-psychoanalytic thinking was shaped. We have already noted how Freud's early thinking was largely 'anti-philosophical' in a very specific sense: by disavowing traditional metaphysics even as he was deeply influenced by other philosophical traditions such as those made available to him by Brentano. From his earliest student days, it is clear that Freud was committed to a materialist/empirical perspective on the mind. But such a perspective, whether seen as 'scientific' or 'positivist', is still essentially a *philosophical* position.

Any map of the development of psychology during the 1870-1914 period will show movements in influence from Britain, through Germany and eventually on to the United States. Originally European in its locus, the development of psychology as a more stand-alone body of theory and practice would sweep from Britain eastwards. Of course, this broad statement should not be seen as ignoring the rather complex cross-fertilization of philosophical ideas in general, that travelled relatively freely across European borders and the English Channel, even then. But it does identify the importance of nineteenth

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<sup>2</sup> Hatfield, "Psychology Old and New", 93-94. Brackets in original.

century British empiricist and materialist methodologies and assumptions for the development of trans-European physiology and neurology during this period.

Freud's formative years of study were deeply influenced by this broad *Zeitgeist* that sat so uncomfortably juxtaposed alongside nineteenth century German Romantic and Idealist traditions. The young Freud, it is maintained, very clearly identified with the intellectual king tide flowing into European thought from across the English channel, and (as explored above) in this he found an erstwhile philosophical guide in Franz Brentano. It is out of this broad philosophical context that Freud pursued his early work in the full flow of the developing new materialist psychology of the day that was becoming a distinct field of practice and study in its own right.

Preceding this revolutionary time in the development of psychology in British thinking was the work of Locke, Hartley and Hume, whose influence was considered in the previous chapter. These thinkers provided a solid empirical foundation for British philosophy in general and the development of psychology in particular. It is no surprise, therefore, that British psychology in the late nineteenth century leaned more towards anti-metaphysical thinking, as seen in the work of Alexander Bain (1818-1903), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), George Henry Lewes (1817-1878), and of course John Stuart Mill.

At this time two major trends in British psychology were evident: biological psychology on the one hand and the phenomenological analysis of mental phenomena on the other.<sup>3</sup> The work of the Scottish philosophical psychologist Alexander Bain – who in 1876 would go on to found the still thriving *Mind, A quarterly Review of Psychology and Philosophy*, – was exemplified in the latter

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<sup>3</sup> Hatfield, "Psychology Old and New", 95.

strand, along with the work of the associationist school that was discussed in the previous chapter, and included J.S. Mill and his father, James Mill. As noted above, J S Mill dismissed Hamilton's notion of unconscious mental states as being self-contradictory and the work of the Associationist would therefore focus on the discerning certain laws of association at work in mental phenomena, while at the same time dismissing the presence of any underlying unconscious mental faculties. Meanwhile, British practitioners of the biological psychology strand included medical physiologists like William Carpenter (1813-1885) and Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), biologically-influenced thinkers such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and George Henry Lewes (1817-1878), and research naturalists such as Charles Darwin (1809-1882), George Romanes (1848-1894) and Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936).

#### **4.1.1 William Carpenter and Two Rival Conceptions of the Unconscious**

William Carpenter (appointed to the Royal Institution in 1845), was a medical physiologist who began his studies working on the nervous system of invertebrates. One of Carpenter's contributions (along with his colleague James Braid, the re-inventor of hypnotism, on which more later), was the effort to debunk what he termed "ideo-motor action".<sup>4</sup> This term related to phenomena claimed by the booming "spiritualist movement" in the 1840s, that involved claims of communicating with the dead, via 'table turning' and early versions of the Ouija board. So-called ideo-motor actions were observed by Carpenter in his studies of "the reflex or automatic muscular motions which arise merely from ideas associated with motion existing in the mind, without any conscious effort of volition".<sup>5</sup> In short, the participants in these

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<sup>4</sup> William B. Carpenter, "On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition", Paper presented to the Royal Institute of Great Britain, 12 March 1852.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Noble, "Three Lectures on the Correlation of Psychology and Physiology", Paper presented to the Chatham Street School of Medicine, Manchester, June 1854, 642.



Spiritualist activities were not aware of their own slight physical actions that were causing the sensations being attributed to beyond-the-grave-influences.

However, of more direct interest here is Carpenter's conception of "unconscious cerebration". There is some scholarly debate about the nature of Carpenter's notion of unconscious cerebration in terms of how his theory should be best classified among the various conceptions (or to use Gödde's phrase, "tradition-lines") concerning the unconscious. Depending on interpretation, it could be seen as contributing to the emergence of one or other of two (ultimately) very different views of the unconscious.

On one hand, Carpenter's conception of the unconscious can be seen as extending in interesting ways, for its day, the old 'cognitive unconscious' tradition line that extends back to Leibniz (but which we also identified above even in Descartes' correspondence). Such a view of the unconscious – or perhaps better, the 'non-conscious' – focuses on the aspects of mind that are not the subject of explicit attention at any particular moment, but which are essential for the healthy functioning of the organism. Thus, in his *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1875), for example, Carpenter observes the way that "mental changes, of whose *results we subsequently* become conscious, may go on below the plane of consciousness, either during profound sleep, or while attention is wholly engrossed by some entirely different train of thought".<sup>6</sup> In fact, he suggests, "a large part of our Intellectual activity – whether it consist in Reasoning processes, or in the exercise of the Imagination – is essentially automatic, and may be described in Physiological language as the reflex action of the Cerebrum".<sup>7</sup> He cites a number of examples of unconscious

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<sup>6</sup> William B. Carpenter, *Principles of Mental Physiology, with their applications to the training and discipline of the mind, and the study of its morbid conditions* (London: Henry S. King and Co, 1875), 516. Italics in original.

<sup>7</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 515.

cerebration in his work, all of which point to a type of problem solving ability in the unconscious. If a problem is presented to the conscious, and time permits for engagement in a completely unrelated conscious activity, then the problem's solution often surfaces, or, to use Carpenter's expression: the matter "...settles itself".<sup>8</sup>

Tellingly, while he thinks that the new natural sciences provide a compelling way of providing empirical evidence for such claims which might otherwise "remain obscure and meaningless", Carpenter suggests that this observation is nonetheless one that can be arrived at *either* via a physicalist or a philosophical route: "it seems a matter of no practical consequence, whether the doctrine be stated in terms of Metaphysics or in terms of Physiology – in terms of mind, or in terms of brain, – provided it be recognised as having a positive scientific basis".<sup>9</sup> Of course, his own biological training and expertise meant that the language of science provided a natural language of preference, though on the other hand his work also shows a vivid interest in philosophical explication of this kind, including those (considered in the previous chapter) by William Hamilton.

In any case, in recent cognitive psychology, Carpenter's 'unconscious cerebration' notion has been 'rediscovered' with the development of the idea of the "adaptive unconscious", which similarly focuses on mental processes that guide decisions and judgements without the involvement of conscious attentiveness.<sup>10</sup> Other recent scholarship has framed this in terms of "the new unconscious"<sup>11</sup>: i.e., a *contemporary* neuroscientific notion that understands the unconscious in purely functionalist physiological terms, and thus shaven of

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<sup>8</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 532. Italics in original.

<sup>9</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 516.

<sup>10</sup> See Daniel Wegner, *The Illusion of Conscious Will* (Boston: MIT Press, 2002.)

<sup>11</sup> Ran Hassin et al (eds). *The New Unconscious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.)

all the ‘messiness’ and (perhaps also implied ideology?) of the psychoanalytic unconscious. John Kilstrom likened this dimension of brain activity to the silent hum of a computer operating system that recedes below the surface of the human interface.<sup>12</sup> Further, “unlike the psychoanalytic unconscious”, explains James Uleman, one of the chief advocates of this approach, this so-called new unconscious “has no innate drives that seek gratification without regard to constraints of reality and society. In fact it is rather cold, apparently rational, and amotivational, compared to the heat and irrationality of psychoanalytic drives and conflicts”.<sup>13</sup> Uleman is certainly correct that such a notion is a long way from the ‘Dionysian’ upsurging unconscious of psychoanalysis that is the source of psychic *disruption* rather than smooth neurological operation. Nonetheless, given the scope of this thesis, it will be necessary to leave to one side the question of whether this contemporary movement involves a category error – or at least a serious conflation – in the way that the terminology of “the unconscious” is being used.

Be that as it may, it is important to note that Carpenter’s conception of the unconscious is certainly not limited to any such notion of a purely ‘non-conscious’ functionalism. Certainly, he is interested in the way in which unconscious mental processes can assist people to solve problems in unexpected ways, and he is certainly interested in memories that return involuntarily and unexpectedly when extensive conscious effort to recall them have failed.<sup>14</sup> Such discussion certainly invites comparison with Freud’s “On the Psychic Mechanism of Forgetfulness” (1898) which he recalls and

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<sup>12</sup> John F. Kihlstrom, “The Cognitive Unconscious”. *Science* 237, no. 4821 (1987): 1445-1452.

<sup>13</sup> James S. Uleman, “Introduction: Becoming Aware of the New Unconscious”. In *The New Unconscious*, by Hassin, Ran R., James S. Uleman, and John A. Bargh, eds., edited by Ran R. Hassin, James S. Uleman, and John A. Bargh. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195307696.003.0001, (7 Mar 2019).

<sup>14</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 519-539.

develops in his *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901). However, there is another striking quality to his discussion of ‘unconscious cerebration’ that points in a significant way towards a nascent Freudian conception of the unconscious, and of its dynamic chthonic and disruptive processes. This is so even if - like his colleague Hamilton, whose lectures he quotes at length in his *Principles of Mental Physiology* – he presents his theories with an undertone of confident optimism typical of the British empirical sciences of the day, rather than the tragic pessimism of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche.

But clearly, for Carpenter, the unconscious is a wellspring of the unexpected as much as a source of surface calm. This comes through most clearly when he notes that the unconscious is not simply a place of cognitive or intellectual operations, but of emotional processes:

[I]t is not intellectual work alone, that is done in this manner; for it seems equally clear that emotional states, or rather states which constitute Emotions when we become conscious of them, may be developed by the same process; so that our feelings towards persons and objects may undergo most important changes, without our being in the least degree aware, until we have our attention directed to our own mental state, of the alteration which has taken place in them<sup>15</sup>

The example Carpenter gives of such phenomena is of a romantic bond that is unrecognised by the parties, even if it is perfectly obvious to others. Carpenter does not suggest any specific mechanism related to denial or repression here, though a quasi ‘hydraulic’ metaphor is certainly strongly hinted out in his description of sudden realisation as a “burst[ing] forth, like a smouldering fire, into full flame”<sup>16</sup> However, more striking still is Carpenter’s suggestion – absolutely anticipating Freud’s later notion of the “ego ideal” or “super-ego” – concerning

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<sup>15</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 539.

<sup>16</sup> Carpenter, *Principles*, 540.

[T]he unconscious influence of what may be called the Moral Atmosphere breathed during the earlier period of life, in forming the habits, and thereby determining the Mechanism of Thought and Feeling [...] The *unconscious* prejudices which we thus form, are often stronger than the *conscious*; and they are the more dangerous, because we cannot knowingly guard against them.

This notion of the unconscious as “dangerous” insofar as it is beyond the control of conscious attentiveness, and in all things represents the impossibility of full self-transparency, points in powerful ways to the most basic intuitions of Freudian psychoanalysis.

#### **4.1.2 James Ward on Attention and Introspection, and his Associationist Critics**

The English psychologist and philosopher James Ward (1843-1925) is another pivotal figure in British philosophical psychology during the last third of the nineteenth century, and another who provided important contributions to the vast seed bed of Anglo-Scottish ideas that were available to the young Freud. Representing an alternative strand of thought to the then dominant British ‘associationist’ school, even while picking up on other themes that were deeply rooted in the British tradition, Ward provided further important ideas that were developed shortly after in early Freudian thought.

Ward is a comparatively rare case of a British scholar whose work benefited from extensive immersion in German scholarship (in a more comprehensive sense than was the case with William Hamilton two generations earlier).

Aged twenty, Ward commenced training for the ministry of the Congregational Church, and it was during this time that a scholarship enabled him to study theology in Berlin and philosophy at Gottingen. The lectures of Hermann Lotze (1817–81) at Gottingen influenced him greatly, and in time this would see him contribute greatly to the introduction to of Neo-Kantian thinking to a British thought, along with some ideas around

panpsychism that hark back to elements of early nineteenth century German Idealism.

More specifically – as seen in his highly influential *Encyclopedia Britannica* article of 1886 on the topic of “Psychology” – Ward would come to emphasise a *phenomenology of the mind* where the ego or self is seen as primary. In this way his psychology pointed in directions very different to the associationist school, and very different also from the various forms of neurological materialism in British psychology. Psychology is presented instead as the study of human *experience*, in all its interiority, but understood as the connection of the self with the world: of the experiencer (subject) and what is experienced (object). Introspection, according to Ward, was the only way in which the subjective elements of the mind could be accessed and therefore it was in itself ‘objective’ and indispensable. Given this basic orientation, the importance of emotional connection are highlighted, as well as the subject’s *attentiveness* to the world. It is therefore outward-facing attentiveness, rather than the association of ideas, that is brought to the foreground of psychological theory. In his 1886 article, Ward presents his understanding of the self/ego as follows:

Self has, in contradistinction from all other presentations, first of all (a) a unique interest and (b) a certain inwardness; (c) it is an individual that (d) persists, (e) is active, and finally (f) knows itself. These several characteristics of self are intimately involved; so far as they appear at all they advance in definiteness from the lowest level of mere sentience to those moments of highest self-consciousness in which conscience approves or condemns volition.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, Ward’s contribution was also about the way in which such an approach was combined with a distinctively British set of influences stemming back to the work of Locke, Hume and the late eighteenth century

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<sup>17</sup> James Ward, “Psychology”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., 1886. Part 84.

Scottish philosopher, Dugald Stewart (1753-1828). It is in this connection that the theme of attention arises, one that has great significance for understanding the early (but also the later) work of Freud. Locke's original understanding of attention is provided by way of a brief, almost passing, definition: "when the ideas that offer themselves (for, as I have observed in another place, whilst we are awake, there will always be a train of ideas succeeding one another in our minds) are taken notice of, and, as it were, registered in the memory, it is *attention*".<sup>18</sup> For Locke, attention, along with 'intention or study', 'remembrance', 'recollection', 'contemplation', 'sleep', 'dreaming' and 'ecstasy' are all *modes of thinking* that simply did not require elaboration or theories of their own. If attention's role in perception was regarded slightly by Locke, by 1738, the work of Christian Wolff had begun treating attention as a worthwhile philosophical topic *per se*.<sup>19</sup> For Locke, attention acted upon perceptions that had already been received but emerging theory of the early eighteenth century began to see attention as playing a part in what is perceived in the first place: not so much a shaper of impressions that have already been received but rather as a determiner of what impressions would actually be received in the first instance.

By the late eighteenth century, Dugald Stewart, in his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, would propose that attention was, in part at least, responsible for the development of certain skilled behaviours (and he cites the act of juggling as one such skill).<sup>20</sup> A 'slight' philosophical notion

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<sup>18</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), II, 19 §1

<sup>19</sup> Christian Wolff, *Empirical Psychology, Treated According to the Scientific Method*, Frankfurt and Leipzig: Officina Libraria Rengeriana, 1732.

<sup>20</sup> Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, (Brattleborough: William Fessenden, 1808).

had, within a century, become the focus of an ever-widening philosophical debate. As Christopher Mole puts it in his overview of the situation:

In the century between Locke's *Essay* and Stewart's *Elements*, then, attention ceases to be seen merely as a certain mode of idea-handling, and comes to be seen as a phenomenon in need of its own explanation, and with a role to play in the explanation of perception, in the explanation of memory (both in its storage and in its recall), and in the explanation of skilled action.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the over-elaboration of this philosophical topic,<sup>22</sup> Ward's arguments relating to attention, and its role in perception, indicate that he viewed a significant role for it. Instead of consciousness, which he regarded as "the vaguest, most protean and most treacherous of psychological terms",<sup>23</sup> he would declare attention to be the single subjective activity required to encompass feelings, perceptions, memories, inferences, strivings and so forth. Ward makes the important clarification that is often overlooked in common speech: when we declare that we perceive, remember, infer or even strive for an object we are assuming that the object in question remains the same, but that the activities (of perception, wanting etc) differ. Ward maintains that our remembering may change the image remembered, as indeed so may a strong desire do likewise. Attention then becomes the one unifying act (thus replacing all of the faculties just listed) in order to provide "...one common factor in all psychical activity".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Mole, "Attention", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/attention/> (20 February, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Philosophical discussion on the notion of attention would proliferate to such a degree that one contemporary thinker complained: "[I]f we cannot employ terms in something like their ordinary sense it is better to make new ones than to abuse and pervert the old. In the case of attention the abuse has even been carried to such a point that attention has been used to include and cover what every one does and must call a state of inattention. (Francis H. Bradley, "On Active Attention", *Mind* 11 (41:1902):1.

<sup>23</sup> Ward, "Psychology", Part 9.

<sup>24</sup> Ward, "Psychology", Part 9.



The early Freud also presses into service the psycho-philosophical notion of attention (*Aufmerksamkeit*), though, once again, we find that while this is a concept that plays a significant role in Freud's pre-psychoanalytic thinking, the word itself almost disappears from his work after 1900. This is a point noted by Strachey who notes that attention "makes an unostentatious appearance in Section 14 of Part I [of the *Project*], but soon begins to show its importance (in Section 19 of Part I and Section 6 of Part II), while in Part III it becomes an almost predominant feature. Nevertheless, in Freud's later writings, 'attention' almost vanishes apart from a few sporadic mentions".<sup>25</sup>

However, if the terminology of attention disappears from Freud's psychoanalytic writings, the concept itself did not. Strachey goes on to trace the concept as evolving through two different lines throughout Freud's entire work.

The first of these lines is, according to Strachey, the more obvious one: the notion of phantasy verses reality, i.e. reality testing. This Cartesian quandary was addressed in the *Project*, but by the time Freud came to write his "Papers on Metapsychology" (1915) it would be raised in a very different style.<sup>26</sup>

Strachey comments:

Freud argued that the 'primary psychical processes' do not by themselves make any distinction between an idea and a perception; they require in the first place, to be inhibited by the 'secondary psychical processes', and these can only come into operation where there is an 'ego' with a large enough store of cathexis to provide the energy necessary to put the inhibition into effect[...] The aim of the inhibition is to give time for 'indications of reality' to arrive from the perceptual apparatus. But...besides this inhibiting and delaying function, the ego is responsible for directing cathexes of 'attention' on

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<sup>25</sup> SE I, "Project for a Scientific Psychology", 394.

<sup>26</sup> SE XIV, *On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*.

the external world, without which the indications of reality could not be observed.<sup>27</sup>

Strachey is pointing to the fact that Freud sees the process of delay as essential to the process of judging whether things are real or not. The ego and attention are seen as playing a vital role in this 'reality testing'. As late as his paper "Negation", (1925) Freud is claiming that the ego has a close genetic relationship with the instruments of sense perception.<sup>28</sup> In a contemporaneous paper, "Mystic Writing-Pad", (1925) Freud affirms the role of the ego as that of sending out exploratory *cathexes* into the external world – and this appears to be what Freud meant by attention.<sup>29</sup>

If 'reality testing' is the first obvious context in which Freud employs the notion of attention, the second employment is less obvious.<sup>30</sup> This second usage focuses on its role in providing certain elements in the preconscious a safe passage into consciousness. As Freud says in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "[t]he excitatory processes occurring in [the preconscious] can enter consciousness without further impediment provided that certain other conditions are fulfilled: for instance ... that the function that can only be described as 'attention' is distributed in a particular way".<sup>31</sup> Further: "[b]ecoming conscious is connected with the application of a particular psychological function, that of attention".<sup>32</sup> Or again: "The system preconscious not merely bars access to consciousness, it also [ ...] has at its disposal for distribution a mobile cathectic energy, a part of which is familiar to us in the

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<sup>27</sup> SE XIV, "The Metapsychology of Dreams", 220.

<sup>28</sup> SE XIX. This appears to be a repeat of his much earlier statements to the same effect in *The Project*.

<sup>29</sup> SE XIX, *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*.

<sup>30</sup> Strachey notes that clarification of this issue is hampered by the fact that Freud's article on "Consciousness" appears to have been lost. SE XIV, 192.

<sup>31</sup> SE V, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: Regression", 541.

<sup>32</sup> SE V, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: The Primary and secondary Processes", 593.

form of attention".<sup>33</sup> In sum, this second usage presents attention as the determining factor in which contents of the unconscious will pass through the system preconscious and into consciousness; attention as a kind of 'psychopomp' so to speak.

Returning to Ward's pivotal article of 1886, other terms, now familiar to us through Freud's writing, can also be observed. For instance, Ward gives a particular place to the concepts of pain and pleasure. In doing so he criticises Bentham for creating a significant stumbling block for Utilitarian philosophy by confusing *pleasure* with *pleasures*. He therefore dismisses Bentham's cynical *bon mot* – that "Pushpin is as good as poetry provided it be as pleasant" – by stating clearly the difference between pleasure and pleasures:

By a pleasure or pleasures we mean some assignable presentation or presentations which are pleasant, - i.e., afford pleasure; by pleasure simply is meant the subjective state of feeling itself. The former, like other objects of knowledge, admit of classification and comparison; we may distinguish them as coarse or as noble, or, if we will, as cheap and wholesome. But, while the causes of feeling are manifold, the feeling itself is a subjective state, varying only in intensity and duration.<sup>34</sup>

Ward, by making this distinction, is here addressing the issue of whether pleasures differ not just quantitatively, but *qualitatively* as well. Having distinguished between pleasure (as a subjective state) and pleasures (the manifold *causes* of the feeling of pleasure) he states firmly his belief in both quantitative and qualitative elements of pleasure:

Whatever be the variety in the sources of pleasure, whatever be the moral or consciousness is pleasant we seek to retain it, if painful to be rid of it: we prefer greater pleasure before less, less pain before greater.

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<sup>33</sup> SE V, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: The Unconscious and Consciousness", 615.

<sup>34</sup> Ward, "Psychology", Part 61.

This is, in fact, the whole meaning of preference as a psychological term.<sup>35</sup>

Ward, then, brings a subtle – but long-needed - correction to Bentham’s argument. Certainly, J S Mill had already introduced the qualitative notion through his “gold, silver and metal coins”, metaphor, but Ward’s distinction between pleasure and its manifold causes brings a simple advance to utilitarian thinking. This philosophical insight post-dates the gordian knot of quantitative verses qualitative that confronted Freud in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.<sup>36</sup>

In a view popularised by Darwin,<sup>37</sup> Ward provides a theory of instincts that arise from “psychological habits that become fixed through inheritance of acquired characteristics”.<sup>38</sup> It was one of Ward’s students, G.F. Stout (1860–1944), who would expand the separation from associationist thinking and at the same time, drawing on sources such as Brentano’s psychology, reinforce the “phenomenological unity and directed activity of mental life”.<sup>39</sup>

However, this split in British philosophy of mind between the older associationist tradition and the newer phenomenological approaches represented by Ward and his students, was not all one way traffic. Figures such as Henry Maudsley, Herbert Spencer, George Lewes, Charles Mercier and Alexander Bain took quite distinct views. Maudsley’s *Physiology of the Mind* (1876), was quite disparaging of the ‘introspective method’, reasoning, first, that introspection was too subjective in its observations, and second, that

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<sup>35</sup> Ward, “Psychology”, Part 61.

<sup>36</sup> SE I, *Pre-Psychoanalytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts*.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: J. Murray, 1859), 209, and Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: J. Murray, 1872), 29.

<sup>38</sup> Hatfield, *Psychology Old and New*, 97.

<sup>39</sup> Hatfield, *Psychology Old and New*, 97. See also: George F. Stout, *Analytic Psychology* (London: Swan, 1896) chaps V and VI for an analysis of Brentano’s contribution.

this method had limited application to children. Unlike Carpenter's dualism, Maudsley's work can be seen as a form of a *materialist monism*, a philosophical stance that was much less common than might be assumed.

Spencer and Lewes, both sharing the *biological* conception of psychology, differed from Maudsley in that they saw the mind as a means for the living organism – the human being - to *adjust* to external environmental influences. Thus for Spencer, writing in 1855, *life* is defined as “the continuous adjustment of internal relations to outer relation”<sup>40</sup> and *intelligence* as “the adjustment of inner to outer relations”.<sup>41</sup> Spencer also provides a useful subdivision of *biological* psychology into a further two types in his later second edition: *objective* psychology deals with “material organismic processes”, actions and behaviours, while *subjective* psychology is “the study of processes available to consciousness”, and “consciously available mental states” that correspond (by way of a type of parallelism) to the objective processes<sup>42</sup>.

Although he too shared in the biological perspective on psychology, Lewes underscored the effect of human society and social conditions in general upon the mind and saw this as a way of differentiating humans from primates.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, *contra* the associationist thinking of the time, Lewes saw the role in innate adaptations in living beings – *human* beings included – and he saw evolutionary theory as providing support for this assumption. Lewes made no secret of the anti-metaphysical and positivist ambitions of his approach:

It is towards the transformation of Metaphysics by reduction to the Method of Science that these pages tend. Their object is to show that the method which has hitherto achieved much splendid success in

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<sup>40</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1855), 374.

<sup>41</sup> Spencer, *Principles*, 486.

<sup>42</sup> Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1870-2) Part 1, Chap 7.

<sup>43</sup> George H. Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind* (Boston: Osgood, 1874).

Science needs only to be properly interpreted and applied, and by it the inductions and deductions from every experience will furnish solutions to every metaphysical problem that can be rationally stated.<sup>44</sup>

As has been noted, Freud himself sympathised with such a reductive approach, especially in his early years, and indeed it was a similar set of methodological disagreements that ran through the early psychoanalytic movement. This is seen especially in the split between Freud and C.G. Jung, the latter of whom was far more in line with the German phenomenological tradition than with Freud's more British-leaning positivist approach.<sup>45</sup>

One final example of the British counter to the introspectivist approach of Ward is the work of Charles Mercier. In his *The Nervous System and the Mind: a Treatise on the dynamics of the Human Organism*, Mercier laments the stagnation of psychology in its approach to developing a clear model of what the normal functioning of the mind should look like. After all, he contends, all other branches of medicine had made significant advances in this regard. As he states:

No doubt the main reason why the study of the normal mind has been disregarded by alienists [= archaic term for *Psychiatrist*] is that classical works on the Mind ignore altogether its association with body, and study it purely from the standpoint so purely introspective as to offer no obvious advantage to the alienist, to whom the concomitant disorders of body are so conspicuous and so important. It is the absence of any statement of psychological doctrines in the which the phenomena of mind are associated with the phenomena of nervous action and of conduct, which has rendered it absolutely necessary to

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<sup>44</sup> Lewes, *Problems*, Vol I, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Jung himself was quite articulate in his critique of the reductive positivism of much of the early movement: "The interpretive methods of both Freud and Adler are reductive, since in both cases there is a reduction to the elementary processes of wishing or striving, which in the last resort are of an infantile or physiological nature. ... Reduction has a disintegrative effect on the real significance of the unconscious product, since this is either traced back to its historical antecedents and thereby annihilated, or integrated once again with the same elementary process from which it arose". "Definitions", *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 6, par. 788.

prepare such a statement before any appreciable advance in the science of insanity can be made.<sup>46</sup>

For Mercier, only a physiological study of the mind, and the concomitant physiological model of 'the normal mind' can advance the study of psychology. Introspectivism, in Mercier's view, has only served to hold back the advance of psychology as a medical science.

If for Ward 'consciousness' (*qua* attention) is the only proper subject of psychological investigation, Mercier argued for the rejection of any notion of consciousness, replacing it with "hypothesized physiological states adjusted and adapted to the environment".<sup>47</sup> It would be the formative work of John Hughlings Jackson, Mercier's mentor and teacher, that leads once again to a significant intersection with the early influences on Freud himself.

## **4.2 Hughlings Jackson's Influence on Freud: Parallelism, Regression, Speech and the Unconscious**

The legacy of the English neurologist John Hughlings Jackson (1835-1911) on Freud's earliest work, and henceforward on the early stages of the development of some key psychoanalytic concepts, is extremely significant. The major contribution of his work in the second half of the nineteenth century was to bring the then current influences of evolutionary thinking and materialist philosophy to bear on the fledgling science of neurology. As will be seen, Hughlings Jackson's influence is strong in Freud's early work, *On*

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<sup>46</sup> Charles Mercier, *The Nervous System and the Mind: A Treatise on the Dynamics of the Human Organism* (London: Macmillan, 1888), 2-3. This work is dedicated to Dr Hughlings-Jackson (Mercier's teacher and friend).

<sup>47</sup> Hatfield, *Psychology Old and New*, 98.

*Aphasia* (1891),<sup>48</sup> but the ripple effects for early psychoanalytic thought stretch far beyond that work alone.

As a co-founder of *Mind*, Hughlings Jackson's writings show a broad awareness of philosophical issues of his day as well as some knowledge of Descartes, Leibniz and Kant. However, his sources in British psychology were many and important, among them Herbert Spencer (1820-1911), whose work was most influential. But there are other contemporary philosophers whom Hughlings Jackson mentions throughout his work: Alexander Bain, George Henry Lewes and to a degree, William Kingdom Clifford (1845 – 1879). Indeed, it is likely that both Clifford and Bain were the sources of the notion of psycho-physical parallelism that was such a major idea in Hughlings Jackson's approach (and which, it will be shown, filters through to Freud's early pre-psychoanalytic work).

Hughlings Jackson's philosophical knowledge also extended into the realms of French philosophy. In an 1880 paper he considered – as something of an aside - whether or not a dreamless sleep was possible, in a broader context of the consideration of epileptic seizures.<sup>49</sup> In doing so he compared the opinions of Descartes, Leibniz and Kant with early nineteenth century French philosophers: Georges Cabanis (1757-1808) and François-Pierre-Gonthier Maine de Biran (1766-1824).

#### **4.2.1 Parallelism, Brain and Language**

In matters of neurology, Hughlings Jackson would always hold to the position that there was no need to postulate a soul – or any other

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<sup>48</sup> Sigmund Freud, *On Aphasia* trans by E Stengel (New York: International Universities Press, 1953.) Originally published in German in 1891. The work provides a neurological investigation into brain lesions, i.e., what would be referred to broadly as 'a stroke' today.

<sup>49</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, "On right or left-side spasm at the outset of epileptic paroxysms, and on crude sensation warnings, and elaborate mental states", *Brain* 3 (1880): 192 – 206.



metaphysical assumptions at all – when seeking to understand the workings of the nervous system. This would lead to criticism that he, along with the contemporary evolutionists of his day, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Huxley (1825 – 1895) and John Tyndall (1820-1893), were *materialists*. In his acclaimed Croonian Lecture of 1884, *On Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System*, Hughlings Jackson makes a spirited defence against such charges.<sup>50</sup> He begins by quoting Spencer who “frequently insists on the absolute difference between states of consciousness and nervous states”. Building on Spencer’s work, Hughlings Jackson declares himself to have a *parallelist* view of the human person. He declares:

If any one wish to be thoroughly materialistic as to what is material, the nervous system, let him not be materialistic at all as to the mind, which is not material at all. A man has both a mind and a body. On the principle of doing one thing at a time, I shall, in this lecture, first, speak of the body only. A man, physically regarded, is a sensori-motor mechanism.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, when speaking on matters pertaining to the nervous system Hughlings Jackson is clearly a materialist but when speaking about the mind, he is not. This parallelist view of the mind and the body, is, in effect where he applies his “doctrine of Concomitance” in which it is asserted that the mind and the nervous system are two distinct entities and as such they do not impact on each other in any way.<sup>52</sup> They are, as it were, two clocks that function parallel to each other (i.e. an explicitly sensorimotor machine arranged as an evolutionary hierarchy). By 1887 he was forced to respond to the criticism that his concomitance theory was a shallow attempt to avoid the charge of ‘materialism’ and furthermore for his ‘two clocks’ metaphor was just a pale

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<sup>50</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, “The Croonian Lectures on Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System”, *The British Medical Journal* 1:121 (April 1884): 703 – 708.

<sup>51</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution”, 703.

<sup>52</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution”, 706.

imitation of Leibniz' own 'two-clock theory', but he maintained his position nevertheless.<sup>53</sup>

In tracing just how Hughlings Jackson's influence might be seen in Freud's early thinking we need go no further than Freud's 1891 text, *On Aphasia* [*Zur Auffassung der Aphasien. Eine kritische Studiewritten*]. In this work, Freud seeks to outline the neurological effects of brain lesions, specifically with regard to their effects on speech, and in pursuit of this end the relationship between language and consciousness is explored in some depth. In doing so, he also makes active use of Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (as discussed in the previous chapter). But he also takes the approach of describing psychopathological phenomena with recourse to the neurological sciences of his day, in a way that closely resembles the method of Hughlings Jackson.

It is widely recognised that John Hughlings Jackson's neurological model played a significant role in *On Aphasia* by assisting Freud with his foundational thinking. No less a judge than Ludwig Binswanger suggested that *On Aphasia* was essential reading in order to understand the historical development of Freudian thought, and in turn that this work cannot be understood without reference to Hughlings Jackson's genetic doctrine.<sup>54</sup>

Michael Molnar, in his analysis of the impact of John Stuart Mill on Freud's thinking also comments on the significance of the almost-forgotten *On Aphasia*:

In the Aphasia study Freud is at that point discussing the idea that the word acquires meaning by being linked to an object-presentation, and

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<sup>53</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, "Remarks on Evolution and Dissolution of the nervous System". *Journal of Mental Science* 23 (1887), 25 – 48.

<sup>54</sup> Erick Stengel, introduction to Freud, *On Aphasia*, xii. Stengel is referring to Binswanger's comments in "Freud und die Verfassung der klinischen Psychiatrie", *Schweiz. Arch. Neur. Psychiatrie*, 37 (1936), 199.

this object presentation borrows its verisimilitude only from an assumed chain of associations. These ideas of object- and word- presentation, first presented in *On Aphasia*, are to recur in *The Unconscious*<sup>55</sup> as traits differentiating conscious from unconscious mental activity. Hence this philosophical (or linguistic) notion is of vital significance.<sup>56</sup>

James Strachey has also emphasised just how much Freud's understanding of the relation between the mind and the nervous system relied on Hughlings Jackson's parallelism, and the extent to which this influence was to persist into his mature work, including (as also Molnar suggests), the 1915 work *The Unconscious*. In an appendix to that same paper Strachey provides clear evidence that Freud's later thinking was influenced by Hughlings Jackson's parallelism and he cites Freud's *On Aphasia*, written almost a quarter of a century earlier, to give proof of the link between Freud's early neurological thinking and his latter day psychoanalytic theorising:

It is probable that the chain of physiological events in the nervous system does not stand in a causal connection with the psychical events. The physiological events do not cease as soon as the psychical ones begin; on the contrary, the physiological chain continues. What happens is simply, that, after a certain point of time, each (or some) of its links has a physical phenomenon corresponding to it. Accordingly, the psychical is a process parallel to the physiological – “a dependent concomitant”.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to note that the phrase “a dependent concomitant” was quoted in English by Freud in *On Aphasia*, in what would appear to be a direct acknowledgement of the recognised coiner of the phrase, Hughlings Jackson.

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<sup>55</sup> SE XIV, “The Unconscious”, 161 – 215.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Molnar, “John Stuart Mill Translated by Sigmund Freud”, in *The Pre-Psychoanalytic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, eds. by Duncan Barford, Filip Geerardyn and Gertrudis Van de Vijver (London: Karnac Books, 2002.) 112. Italics mine.

<sup>57</sup> SE XIV, “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement”, 55. Note that Strachey is providing his own translation of *On Aphasia* in this instance, since this book was never included in the *Standard Edition*. Presumably, Strachey wrote this appendix to provide information for English-speaking readership on the foundational significance of *On Aphasia*, which, at that time, had not been translated into English.

Overall, there is no clearer evidence of Freud's adoption of Hughlings Jackson's parallelism than the description of how one learns to *speaking, spelling, reading* and *writing* in this work. Here Freud moves away from the dominant (though dated) phrenological theories of the time that held that mental functions were localised in certain areas of the brain. He proposes instead a hierarchy for the processes of speaking, spelling, reading and writing that his neurological studies have raised for him and while this is clearly physiological in its language (and therefore faithful to Hughlings Jackson) there is more to be noted.

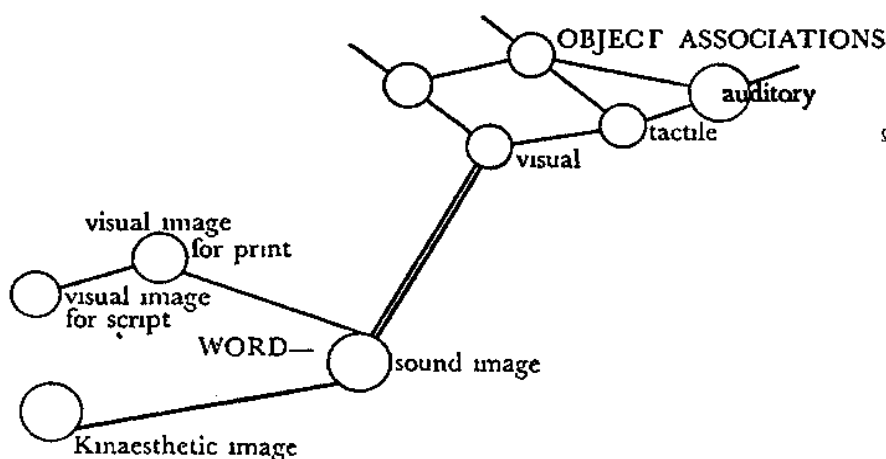
Freud's account is an integrated hearing-speaking-spelling-reading-writing model.<sup>58</sup> The word that is *heard* (the first "sound image") is *imitated* and spoken (the "second sound image"). In this, he clearly rejects the 'innervation theory' which proposed that the hearing of words stimulated a particular nervous impulse that enabled the hearer to speak the same or similar word. *Speaking* the language of others is achieved by seeking to reproduce the sound image ourselves. We may need to repeat the sounds made by the other person, or "say after" them in order to develop our language skill. *Spelling* is achieved by combining the letters' visual forms with the new sounds. There will already be sounds that are familiar to us from other sound-images. As well as learning to speak there is the *first sound image* – in this case of the letter of the alphabet that we see (and may know from other words) – and the second sound image (the newly spelt word). Just as with learning to *speaking* a language, repetition of the sound of the letter plays a role in learning to spell. *Reading* is learned by following established rules to combine certain nervous impulses with the physical effort of pronouncing words out loud. It then becomes clear to us that we are already familiar with such words through

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<sup>58</sup> This account is sketched out in *On Aphasia*, 72-78.

everyday language. Verbals sounds are then linked up with the speech images acquired in learning to spell. According to Freud, once this is done, the individual is able to now read with understanding. *Writing* is achieved by reproducing images of the alphabet by means of certain energetic impulses to the hand itself. Freud states that this is a relatively simple process that is less easily disturbed than the process of reading. Finally, as we grow and mature, the abilities to abbreviate and substitute symbols (e.g., in the case of shorthand) occurs. Furthermore, reading becomes a process whereby words are no longer read out aloud nor spelt out.

Freud brings together these various processes into a 'Psychological Schema of the Word Concept', which he depicted thus:<sup>59</sup>



**Psychological schema of the word concept.**  
 The word concept appears as a closed complex of images, the object concept as an open one. The word concept is linked to the concept of the object via the sound image only. Among the object associations, the visual ones play a part similar to that played by the sound image among the word associations. The connections of the word sound image with object associations other than the visual are not presented in this schema.

**Figure 5** "Psychological Schema of the Word Concept" in *On Aphasia*, 77

<sup>59</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 77.

In a physiological model that is firmly undergirded by Hughlings Jackson's parallelism, we see in Freud's model a strong emphasis on 'the word'. Years later, psychoanalysis would become known as 'the talking cure' so it must be noted that in his pre-psychoanalytic days Freud was already aware of the significance of 'the word'.

Returning to his *The Unconscious* (1915) we see strong links back to the *On Aphasia* model (and its terminology) when Freud seeks to clarify the technical working of repression:

Now, too, we are in a position to state precisely what it is that repression denies to the rejected presentation in the transference neuroses: what it denies to the presentation is translation into words which shall remain attached to the object. A presentation which is not out into words, or a psychical act which is not hypercatheted, remains thereafter in the *Ucs.* In a state of repression.<sup>60</sup>

By 1915, Freud's thinking was well established, to the point that he was embarking upon what is referred to as his 'metapsychological' phase. Yet, the role of *the word* remains pivotal in enabling the contents of the unconscious right of entry in the conscious (or preconscious). By this time Hughlings Jackson's parallelism (which allowed for the unconscious, but then immediately excluded it from any serious discussion) is no longer a constraint on Freud's thinking. Yet this significant freedom now offered Freud in his modelling does not see a complete disowning of previous theorising. As has been noted above, Freud's notion of *cathexis* (*Besetzung*) is an example of a concept originating in his early physiological thinking but continuing into his later psychological theoretical development (albeit, as LaPlanche points out, without his ever having given a rigorous theoretical definition<sup>61</sup>).

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<sup>60</sup> SE XIV, "The Unconscious", 202.

<sup>61</sup> LaPlanche, *Language*, 62.

Strachey reminds us that in the *Project* (1895), Freud “purports to describe and explain the whole range of human behaviour, normal and pathological, by means of a complicated manipulation of two material entities – the neurone and ‘quantity in a condition of flow’, an unspecified physical or chemical energy”.<sup>62</sup> We can observe striking similarities in Hughlings Jackson’s parallelist position when he insists that consciousness is *not* the function of the brain. Furthermore, for Hughlings Jackson, the nervous system “has to do with storage of energy (the taking in of materials having potential energy), with nervous discharges (or liberations of energy) by nerve cells; with the rates of liberations, the resistances encountered and the degrees of those resistance”.<sup>63</sup> The resemblance between this approach and Freud’s energetic/economic/cathetic model is striking. Other examples of Hughlings Jackson’s foundational influence upon Freud’s later work now follow.

#### **4.2.2 Reversal in a Functional System: *Rückbildung* (Dissolution and Regression)**

Central to Hughlings Jackson’s functional model of the nervous system is a fundamentally evolutionary conception of *advance* to higher levels of complexity, but which can also, in pathological states, dissolve and *reverse* to more primitive levels of organisation. Herein lies a key template that was to be developed by Freud into the central psychoanalytic concept of regression.

Hughlings Jackson’s model of the nervous system is spelt out clearly in his paper *Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System*.<sup>64</sup> Here he uses the term “evolution” to describe the functional make-up of the nervous system and

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<sup>62</sup> SE XIV, “The Unconscious – Editor’s Note”, 163.

<sup>63</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, “Remarks on evolution and Dissolution”, in *Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson*, Vol 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1958), 84.

<sup>64</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System”, in *Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson*, Vol 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 45-75. This paper makes up the Croonian Lecture.

how, under normal development, unimpeded by illness or injury, the nervous system is put together “in an ascending development in a particular order”.<sup>65</sup> Evolution progresses from “centres comparatively well organised at birth up to those, the highest centres, which are continually organising through life”.<sup>66</sup> The “highest centres” make up the mind – or at least the physiological basis of consciousness, which, according to Hughlings Jackson “are the most complex and the most voluntary”.

If evolution moves from the earliest, simplest, most reflexive, and most resistant, through to the most complex, recent and highest functions, then, according to Hughlings Jackson any illness of the nervous system forces a *dissolution* (or reversal) of the functional hierarchy. Depending on the illness or injury, the dominance of the so-called ‘higher centres’ of the nervous system are usurped by the highest level that remains intact (in much the same way that water will drain to the next most secure vessel). Hughlings Jackson used a parliamentary simile to illustrate his point that the higher nervous functions evolved out of the lower nervous functions, keeping the lower functions in check “just as a government evolves out of a nation and *controls as well as directs* that nation”.<sup>67</sup> In short, pathologies of the nervous system mean the dissolution of higher-level functioning, and a regression back to simpler states that always remain ‘below’.

This ‘last on/first off’ model of evolution and dissolution provided a solid base for Freud’s early thinking. His use of the term ‘regression’ (*Rückbildung*) is encountered for the first time in *On Aphasia* when he outlines his adoption of Hughlings Jackson’s conception of *dissolution*.<sup>68</sup> At this early stage, the

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<sup>65</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution and Dissolution”, 46.

<sup>66</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution and Dissolution”, 46.

<sup>67</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Evolution and Dissolution”, 58. Italics mine.

<sup>68</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 87.



meaning and context of the term ‘regression’ is entirely neurological, relating as it does to the effects of injury to the brain by stroke, trauma, tumour or infection. These effects, generally referred to (and conceived of) as ‘lesions’, are the cause of the impairments of speech and language usage encountered in the condition of *aphasia*. Freud’s acknowledgement of the importance of Hughlings Jackson’s model for his own work is atypically explicit: “In assessing the functions of speech apparatus under pathological conditions we are adopting as a guiding principle Hughlings Jackson’s doctrine that all these modes of reaction represent instances of functional retrogression [*Rückbildung*]”..<sup>69</sup> Freud’s ringing endorsement of Hughlings Jackson’s theory is rare – all other neurologists referred to in *On Aphasia* receive varying degrees of criticism and rejection. No doubt, Hughlings Jackson is granted such favouritism because his framework explains a number of aphasic pathologies for Freud. It is through the mechanism of *retrogression* that these can be accounted for.

Freud’s use of the language of *Rückbildung* in this specifically neurological (and pre-psychoanalytic) sense introduces an interesting problem of translation. In his English rendering of *On Aphasia*, Stengel chooses to translate Freud’s term as “retrogression” in order to distinguish it from the later meaning of the term that emerges in Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), which Stengel then translates as “regression”.<sup>70</sup> Stengel’s decision is understandable as a way of respecting the very different milieu in which Freud was thinking at this earlier period. As has been noted, Hughlings Jackson was very clearly committed to a physiological psychology, and although he would allow the possibility of mental processes functioning independently of underlying physiological states (given his commitment to

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<sup>69</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 87. German emphasis mine.

<sup>70</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, xii.

parallelism), he would go on to express often his view that “our [focus] as medical men is with the body. If there is such a thing as a disease of the mind we can do nothing for it”.<sup>71</sup> For the time being, Freud was happy to embrace this position.

Only a few years after Freud’s work in *On Aphasia*, in his collaborative work with Josef Breuer (1893-95), the adjectival use of ‘retrogression’ is encountered: *Rücklaufig*, i.e., ‘retrogressive’.<sup>72</sup> It is used to describe the cause of hallucinations. As Breuer declares:

[I]t does not seem possible for a healthy person to endow the memory of a physical pain with even the degree of vividness, the distant approximation to the real sensation, which can, after all, be obtained by optical and mnemonic images. Even in the normal hallucinatory state of healthy people which occurs in sleep there are never, I believe, dreams of pain unless a real sensation of pain is present. This ‘retrogressive excitation’ emanating from the organ of memory and acting on the perceptual apparatus by means of ideas, is therefore in the normal course of things still more difficult in the case of pain than in that of visual or auditory sensations.

Here we see the beginnings of a theory that is adopted and expanded upon by Freud in his 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology*<sup>73</sup> In essence, the notion of ‘reversed excitation’ describes that process whereby the organ of memory acts upon the perceptual apparatus – essentially *reversing* the normal processes of perception.

As simple as this extended usage of the word ‘retrogression’ appears, it comes with more nuance than is observed at first glance. In his excellent work on the history of Freud’s concept of regression, Stanley Jackson provides a clearly

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<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Tristram Engelhardt, “John Hughlings Jackson and the Mind-Body Relation. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Summer 1975, 49(2), 147.

<sup>72</sup> SE II, “Theoretical – Breuer: Are All Hysterical Phenomena Ideogenic?” 189.

<sup>73</sup> SE I, see especially, “Part 1, Section 20”, 338-343.

argued case for the development of two forms of regression from this period in Freud's thinking, namely, *temporal* and *topographical* regression.<sup>74</sup> The respective influences of Hughlings Jackson and Josef Breuer can be discerned in this twofold development. It should be noted, however, that this twofold concept of regression did not evolve immediately in Freud's conceptual thinking and that there were considerable twists and turns along the way. However, these complexities are themselves instructive and are now examined.

#### 4.2.3 Temporal Regression

Stanley Jackson locates the point of origin of the psychoanalytic concept of temporal regression within the British evolutionary tradition itself:

The concept of temporal regression is one with a heritage deeply rooted in evolutionary thought, and it was to become inextricably tied up with the whole view of psychoanalysis as a developmental psychology. At all times it functioned with the underlying assumption that there had been a development over time (at least months, usually years) from a simpler, more primitive, less organized stage toward a more complex, more advanced, more organized stage; and it was conceived of as a process which involved the undoing of those accomplishments.<sup>75</sup>

If the psychoanalytic notion of regression has its origins in Hughlings Jackson's category of dissolution, this was (as indicated by Hughlings Jackson himself<sup>76</sup>) itself derived from the work of Herbert Spencer. In his *First Principles*, Spencer explored the notion that change is constant and undertook

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<sup>74</sup> Stanley W. Jackson, "The History of Freud's Concepts of Regression", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 17.3 (July 1969).

<sup>75</sup> Jackson, "Regression", 743-44.

<sup>76</sup> Acknowledgement of Hughlings Jackson's borrowing evidently went both ways. In a 1883 letter to E.L. Youmans, Spencer himself mentions that Hughlings Jackson had borrowed and adapted his concept of dissolution "years ago", and applied it to nervous disorders. The fact that Hughlings Jackson made selective use of Spencer's *dissolution*, using it ontogenetically and not phylogenetically as Spencer himself had done, appears not to have worried Spencer. (David Duncan, *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*, vol 2 (London, Williams and Norgate, 1904), 335.)

the task of formulating a law that concerns itself with “the continuous redistribution of matter and motion”.<sup>77</sup> He would arrive at the notion of a cycle of change which would satisfy his demand for such a law. In the early part of this cycle the process of “integration” (or “growth” in the case of living organisms) predominated; this was followed by a “phase of equilibrium” and then, in the latter stage “disintegration” is predominant.<sup>78</sup> He would eventually rename the phases integration and disintegration “evolution” and “dissolution” respectively.<sup>79</sup> Eventually, Spencer would come to conclude that dissolution “is a disintegration of matter, caused by the reception of additional motion from without”.<sup>80</sup>

Any reading of Spencer’s work will, with his willing engagement of terms like ‘force’, ‘matter’ and ‘motion’, give the reader the impression that his model of thinking owes most to the *physical* sciences. Change is viewed in *mechanical* terms and the similarities with Freud’s own scientific thinking – at least up until the *Project* – are clear. Yet this mechanistic approach would endure throughout Freud’s work, evident even in his later, less popular, metapsychological theorising in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), on the death and sex drives.<sup>81</sup>

In any case, the link between Hughlings Jackson’s concept of dissolution and Freud’s temporal regression is clear. As Freud puts it in *On Aphasia*, “aphasias simply reproduce a state which existed in the course of the normal process of learning to speak”.<sup>82</sup> Further:

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<sup>77</sup> Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (London: Williams and Norgate, 1893), 277.

<sup>78</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, 284.

<sup>79</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, 285.

<sup>80</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, 522.

<sup>81</sup> SE XVIII, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*.

<sup>82</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 42.

[A]ll these modes of reaction represent instances of functional retrogression (dis-involution) of a highly organized apparatus, and therefore correspond to earlier states of its functional development. This means that under all circumstances an arrangement of associations which, having been acquired later, belongs to a higher level of functioning, will be lost, while an earlier and simpler one will be preserved. From this point of view, a great number of aphasic phenomena can be explained.<sup>83</sup>

Hughlings Jackson's notion of 'dissolution' thus takes its place as a key contributor to Freud's understanding of pathological conditions that were to become central to psychoanalytic theory. In his *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1909) Freud cemented the notion of temporal regression (along with fixation and frustration) as the key to understanding pathogenic processes. Using now a more distinctly developmental approach, Freud announces at his Clarke lectures:

There is a dictum in general pathology, Gentlemen, which asserts that every developmental process carries with it the seed of a pathological disposition, insofar as that process might be inhibited, delayed, or may run its course completely.<sup>84</sup>

He then proceeds to give a clear definition of illness, and the role of temporal regression within this:

The flight from unsatisfactory reality into what, on account of the biological damage involved, we call illness (though it is never without an immediate yield of pleasure to the patient) takes place along the path of involution, of regression, of a return to earlier phases of sexual life, phases from which at one time satisfaction was not withheld. This regression appears to be a twofold one: a *temporal* one, insofar as the libido, the erotic needs, hark back to stages of development that are earlier in time; and a *formal* one, in that the original and primitive

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<sup>83</sup> Freud, *On Aphasia*, 87.

<sup>84</sup> *SE XI*, "Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Lecture Four", 45.

methods of psychical expression are employed in manifesting those needs.<sup>85</sup>

A few years later, in a later 1914 insertion into his text of his “The Interpretation of Dreams”, Freud provided further elaboration concerning the three distinct senses of regression, all three elements of which are understood to occur at the same time”.<sup>86</sup> *Topographical* regression is a systems-based view of mental functioning that sees the mind as two parts: the *repressed* (equated quite simply with ‘the system unconscious’) and the *repressing* (likewise equated, in simple terms, with ‘the system conscious’). *Temporal* regression (as discussed above) harks back to “older psychic structures”. Finally, *formal* regression is where “primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual one”. Freud states that the temporal and formal views of regression apply not just to the interpretation of dreams but also to the understanding of psychoneurosis. Regression takes the dreamer back to his/her earliest condition; so early, in fact, that it may be that the door to the phylogenetic realm may be knocked upon. Here Freud makes a link between the British and the Germanic roots of his thought as he quotes Nietzsche’s assertion that “in dreams some primeval relic of humanity is at work which we can now scarcely reach any longer by a direct path”.<sup>87</sup> And thus the evolution is complete: from its early sources in the thought of Hughlings Jackson, Spencer (and other British neurologists), the concept of *Rückbildung* has developed into the psychoanalytic theory of regression.

#### **4.2.4 Topographical Regression and the Hobbesian Inheritance**

Freud’s conception of topographical regression calls for further analysis. On one hand, *time* is the central feature of the psychoanalytic notion of *temporal*

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<sup>85</sup> SE XI, “Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis: Lecture Five”, 9. Italics in original.

<sup>86</sup> SE V, “The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: Regression”, 548.

<sup>87</sup> SE V, “The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: Regression”, 549.

regression, for it is in this medium that prior events of infancy and childhood are woven into the developing psychology of the individual. On the other hand, while topographical regression assumes the necessity of time, it is primarily a matter of *spatial* relation. As Stanley Jackson puts it: topographical regression “emphasises the retracing of a pathway ... in a hypothetical psychical apparatus”.<sup>88</sup>

The logic of topographical regression is already present in the *Project*, albeit on the basis of a physicalist model of human mental functioning. Here Freud borrows Breuer’s model for the explanation of hallucination and expands on it by using a ‘reflexive arc’ model.<sup>89</sup> Freud proposes that in normal waking life a ‘current’ is transmitted through a system of ‘permeable neurones’ through to motor discharge via the muscular system. However, when asleep, these same permeable neurones allow the current to flow in reverse, and thus become ‘retrogressively cathected’.<sup>90</sup> This, Freud would claim, is how we come to have dreams and hallucinations.

There is, though, another source for Freud’s thinking at this point, at least as it develops between *The Project* and a telling footnote he adds in 1914 to the text of his *The Interpretation of Dreams*.<sup>91</sup> In another compelling reference to the distinctive British empirical philosophical influence on his thought, Freud quotes Thomas Hobbes, claiming him as one of the early advocates for this theory: “In sum, our dreams are the reverse of our waking imaginations, the

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<sup>88</sup> Jackson, “Regression”, 777.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 1 above for a detailed account of the 5 models used throughout his career to map the human psyche.

<sup>90</sup> SE I, “Project for a Scientific Psychology: The Analysis of Dreams”, 339.

<sup>91</sup> SE V, “The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: Regression”, 542.

motion, when we are awake, beginning at one end, and when we dream at another".<sup>92</sup>

This short quotation is interesting enough in its own right. However, it is only when the full context of this little quote is considered, that the profundity of Freud's recognition of his own theory of topographical regression as it pertains to dreaming in one of the seminal early thinkers of the British tradition, is revealed.

In this passage Hobbes first makes reference to *imagination*, which he describes as a "*decaying sense*, and is found in men, and many other living creatures, as well sleeping as waking"; or again: "After the sight or sense of any object imagination is essentially the faded version thereof"<sup>93</sup> In Hobbes' view then (as seen in the previous chapter), imagination and memory are the same thing, being pale versions of the original sense impression and differentiated only, in Hobbes' understanding, by seeing imagination as the content of the memory and memory as the decaying process itself. However, the significant point in Hobbes' understanding of imagination and memory is that the motion that generates them is from *without*, i.e. it is an external stimulus. The flow of motion is inwards.

Hobbes then declares:

The imaginations of them that sleep are those we call dreams. And these also, as all other imaginations, have been before, either totally or by parcels, in the sense. And because in sense, the brain and nerves, which are the necessary organs of sense, are so benumbed in sleep, as not easily to be moved by the action of external objects, there can happen in sleep no imagination, and therefore no dream, but what proceeds from the agitation of the inward parts of man's body; which

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Vol 3 ed W Molesworth (London, John Bohn: 1839), 8.

<sup>93</sup> Hobbes, Vol 3, 4 – 5, Italics in original.



inward parts, for the connexion they have with the brain, and other organs, when they be distempered, do keep the same in motion; whereby the imaginations there formerly made, appear as if a man were waking; saving that the organs of sense being now benumbed, so as there is no new object, which can master and obscure them with a more vigorous impression, a dream must needs be more clear, in this silence of sense, than our waking thoughts. And hence it cometh to pass, that it is a hard matter, and by many thought impossible, to distinguish exactly between sense and dreaming.<sup>94</sup>

If the motion that generates imagination and memory is from *without*, via an external stimulus, the motion for dreams actually begins from *within*. So, for example, imagination and memories have their origin in the sense (experience) of some external object, e.g. the poster we have viewed of a sunny holiday on some tropical island. The physical effect (and, as shall be seen momentarily, Hobbes is a physicalist) is perhaps a warm feeling. For Hobbes this would have been the literal warming of some bodily organ, and for the sake of example we might see this as the heart. In sleeping it is the (literal) warmth of this organ that will cause dreams of tropical islands. This is a physical effect and, importantly when referencing Freud's view of dreams, the motion (effect) comes from within, then moving in an outwards direction:

And seeing dreams are caused by the distemper of some of the inward parts of the body, divers distempers must needs cause different dreams. And hence it is that lying cold breedeth dreams of fear, and raiseth the thought and image of some fearful object, the motion from the brain to the inner parts and from the inner parts to the brain being reciprocal; and that as anger causeth heat in some parts of the body when we are awake, so when we sleep the overheating of the same parts causeth anger, and raiseth up in the brain the imagination of an enemy.

It is on the basis of this reasoning (filled also with further examples), that Hobbes concludes with the words that Freud quotes: "In sum, our dreams are

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<sup>94</sup> Hobbes, Vol 3, 7-8.

the reverse of our waking imaginations; the motion when we are awake beginning at one end, and when we dream at another".<sup>95</sup>

Hobbes' view of dreams is further developed in his "Of Sense and Animal Motion", where he seeks to describe the causes of sense (perception)".<sup>96</sup>

Descriptions of the nature of dreams, along with imagination and illusion, are then overlaid on this description. For Hobbes, "*SENSE is a phantasm [impression], made by the reaction and endeavour [motion<sup>97</sup>] outwards of the organ of sense, caused by an endeavour [motion] inwards from the object, remaining for some time more or less*".<sup>98</sup> In one sense, Hobbes' theory of perception is comparable to some aspects of the ancient/medieval notion of passive/active intellect. However, the physicalist nature of his account lies in the meaning of Hobbes' concept of motion, and in particular "animal motion".

*Animal Motion* is 'voluntary' motion, by which Hobbes appears to refer to a freedom on the part of the 'sentient' (i.e. the person or creature doing the sensing or perceiving) to respond to the sensations. Whether such responses are reflexive (i.e., requiring no cognitive intervention) or responsive (i.e., resulting from some sort of intentional cognitive decision) does not seem to be of interest (as per the "embryo" example below). Hobbes also distinguishes *animal motion* from '*vital motion*', a term he uses to describe the circulatory system of human beings. He provides no reason why this should be so, but an implicit parallelism is evident at this point. He then proceeds to describe animal motion as "the very first endeavour (motion), found even in the embryo; which while it is in the womb, moveth its limbs with voluntary

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<sup>95</sup> Hobbes, Vol 3, 7-8.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Vol 1 ed W Molesworth (London, John Bohn: 1839), 387 – 410.

<sup>97</sup> Hobbes, Vol 1, 389. Italics mine.

<sup>98</sup> Hobbes, Vol 1, 391. Capitals and italics in original.

motion, for the avoiding of whatsoever troubleth it, or for the pursuing of what pleaseth it".<sup>99</sup> Animal motion, when drawn to something that by experience is known to be pleasant, is called appetite; and when something is shunned is called aversion. Finally, to complete his physicalist view of sense, Hobbes introduces the notion of *animal spirits*, which give an explanation of just how animal motion is translated into actual physical muscular activity:

Consequent to this first endeavour [presumably in the embryo] is the impulsion into the nerves and retraction again of animal spirits, of which it is necessary there be some receptacle or place near the original of the nerves; and this motion or endeavour is followed by the swelling and relaxation of the muscles; and lastly, these are followed by contraction and extension for the limbs, which is animal motion.<sup>100</sup>

The essentially energetic (albeit crudely mechanical) nature of Hobbes' view of sense perception is striking here. The "animal spirits" appear to be some sort of energy – in a time when the concept of *invisible* energy would not have been familiar. These spirits/energy impact physically upon the muscular system by way of movement through the nervous system – starting from some sort of "receptacle" where the nervous system commences.

In exploring Freud's *topographical regression*, we see significant resonances with the Hobbesian concepts just explored, a link that Freud himself explicitly invites via his inserted quotations from this Hobbesian text. Freud's concept relies on the direction of energetic flow, and it is the change of direction which provides the basis for understanding the psychoanalytic idea of *regression*. Both Freud's *cathected energy* and Hobbes *motion* are physical in nature even if they sought different ways to explain this: Freud used an invisible electricity-

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<sup>99</sup> Hobbes, Vol 1, 407.

<sup>100</sup> Hobbes, Vol 1, 408. Brackets mine.

like concept and Hobbes a more mechanical one undergirded by "animal spirits" which appear to have the quality of invisible energy about them.

Freud's *Pleasure Principle*— his governing principle of pleasure and pain — also finds significant echoes in Hobbes' theory of sense. For Hobbes, "the heart ... must necessarily make some alteration or diversion of vital motion, namely, by quickening or slackening, helping or hindering the same. Now when it helpeth, it is pleasure; and when it hindereth, it is pain, trouble, grief, etc." <sup>101</sup> Similarly, for Freud, the whole system of the psyche is almost entirely orientated toward the avoidance of pain (i.e., increased levels of excitation) and the attainment of pleasure (i.e., reduced excitation). Thus, whether it be understood as control over quantitative levels of *motion* (Hobbes) or *excitation* (Freud), the result is an essentially mechanical/energetic understanding of the sentient creature.

Clearly then, even allowing for their different vocabularies and scientific outlooks, and even when making allowances for the caution of their parallelist proclivities, both Freud and Hughlings Jackson stand in the Hobbesian physicalist tradition in their understandings of the human being. This is true even of Freud's later writings as has been observed by Peter Gay who notes a different sense of Freud's drawing on the Hobbesian tradition through the notion of the civilisational significance of the *delaying* of the mechanical reflex:

The Freud of *Civilisation and its Discontents* was writing in a Hobbesian tradition: the momentous step into culture had come when the community took power, when individuals eschewed the right to take violence into their own hands. The man who first flung an epithet at

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<sup>101</sup> Hobbes, Vol 1, 406.

his enemy instead of a spear, Freud once observed, was the true founder of civilisation.<sup>102</sup>

If by 1920 Freud was moved to comment that by his notion of the death instinct he seems to have “unwittingly steered [his] course into the harbour of Schopenhauer’s philosophy”, might he not have made a similar – and perhaps even more pertinent – observation concerning the Hobbesian waters into which his foundational energetic conception of the psyche had long ago led him?

Although Freud never completely abandoned his energetic model of the human psyche, he did, as has been stated, move away from *the Project* and its ultimately limited means of accounting for the growing amount of data that he accrued in clinical practice. Although the energetic term ‘excitation’ did not completely disappear from Freud’s writings,<sup>103</sup> it was replaced increasingly by terms such as “wish” and “impulse”. Stanley Jackson manages to distil this complex development of language for topographic regression as follows:

[I]t might be said that wishes, or impulses, came to be thought of as moving in a progressive direction to become manifested as thoughts; and this type of regression came to be thought of as involving a movement backward until wishes, or impulses, became transformed from thoughts back into images, and then a further movement backward to stimulate the perceptual apparatus in such a way that hallucinations or dreams are produced”.<sup>104</sup>

Be that as it may, always closely linked to Freud’s topographic model of the mind, *topographic* regression would, as a concept, be overshadowed by the concept of *temporal* regression in his later thinking.

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<sup>102</sup> Gay, *Freud*, 546.

<sup>103</sup> See *SE XVIII*, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” as an example of Freud’s enduring usage of the energetic model. Note, too, its more theoretical application.

<sup>104</sup> Jackson, “Regression”, 774.

#### 4.2.5 From Passive to Active Unconscious

Between 1891 and 1915, developing conceptions of regression in Freudian thought (understood in temporal, formal and topographic dimensions) had the effect of forcing an elaborated and deepened sense of the meaning and operation of the 'system unconscious'. What is it that is repressed but then revealed in regression? What is the status of repressed content? What of the dynamics of the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious? In short: how is the topography of mind to be understood in a holistic way?

If the influence of John Hughlings Jackson was very evident in *On Aphasia*, this is less the case with *Studies on Hysteria* (1894) which Freud co-wrote with Joseph Breuer. Nonetheless, it is here that a recognisable properly psychoanalytic use of the term 'the unconscious' (*das Unbewusste*) is found, arguably, for the first time. Somewhat ironically, this paper is Breuer's *Fraulein Anna O* (1893). The concept of the unconscious is not elaborated upon by Breuer in any detail, other than to imply that "the secondary state" of Anna O (i.e., her hysterical symptoms) impacted on her consciousness when they "were acting as a stimulus 'in the unconscious'".<sup>105</sup>

This minimalist view of the unconscious should come as no surprise as it is evident that Breuer's basic assumptions about the unconscious were strongly influenced by the assertion of Theodore Meynert (1833-92) that stronger ideas inhibit weaker ones. Thus, Breuer declares, "As a rule, when the intensity of an unconscious idea increases it enters consciousness, ipso facto. Only when its intensity is slight does it remain unconscious".<sup>106</sup> As one commentator

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<sup>105</sup> SE II, "Fräulein Anna O", 45.n.1. Strachey notes that Breuer places the term in quotation marks, and suggests that this may indicate his intention to attribute this term to Freud (Note 1). Freud uses the term *Unterbewusst* ('subconscious') in a footnote on page 69, and Breuer uses this term a number of times in *Hysteria*. Freud later rejected this term in favour of 'unconscious' (see "The Unconscious", SE XIV).

<sup>106</sup> SE II, 223

notes, Breuer thought that the hysterical symptom “drains excitation from a traumatic idea into itself, leaving the idea or memory weak and therefore unconscious”.<sup>107</sup> In a sense, Breuer’s notion of the unconscious (uncontested by Freud in his collaborative work with Breuer) was something of a holding pen for ideas until they were “excited” – and if this were the case then they would be made known to the conscious because the ‘holding pen’ had the power only to contain only *weaker* ideas.<sup>108</sup>

However, no sooner had Freud completed his collaborative work with Breuer than he embarked upon his ambitious *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895).<sup>109</sup> Whilst many would argue that this work itself reflects the influence of Brücke and Meynert and that it continues the model established by Breuer, there is a telling passage in *A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-analysis* (1912) which appears to indicate Freud was soon moving toward a more active model of the unconscious, and was breaking quite clearly with the assumptions underpinning Breuer’s presentation. Accordingly, that which is not conscious needs to be understood in a more complex and dynamic sense:

We were accustomed to think that every latent idea was so because it was weak and that it grew conscious as soon as it became strong. We have now gained the conviction that there are some latent ideas which do not penetrate into consciousness, however strong they may have become. Therefore we may call the latent ideas of the first *foreconscious* [*Vorbewusst*], while we preserve the term *unconscious* (proper) for the latter type which we came to study in the neuroses. The term *unconscious*, which was used in the purely descriptive sense before [i.e. during his collaboration with Breuer], now comes to imply something

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<sup>107</sup> S P Fullinwider, “Sigmund Freud, John Hughlings Jackson, and Speech”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44:1 (Jan – Mar 1983): 153.

<sup>108</sup> It can be further noted that the abstract notion of *the unconscious* per se does not hold interest for Breuer, so much as what may be described as his two-states-of-consciousness model that he advances in his work with Fräulein Anna O. The one state of consciousness is used to describe the patient when she is “normal psychically” (*SE II*, 45.) and the second state of consciousness is used to describe the patient’s self-declared “bad self”, (*SE II*, 46.)

<sup>109</sup> *SE I*.

more. It designates not only latent ideas in general, but especially ideas with a certain dynamic character, ideas keeping apart from consciousness in spite of their intensity and activity.<sup>110</sup>

This mature reflection on Freud's part on the dynamism of the unconscious allows for two types of latent idea: those that pass into the *preconscious* (initially termed the *foreconscious*) and those, that despite their intensity, are retained within the unconscious.

What, it might be asked, have been the grounds for this theoretical shift or innovation in Freud's thought? One intriguing suggestion is that the alternative was already available to him in terms of the Hughlings Jackson model that Freud had already employed in *On Aphasia*. For it is that model which sees certain activities as "normal" for the different functional levels of the nervous system. On that basis, it is just a short step to see certain characteristics, and thus dynamics, as 'normal' for the unconscious. If the unconscious is itself a functional level, there is no reason why it would not have certain kinds of content proper to it that would remain as latent ideas not ordinarily present to the preconscious despite their energised state. But on the other hand, as revealed by cases of regression in which complex conscious operations can break down, the unconscious would also need to be seen as an active constituent element of the overall psychic system - and not simply as a passive reservoir for energetically weak mental content. The unconscious thus emerges in its own right as an active player in mental operations.

On this account, the unconscious would have its own character and dynamics, and these would be both discernible (as noted in the studies of neuroses) as well as "normal". To this extent, amongst many other influences,

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<sup>110</sup> SE XII, "A Note on the Unconscious", 262. Italics in original. Strachey notes that from 1925 the English translation of *Vorbewusst* 'foreconscious' became 'preconscious' and remained the favoured translation of thereafter.



the early psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious can be seen as an unfolding of the basic principles of the Hughlings Jackson inheritance.

#### **4.2.6 Dream, Illusions and Hallucinations**

On the basis of this new active and dynamic account of the unconscious, a radical new way of viewing dreams and hallucinations emerges. Originally Freud's views on both phenomena followed Meynert's assertion that these represented a *malfunction* of 'cortical associations'. Hughlings Jackson's model, however, asserted quite clearly that dreams and the ideations of the mentally ill were merely representations of a lower level of mental functioning – and that they were *normal* at that level. To quote Hughlings Jackson:

'To undergo dissolution' [read regression] is rigidly the equivalent of the statement, 'to be reduced to a lower level of evolution'. In more detail: loss of the least organised, most complex, and most voluntary, implies the retention of the more organised, less complex, and the more automatic. Disease is said to 'cause' the symptoms of insanity. I submit that disease only produces negative mental symptoms answering to the dissolution, and that all elaborate positive mental symptoms (illusions, hallucinations, delusions, and extravagant conduct) are the outcome of activity of nervous elements untouched by any pathological process; that they arise during activity on the lower level of evolution remaining.<sup>111</sup>

For Hughlings Jackson, then, such psychopathological phenomena are not caused by disease directly. Rather they are manifestations of normal processes in lower levels of psychic functioning which the disease – by virtue of 'dissolution' – now reveals. The disease is not the cause of the pathological

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<sup>111</sup> Hughlings Jackson, *Selected Writings*, Vol 2, 46. Speech marks and brackets in original. This excerpt from the 'Croonian Lectures', originally produced in *The Lancet*, 1884. This paper is considered to be the mature thinking of Hughlings Jackson.

symptoms; it is simply what 'lifts the lid' on the normal functioning of the primitive realms of the psyche that are always already there.

In an earlier paper titled *Remarks on Dissolution of the Nervous System as Exemplified by certain Post-Epileptic Conditions*, Hughlings Jackson elaborates further upon his foundational theory of dissolution and how it helps explain the nature of dreams, hallucinations, and other such phenomena.. In doing so he insists that “*all symptomatic conditions*” need to be understood in both their negative and positive elements, and – in the context of post-epileptic symptomology – he insists that negative elements are described both *physically* and *psychically*.<sup>112</sup> Physically, the *negative element* is seen as the dissolution effect caused by the epilepsy itself, and therefore the loss of the least organised and continually organised elements of the higher nervous centres. There is also a loss of the most special and complex sensori-motor arrangements in anatomical terms. However, the *positive element* can be seen, physically, in “the activity of lower nervous arrangements, which are, except for over-activity, healthy”.<sup>113</sup> This layered functional model of the nervous system builds in the survival of lower levels of functioning (in terms of the nervous system) when the higher levels are impeded. What is then seen is ‘normal’ for that level, insofar as the process of dissolution does not entail the wholesale destruction of the complete nervous system, but rather a peeling back, layer by layer, of the functioning system.

Almost incidentally, Hughlings Jackson then employs the “positive and negative element duplex model” to describe sleep and dreaming. In terms of the processes of dissolution (regression), sleep is normal, and a dream is

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<sup>112</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, “Remarks on the Dissolution of the Nervous System as Exemplified by certain Post-Epileptic conditions”, in *Selected Writings*, Vol 2, 17. Original article printed in *Medical Press and Circular*, Vol I, 329. 1881.

<sup>113</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Remarks”, 16.

considered to be analogous to the positive element. *Ipsa facto*, dreams are normal for the state of sleeping because they are normally generated at the level concerned.

Likewise, Hughlings Jackson ascribes to illusions the same 'positive element'. Of course, not wishing to appear pedantic, he agrees in a generalised way with the clinical conclusion that cerebral atrophy is the cause of a patient's illusion. But using his positive/negative element duplex model, he insists on going deeper. Whilst atrophied nerve tissue might be deemed the negative element in such an example, the positive element is present as well – if not often lost in clinical diagnoses. But, Hughlings Jackson maintains:

Atrophied nerve tissue is not nerve tissue at all, it is functionally just nothing, and cannot be the cause of anything positive; the *positive mental symptoms*, the *illusions*, arise during activity induced in non-atrophic, in healthy, nervous elements of what is left of the patient.<sup>114</sup>

On the matter of hallucinations, Hughlings Jackson declares that they are "illusions, arising from external conditions".<sup>115</sup> Just as, say, a dream of a silver spoon stuck in the throat might be attributed (when awake) to an actual sore throat, so likewise a hallucination is the positive element at work in a lower nervous centre: i.e. an indication that one (lower) nervous centre is working normally, even when higher centres are not.

All of this is highly instructive for understanding Freud's emerging understanding of such psychopathologies. The break through comes when pathologies are understood not just in the sense of topological regression (the repressed unconscious and the repressing conscious), but in a temporal sense in which the unconscious can episodically return through regression when induced by factors pertaining at the time. As Stanley Jackson has indicated,

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<sup>114</sup> Hughlings Jackson, "Remarks", 24. Italics mine.

<sup>115</sup> Hughlings Jackson, "Remarks", 25.

the way this is enacted in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), points to a connection between Hughlings Jackson's 'positive element' and 'dissolution' and Freud's topographical and temporal regression. Whereas the phenomenon of hallucinatory wish fulfillment had hitherto been understood in terms of topographical regression, something new emerges when Freud introduces a temporal and human developmental element into the picture. Freud now views this phenomenon as "typical of human mental functioning at an early age and as occurring only under special circumstances (i.e., dreams, psychoses) in later years. Consequently, "he [Freud] now conceived of the hallucinatory revival of perceptual images as both a regression from thoughts to imagery and a regression to an earlier mode of mental functioning. That is, the same phenomenon involved both topographical and temporal regression".<sup>116</sup>

In this revolutionary move – partially inspired, it would seem, by key ideas in Hughlings Jackson's work – dreams and hallucinations are no longer seen as pathological *variations* on the normal, but as normal and ubiquitous operations of the psyche, albeit ones usually covered over by higher levels of psychic functioning. A major piece of the psychoanalytic understanding of the human being had thereby fallen into place, and with it a guiding principle for a range of clinical therapeutic techniques and practices.

#### **4.2.7 Language and Speech as Therapeutic**

As already noted, psychoanalysis is often referred to as 'the talking cure'<sup>117</sup> and this goes some way to underscore the significance of the spoken word in psychoanalysis in general. From the beginning (or at least from *On Aphasia*),

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<sup>116</sup> Jackson, "History of Freud's Concepts of Regression", 752.

<sup>117</sup> It was one of Breuer's patients who christened the early modes of treatment as "The Talking Cure", see *SE XI*, 13.

the spoken word held great significance for Freud and, as we have seen above, it is the work of Hughlings Jackson which enabled the development of this key element. For Hughlings Jackson *the spoken* or *the propositional* is the most evolved of the functional levels. It is more accurate to use his actual terminology: the highest level in his functional model is the ability to “propositionise”, by which he means the ability to use words in such a way that a new meaning is achieved. So, for example, loss of speech through aphasia might mean an individual can still say “yes” or “no” but these words are often uttered without context or meaning. For Hughlings Jackson, “the loss of speech is therefore the loss of the power to propositionise”<sup>118</sup> Even if words can still be uttered, they are not necessarily to be considered speech *per se*. At this point he reasserts his parallelist doctrine, including the insistence that the physical and psychological realms must never be mistaken for each other. “We must ...carefully distinguish between words and their physical bases, as we do betwixt colour and its physical basis”.<sup>119</sup> Yet, through his physiological/psychological parallelism, Hughlings Jackson clearly places the spoken word, the propositional, as the crown of his neurological model.

With the exception of the collaborative *Studies On Hysteria* (1893-1895), Freud never departs from this basic Hughlings Jacksonian insight. Picking up this thread in *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud maintains not that memories become conscious by means of an increase of excitation, but rather that “this purpose is fulfilled by *speech association*”.<sup>120</sup> In short, memories only become conscious when they are associated with a word or words.

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<sup>118</sup> John Hughlings Jackson, “Speech Affectations from Brain Disease”. in *Selected Writings of John Hughlings Jackson*, Vol 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 160.

<sup>119</sup> Hughlings Jackson, “Speech Affectations”, 162.

<sup>120</sup> *SE* 1, 365.

It is in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), that Freud identifies the role of speech in linking the preconscious with the conscious, and thus to produce meaning. The preconscious needs to have something that attracts consciousness, and it is speech that performs this task, or more, accurately, memories and associations attached to words. Rather than relying on the pleasure/unpleasure principle (which is too broad-brushed for the point he is making), Freud turns to speech in order to understand its specific fine-tuned role in this respect. The role of speech is to bestow *qualitative* meaning on what is for Freud merely *quantitative* thought processes. Thought processes are quantitative in that they relate only to flow or impeded flow: i.e. pleasure/unpleasure. As Freud puts it:

Thought-processes are in themselves without quality, except for pleasurable and unpleasurable excitations that accompany them ... [I]n order that thought-processes may acquire quality, they are associated in human beings with verbal memories, whose residues of quality are sufficient to draw the attention of consciousness to them in order to endow the process of thinking with a new mobile cathexis from consciousness.<sup>121</sup>

Consciousness can receive excitations from both the perceptual system (sight, sound, touch etc) and from pleasure and unpleasure (psychical processes regulating cathected energy), and speech, by virtue of its relationship-enabling role with the preconscious, is now “the second of *two* sensory surfaces, one directed towards perception and the other towards the preconscious thought processes”.<sup>122</sup> In an explanatory footnote added to the text of *The Interpretation of Dreams* much later in 1925, Freud provides a fascinating gloss to this passage using terminology much more consistent with his later thinking, to interpret this 1900 text. He reports that “[i]t became necessary to elaborate and modify this view after it was recognised that the

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<sup>121</sup> SE V, “The Unconscious and Consciousness”, 617.

<sup>122</sup> SE V, “The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: The Function of Dreams”, 574.

essential feature of a preconscious idea was the fact of it being connected with the residues of verbal representations".<sup>123</sup> In effect, Freud's shift from a topographical model of the working of the unconscious/conscious to a temporal dynamic one, facilitated by the therapeutic role of words, would span most of his writing career. In 1900 Freud states "What we are doing here is once again to replace a topographical way of representing things by a dynamic one. What we regard as mobile is not the psychical structure itself but its innervation".<sup>124</sup> From this point, by elaboration and modification, Freud's appreciation of the pivotal role of 'the word' in psychoanalytic theory would be abundantly evident.

In 1911 in his *Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, Freud again asserts that the role of verbal residues is to provide thinking with qualities that make what is essentially an unconscious act accessible to consciousness. Thus, he says: "It is probable that thinking was originally unconscious, insofar as it went beyond ideational presentations and was directed to the relations of impressions between two objects, and that it did not acquire further qualities perceptible to consciousness until it became connected with verbal residues".<sup>125</sup>

By 1915 Freud had come to see words as playing an important role when dealing with repression. He draws a useful distinction between a conscious presentation and an unconscious presentation on the basis of the fact that the former has a word attached to it the latter has not. Freud concludes that "[a] presentation which is not put into words, or a psychical act which is not hypercatheted, remains thereafter in the *Ucs* in a state of repression".<sup>126</sup> He

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<sup>123</sup> SE V, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: The Unconscious and Consciousness – Reality", 611, n 1.

<sup>124</sup> SE V, "The Psychology of the Dream-Processes: The Unconscious and Consciousness – Reality", 610-11.

<sup>125</sup> SE XII, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning", 221.

<sup>126</sup> SE XIV, "The Unconscious: Assessment of the Unconscious", 201-2

also illustrates this with the case of psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia where "cathexis of the word-presentation ... represents the first attempts at recovery or cure". The issue of meaningful speech acts "conspicuously dominate the clinical picture of schizophrenia"<sup>127</sup>

This same insight is repeated often in the coming years. For example, in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) Freud poses the question: "How does a thing become conscious?" He immediately rephrases this and asks, "How does a thing become preconscious?" The answer, now predictable, is: "Through becoming connected with word-presentations corresponding to it".<sup>128</sup> He then elaborates:

Verbal residues are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system *Pcs.* has, as it were, a special sensory source. The visual components of word-representations are secondary, acquired through reading ... In essence a word is after all the mnemonic residue of a word that has been *heard*".<sup>129</sup>

By identifying *hearing* as a key perceptual apparatus for deriving word presentation, Freud has brought together the *physiological* (i.e. process of hearing) with a *psychological* effect (word-presentation). Of course, the meaning of 'psychological' here – whether it is inflected toward the physiological or the metaphysical – is ambiguous. Freud (perhaps like Hughlings Jackson himself) might be best understood as an uncommitted parallelist in this respect, even if the suspicion of a subtle physiological reductionism seems justified at various points.

In any case, it is striking that more than thirty years after *On Aphasia*, the basic insight of the seminal role played by speech of breaching the frontier of

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<sup>127</sup> SE XIV, "The Unconscious: Assessment of the Unconscious", 203-4.

<sup>128</sup> SE XIX, "The Ego and the Id", 20.

<sup>129</sup> SE XIX, "The Ego and the Id", 20-1. Italics mine.



consciousness – an idea developed through the extensive clues provided by John Hughlings Jackson – continued to deeply animate Freud’s thinking.

### **4.3 Hypnotherapy and Anthropology: The Anglo-Scottish Origins of Transference Theory**

There are other Freudian concepts that reveal their relationship to the Anglo-Scottish tradition-line’. *The transference* is one such example, and as with all of Freud’s key concepts, its meaning and significance for Freud continued to evolve throughout his career. This, combined with the formidable complexity and contested nature of the phenomenon of transference as such, makes the identification of its pre-psychoanalytic origin(s) a difficult task. This is especially the case in view of the striking lack of discussion in scholarly circles about the origin of this central concept in psychoanalytic theory and practice.

The focus in this section is not so much on transference as the essential terrain within which clinical treatment takes place, but rather with the very concept of transference *per se*, as a phenomenon and modality of the human psychic system. As such, it is considered a pervasive method by which the psyche looks to actualise unconscious desires through the medium of an intimate relationship with a particular object. Part of the difficulty of defining the term beyond that is the sheer pervasiveness of the concept in psychoanalytic literature (and perhaps its over-extension in some circumstances).

#### **4.3.1 The Development of the Concept of Transference in Freud’s Writings**

To the extent that there has been scholarly investigation into the history, or pre-history, of the psychoanalytic understanding of transference, opinion is rather mixed between those who see Freud as the radical originator of the concept, and those who would read Freud’s concept as being made possible in certain respects by nineteenth century precursors.

At one end of the spectrum of this continuum is the work of Leon Chertok, whose 1984 paper on this topic takes the view that Freud's notion of the transference owes practically no debt at all to prior influences.<sup>130</sup> Here he declares that "[i]t is possible to assert today, with some degree of assurance, that the discovery of the transference was Freud's first major discovery, and that which opened the way for the series of further, now well-known, discoveries which he was to make".<sup>131</sup> In Chertok's eyes at least, it is clear that Freud 'discovered' the transference at a clearly defined point in time, viz., sometime in the first half of 1892:<sup>132</sup>

One day I had an experience which showed me in the crudest light what I had long suspected. It related to one of my most acquiescent patients, with whom hypnotism had enabled me to bring about the most marvellous results, and whom I was engaged in relieving of her suffering by tracing back her attacks of pain to their origins. As she woke up on one occasion, she threw her arms round my neck ... I was modest enough not to attribute the event to my own irresistible personal attraction, and I felt that I had now grasped the nature of the mysterious element that was at work behind hypnotism. In order to exclude it, or at all events to isolate it, it was necessary to abandon hypnotism".<sup>133</sup>

Chertok argues that, from this point, by resisting his patient's view of himself Freud was "envisaging the existence of a third figure, interposed between the patient and himself". Furthermore, he goes on to make the bold assertion that "this may justifiably be regarded as the starting point of the concept of the transference".<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Leon Chertok, "Hypnosis and Suggestion in a Century of Psychotherapy: An Epistemological Assessment", *Journal of American Academic Psychoanalysis* 12.2 (1984): 211-232.

<sup>131</sup> Chertok, "Hypnosis", 220.

<sup>132</sup> Chertok, "Hypnosis", 221.

<sup>133</sup> *SE XX*, "An Autobiographical Study", 27.

<sup>134</sup> Chertok, "Hypnosis", 222.

There are some important difficulties with this assertion, however. First, Chertok's reference to 'a third figure' in Freud's work is not referenced anywhere else in Freud's writing. It may be that Chertok is mistaking a later-developed psychoanalytic technique (designed to help psychoanalysts understand how to respond to the transference in practice) for the origins of the idea of the transference itself. Second, there is an uncritical acceptance of Freud's claim concerning the abandonment of hypnosis and the neat coincidence of the appearance of the transference-like self-awareness. Most problematic of all, however, is the actual textual evidence in Freud's own writings that would point to a very different – and much more gradual – story concerning the origins of what would become the central psychoanalytic notion of transference.

If, as LaPlanche suggests, there are two fundamental elements to the transference in psychoanalysis –the "actualisation of the past" and "displacement onto the person of the analyst"<sup>135</sup> – then Freud's views on just how each of these elements worked (together and individually) evolved with his experiences. As Rycroft reminds us, in his early work Freud saw the transference as "a regrettable phenomenon which interfered with the recovery of repressed memories and disturbed the patient's objectivity".<sup>136</sup> His understanding of its positive therapeutic significance seems to have grown slowly. An initial dawning of interest is found in his case study titled *A Case of Hysteria*, in which Freud presents an account of his treatment of an eighteen-year old girl he calls Dora, for a period of three months, commencing October 1901. Here Freud spells out his early understanding of the role of the transference in analysis:

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<sup>135</sup> LaPlanche, *Language*, 461.

<sup>136</sup> Charles Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, London, 1995. 185

What are transferences? They are new editions or facsimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the process of analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is the characteristic of their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way: a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment.<sup>137</sup>

Freud goes on to state his conviction that “psycho-analysis does not *create* transferences, it merely brings them to light”.<sup>138</sup> But in the case of Dora, Freud admits that he “did not succeed in mastering the transference in good time”.<sup>139</sup> It is not clear in his conclusion to this paper as to how critical he thought the question of interpretation of the transference was to the success (or otherwise) of his work with Dora,<sup>140</sup> or indeed for psychoanalytic therapy in general.

However, by the time of his writing various papers on clinical technique a decade later (1911-13), Freud had clearly come to see transference as an essential clinical tool for the progress of psychoanalytic treatment, and consequently he was able to give a much more considered and theoretical view of the role of transference.<sup>141</sup> Famously, in his 1912 paper *The Dynamics of Transference*, he comments that “[f]inally, every conflict has to be fought out in the sphere of transference”.<sup>142</sup> Even though it was a form of resistance to therapy, transference also gives access to the unconscious (in this sense, like

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<sup>137</sup> SE, VII, “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria: Postscript”, 116. Note: Although this paper appears in Vol VII it should, as editors suggest, have been included in the Vol I (since it was written in 1901.) This is useful in dating the evolution of the transference concept.

<sup>138</sup> SE VII, “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria: Postscript”, 117. Emphasis in original.

<sup>139</sup> SE VII, “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria: Postscript”, 118.

<sup>140</sup> As is well known, the therapy ended abruptly following Freud’s suggestion of Dora’s implication in the events she reported.

<sup>141</sup> SE XII, “The Dynamics of Transference”, 99.

<sup>142</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 104.

regression), and thus to the psychic disturbances that are the root of the neurosis. In terms of clinical strategy, transference should be viewed as a playing out of the neurosis in real time, thus allowing it to be analysed and interpreted, *named through speech* (the 'talking cure'), and thus brought into consciousness where it can be confronted.

Freud suggests a key mechanism involved in the therapeutic manifestation of transference is the displacement of relational needs. "If someone's need for love is not entirely satisfied by reality", Freud contends, "he is bound to approach every new person with anticipatory ideas".<sup>143</sup> It is only a small step from this point to see that the therapist is therefore likely to be the object upon which this process is directed. Freud acknowledges the contemporaneous work of C.G. Jung in this area, where Jung notes that the transference is often attached to prototypical ideas, i.e., the father image, the mother image or even the brother-image. In simple terms, the patient often transfers to (or cathects into) the therapist a previous relationship patterned by these primal relationships.<sup>144</sup>

One important claim that Freud makes is that while this phenomenon of transference is a key to understanding the dynamics of psychoanalytic therapy, in which its presence and intensity can be quite fierce, it is not itself caused by psychoanalysis. Rather, transference is a general phenomenon; a feature of the operation of the human psychic system, albeit one that is more intense in neurotic patients. This is shown, Freud suggests, by the fact that the phenomenon can be observed in a number of environments (such as mental institutions) where the practice of psychoanalysis is absent.

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<sup>143</sup> SE XII, "Transference", 100.

<sup>144</sup> Freud is referring to Carl G. Jung, "Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido" published in German in 1911, and in English as *Psychology of the Unconscious* (New York, 1919.)

Second, Freud addresses the issue as to why the transference emerges as “the most powerful resistance to treatment”<sup>145</sup> He does so by suggesting that a distinction must be made between a ‘positive’ transference and a ‘negative’ one, i.e. between the transference of *affectionate* feelings and those that are *hostile*. A further distinction applies to the positive transference: “the transference of friendly or affectionate feelings that are admissible to consciousness and transference of prolongations of those feelings into the unconscious”.<sup>146</sup> By removing the first layer of the transference, the deeper unconscious component becomes admissible to the conscious and is therefore amenable to treatment. As Freud states: “psychoanalysis shows us that people who in our real life are merely admired or respected may still be sexual objects for our unconscious”.<sup>147</sup>

For Freud both the negative and positive transferences occur together, denoting a type of ‘ambivalence’ towards the therapist.<sup>148</sup> He notes an all-too-frequent pattern by which the patient, who up to a certain point in the treatment has appreciated the analysis (positive transference) then becomes increasingly resistant to the direction of the therapy and the person of the therapist (even sometimes ending the therapy). For Freud, this is the beginning of the hard work of therapy, at which point “we have penetrated into the unconscious”. The resistance is due to the fact that “[t]he unconscious impulses do not want to be remembered in the way the treatment desires them to be, but endeavour to reproduce themselves in accordance with the timelessness of the unconscious and its capacity for hallucination”.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 101, emphasis in original.

<sup>146</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 105.

<sup>147</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 105.

<sup>148</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 106. Freud borrows Bleuler’s term here.

<sup>149</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 106, brackets mine.

Freud concludes his 1912 paper on the transference by picturing it as a sort of battlefield where the tug-of-war between analyst and analysand takes place: “[t]his struggle between the doctor and patient, between intellectual and instinctual life, between understanding and seeking to act, is played out almost exclusively in the phenomena of the transference”.<sup>150</sup>

Given present purposes, the key question is what scholarly resources Freud may have had at his disposal by which he was able to make sense of his clinical observations over the preceding decade, in order to arrive at such a sophisticated theoretical and clinical understanding of the transference phenomenon. The suggestion, once again, is that the influence of Anglo-Scottish scholarship needs to be recognised as a key influence in this regard. Two such sources will be briefly suggested: first, the circle of British philosopher physicians, led by Dugald Stewart and James Braid, who developed an empirical approach to hypnotism that revived the long-discredited practice of mesmerism; and second, the work of Scottish anthropologists James Frazer and other Scottish and English anthropologists, who provided Freud with a vast human canvas through which to understand the phenomenon on a broad scale.

While on the surface lacking obvious connection, there is a continuity discernible between these two sources that is to do with the threat of *counter-rationality* or *prima facie* counter-Enlightenment thinking. In the former case, this relates to the tenuous linkages of hypnotherapy (of which Freud was for a time an enthusiastic advocate) to the earlier Mesmerism movement with its vitalism and occultism. In the latter case, it relates to the alleged explanatory

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<sup>150</sup> SE XII, “Transference”, 108.

power of the study of ritualised animism and archaic religious practices for understanding human psychic processes.

#### **4.3.2 From Stewart and Braid to Charcot: The Rebirth of Hypnosis**

In turning to consider the origins of hypnotherapy, the elemental origins of psychoanalysis itself are being considered. This is a claim that relies not only on the evidence from the time, but also on Freud's own recollections as he recorded them in his "A Short Account of Psycho-analysis" in 1923:

It is not easy to overestimate the importance of the part played by hypnotism in the history of the origins of psychoanalysis. From a theoretical as well as from a therapeutic point of view, psychoanalysis has at its command a legacy which it has inherited from hypnotism.<sup>151</sup>

However, as will be seen, the study of the legacy of the hypnotism movement in the second half of the nineteenth century is also a study of the development of the idea of theory and practice of transference, for the nineteenth century hypnotists – including the seminal figure of James Braid (1795-1860) – were pioneers in the study of transference phenomena.

In order to trace the origins of hypnotherapy, it is necessary to consider the strange world of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century animal magnetism movement, and in particular the role of the German doctor and magnetic therapy advocate, Franz Anton Mesmer (1734 – 1815). Mesmer held that the universe was indwelt with an omnipresent magnetic force, and that this same magnetic force flowed through every human being in the form of a magnetic fluid. Physical (and mental) illnesses were perceived by Mesmer as resulting from insufficient or impeded magnetic flow in the person concerned. Mesmer's answer to this problem was to apply magnets to the afflicted areas to rectify the flow of magnetism. Since he found that his clients often reported rapid

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<sup>151</sup> SE XIX, "A Short Account of Psycho-Analysis", 192.



improvement, Mesmer went on to develop more and more elaborate ways of applying his magnetic theory to ailing individuals. He is reported as having a tub full of iron filings that he would stir with 'magic rods' in his salon. Eventually Mesmer asserted that it was his own personal magnetic force that was curing those who came to him and that simply waving his hands in front of the individual's body at the point of pain or ailment would induce healing.<sup>152</sup> Since Mesmer was practising in Paris at this time, his fame (or infamy) reached the court of King Louis XVI, and in 1784 a formal investigation was held that conducted a series of empirical experiments that took into account the placebo effect, and Mesmer's animal magnetism theory was found to be without merit.

By this time a group of philosopher physicians in Scotland had begun to study the effects of Mesmer's work, now stripped of its discredited theoretical basis. In particular, the work of Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), an expounder of Scottish Common Sense Realism (and populariser of the Scottish Enlightenment) is noteworthy. Stewart felt that the medical effects and results of Mesmer's work were worthy of more clinical assessment, certainly more so than when propped up by animal magnetism theory.

One of Stewart's pupils, James Braid, a Manchester-based, Scottish-born surgeon, would take up Stewart's mantle and in time would become the so-called 'father of hypnotism'. Braid was evidently a very different character to Mesmer: already an established surgeon with a strong medical reputation, he was driven by the empirical method and brought this training to bear on his assessment of the evidence.<sup>153</sup> His initial impressions were not positive, but

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<sup>152</sup> Luis A Cordon, *Freud's World, An Encyclopedia of his life and times*, (Santa Barbara, Greenwood, 2012), 211.

<sup>153</sup> Nathan Kravis, "James Braid's Psychophysiology: A Turning Point in the History of Dynamic Psychiatry", *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 145:10 (Oct 1988): 1192.

even while rejecting the claims of the mesmerists, he was drawn to investigate the phenomena at more depth on the basis of purely *physiological* – as distinct from vitalist or animal magnetic; or indeed psychological – principles.<sup>154</sup>

In his 1843 work Braid coined the term “neuro-hypnotism” (from the Greek for ‘nervous sleep’) and he set about providing much research to distance what he proved to be an effective neurological technique from its unscientific Mesmerian origins. Braid came to see the patient’s state, while under hypnosis, as being induced by the patient him/herself. Fluidic magnetic causes were completely dismissed; instead, the patient was seen as willing the sleep-like state and the physician was seen as a sort of guide to the place or region of ailment, but who also takes advantage of the tendency of the person in a hypnotic state “to obey and imitate”.<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, as Kravis notes, the focus of the therapy was the *imagination* of the hypnotised patient, and the ability of the hypnotist to “harness the power” of this imagination that was understood to be “especially active” during hypnosis. This harnessing process was made possible by the skill of the hypnotist to concentrate the attention of the patient:

Attention is the lens that focuses all mental faculties – including imagination, expectation, faith, hope, and belief ... Once a subject fixes his or her attention, the hypnotist uses suggestions, ‘conveyed in an energetic and engrossing manner’, to excite or depress a designated function. Success is assured in subjects with a talent for ‘great fixity of

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<sup>154</sup> Braid reports that at “[t]he first exhibition of [mesmerism] I ever had an opportunity of attending ... I saw nothing to diminish, but rather to confirm, my previous prejudices. At the next conversazioni ... one fact, the inability of a patients to *open his eyelids*, arrested my attention. I considered this to be a *real phenomenon* and was anxious to discover the physiological cause of it”. Significantly, he says that “[m]y first object was to prove, that the inability of the patient to open his eyes was caused by paralysing the levator muscles of the eyelids, through their continued action during the protracted fixed stare, and this rendering *physically* impossible for him to open them”. James Braid, *Neurypnology, or, the rationale of Nervous Sleep considered in relation with Animal Magnetism*, (London: John Churchill, 1843), 16-17. Italics in original.

<sup>155</sup> Kravis, “James Braid’s Psychophysiology”, 1198.

attention, especially if also possessed of a vivid imagination, and lively faith in the fulfilment of the prediction'<sup>156</sup>

Significantly, during the course of his career, Braid gradually de-emphasised the need for specific methods for inducing the hypnotic state, and in many ways, this was already charting a path that Freud was to take some years later. The point of the hypnosis was simply to induce a state that would facilitate effective suggestion. "I know, from experience", Braid commented in 1848, "that any other object would be equally efficient, provided the patients were impressed with that conviction"<sup>157</sup>

An absolutely key aspect of Braid's theory of mind that emerged through his practice (though he named it only in 1844), was the concept of the 'double consciousness'. As distinct from the 'first' awake consciousness, the second consciousness is discrete and "split off" aspect of mind that has its own set of vividly held memories, and in which the usual norms of behaviour are suspended as might be the case in dreaming. In this hierarchical model, there is a clear differentiation between "the ordinary waking state" that is marked by reason and the will, and the hypnotic state that is marked by "imagination, credulity, and docility". The practice of hypnotism is simply an inversion by which the latter is brought forward outside of its usual mode that is the state of sleep.<sup>158</sup>

In Braid's later work, it is clear that he views the clinical practice of hypnotism as a way of the therapist gaining access to the unconscious states of the patient in order to intervene in them. The proximity of this basic aim to those of psychoanalysis is clear. As Kravis emphasises, by the late 1840s Braid was

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<sup>156</sup> Kravis, "James Braid's Psychophysiology", 1195. Kravis' quotations are from Braid's 1845 article in the *Lancet*.

<sup>157</sup> Kravis, "James Braid's Psychophysiology", 1197.

<sup>158</sup> Kravis, "James Braid's Psychophysiology", 1198.

“clearly express[ing] the notion that an idea inaccessible to consciousness can be pathogenic and that appropriate therapy entails the destruction of the morbid idea”.<sup>159</sup> The difference between the two approaches is not one of intent, but of method.

With this new-found sense of medical respectability, other Scottish physicians had marked success in its use in the field of anaesthesia, though with Braid’s death in 1860, British and Scottish medical interest in the practice of hypnosis fell dormant. However, it was at this moment that Braid’s ideas were to gain a significant level of traction in Europe, culminating in the decision of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) to take up the study of Braidian hypnotism in 1878. This effectively marked a movement away from his field of neuroanatomy into the new field of “dynamic physiology” through the use of hypnosis, and his work on hysteria. In fact, Charcot’s experimental methods even reached back somewhat to the old mesmeric methods, combining the use of metals and magnets with hypnosis in his efforts to treat hysteria, paralysis and other conditions.<sup>160</sup>

Charcot’s practice made explicit use of the notion of transference in his treatment of hysterical contractures and paralysees. His approach was to literally *transfer* the problem “from one side of the body to the other”, understanding this as a “compensatory mechanism to maintain energetic equilibrium in the nervous system by means of displacement [*déplacement*] of excitation”. With the paralysis shifted, it could then be treated in other ways to remove it completely.<sup>161</sup> Given that the term ‘transference’ was widely used by Charcot and his circle, Freud’s decision to maintain the term for his own

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<sup>159</sup> Kravis, “James Braid’s Psychophysiology”, 1201.

<sup>160</sup> Nathan Kravis, “The ‘Prehistory’ of the Idea of Transference”, *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 19 (1992): 16.

<sup>161</sup> Kravis, “‘Prehistory’ of the Idea of Transference”, 16.

psychoanalytic method of treatment is an interesting one. As Kravis indicates, it would certainly seem to indicate that Freud understood a fundamental continuity between the transference referred to in dynamic physiology and that within his own psychoanalytic method. Perhaps just this kind of connection is indicated in Freud's discussion, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, of the way that an unconscious idea can be transferred into consciousness. With reference to that text, Kravis explains:

[A]n unconscious idea can only affect the preconscious by "establishing connection with" an idea already in the preconscious. It does this "by transferring its intensity on to it and by getting itself 'covered' by it. Here we have the fact of 'transference'. Repressed ideas destined for expression in neuroses or in dreams have "a need for transference" ... in which elements of high psychical value are deprived of their intensity and elements of low psychical value are newly cathected and intensified. A conscious wish can become a dream instigator only if it awakens an unconscious wish; the latter then transfers its intensity on to the former. Transference is essentially a mechanism of "displacement of psychical intensities".<sup>162</sup>

Freud was clearly enormously impressed by Charcot during his short time with him during 1885-86, and he evidently set about reading Braid himself.<sup>163</sup> However, his application of hypnotherapeutic techniques in his own practice after his return to Vienna, while enthusiastic, was measured. In his still very helpful summary of the reasons for Freud's movement away from the dynamic physiology approach to therapy, Lewis Aron makes a number of important points. On one hand, it seems that "Freud never regarded himself as particularly adept at hypnotism". But on the other hand, he also appreciated the limitations of the method. First, hypnotism would only work

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<sup>162</sup> Kravis, "Prehistory' of the Idea of Transference", 18. His quotes are from Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

<sup>163</sup> There were French and German translations of Braid's works available at the time. Freud held a German translation of Braid's work in his library: Braid, James, *Der Hypnotismus. Ausgewählte Schriften*. Ed. and pref. W. Preyer. (Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel 1882.)

if inducement of the hypnotic state was successful, but “Freud correctly realized that most patients were not this hypnotizable ... [and this] would have meant that catharsis or any talking therapy would only be useful with very few exceptionally hypnotizable patients”.<sup>164</sup> Second, Freud “did not want to be the one doing all of the talking; he wanted to listen to his patient, so that he himself could learn”. Third, and most important of all, he became convinced – largely through the influence of Hippolyte Bernheim (1840-1919), the founder of the Nancy school of hypnotism – that the inducement of a hypnotic state was not essential in order to access the unconscious and make the needed interventions:

Bernheim's theory that hypnotism was nothing other than suggestion led the way for the abandonment of the need to formally induce a hypnotic trance. If hypnosis was not a special altered state, but was rather just the product of suggestion, then the possibility was opened to not induce a formal state that mimicked sleep, but rather to attempt to use suggestion directly.<sup>165</sup>

With this “shift from hypnotism to free association” there was a shift “from neurology to psychology”. But further, psychotherapy became a conversation between two human beings rather than an action by the therapist on a passive patient.<sup>166</sup> Yet for all of that massive change, the organic connection between psychoanalytic and Braidian hypnotherapy remains. Ellenberger notes that the psychoanalytic transference “was a reincarnation of what had been known for a century” by the mesmerisers and the hypnotists “as rapport”.<sup>167</sup> However, whereas the earlier therapies simply tried to establish rapport in order to reduce patient resistance and facilitate intervention, the genius of

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<sup>164</sup> Lewis Aron, “From Hypnotic Suggestion to Free Association: Freud as a Psychotherapist, circa 1892–1893”, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32:1 (1996): 105-06.

<sup>165</sup> Aron, “From Hypnotic Suggestion to Free Association, 107.

<sup>166</sup> Aron, “From Hypnotic Suggestion to Free Association, 112.

<sup>167</sup> Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: Fontana, 1970), 490.

Freud's approach was to actively court the establishment of the transference neurosis as a form of resistance that is also the very medium within which the therapy takes place.

The relationship of Braid's dynamic hypnotherapy to Enlightenment thinking is a complex one. On one hand, there is a clear commitment to the empirical method, alloyed with a post-vitalist physiological set of assumptions. But on the other hand, this is a case of British empiricism tidying up mesmerism and making it scientifically acceptable. However, perhaps there is a larger story to be told here in terms of the appeal of vitalist movements such as Mesmer's *qua* a 'reaction-ism' against the disenchanted universe of physicalist reductionism. In his work on the influence of Mesmer, Robert Darnton claims that rapid advances in scientific knowledge that issued forth from the Enlightenment period overwhelmed many, and their disorientation made them all the more attracted to the 'marvellous' and the 'magical'.<sup>168</sup> He even suggests that mesmerism, and movements like it, played into – and even contributed to – the revolutionary mood of late eighteenth century France by “serv[ing] as a weapon against the academic establishment” that was cast as ‘despots’ and ‘aristocrats’ in their own field as political leaders were in theirs.<sup>169</sup> On this account, mesmerism represented a democratising of knowledge, and a re-enchantment of the world. In this respect, David Allen Harvey likens mesmerism to the rise of *Naturphilosophie* that also arose against the mechanistic philosophy of the day.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1968), see especially 161 – 168.

<sup>169</sup> Darnton, *Mesmerism*, 164.

<sup>170</sup> David Allen Harvey, “Elite Magic in the Nineteenth Century” in Collins, David J., ed. *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. doi:10.1017/CHO9781139043021.

In terms of its status vis-à-vis the Enlightenment, the implications of this reading for psychoanalysis – as a discipline that grew out of ‘cleaned up’ versions of counter-Enlightenment movements – are intriguing. Freudian thought was always at the junction of the mechanistic and the mysterious; the empirical and the enchanted. Invariably he chose the empirical road, though always with a ‘twist’, and a nod to a different *Zeitgeist*. Others within the psychoanalytic movement – most famously, C G Jung – would be less observant of the more reductionistic strictures of scientific method.<sup>171</sup>

### **4.3.3 Frazer and the Anthropological Manifestations of Transference**

The work of Scottish and English scholarship also plays strongly, albeit in complex ways, in Freud’s thinking about the broad human phenomenon of transference and its relation to observed clinical manifestations. Especially in and around the time of his writing *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913),<sup>172</sup> Freud gives various examples drawn from the British anthropological literature to justify his claims about the ubiquity of such phenomena in human societies. Of course, the focus on “primitive” communities comes with the implication that the relative lack of sophistication in evidence allows the scholar to observe *general* human tendencies more directly; in essence to observe the workings of the unconscious in less disguised form. Traditional animistic and totemic practices and rituals, with their displacements of guilt, responsibility, prohibition and contagion, are mirrored in the bizarre neurotic behaviour of patients encountered in contemporary clinical contexts.

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<sup>171</sup> Jung’s extensive analyses of Paracelsus and other Alchemical texts explicitly looked to explore other modes of psychological healing. See especially Jung’s *Collected Works Vols Alchemical Studies* (Vol XIII) and *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Vol XIV).

<sup>172</sup> *SE XIII*, 1 – 162.



The Scottish Anthropologist James George Frazer (1854-1941) looms large in this respect, with his *The Golden Bough* being a major source for Freud's *Totem and Taboo*.<sup>173</sup> Not only does Freud's text reference Frazer's work frequently, but Freud's copies of Frazer's works in his London library are heavily annotated.<sup>174</sup>

While Frazer is Freud's major source and interlocutor throughout *Totem and Taboo*, another primary source was the Scottish orientalist and biblical scholar, William Robertson Smith (1846-94), about whose 1889 work, *Religion of the Semites* Freud was extremely enthusiastic (even if the timing of his discovery of the book meant that it only turns up in *Totem and Taboo* in the fourth and final section).<sup>175</sup> On the topic of animism, Freud also references the Scottish poet and novelist (and sometime anthropologist), Andrew Lang (1844-1912).<sup>176</sup> Two other figures, both English, were major sources: the highly influential philosopher and sociologist, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and the cultural anthropologist, E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), whose *Primitive Culture* (1871) was to be a major influence on Frazer's work. And of course, the theories of Charles Darwin (1809 -82) himself, concerning the "primal horde", come up for discussion in Freud's text. While there are a range of other sources for Freud's work at this period – including the highly respected German psychologist and philosopher Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) – the dominance of Anglo-Scottish scholarship is undeniably striking.

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<sup>173</sup> The first (two volume) edition of *The Golden Bough* appeared in 1890, with the second (three-volume) edition published in 1900.

<sup>174</sup> Two works by Sir James Frazer can be found in Freud's library, both liberally annotated by Freud: James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1911-13). Also, James G Frazer, *Totemism and exogamy. A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1910).

<sup>175</sup> Patrick Merot, "From One Myth to the Other: From 'Totem and Taboo' to 'Overview of the Transference Neuroses'", *Research in Psychoanalysis* 21.1 (2016): 74.

<sup>176</sup> SE XIII, "Totem and Taboo: Animism, Magic, Omnipotence of Thoughts", 87.

While there can be no certainties in these matters, it would seem highly likely that Freud's avid reading of such scholarship would have played into his contemporaneous work on the clinical theory of transference that was developing at this time, and which came together in important ways with his paper "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912). The first two parts of what was to become *Totem and Taboo* were completed in January and May of that same year, with the third and fourth parts completed in January and June of the following year, followed by the publication of the work as a whole.<sup>177</sup> This work can be seen as a broad anthropological confirmation of his clinical and psychoanalytic theories, and to that extent the projects can rightly be understood as continuous.

Frazer's references to the phenomenon of transference in non-European ritual practices show telling similarities with Freud's own notions in a number of ways. He provides numerous examples of what he calls the "transference of evil" from humans to animals or even inanimate objects. He gives numerous accounts of ritualistic practices where illness and misfortune in humans are transferred magically to animals, and such actions are deemed to be efficacious in *transferring* that illness or misfortune on to the animal concerned. Not only can this transference process involve animals, but Frazer also gives numerous examples of how pain and suffering can be transferred from one human being to another who then has to bear the burden. Frazer suggests that such a notion, that is "familiar to the savage mind", arises from "a very obvious confusion between the physical and the mental"<sup>178</sup> Frazer provides a plenitude of examples of "sin eating": i.e. various rituals, usually involving eating and drinking over (or in proximity to) a corpse. These rituals

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<sup>177</sup> Merot, "From One Myth to the Other", 82, n. 1.

<sup>178</sup> James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol 2 (London: Macmillan and Co, 1894), 148.

enabled the sins of the deceased to be transferred to a (mostly) poor person in exchange for money.

Freud's enthusiasm for the work of William Robertson Smith relates to his analyses of the rituals concerning sacrificial death in the ancient Judaic tradition, and Christian ritual. The roots of these practices were understood to be the "gift to the deity, as a transference of property from men to the god".<sup>179</sup> The transaction of ritual killing and consuming in community is not simply a matter of binding the members in fellowship, but of transferring and replacing. Freud's claims here are quite explicit:

Psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father [...] The ambivalent emotional attitude, which to this day characterizes the father-complex in our children and which often persists into adult life, seems to extend to the totem animal in its capacity as substitute for the father".<sup>180</sup>

Tellingly, Frazer and Robertson Smith are not the only Scottish thinkers that Freud brings into his discussion to support his claim about the universality of the tendency toward psychological transference:

The justification for attributing life to inanimate objects was already stated by Hume in his *Natural History of Religion* [...] 'There is an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious'.<sup>181</sup>

Across his text, Freud speaks of direct parallels between taboos and clinically observed obsessional neuroses, and in turn between the 'logic' of rituals for

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<sup>179</sup> SE XIII, "Totem and Taboo: Return to Totemism in Childhood", 160.

<sup>180</sup> SE XIII, "The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest: The Psychological Interest of Psycho-Analysis", 165-66.

<sup>181</sup> SE XIII, "Totem and Taboo: Animism" 89-90. Significantly, he also references Schopenhauer on the unavoidability of the problem of death in connection with "belief in souls and in demons, which is the essence of animism".

dealing with them in traditional societies and the displacement activities that patients engage in during therapy. The case of taboo prohibitions is a case in point, and Freud refers freely – using Frazer’s own terminology – to

“transference (or, as it is better to say, the *displacement*) of prohibition[s]”.<sup>182</sup>

The clinical application of the anthropological research is seamless:

The ease with which the prohibition can be transferred and extended reflects a process which falls in with the unconscious desire and is greatly facilitated by the psychological conditions that prevail in the unconscious. The instinctual desire is constantly shifting in order to escape from the *impasse* and endeavours to find substitutes—substitute objects and substitute acts—in place of the prohibited ones. In consequence of this, the prohibition itself shifts about as well, and extends to any new aims which the forbidden impulse may adopt.<sup>183</sup>

Another key example is the close resemblance between clinically observed obsessional neuroses and the obsessive rituals characteristic of tribal taboos. “The most obvious and striking point of agreement between [these two]”, Freud maintains, “[is] that these prohibitions are equally lacking in motive and equally puzzling in their origin”.<sup>184</sup> Neither need to be enforced through threat of external punishment, since the threat is internal to the prohibition itself, which if broken would bring its own disaster. Freud notes that these obsessional prohibitions (whether neurotic or taboo-related) “are extremely liable to displacement”. Indeed, the notion of contagion is appropriate here: those who break taboo (or neurotic ritual requirements) may become taboo (or contagious) himself: the contagion can be displaced or transferred to others. Yet, in all such cases, despite the absolute certainty of the belief, no reasoned account can be given of the nature of the threat, nor why it applies with such absolute urgency.

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<sup>182</sup> SE XIII, “Totem and Taboo: Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence”, 32.

<sup>183</sup> SE XIII, “Totem and Taboo: Ambivalence”, 35.

<sup>184</sup> SE XIII, “Totem and Taboo: Ambivalence”, 31.

## Concluding Remarks

To conclude this section – and with it the survey of the Anglo-Scottish roots of Freudian thought – the question must be posed concerning the overall significance of the claims being made through the examination of these links. The argument being put is *not* that psychoanalysis is a movement that arose out of a British intellectual context *rather than* a German or broader European one. Such a claim would be ridiculous, not only given the vast and demonstrable contributions of Germanic traditions to Freudian thought, but also given the not insignificant levels of pan-European scholarship during the 17-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rather, it is to insist on the great complementary importance of Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment and later figures (right into the early twentieth century), in contributing directly to the formative development of the psychoanalytic movement in terms of the early thought of Sigmund Freud.

To this end, there is a need to *reemphasise* the British empiricist heritage in the context of scholarly assessments of the roots and nature of the psychoanalytic movement as a whole, and to add that fourth “tradition line” to Götter’s threefold Germanic framework.

## Conclusion

This thesis has inquired into the intellectual roots of Freudian psychoanalysis. Two questions have been at the focus. First, how does Freudian psychoanalysis relate to the Enlightenment tradition? Second, how does the same body of psychoanalytic thought relate to the modern European philosophical traditions that flowed from the watershed event of the Enlightenment, and how did those various “tradition-lines” come together in what became Freudian psychoanalysis?

The thesis has explored the philosophical roots of psychoanalysis, initially through an exploration of European Enlightenment thought, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century European Rationalism, and nineteenth century German Romanticism and drive theories. It then made the suggestion that while central, these currents alone miss out on a major source of influence, that being the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Scottish empirical tradition of philosophy. In examining this neglected tradition-line of the unconscious that looks well beyond the voluminous texts of the German philosophical tradition alone, it offers an alternative understanding of the philosophical sources that enriched the research of this young late nineteenth century Viennese doctor, and thus of the psychoanalytic movement more generally.

This “other Freud” turns out to be a paradoxical figure. On the one hand, he emerges as a son of the Classical intellectual tradition, and as one committed to the Enlightenment principles of rational inquiry and scientific method. Yet, on the other hand, it is precisely by applying his dedication to these traditions that he came to appreciate the ineluctably dark recesses of the human psyche; of our *constitutional* inability to truly fulfil the Delphic imperative to “know thyself”, and of the wisdom of the Socratic embrace of the truth that one does “not know” even as one must then start over on the quest to understand. In

following the Enlightenment motto of “daring to know”, he came to see that deeply embedded psychic structures and processes ensure that on the whole we cannot know with any great transparency much of what defines and limits us and causes us suffering. In this way, Freud, using an empirical method, became (like others before him), a philosopher of the “dark Enlightenment”.

## Retrospect

Before looking forward, it will be helpful to briefly review the argument of the thesis. The **first chapter**, “The 17-18<sup>th</sup> Century Enlightenment and the Freudian Unconscious”, began by considering some ancient and more recent poetic and literary precursors of psychoanalysis, before then turning to the 17-18<sup>th</sup> century European Enlightenment’s thinking of itself via some of its key intellectual voices (Reinhold, Kant and Mendelssohn), including some of its more discordant voices (Mendelssohn, Hamann). What then followed was an analysis of ways that the seed of an idea germinated in European Rationalism: that even in the desire to achieve rigorous understanding of self and world, a vast surplus of what is known but somehow *not-known* (non-conscious) is unavoidable. This idea was traced in the thought of such key figures as Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza and Kant. In the final section, Freud’s various models of the unconscious are considered in light of this longer tradition, and the scientific *Weltanschauung* that is rooted in the Enlightenment.

The focus of the **second chapter** was nineteenth century German Romanticism and its aftermath. Here the focus initially was on Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and Carus’s application to empirical biology, before this movement was then traced into Schelling’s middle period, under the influence of Jakob Böhme, and thus the emergence of drive/instinct theory focusing especially on the philosophies of Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and Nietzsche. Given the substantial body of contemporary work being published

on the connection between this period of German thought and the emergence of Freudian psychoanalysis, a major theme of this chapter was the similarities and the differences with Freudian thought, as well as the question of Freud's reading of this tradition during the development of his own approach. A case was made here that Freud's repeated claims that psychoanalysis had its *own* route to the not dissimilar conclusions of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and others, are credible ones, even given his clear familiarity with those thinkers especially after 1915. However, this claim is all the more reasonable on the basis of the evidence examined in the second half of this thesis.

In the two final chapters, then, the focus changes to the tradition of Anglo-Scottish empirical philosophy with which – as will be shown – the young Freud was deeply immersed, and which clearly influenced the early development of psychoanalysis, both directly and indirectly. The substantial argument is thus made in these chapters for a fourth tradition-line of the unconscious (to use Gödde's phrase), one that has been routinely overlooked or down-played in the scholarship.

**Chapter three** began with a brief sketch of Freud's links to the British intellectual environment, before turning to the specifics. The formative influence of Franz Brentano was examined for its significance in terms of turning Freud onto the British empiricist tradition philosophy. This was followed by an analysis of J.S. Mill and the British Associationist tradition that was of such theoretical and clinical importance for Freud. William Hamilton and the tradition of Scottish "common sense" philosophy was then discussed, noting his work on "unconscious cogitations" and mental energies. Finally, Freud's interests in the Utilitarians was considered, including Bentham's pleasure principle. Throughout this chapter, a picture is developed of Freud's active reading and development of the insights of these thinkers.



The fourth chapters further developed this approach, with reference to some of the more applied work by British philosopher-psychologists of the day. It started with an analysis of the research of William Carpenter and his investigations into unconscious thoughts and the sleep state, and it moved on to consider James Ward's account of ego, introspection and instinct, and in the context of the developing popularity of Darwin's theories, that were also of great interest to Freud. The work of John Hughlings Jackson was also featured prominently in this chapter, especially for Freud's early neurological phase of research as well as the way that these ideas were retained even as his approach was reframed. Key ideas such as mind-brain parallelism, regression and speech, that are all at play here, were examined in this context. So too were the origins of Freud's notion of transference, in the long arc from the transformation of Mesmer's "animal magnetism" approach by James Braid which is the backstory to the development of hypnosis, and so too was the work of James Frazer that also pointed Freud in a more sociological direction.

In sum, on the basis of a great deal of conceptual archaeology, the thesis has argued for a vast array of influences through which Freudian psychoanalysis developed, both clinically and theoretically, but in doing so appeal is made to broaden recognition of the vital role that was played by British sources. In this way, it can be shown that Freud's famous rejection of philosophy was much more a matter (encouraged by his philosophy teacher, Brentano) of placing to one side the great nineteenth century German Idealist and Romanticist traditions. But, to the contrary, there is very substantial evidence that Freud's engagement with English and Scottish philosophy ran deep, especially in its more psychologically applied phases, and was a major source for his thought, especially during the formative years of psychoanalysis.

## Carrying forward: Twentieth Century and Beyond

This thesis has been concerned not so much with psychoanalysis as such, but more with the philosophical province of its intellectual roots in the (largely early) work of Sigmund Freud. As such, its engagement with twentieth century psychoanalysis has been necessarily limited: both in terms of Freud's later work, as well as the vast array of applications and further theoretical developments by psychoanalytic theorists and clinicians over the years. However, it will be helpful to say a few words about these matters here, especially since it is in making such applications that the value and importance of the research conducted in this thesis might be better appreciated. For in various senses, a tradition-lines approach provides a valuable heuristic for the study of the broader psychoanalytic movement.

The approach to be used to undertake this brief sketch will be guided by the extended version of Gödde's tradition-lines approach that has strongly informed the organisation of the major sections of the thesis. The question, then, is where did these tradition-lines go in the twentieth century, and how might they be seen to be still relevant in the twenty-first? How were these various lines of tradition evident in subsequent generations of thinking about the unconscious, both prior to Freud's death in 1939, and beyond? And how can they be helpful in an ongoing way for understanding the diversity of psychoanalytic (and broader psychological) schools of thought?

### (a) *The Cognitive Unconscious tradition-line*

As discussed earlier, this tradition-line, that originated in Enlightenment philosophy, developed as an epistemic need for something more than just present awareness or consciousness. In a sense, this is a notion of a "non-conscious" repository rather than an active "unconscious". In Modern European thought (especially German thought), this approach was

foundational, but it was quickly eclipsed by more dynamic and topological models. Yet, interestingly, there is a sense in which something like this tradition of the non-conscious is proving to be an enduring, and is still evident – perhaps in increasingly heightened form – in contemporary neuroscience. It is fair to say that the cognitive unconscious tradition line is enjoying something of a resurgence at present, having been largely neglected during the twentieth century.

This rekindled interest in the cognitive non-conscious is hotly debated in cognitive psychology, particularly within the school of **Epiphenomenalism**. In a sense, this approach takes the Enlightenment assumption about the primacy of conscious thought and turns it on its head. The argument is that advances in cognitive neuroscience are providing a new understanding of human psychology that does not require a consciousness nor the intuitive unified self that we experience as being ‘me’. This very contemporary position has been traced back to Thomas Huxley, who (in 1874) proclaimed:

All states of consciousness in us ... are immediately caused by molecular changes of the brain-substance. It seems to me that in men, as in brutes, there is no proof that any state of consciousness is [itself] the cause of change in the emotion of the matter [brain] of the organism.<sup>1</sup>

Huxley is espousing a type of extreme materialism here, one which would see no need for the positing of consciousness in a scientific understanding of human psychology. In fact, Huxley was writing and theorising at the same time as William Carpenter, whose notion of “unconscious cerebration” was noted above and who, with Huxley, might share the title of early cognitive psychologist. On this account, the non-conscious (or the cognitive unconscious) is not in question, but rather its opposite: it is consciousness or

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<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Huxley, “On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History”, *The Fortnightly Review (New Series)* 16 (1874): 555-80.

the need for such a construct that is being raised. Contemporary champions of epiphenomenalism, Peter Halligan and David Oakley, point out that “most brain processes are not accompanied by any discernable change in Subjective awareness”. Consequently, there’s a lot going on in our heads that we are not aware of at a conscious level and, “since unconscious processes can carry out almost every fundamental high-level function that conscious processes can perform ... the role of consciousness is, if not utterly zero, at least quite minimal”.<sup>2</sup> Leibniz and Carpenter are not available for comment on this significant twist, but perhaps we might venture that their “*petit perceptions*” and “unconscious cerebrations” are coming back into their own again. Interestingly, in this contemporary branch of cognitive psychology – that is so far from psychodynamic psychology – some of Freud’s own earliest sources are nonetheless coming back into the frame.

Of course, present day **neuroscientific advances** would have been invaluable to Freud in his pre-psychoanalytic days. Were it not for the fact that some 140 years of technological advances in brain imagining separates these advances from Freud’s early thinking, it is tempting to speculate on just how much of the cognitive unconscious would have come to fore in his theories. Indeed, in a recent article, Orla Hardiman questioned the well-established divide between the treatment of certain diseases of the mind as organic diseases (e.g., Motor Neurone Disease) requiring a neurologist, and psychiatric illness requiring the treatment by a psychiatrist (e.g., Schizophrenia).<sup>3</sup> The reason, Hardiman argues, is that neuroscientific research has recently discovered that both Motor Neurone Disease and Schizophrenia share 14% of the same genes.

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<sup>2</sup> Peter W Halligan. and David A. Oakley, “Giving Up on Consciousness as Ghost in the Machine” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (April 2021), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Orla Hardiman, “Freud’s Divide Between Psychiatry and Neurology is redundant – here’s why”, in *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/freuds-divide-between-psychiatry-and-neurology-is-redundant-heres-why-74598> Accessed 1 October 2021.

Consequently, which should be treated neurologically, and which should be treated in the psychiatric modality? More importantly, from the standpoint of this thesis, there is a sense in which the basic physicalist materialism of Freud's early work – and which (as seen earlier) bequeathed many features to his mature work as well – is reinforcing contemporary approaches that are reaching conclusions not dissimilar to Freud's *Project For Scientific Psychology* (1895). The difference, of course, is access to much more advanced anatomical and imaging tools, the lack of which frustrated Freud's early work. The theoretical dead-end reached in his *Project* shows all the signs of a budding cognitive approach starved of the nourishment that only present-day neuroscience could provide. What, indeed, would psychoanalysis have looked like if he had access to modern neuroscientific tools? And what would contemporary psychology look like more generally?

**(b) *The German Romantic Tradition-line***

In Chapter 4, the link between Mesmerism and Freud was made via the Anglo-Scottish Tradition-line, in particular through the work of Dugald Stewart and James Braid. However, the attraction that Mesmer's work held for the German Romantics themselves was also noted in chapter two. As Ellenberger states:

The German Romanticists were interested in animal magnetism for two reasons: the first being the attraction of Mesmer's theory of a universal, physical "fluid". Romantic philosophers visualized the universe as a living organism endowed with a soul pervading the whole and connecting its parts. Mesmer's physical fluid – had its existence been demonstrated – would have furnished evidence of the Romantic conception.<sup>4</sup>

The unifying potential of such a conception would be of considerable attraction to early German Romanticism, since it held the possibility of a sort

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<sup>4</sup> Ellenberger, *The Unconscious*, 77-78.

of world soul that could be communed with via a sixth sense. Ellenberger himself outlines the nature of this sixth sense as “[providing] humans with an ability of describing distant events predicting future happenings ... [and they] assumed that somnambulant lucidity would enable the human mind to establish communications with the World Soul”.<sup>5</sup>

These metaphysical notions would ultimately hold little appeal for Freud (of the many accusations levelled against him, *pantheism* was not one), with his own use of this tradition initially following Braid’s (and Charcot’s) approach of hypnotherapy, and from there developing into his own theory of transference. However, the identification by early Romanticism with Mesmer’s work was revived and recast in the twentieth century in the work of **Carl G. Jung**. As Jung willingly attests, the animal magnetism-hypnotherapy-transference link would play a central role in the development of his own Analytical Psychology. For Jung, Mesmer’s “animal magnetism” and its value could be described thus:

[It is] nothing but a rediscovery of the primitive concept of the soul-force or soul-stuff, awakened out of the unconscious by a reactivation of archaic forms of thought. [...] This development of reactivated contents from the unconscious is still ongoing today [which has] led to a popularizing of the next higher stage of differentiation- the eclectic or Gnostic systems of Theosophy and Anthroposophy. At the same time it laid the foundations for French psychopathology, and in particular of the French school of hypnotism. *These in turn, became the main sources of analytic psychology.*<sup>6</sup>

The implications of this statement by Jung, written in 1918, are considerable insofar as they point to a type of neo-Romanticism that can be viewed

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<sup>5</sup> Ellenberger, *The Unconscious*, 78.

<sup>6</sup> Jung, *CW*, 10, para 21. Italics mine. Jung would again repeat his view that the “scientific investigation into the psychological unconscious began with the study of hypnotism” in *CW*, 18, para 1223. Note that Jung does not acknowledge Braid’s role in resuscitating ‘animal magnetism’, and is content to attribute this to Charcot (with whom he studied in Paris over the Winter of 1885-86) alone.

throughout the work of Jung and his adherents, and which is clearly at the root of the momentous break between Freud and Jung in 1912. As argued above, Freud's physicalist materialist model had little tolerance for the Romantic or the supernatural. Jung, on the other hand, would take the Mesmerism-hypnotism-transference train of thinking and willingly engage it in its own terms. He was quite frank about what he saw as his own debt to the Romantic unconscious. In his notes to a lecture on "The Hypothesis of the Collective Unconscious", Jung specifically acknowledges the "eternal unconscious" of Schelling, as well as C.G Carus who, in Jung's opinion "was the first to base a developed philosophical system on the concept of the unconscious".<sup>7</sup> Jung's view of the unconscious was broad enough to encompass what Freud rejected. This included the notion of the *collective* unconscious: the phylogenetic view which maintains that all of humanity shares contents in common at a deep level of the unconscious. Indeed, Jung saw Mesmer's work (and latter-day examples of Gnosticism such as Theosophy) as deeply implicated in a collective psychic outpouring that history would name the French Revolution: a "colossal explosion of the inflammable matter that had been piling up ever since the Age of Enlightenment".<sup>8</sup>

Given Jung's interest in the collective unconscious (qua the Romantic absolute insofar as the human touches upon it), it makes sense that Jung (ultimately following Schelling) would be so fascinated with alchemico-theosophical and mythological themes. This is a far cry from the Freudian scientific *Weltanschauung* that is so fixed on the individuals in their own psychogenetic experience and symbolism, in isolation from any absolutist teleological theories. As much as Freud was quite aware of the vast landscape of German

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<sup>7</sup> Jung, CW, 18, para 1223.

<sup>8</sup> Jung, CW, 10, para 22.

philosophical thought, and as much as he was wary of its tendency to make conclusions that were very similar to the conclusions that his own research was pushing towards, he also made very clear that he would have no truck with idealistic, metaphysical philosophy, or anything at all redolent of theological (including theosophical) thinking. He was a man of empirical science, whose conclusions just happened to (inconveniently) harmonise with some of the *conclusions* of those very different styles of thought.

But if Freud largely passed on much of what the Romantic tradition of the unconscious offered, it was richly taken up in other branches of psychoanalysis: certainly Jung, but also (to a lesser degree) figures like **Otto Rank**, as seen in his own fascination with artistic genius.<sup>9</sup> But it was also certainly evident in the work of Jung's one-time protégé, James Hillman.

**James Hillman** was an American psychologist who studied under Jung at in Zurich at the C.G. Jung Institute and eventually rose to a place of prominence in that same institute. Hillman would found a break-away Jungian school of thinking that would eventually be named *Archetypal Psychology*. After leaving Zurich he wrote and lectured extensively until his death at his home in Connecticut.

Hillman's *Revisioning Psychology* (1975) owes a great deal to Jung, but he cast his academic net wide and there is also clear evidence of Classical and Renaissance thinking, as well as German Romantic thought.<sup>10</sup> In *Revisioning Psychology* he acknowledges his sources:

By calling upon Jung to begin with, I am partly acknowledging the fundamental debt that archetypal psychology owes him. He is the

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<sup>9</sup> See: Otto Rank. *Art and Artist*. (New York: Agathon Press, 1968).

<sup>10</sup> In 1970, Hillman became editor of *Spring Publications* a publishing company devoted to advancing Archetypal Psychology as well as publishing books on mythology, philosophy and art. The only accessible English translation of Carl G. Carus, *Psyche: On the development of the Soul, Part 1 The Unconscious* was published by Spring Publications (see Bibliography).



immediate ancestor in a long line that stretches back through Freud, Dilthey, Coleridge, Schelling, Vico, Ficino, Plotinus and Plato to Heraclitus – and with even more branches to be traced.<sup>11</sup>

Here it is easy to see the Romantic influences in Hillman's long line of acknowledged philosophical progenitors. Even though it appears that the specific Romantic influence could easily be swamped by such a large number of acknowledged philosophical influences on Hillman, the task of understanding Hillman and his tradition-line links is made clearer when his *technique* is examined. For example, for Hillman, dream analysis should have nothing to do with interpretation nor indeed any reductive processes whatsoever. For example, the image of a black snake should be retained rather than "interpreted": for "the moment you've defined the snake, interpreted it, you've lost the snake, you've stopped it and the person leaves the hour with a concept about my repressed sexuality or my cold black passions ... and you've lost the snake".<sup>12</sup> Hillman's persistent dictum is to "stick to the image".

On one level Hillman can be seen as rejecting the essentials of Jungian Analytical Psychology, and certainly his understanding of Archetypes contradicts Jung's in many ways. (It is hard not to agree with the Jungian scholar Walter Odajnyk when he says that Hillman should have named his brand of psychology 'Imaginal Psychology' instead.)<sup>13</sup> But what matters for present purposes is Hillman's high view of the image (Jung's "*Imago*"). His view is, in this respect, Schellingian: that it to say, Hillman sees art as the road to the unconscious – the *only* road. Hillman's art is the image, wherever it

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<sup>11</sup> James Hillman. *Revisioning Psychology* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), xi.

<sup>12</sup> James Hillman. *Inter Views: Conversations With Laura Pozzo on Psychotherapy, Biography, Love, Soul, Dreams, Work, Imagination, and the State of the Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 54.

<sup>13</sup> Odajnyk, V. Walter. "The Psychologist as Artist: the Imaginal world of James Hillman", *Quadrant: A Jungian Quarterly*, 17, 1 (1984): 39–48.

may be found: in dreams, in fantasies in stained glass windows or art galleries. As seen, for Schelling, art depicts what philosophy cannot depict: “the unconscious element in acting and producing”. The Romantic tradition-line comes through forcefully here in Hillman’s approach, and in Jung’s. Freud’s more reductive and analytical approach to images (in dreams, in myths and in religions) shows a much greater reliance on the empirical Anglo-Scottish tradition that shaped his early thinking so profoundly. The image would be a *means to an end* in Psychoanalysis whereas it was an end *in itself* in the Analytical and Archetypal Psychologies of Jung and Hillman.

But further, Hillman’s later work (such as his 1997 work *The Soul’s Code*) lays out his “acorn theory” of the soul.<sup>14</sup> This theory states that all people already hold the potential for unique possibilities inside themselves, much as an acorn holds that is necessary for the mighty oak tree to come into being. In this deeply Aristotelian view, a unique, individual energy of the soul is contained within each human being and is active throughout their whole life, including their calling and their life’s work at which point the oak is fully matured. This notion resonates loudly with Carus’ *entelechy* as explored above in Chapter 2. As will be recalled from that Chapter, Carus offered a prototypical view of a type of DNA theory, drawing together the metaphysical and the biological, always working to an end.

### ***(c) The Drive-related Irrational Tradition-line***

Two different trajectories for the Drive tradition-line are traced here. The first looks to its iterative development of the notion of ‘drives’ translated into the context of the first generation British psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein. The development here is confused and confusing but speaks very much to the

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<sup>14</sup> James Hillman. *The Soul’s Code, In Search of Character and Calling* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 1996).

difficulties that post-Freudian thinkers had with translating Freud's so-called "metapsychology" in the practice. The second trajectory validates Freud's dual instinct theory as being central to his work, despite its poor reception. Furthermore, a clear understanding of this under-appreciated concept plays into a little-known evolutionary strand to Freud's thinking. Both of these trajectories are made clearer in the light of the Anglo-Scottish tradition-line's reinforcement of the view of Freud as empirically driven.

In his own writings, Freud's mature instinct/drive theory is placed under the broader category of metapsychology. Yet, as has been argued throughout this thesis, this theory represents not so much an embracing of broad philosophical ideas (a metaphysics) but rather as a *return* to his early pre-psychoanalytic thinking: biological, physical and material. This is highlighted by the Anglo-Scottish tradition-line which itself, casts fresh light on understanding of post-Freudian interpretations of his drive/instinct theory. This light is no more illuminating than when considering the work of early British Psychoanalysts. For Freud's relationship with his first generation of psychoanalysts was not always a smooth one, and it might be argued that it reached (or would have reached) a head in the work of **Melanie Klein**.<sup>15</sup>

Klein saw herself as adopting Freud's drive theory, but her work and ideas were highly controversial within the psychoanalytic movement, eventually contributing to the so-called "controversial discussions" in London in 1942-3. Taking up Freud's life/death instincts theory and applying it in her early work, she published *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (1932) which gave clear expression to her key concepts: the paranoid-schizoid and depressive

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<sup>15</sup> Freud died in September 1939 and the issue of disharmony was continued between Anna Freud (Freud's daughter) and Melanie Klein. For a thorough account of the complex issues that contributed to the "controversial discussions" see Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and her Work* (London: Maresfield Library, 1985), 179- 234.

positions.<sup>16</sup> As Phyllis Grosskurth puts it, this work “takes up Freud’s notion of the life and death instincts, a dialectical structure of opposites, of love and hate”, and the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are based on these.<sup>17</sup>

However, as compelling as Klein’s theories are, particularly as they relate to her observation of children’s behaviour, it seems that she has simply not understood the meaning of Freud’s life/death instinct. As Grosskurth points out, being untrained in biology, Klein seems to use “death instinct” as just a useful term to apply to “the child’s fear of being damaged, overwhelmed, or annihilated”.<sup>18</sup> Shining the light of the Anglo-Scottish tradition-line on these differences only serves to highlight how little Freud’s Drive/Instinct theory was understood, and how less it would be employed in later Psychoanalytic developments. Grosskurth’s surmise that a lack of biological training on Klein’s part was involved here is telling, since many in the post-Freudian traditions are quite content to ignore (or misunderstand) the intrinsically bio-physiological nature of Freud’s thinking, even well into his metapsychological period. Here too, the tradition-line approach provides the study of the psychoanalytic traditions with a valuable heuristic.

If Klein’s work looked to co-opt Freud’s life/ death instinct, the early Scottish psychiatrist, **Ian Suttie** (died, 1935) condemned Freud’s instinct theory unreservedly as being ‘heuristically useless’. Suttie’s post-humously published *The Origins of Love and Hate* was enthusiastic about Freud’s earlier theories, but scathing about the later “metapsychological’ developments”.<sup>19</sup> It is as if Freud’s later thinking provided an excuse for the flowering of

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<sup>16</sup> Melanie Klein. *The Psycho-analysis of Children* trans. by Alix Strachey (London: Virago, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> Grosskurth, *Klein*, 191.

<sup>18</sup> Grosskurth, *Klein*, 194.

<sup>19</sup> Ian D. Suttie. *The Origins of Love and Hate* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1960), 184.

dichotomies (in Suttie's case Love and Hate; in Klein's Envy and Gratitude<sup>20</sup>) that would lead to the problem of *pars pro toto* theories in later psychoanalytic theories. Suttie rejected Freud's death instinct theory on the basis of its "unscientific" nature, but in doing so there seems to have been a lack of insight into Freud's early bio-physiological work, and the way in which that work fed into his later metapsychology. Again, the benefit a wider appreciation of the broad intellectual roots of early Freudian thought would be helpful here, including the way Freud drew on the work of some of Suttie's own nineteenth century countrymen.

Nonetheless, Suttie's work was influential for what was to become the British Independent School of psychoanalysis. John Bowlby, himself notable for his interest in child development and for his pioneering work in attachment theory, credits Suttie with the discovery of two key concepts that would form the basis of his own work: attachment and separation anxiety. Furthermore, in his Foreword to the 1988 edition of Suttie's *The Origins of Love and Hate*, Bowlby makes Suttie's anti-instinct stance very clear: Suttie maintained that the infant is not born with a complex array of pre-programmed instincts, but rather with a simple attachment-to-mother.<sup>21</sup>

Suttie's criticism of Freud's dual instinct theory is emblematic of problems potentially caused by the comparative silence around Freud's early work, as well as the fourth tradition-line with which it is so closely connected. If the long-term effect of Strachey's translation of Freud's term "*Trieb*" is in the realm of speculation, it is clearer that the veil thrown over Freud's early thinking meant that his early adherents were often denied a vital glimpse of the origins of psychoanalysis, a glimpse that may have re-shaped much of the

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<sup>20</sup> Klein's post-war writing would go on to expand on this dichotomised framework, ultimately being published under the title of *Envy and Gratitude* (London: Hogarth, 1975).

<sup>21</sup> Suttie, *The Origins of Love and Hate*, xvii.

subsequent rejection of his “instinct” model. In the significant estimation of both LaPlanche and Sulloway, the death Instinct was fundamental to Freud’s overall thinking, and one that was implicit in Freud’s thinking since his *Project* (1895). According to Sulloway, Freud’s theory of the death instinct “has a perfectly rational logic in its own psychobiological terms”,<sup>22</sup> and for LaPlanche: “it is possible to recognize the death instinct as a new guise for a basic and constant *sine qua non* of Freudian thought”<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, as distantly related as they may seem it is also the case that Freud’s drive/instinct theory has interesting points of connection with contemporary **evolutionary psychiatry**. Indeed, when viewed through the lens of Anglo-Scottish empiricism, the drive-related irrational tradition-line should be expanded to include not only the philosophical theories of Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, Nietzsche and others, but also *Darwinian* scientific theory, with the death/life dual instinct theory one crucial outcome.

Although it enjoyed a long gestation period of some twenty-five years, Freud’s 1920 death/life instinct theory was conceived in his pre-Psychoanalytic stage. It was during this stage that Freud was exposed to Darwin’s evolutionary theory (both directly, and via German appropriation). Sulloway emphasizes this point when he states: “nowhere was the impact of Darwin, direct and indirect, more exemplary or fruitful outside of biology proper than within Freudian psychoanalysis”.<sup>24</sup> Freud himself acknowledges Darwin’s theory of emotions in his early work with Breuer, in the case of Frau Emmy von N when he observes that she:

... played restlessly with her fingers (1888) or rubbed her hands against one another (1889) so as to prevent herself from screaming. This reason reminds

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<sup>22</sup> Sulloway, *Biologist*, 395.

<sup>23</sup> Laplanche, *Language*, 103.

<sup>24</sup> Sulloway, *Biologist*, 275.

one forcibly of one of the principles laid down by Darwin to explain the expression of emotions – the principle of overflow of emotions, which accounts, for instance, for dogs wagging their tails.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in his earliest theorising on the notion of dual-instincts, Freud referenced Darwin's work. Furthermore, since Darwin would place two instincts at the heart of the evolution of life – viz., the instinct for self-preservation and the sexual instinct – it is not surprising to find Freud, along with a number of his contemporaries, building on these Darwinian foundations. So, for example, in his "The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest" (1913) Freud states clearly that, having held off from active engagement in biological models for as long as he could when developing his theories (something that perhaps echoes his approach with German philosophy!), there is one important touchpoint that has become clear:

The contrast between the ego instincts and the sexual instinct, to which we are obliged to trace back the origin of the neuroses, is carried into the sphere of biology in the contrast between the instincts which serve the preservation of the individual and those which serve the survival of the species.<sup>26,27</sup>

A number of Anglo-Scottish influences have already been noted as forming the fourth tradition-line formative in Freud's thinking, and so we should not be surprised to see here, in Freud's own words, an acknowledgement of the Darwinian undergirding to his dual-instinct theorizing.

The link between Freudian and Darwinian theory has become even clearer in recent years with the 1987 publication of a hitherto unpublished paper by Freud: "A Phylogenetic Fantasy. Overview of the Transference Neurosis".

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<sup>25</sup> SE II, 91. Brackets in original.

<sup>26</sup> SE XIII, 182.

<sup>27</sup> On the early link between Freud and Darwin: Marcaggi, Geoffrey and Fabian Guénolé, "Freudian: Evolutionary Thinking as the Root of Psychoanalysis", *Frontiers in Psychology* 9:892 (2018): 1-9.

(1915)<sup>28</sup> This paper reveals Freud's musings on the possibilities of evolutionary aetiology for his notions of anxiety hysteria (phobias), conversion hysteria and obsessional neurosis. Freud speculates that the common aetiology of these specific maladies were the adaptations that early hominids had to make with the onset of the Ice Age, such as a paucity of food and resources that meant abstaining from sexual contact. This unused libido was then translated into states general anxiety. Freud argues that this *phylogenetic* phenomenon could be seen *ontogenetically* in the behaviour of children: in the phobias that they display when they treat their own unsatisfied sexuality as an external danger. In a similar way, even if the Ice Age has long since disappeared as a threat, the adaptive mechanisms that resulted are still evident.<sup>29</sup>

It is on this and similar bases that Freud is now being seen as the main precursor of contemporary evolutionary psychiatry, even if his scientific analyses are somewhat outdated in parts.<sup>30</sup> Freud develops his Ice Age into a "genome-lag hypothesis" in the sense that modern psychopathologies have their roots in ancient human adaptive practices that are a world away from the nineteenth and twentieth century Vienna. The connection to recent work in evolutionary biology and psychiatry is very clear.

#### ***(d) What of Other Twentieth Century Psychoanalytic Currents?***

There is, of course, much more that needs to be said in order to do even a modicum of justice to how the expanded tradition-lines approach developed

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<sup>28</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *A Phylogenetic Fantasy. Overview of the Transference Neurosis*, ed. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, trans. by Axel Hoffer and Peter T. Hoffer (London: Belknap Press, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> On Freud's paper, see: Andreas De Block, "Freud as an 'Evolutionary Psychiatrist' and the Foundations of a Freudian Philosophy", *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Philosophy*, 12(4) (Dec 2005), 315 – 325.

<sup>30</sup> See Anthony Stevens and John Price, *Evolutionary Psychiatry. A New Beginning* (London: Routledge, 1996); McGuire, Michael and Alfonso Troisi, *Darwinian Psychiatry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and De Block, Marcaggi and Guénolé *et al.*



here can also be applied to the vast range of schools of thought in twentieth century psychoanalytic thought and practice, and of the benefits that come from doing so. That is work remaining to be done. Certainly, given what was said at the outset of this thesis (concerning its methodology) about the way that the various tradition-lines clearly interweave with each other in their relevance to the development of psychoanalysis, the same is also true of the way they continued (and continue) to influence this tradition after Freud. That is to say that elements of more cognitive, Romantic, drive-related, and empirical philosophical influences continued to shape the history of psychoanalytic thought long after Freud's initial body of work.

It is also the case that *new lines of tradition* were interwoven with the four that have been discussed in this thesis. One particularly poignant example of this is the linguistic and structuralist turn in psychoanalysis that is associated most strongly with the work of **Jacques Lacan**. It is, of course, not possible to provide anything like an account of Lacan's so-called "return to Freud", through the lens of Saussure's linguistics and Levi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, in the context of the discussions above. However, suffice to say that his readings of Freudian texts, his critique of ego psychology, as well as his disputes with object relations theory were driven by a new element in psychoanalytic theory. It is this new perspective – a new "transition-line" perhaps? – which makes it possible for Lacan to look again at Freud's accounts of dream narratives and imagery, slips of the tongue and jokes to note the key role played by language in the dynamics of psychic life. In this way, Lacan makes his famous claim about the unconscious being "structured like a language".<sup>31</sup> From the very beginning, psychoanalytic thought has been no stranger to vast disputes among its many theorists, and during the second

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<sup>31</sup> Jacques Lacan. "Science and Truth" in *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 737.

half of the twentieth century (and indeed to this day), the structuralist turn has provoked all manner of disputes that go to the heart of not only psychoanalytic theory and its clinical application, but also its philosophical underpinnings.

## **Prospect**

Here, at the end, the question might then be asked, *Quo Vadis?* Where does this work go now? A few thoughts are in order before concluding.

One obvious way forward is the continued development of work in the area of the much-neglected Anglo-Scottish tradition-line as it relates to Freud's own early research. First of all, this is a question of the history of psychoanalysis, and thus the history of ideas. It shows an "other Freud" that is often under-appreciated, and that has the possibility of significantly changing perceptions of both Freud and the clinical/ intellectual movement he bequeathed. However, second, it is also important for the present of psychoanalysis. This is because the very reception of what psychoanalysis is eventually all about is inflected in important ways by the understanding of the intellectual traditions that have informed it. In the same way, understandings of the contribution of nineteenth century British philosophy to psychology are in this way profoundly enhanced. So not only do we come to understand psychoanalysis better, but we are also enabled to understand the contributions and inherent insights of British philosophy better.

This new emphasis also makes a contribution to contemporary scholarship by challenging the current consensus that focuses on understanding Freud in terms of nineteenth century German thought. The contribution of this thesis is not to say 'no' to this work (as seen in the discussion of chapter two above), but rather, "yes ... and ...". This includes the importance of recovering the bio-physiological Freud, including the lasting contributions of this approach

to Freud's later thought, from approaches that would see him as working largely within the domain of the German vitalist school of thought.

Beyond that, the whole Tradition-lines approach taken by Günther Götde calls for further exploration, given the benefits of taking a structured approach like this in service to understanding a complex intellectual tradition of this kind. Inevitably, one can take issue with the details of Götde's approach – as has been done in this thesis certainly – but the hermeneutical strength of this general approach is one well worth further investigation. Indeed, there is much to be said for furthering the various strands of each tradition, not only in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, but also in terms of the subsequent schools of thought that his body of work inspired.

Finally, on a smaller scale not, it the whole matter of the historical links between Darwinian evolution (both Darwin himself and other British evolutionists) and Freudian psychoanalysis, as well as its potential for contemporary application, deserves further research. Is Freud's evolutionary thinking more consistent with Lamarckism or is the German Evolutionary tradition clearly demonstratable in Freud's thinking?

All work for another time ...

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