





EXTENDING THE MENTAL:  
PHILOSOPHICAL ASSESSMENTS OF APPROACHES TO THE  
UNCONSCIOUS IN FREUDIAN THEORY AND EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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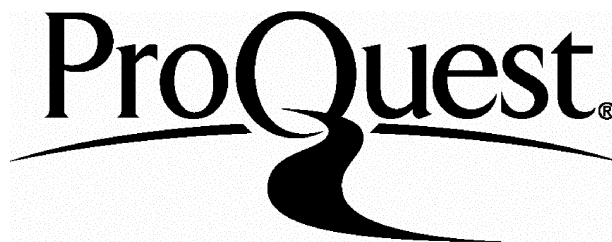
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. The distinction is made between naive first-personal and naive third-personal conceptions of the mind. The relationship between the naive first-personal conception of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality is illuminated via an exposition and assessment of John Searle's recent argument against certain kinds of unconscious mentality. Upon Searle's conception of the mind the notion of unconscious mentality is rendered conceptually incoherent. Searle proposes an extension of this conception of the mind that will accommodate certain forms of unconscious mentality; but, it is argued, his "Dispositional Analysis" of unconscious mentality is inadequate.

The naive first-personal conception of the mind has negative implications for the notion of unconscious mentality. The view that unconscious mentality may be vindicated by rejecting all naive conceptions of mind is examined but found to be problematic: the core objection is that non-naive conceptions of mind are not intelligible as conceptions of mind. The advocate of unconscious mentality faces a dilemma: reject naive conceptions of the mind (and risk unintelligibility) or reject unconscious mentality.

A recent interpretation of Freudian theory suggests that we may avoid the dilemma and vindicate the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality if we take Freud to be committed to a naive third-personal conception of the mind. Such a conception of the mind supports a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality. However, if the naive third-personal conception of the mind is to allow the attribution of the kinds of unconscious mental phenomena found in Freudian theory it must be extended in some appropriate way. The extended naive third-personal conception of the mind has, at least, the potential to support an adequate account of unconscious mentality. Finally, attention is drawn to a number of problems that must be overcome if that potential is to be realized.

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## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 Unconscious mentality: what is it?

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. But, to begin with, it will be helpful if I indicate what notion of unconscious mentality it is that will be examined and assessed in this thesis.

I shall not be concerned with Jung's notion of a collective unconscious mind; nor shall I be concerned with those who claim that there is some universal unconscious mentality that pervades and underlies all phenomena.<sup>1</sup> It is the notion of the unconscious mentality of individual persons that will be examined and assessed.

We say of individual people that they are in a "state of unconsciousness" when they are in a deep sleep, or in a coma.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, we describe our waking state as a "state of consciousness". Although such states are states of persons (and not states of species, or states of the whole universe) my concern in this thesis is not with the notion of states of unconsciousness in this sense. The notion of an unconscious mental state is equivocal between state of unconsciousness (coma; vegetative state; deep

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include Schopenhauer, Eduard Von Hartmann, Carl Gustav Carus. For a detailed discussion of the relation between German romantic philosophy and the notion of a universal unconscious mind see Henri F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry (New York: Basic Books, 1970) pp.199-210

<sup>2</sup> Brian O'Shaughnessy distinguishes different states of consciousness and unconsciousness, and examines the distinction between states of consciousness and, what he calls, 'experiences' or 'particular consciousness' in his 'Consciousness', Midwest Studies in Philosophy X (1986) pp.49-62.

sleep) and unconscious state (a particular unconscious belief, desire or wish). This thesis is concerned with the latter notion of an unconscious mental state.

There is the question of how these two notions of unconscious mentality are related. Must an unconscious mental state be an episode that only occurs in a state of unconsciousness? For the kinds of unconscious mental states that are examined in this thesis it is, in general, not the case that a subject must be in a state of unconsciousness (coma; deep sleep) in order for a particular mental state (of that subject) to be an unconscious mental state. It may be true that if a subject is in a state of unconsciousness then all the mental states that are correctly attributable to them, at that time, must be unconscious mental states. But, even if this line of inference is valid it does not follow that it is only correct to attribute unconscious mental states to those who are in a state of unconsciousness: the attribution of an unconscious mental state to a subject, at a particular time, is consistent with the supposition that the subject is: i) conscious, in the sense of being awake; ii) conscious of other mental states, or their content, at that time.<sup>3</sup>

I have distinguished states of unconsciousness from unconscious mental states; this thesis is concerned with the latter phenomena. There are now two remaining points of clarification that must be addressed: what kind of consciousness is it that unconscious mental states lack; what makes an unconscious state a mental state? With regards to the first point it is unfortunate that there is no universally accepted concept of consciousness that we

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<sup>3</sup> The issues raised in this paragraph will be important for our assessment of Searle's argument against unconscious mentality: see Section 2.2 below.

may define unconscious mentality against.<sup>4</sup>

In recent years philosophers have been particularly concerned with two distinct notions of consciousness.<sup>5</sup> The first notion is phenomenal consciousness. What distinguishes the notion of phenomenal consciousness is the thought that a mental state is a conscious state if, and only if, there is something that it is like for a subject to experience, or be in, that state.<sup>6</sup> If we suppose that phenomenal consciousness is the central, or the only plausible, notion of consciousness we may also be tempted to argue that unconscious mentality consists in a lack of phenomenal consciousness. However: there is a danger that we would count as unconscious many mental states that, intuitively, seem to be conscious mental states. We may agree that there is something that it is like to have perceptual experiences, and sensations such as pains or itches. Such episodes have a subjective character. But, the fact that a mental state lacks the kind of subjective character that our sensations of pain or colour typically have, does not mean that the state is unconscious; unless we are to suppose that all conscious thought has subjective features that are akin to those found in perceptual experience and sensation.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Natsoulas examines seven different senses of the term "consciousness" in 'Consciousness,' American Psychologist Oct. 1978, pp. 906-914. For a discussion of the implications for empirical psychology of the lack of agreement about the nature of consciousness see: Alan Allport, 'What Concept of Consciousness' in Consciousness in Contemporary Science Ed. by A.J. Marcel and E. Bisiach (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) pp. 159-182.

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of recent philosophical thought on the nature of consciousness and an examination of the distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness see the editors' introduction to Consciousness: Psychological and Philosophical Essays ed. by Martin Davies and Glyn W. Humphreys (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993) pp.1-39. (especially pp.9-35)

<sup>6</sup> See Thomas Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat' in his Mortal Questions (Cambridge: CUP, 1979) pp. 168-180

There are two distinct reasons for rejecting the view that unconscious mental states are those mental states that lack phenomenal consciousness. The first is the thought that there are some mental states (e.g. some, but not necessarily all instances of mathematical thinking) that lack the kind of phenomenal features that sensations and perceptual experiences have. The challenge to the claim that consciousness consists in phenomenal consciousness alone is as follows: if the consciousness of all mental states is phenomenal consciousness then some characterization of phenomenal consciousness must be given such that sensations, perceptual experience, all instances of mathematical thinking, all instances of linguistic thought and so on, can all be shown to instantiate phenomenal features. But this general application of the notion of phenomenal consciousness attenuates the notion: if the consciousness of all mathematical thought consists in its being phenomenally conscious then the "something that it is like" notion that applies to perceptual experience involves something over and above phenomenal consciousness (in this attenuated sense of phenomenal consciousness). In short, the objection is that from our own first person point of view we can tell that different kinds of mental state are conscious in different ways; any characterization of consciousness must be sensitive to these differences. To say that all consciousness is phenomenal consciousness fails to register these differences in the experiential character of different kinds of thought. But this line of objection ties the debate to what can be known from the first person point of view. We need some way of adequately answering the following question: are there certain kinds of mental states that are conscious (for us) without it being the case that there is "something that it is like" to be in those states? However, it is notoriously difficult to settle such a debate: e.g. person A may say that certain of their thoughts have no phenomenal characteristics; whilst

person B says that their thoughts of that type always do.

A second line of objection, against the view that all consciousness is phenomenal consciousness, stems from a consideration of another feature of conscious mentality. Conscious mental states are such that they, or their content, are available to us in the sense that we may report their content (or their existence). We may report, attend to, judge, or assess the content of such states just in virtue of being in such states. Unconscious states, and the conscious mental states of others, are not available to us in the same way. The thought that the consciousness of a mental state is connected to the availability of its content for report or judgement forms the basis of the second notion consciousness that is of interest in contemporary philosophy of mind: access consciousness. An access conscious state (with, for example, the content that snow is white) is such that the subject may, simply in virtue of being in that state judge, or report: i) that snow is white; or, ii) that she is in a state with that content.<sup>7</sup>

Access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness are distinct notions of consciousness. There are many questions that arise concerning the relationship between these two notions: must all conscious states be both access and phenomenally conscious? Which notion takes conceptual priority? Can phenomenal consciousness be defined in terms of access? Is the availability for report dependent upon phenomenal consciousness? I have introduced these distinctions between different notions of consciousness to indicate that there may not be universal agreement over

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<sup>7</sup> This formulation is from Davies and Humphreys, op. cit. p.11. The notion of access consciousness is further refined when one introduces the question of what conceptual resources the subject needs in order to judge, or report, the content of their mental states. See Martin Davies, 'Consciousness and the Varieties of Aboutness' in Philosophy of Psychology: Debates on Psychological Explanation ed. by C. Macdonald and G. Macdonald (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) pp.356-392 (especially pp.360-363).

what it is that unconscious mental states lack: e.g. the view that a state may lack phenomenal consciousness but exhibit access consciousness is one that will be rejected by those who are convinced that all consciousness involves phenomenal consciousness. Rather than try to settle this debate, for the purposes of this thesis I shall take an unconscious mental state to be a mental state that exhibits neither phenomenal consciousness nor access consciousness. Such unconscious states may be had by a subject who is in a state of consciousness (wakefulness).

One final clarification of the notion of unconscious mentality will be helpful. C.D. Broad makes the useful distinction between relatively and absolutely unconscious mental states.<sup>8</sup> I may be unconscious of your mental states; such states are relatively unconscious (to me). Absolutely unconscious states are mental states that no person is conscious of. This thesis will be concerned with the notion of absolutely unconscious mental states and events.<sup>9</sup>

I have said a little about what I shall take unconsciousness to consist in. As for the question of what mentality consists in: at this point I merely note that one of the concerns of this thesis is with the relationship between certain deep assumptions about the nature of mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. The notion of an unconscious mental state will mean different things to different people depending upon, in part, what they assume about the nature of mind. On the conception of the mind examined in Chapters 2 and 3 consciousness is taken to be the central mental notion. On the conception of the mind examined in Chapter 4 interpretability is the

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<sup>8</sup> C.D. Broad, Mind and its Place in Nature (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1929) p.375.

<sup>9</sup> An analyst may be conscious of the unconscious mental states of some patient. By "absolutely unconscious" state I mean a state that no-one is conscious of in the way that they are conscious of their own mental states. From now on I will simply refer to unconscious mental states (meaning absolutely unconscious mental states).

distinguishing mark of mentality. I shall not attempt to define some neutral notion of unconscious mentality here.

To summarise: this thesis is concerned with the conceptual coherence of the notion of absolutely unconscious mental states, events, processes and so on. Such states are unconscious in so far as they lack both access and phenomenal consciousness (though the psychological subject may herself be conscious in the sense of being awake and she may be conscious of other mental states at that time); the question of what their mentality consists is an issue that will be discussed throughout this thesis.

## 1.2 Different conceptions of unconscious mentality

We have now narrowed down the notion of unconscious mentality that this thesis is concerned with. Even within this narrower category of unconscious mentality there are distinctions to be made between different accounts and theories of unconscious mental states. The most widely known notion of unconscious mentality is that of Freudian theory. Freud's arguments for the existence of unconscious mental states will be examined in Chapter 4. But we should not suppose that interest in the notion of unconscious mentality is confined to the supporters and critics of Freudian theory. There was much interest in the notion of unconscious mentality in the two hundred years before Freud's use of the term.<sup>10</sup> Some of that interest was in the notion of unconscious mentality as a universal metaphysical principle.<sup>11</sup> But many of these thinkers held the view that some of our personal, psychological, states are both mental

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<sup>10</sup> L.L. Whyte, The Unconscious Before Freud (New York: Basic Books, 1960) contains a wealth of references to Pre-Freudian interest in the unconscious in philosophy, literature and psychology.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 1 above.

and unconscious at the same time.<sup>12</sup> I have drawn attention to the existence of, what I shall call, The Pre-Freudian Unconscious in order to indicate the historical source, and breadth of application, of the debate about the plausibility and coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality. We will be addressing the question of the coherence of the general notion of unconscious mentality; we should bear in mind that the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality is the result of one approach to the unconscious amongst many (of greater or lesser plausibility).

In recent years there has been a resurgence in interest in the notion of unconscious mentality. This interest has been from a psychological quarter methodologically quite distinct from Freudian theory: cognitive psychology. The "Cognitive Unconscious" includes such phenomena as subliminal perception (Marcel; Dixon); blindsight (Weiskrantz); nonconscious social information processing (Lewicki); preconscious perceptual processing (Dixon).<sup>13</sup>

Accounts of unconscious mentality can be grouped into three main divisions: the Freudian Unconscious; the Pre-Freudian Unconscious, and the Cognitive Unconscious. It is worth noting that the thinkers in all these groups hold that there is a significant distinction to be made between conscious and not-conscious phenomena. The recent interest in the Cognitive Unconscious can be seen as a continuation

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<sup>12</sup> See Section One of the Bibliography for selective list of works published before 1880 that contain positive, or speculative, claims for the existence of unconscious mentality.

<sup>13</sup> The term "cognitive unconscious" originates from P. Rozin 'The Evolution of Intelligence and Access to the Cognitive Unconscious,' Progress in Psychobiology and Physiological Psychology 6 (1976) pp. 245-280. A useful introduction can be found in John Kihlstrom's article 'The Cognitive Unconscious' Science 237 (1987) pp. 1445-1452.

For further references see the section of the bibliography devoted to the Cognitive Unconscious.



of the empirical psychological interest in the unconscious in Pre-Freudian times. The reason for a lack of empirical psychological interest in the unconscious in the interim period (1900-1960) is that consciousness ceased to be an object of interest for psychology in the years when behaviourism was the dominant paradigm. As Kihlstrom puts it, in the article noted above: "One of the most salutary by-products of the development of cognitive science has been a revival of interest in consciousness".<sup>14</sup> Interest in unconscious mentality has, historically, been confined to those schools of psychology or philosophy for whom consciousness was a phenomenon of psychological, or philosophical, interest and significance. We should bear this historical observation in mind as we proceed to examine the coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality: there is an intimate relation between, on the one hand, the conceptual coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality, and, on the other, the beliefs one has about the nature of consciousness and its significance for mentality.

### 1.3 Preliminary Sketch

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. There are two main questions that will be addressed in this thesis: i) Can a naive conception of the mind support a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality? ii) What kinds of unconscious mental states are allowable upon a naive conception of the mind? In order to answer these questions I intend to focus upon the work of two authors: John Searle and Sigmund Freud.

I focus upon John Searle because he has recently explicitly argued in some detail against the coherence of the notion of (certain forms of) unconscious mentality.

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<sup>14</sup> Kihlstrom, *ibid.* p.1445

Furthermore, his objections to the notion of unconscious mentality stem, so I argue, from his commitment to a naive conception of the mind. Chapter 2 involves an exposition and assessment of his negative case against unconscious mentality; Chapter 3 is concerned with his positive account of unconscious mentality. In Chapter 4 I turn to Freud's positive case for unconscious mentality and assess a recent interpretation of Freud which takes psychoanalytic explanation to be based upon an extension of our naive psychological forms of explanation.

The middle three chapters are concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. The concluding chapter summarises and assesses the work of the previous three chapters and concludes with answers to the questions noted at the beginning of this section. I end this thesis by indicating certain pertinent issues that need further examination if an adequate account of unconscious mentality is to be given.

## CHAPTER 2

UNCONSCIOUS MENTALITY REJECTED:  
SEARLE'S ARGUMENT FOR THE CONNECTION PRINCIPLEIntroduction

This chapter is concerned with John Searle's arguments against the notion of unconscious mentality. My primary aim is to reveal the underlying motivation for Searle's rejection of unconscious mentality. I begin in Section 2.1 by outlining his argument against unconscious mentality. In Section 2.2 I consider the explicit support for his argument but find it wanting. The remaining three sections are an attempt to uncover the deep assumptions that, for Searle, render the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually incoherent. I argue that the motivation and support for Searle's argument against unconscious mentality comes from his commitment to a particular conception of the mind: the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

2.1 John Searle and the Connection Principle.

John Searle has argued against the possibility of certain kinds of unconscious mental phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In particular he argues against the possibility of unconscious mental processes or states that are deemed to be unavailable, or inaccessible, to consciousness. Examples include: Chomsky's unconscious rule following and Depth Grammar; Freudian unconscious instincts that can never be brought to consciousness; any form of intentional processing in a non-

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<sup>1</sup> John Searle, The Rediscovery of the Mind (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992) Chapter VII; 'Consciousness, explanatory inversion and cognitive science,' Behavioral and Brain Sciences 13 (1990) pp. 585-642. References to The Rediscovery of the Mind will be placed in the text as RM followed by page number.

conscious artificial cognitive system (for Searle, such processing cannot be intentional and a fortiori cannot be mental unless such artificial systems are capable of consciousness). Searle also argues against the coherence of the notion of unconscious mental acts or events whereby such events are deemed to be mental at the time that they are unconscious. Searle objects to the thought that an unconscious event or process could be mental, in the way that conscious states are mental, at the time of its occurrence. Searle objects to certain kinds of unconscious mentality: I will follow Searle in referring to the former as deep unconscious mental phenomena; I will refer to the latter kind of objectionable unconscious mentality as unconscious mental occurrences. If Searle's claims are supportable then we must accept that the notion of unconscious mentality should be restricted and that certain forms of unconscious mentality (advocated by some) must be rejected.

Searle calls his argument against the possibility of certain unconscious mental phenomena 'the argument for the Connection Principle' (RM 155). The Connection Principle is stated by Searle as follows: 'The notion of an unconscious mental state implies accessibility to consciousness' (RM 152). Any state that is not, in principle, accessible to consciousness cannot be a mental state. Searle's Connection Principle makes a positive claim. However, in this chapter I shall be concerned with the negative implications of Searle's argument for the Connection Principle for the notion of unconscious mentality.

Searle expresses his argument for the Connection Principle primarily in terms of intentionality. He objects to those who posit unconscious intentional states that fail to be accessible to consciousness (or that are mental whilst unconscious). Let me begin by quoting the first four steps of Searle's argument:

1. There is a distinction between intrinsic intentionality and as-if intentionality; only

- intrinsic intentionality is genuinely mental.
2. Unconscious intentional states are intrinsic.
  3. Intrinsic intentional states, whether conscious or unconscious always have aspectual shapes.
  4. The aspectual feature cannot be exhaustively or completely characterized solely in terms of third-person, behavioural or even neurophysiological predicates. None of these is sufficient to give an exhaustive account of aspectual shape. (RM 156-158)

Though the argument above makes certain claims about intentionality it is clear that Searle does not intend the conclusions of the argument to apply only to intentional states: the Connection Principle itself expresses a general claim about unconscious mental states. Furthermore, the next step of the argument makes general claims about the possibility of unconscious mentality. The fact that Searle draws general conclusions about mentality from an argument concerned with intentionality does not imply that Searle is making some illicit generalization. The shift to general claims about the mental is warranted because Searle's case against the possibility of unconscious intentional states simply involves a particular application of his more general views about the nature of mind. Deep unconscious intentional states and unconscious intentional occurrences are to be rejected; not because intentional states (alone) have some particular feature that renders the notion of unconscious intentional states incoherent, but because all (intrinsic) intentional states are mental. It may be that Searle couches the argument in terms of intentionality because he takes most of the claims in favour of unconscious mentality to be claims about unconscious intentional phenomena.

Given that Searle intends his argument to be generally applicable to mental phenomena in general; and, given that our concern is with the plausibility and coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality: I suggest that we reformulate his argument in terms of mental states. Such a

re-formulation will be useful for our purposes and it need not misrepresent Searle's views; after all, Searle draws a general conclusion about unconscious mentality from the argument. As the argument for the Connection Principle involves a particular application of some of Searle's general assumptions about the nature of mind it will be helpful if we begin by briefly setting out the important features of Searle's general view of the nature of mind.

Searle claims that: 'Not all of reality is objective; some of it is subjective' (RM 19). But what are these subjective phenomena? For Searle all and only mental phenomena have a subjective ontology:

The ontology of the mental is essentially a first person ontology. . . . Mental states only exist as subjective, first person phenomena. (RM 70)

Searle also maintains that non-mental phenomena can only have an objective ontology. For example: the activity of our digestive system; certain non-mental processes in our brain; these events and processes only have objective ontological features. Mental phenomena have both subjective and objective ontological features; they have an irreducible (RM 19, 95) and ineliminable (RM 56) subjective ontology in addition to the neurophysiological features of the brain that serve as the basis for this 'causally emergent' (RM 112) mentality.

In the argument for the Connection Principle, as outlined above, subjectivity makes an appearance in the guise of 'aspectual shape'. What is 'aspectual shape' and how is aspectual shape related to subjectivity? Searle insists that:

Subjectivity has the . . . consequence that all of my conscious forms of intentionality that give me information about the world independent of myself are always from a special point of view. The world itself has no point of view, but my access to the world through my conscious states is always perspectival, always from my point of

view. (RM 95)

This notion of a special point of view forms the basis for Searle's notion of aspectual shape:

Whenever we perceive anything or think about anything, we always do so under some aspects and not others. These aspectual features are essential to the intentional state; they are part of what makes it the mental state that it is. When you see a car . . . you actually have a conscious experience from a certain point of view and with certain features. . . . and what is true of conscious perceptions is true of intentional states generally. (RM 157)

Aspectual shape is the way that subjectivity is instantiated in intentional states. But subjectivity, or more precisely ontological subjectivity, is what marks off the mental from the non-mental in general. I suggest that we re-formulate the argument for the connection principle in terms of ontological subjectivity. This should not distort Searle's argument, for what does the work in his argument is the assumption that unconscious mental states (of a kind that are not accessible to consciousness) lack the subjective ontological features that are an intrinsic and essential feature of mentality.

Let us return to the argument for the Connection Principle. Remember that Searle's aim is to argue for the claim that 'The notion of an unconscious mental state implies accessibility to consciousness' (RM 152). How do assumptions 1)-4) contribute to this aim? The first and third assumptions jointly entail that, for intentional states, only those states with aspectual shape are genuinely mental. But aspectual shape is merely a species of ontological subjectivity. Given that Searle maintains that all and only mental phenomena have a subjective ontology. We can re-formulate steps 1) and 3) as a single, more general, assumption:

CP1) All and only mental phenomena have ontologically subjective features.

This is an assumption that Searle will accept, and, given that 1) and 3) entail the conclusion that, for intentional states, all intentional states are ontologically subjective (i.e. have aspectual shape) it is justified as a generalization from the intentional to the mental.

Step 2) claims that unconscious intentional states are intrinsic. Searle needs to introduce this assumption because he wishes to claim that unconscious states have intrinsic rather than mere 'as-if' (RM 78) intentionality. Given 1) and 3) we can conclude that unconscious intentional states are mental and that they have aspectual shape. I propose that we introduce a parallel assumption:

CP2) Unconscious mental phenomena have ontologically subjective features.

It may seem that CP2) is redundant given that CP1) expresses the claim that all mental phenomena are ontologically subjective. Given CP1), CP2) is true if there are unconscious mental phenomena. But there are good reasons for introducing CP2): they are similar to Searle's reason for introducing step 2). CP2) claims that unconscious mental phenomena are not to be counted as mental merely in some metaphorical way (as ersatz or 'as-if' mental states).

Searle's steps 1)-3) and our CP1) and CP2) are by way of setting the stage. Unconscious mentality is introduced as being on a par with conscious mentality. By the end of step 3) we have yet to be given reason to deny any form of unconscious mentality. The introduction of the fourth assumption marks the beginning of Searle's attempt to drive a conceptual wedge between the notions of conscious and unconscious mentality. The assumption is that the aspectual features of intentional states (or, more generally, the



subjective features of mental states) cannot be exhaustively accounted for in terms of objective predicates (behavioural, neurophysiological and so on). For Searle: 'no amount of neurophysiological facts under neurophysiological descriptions constitute aspectual facts' (RM 158). We need not depart greatly from Searle's step 4) for our third assumption:

CP3) Ontologically subjective features cannot be exhaustively or completely characterized solely in terms of third-person, behavioural, or even neurophysiological predicates. None of these is sufficient to give an exhaustive account of subjective ontology.

CP3) serves to keep apart the ontologies of the mental and the non-mental. CP3) is an expression of an ontological partition in terms of the features of different kinds of predicates. But Searle is not solely making a claim about the tension that exists between our mental and non-mental vocabularies; for Searle the reason that descriptions in non-mental terms fail to exhaustively characterize mentality is that third-person (descriptive) predicates are appropriate (only) to the particular ontology that they are used to describe. Nor should we suppose that the ontological partition between objective and subjective is a consequence of some linguistic partition. Searle assumes that the particular ontological categories of mind and the non-mental world are independent of, and prior to, our epistemological and linguistic limitations (see RM 23).

What are the implications of accepting Searle's 1)-4) and our CP1)-CP3)? One implication that can be drawn is that unconscious mental states qua mental cannot be exhaustively characterized in terms of third-person predicates. But CP3) does not, it would seem, give us any reason to reject unconscious mentality or to treat conscious and unconscious mentality differently. Searle's step 4) merely serves to pave the way for the assumption

that gives rise to a disparity between Searle's accounts of conscious and unconscious mentality. Searle's fifth step (and our fourth) is as follows:

5. [T]he ontology of unconscious mental states, at the time they are unconscious, consists entirely in the existence of purely neurophysiological phenomena. (RM 159)

We need not re-formulate this to fit with CP1)-CP3), as 5) already expresses a general claim about unconscious mentality; 5) will be our assumption CP4). The introduction of CP4) leads to an apparent 'contradiction' (RM 159). Qua mental, unconscious mental states must have a subjective ontology. But, according to CP4), qua unconscious they can only have objective ontological features. CP3) served to keep apart the truly mental from the non-mental. CP4) serves to place conscious mentality in one camp and unconscious mentality in the other. Only conscious mentality has an irreducible, intrinsic subjective ontology. In the case of conscious mentality there are subjective ontological features that are causally emergent from the neurophysiological features of the brain. In sharp contrast, in the case of unconscious mentality '[t]here is nothing else there except neurophysiological states and processes describable in neurophysiological terms' (RM 161). Conscious mentality is not exhaustively describable in neurophysiological terms; unconscious mentality is. For Searle, this difference in describability reflects differences in ontology; so there must be some ontological difference between conscious and unconscious mentality.

The central implication of CP1)-CP4) is that unconscious mental states, if they are to be mental at all, cannot be so in the same way as conscious mentality. Searle argues against the 'naive, pretheoretical notion of an unconscious mental state [as] the idea of a conscious

mental state minus the consciousness'.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, unconscious mental events cannot count as mental occurrences just in virtue of their exhibiting certain paradigmatically mental features at a particular time. Searle's conception of the mind disallows the possibility of unconscious states being mental states in their own right: all and only mental states have intrinsic ontologically subjective features whilst unconscious states cannot. Searle concludes his assault on the unconscious with this assessment:

[T]here is supposed to be a class of deep unconscious mental intentional phenomena that are not only unconscious but that are in principle inaccessible to consciousness. These, I have argued, do not exist. Not only is there no evidence for their existence, but the postulation of their existence violates a logical constraint on the notion of intentionality. (RM 173)

We should take heed of the strength and form of Searle's conclusion. Searle is not merely claiming that the notion of unconscious mentality lacks empirical support. Nor is he simply drawing attention to the fact that there are epistemological and methodological problems with regards to how we may come to form beliefs about the unconscious. Searle concludes, of unconscious intentional states, that 'the postulation of their existence violates a logical constraint on the notion of intentionality' (RM 173). The notion of an unconscious intentional state is incoherent because intentional states are mental states and all mental states must exhibit ontological subjectivity. Searle's negative conclusion is thus not confined to unconscious intentional states alone: the notion of an unconscious mental state is conceptually incoherent.<sup>3</sup> Is this negative

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<sup>2</sup> Searle seems to have Freud in mind as a target here. See the discussion of Freud in Chapter 4 below.

<sup>3</sup> The Connection Principle expresses a claim about unconscious mentality in general.

conclusion warranted? There may be many good reasons for rejecting such deep unconscious mental phenomena, but we now need to assess the soundness of Searle's particular argument for this strong conclusion. So far we have (in CP1-CP4)) been concerned with a number of assumptions that Searle puts forward; if these assumptions are all supportable then the notions of deep unconscious mentality and of unconscious mental occurrences must be rejected.

## 2.2 The explicit support for Searle's argument

The assumption that is particularly problematic for the notion of unconscious mentality is CP4). It is a claim about the ontology of unconscious mental states; unconscious mental states only have objective ontological features at the time that they are unconscious. They cannot truly be mental because all mental states have an irreducible and ineliminable subjective ontology.

Searle's explicit argument in favour of CP4) uses, as a lever, our intuitions about unentertained belief and memory (RM 159).<sup>4</sup> Searle asks us to imagine a man in a sound dreamless sleep. Searle notes that we can still truly say of this sleeper that he has a number of beliefs even if he is not consciously entertaining such beliefs as he sleeps. Searle then goes on to ask a rhetorical question: 'what fact about him makes it the case that he has these unconscious beliefs?' (RM 159). Searle's confident answer is: '[w]ell, the only facts that could exist while he is completely unconscious are neurophysiological facts' (RM 159). Why? In The Rediscovery of the Mind Searle does not clearly spell out

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<sup>4</sup> Searle does not make clear, in his examples, whether the beliefs attributed to the sleeping person are meant to be tacit (i.e. beliefs that the sleeper has never entertained but, given his other beliefs, he could do so) or simply unentertained (i.e. beliefs that have been consciously entertained that are not being entertained at the moment).

his reasons. Thankfully Searle has made his reasons clear elsewhere. If we allow genuine unconscious mentality for the sleeping man then we will be committed to the absurd claim that:

[I]n addition to the neurophysiological processes in his brain, there are then and there the aspectual shapes of all the indefinitely large number of beliefs the man has.<sup>5</sup>

Searle's argument in support of CP4) seems to be as follows:

i) We can attribute indefinitely many unentertained and tacit beliefs to an unconscious person.

ii) It is absurd that indefinitely many occurrent instances of belief could be realized in the brain at a particular moment.

iii) Commitment to a non-dispositional account of unconscious mentality takes the attribution of unentertained and tacit beliefs to consist in the attribution of unconscious occurrent instances of belief.

iv) Given i) and iii), commitment to a non-dispositional account of unconscious mentality leads to the attribution of indefinitely many occurrent instances of belief at a particular moment.

v) Given ii) and iv), iii) is absurd and thus non-dispositional accounts of unconscious mentality should be rejected.

This seems to be what Searle has in mind as support for CP4). But, as support for CP4) it is inadequate. The fundamental problem with this line of argument in favour of CP4) is that it conflates the treatment of unentertained belief; tacit belief and memory on the one hand, with that of unconscious mentality on the other. Given Searle's favoured dispositional analysis this is, for him, a fair move: tacit belief, unentertained belief, memory and

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<sup>5</sup> Behavioral and Brain Sciences 16:1 (1993) p.201.

unconscious states in general will be amenable to a dispositional analysis.<sup>6</sup> But at this stage of the argument for the Connection Principle he has not shown that we must treat all unconscious mentality dispositionally. We can, if we wish, entirely agree that it would be absurd to suppose that every belief that can be truly attributed to a person must be actually, occurrently, realized there and then (albeit unconsciously). We may also wish to agree with Searle that such (tacit or unentertained) beliefs should be treated dispositionally in some way. But such agreement does not entail agreement with Searle's general claim CP4) that denies mentality to unconscious states. To summarise: my first objection against Searle is that he conflates a treatment of tacit belief, unentertained belief, and memory with that of unconscious mentality. We cannot draw general implications about the plausibility of unconscious mentality from the fact that certain accounts of unconscious mentality are not appropriate to a treatment of the dispositional nature of unentertained and tacit belief.

Searle's explicit support for CP4) gives rise to a second pair of (related) objections. I want to draw attention to the fact that Searle, in his support for CP4), uses the example of a person in a sound dreamless sleep. We are expected to have intuitions about what kind of mental activity (if any) may be found in a person in such a state. The intuitions that we have, concerning the mentality of the sleeper, are to count (Searle hopes) in favour of CP4). There are two objections that I want to raise against this particular line of support for CP4). First: there is the question of whether our intuitions about some phenomenon should be allowed to play any decisive role in determining the conceptual coherence of the phenomenon in question. With regards to the mentality of the sleeping person Searle assumes that we will agree

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<sup>6</sup> Searle's dispositional analysis is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.2, below.

that the 'only facts that could exist while he is completely unconscious are neurophysiological facts' (RM 159). This is a modal claim. We are being asked to form an intuition about what could be the case. We are supposed to agree with the claim that, in the brain of a sleeping person, only non-mental phenomena can exist. Intuitions alone seem inadequate for the task of providing support for CP4).

The first objection is directed against the general use of intuitions. The second objection is that: even if our appeal to intuition is unobjectionable in certain cases; we must ask whether our intuitions about the mental life of a sleeping person are a sound guide to our intuitions about the plausibility of unconscious mentality in general.<sup>7</sup> We should note that theorists who make claims about unconscious mental states are not, in general, concerned solely with the mentality of those who are in a dreamless sleep or other states of unconsciousness. For example: cases of subliminal perception; unconscious learning; unconscious social information processing and so on: all these phenomena are unconscious (supposedly mental) phenomena of waking subjects; the subject is not conscious of these phenomena though they are, in the waking sense, conscious (they may be conscious of other phenomena at the same time). For certain kinds of unconscious mentality it may even be that the subject has to be in a wakeful state (or at the very least, not in a sound dreamless sleep) if they are to acquire the information which is then, unconsciously processed. The subject would need to be in a state of consciousness in order to have these unconscious mental states. I am not claiming that wakefulness is a necessary condition for all mental activity (including unconscious mental activity) I am merely pointing out that

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<sup>7</sup> I have already discussed the distinction between states of unconsciousness (sleep; coma etc.) and unconscious mental states (unconscious wishes etc.) in Chapter 1.

many of the claims made for unconscious mental phenomena are claims made about the (unconscious) mental activities of wakeful subjects. Our intuitions about the mentality of a person in a state of unconsciousness are no guide to the coherence or plausibility of such unconscious mental phenomena.

I suggest that the use of the example of a sleeping person to generate intuitions about the plausibility of unconscious mentality, though it has obvious rhetorical advantages for Searle, is unsatisfactory. If our intuitions in favour of CP4) are strong then Searle should be able to use examples that are deemed to offer support for unconscious mentality. Searle will have to show that it is not merely our intuitions about sleeping persons that supports CP4). We may share his intuitions for the case of the sleeper but, consistent with this, we may not share his intuitions in more plausible cases of nonconscious mentality. Admittedly, in the case of a waking subject who is unconscious of certain cognitive intentional processes, it is less easy to generate an intuitive response to questions concerning the nature, or presence, of that unconscious processing. Even so, Searle, if he is to support a general conclusion about unconscious mentality, must show that our intuition to agree that 'at the time when the states are totally unconscious, there is simply nothing there except neurophysiological states and processes' (RM 159) is not just an intuition about people who are asleep, or in comatose or vegetative states. In brief: my second objection is that we cannot simply generalize from our intuitions about the mental life of a sleeping person to the plausibility, or implausibility, of unconscious mentality in general; Searle's explicit support for CP4) depends upon just such a move.

Searle's explicit case in favour of CP4) depends upon three things: first, upon a conflation of tacit belief and unentertained belief with unconscious mentality in general (which is acceptable to Searle but need not be accepted by



us). Secondly: Searle's explicit support for CP4) depends upon the viability of the use of intuitions in support of modal claims. Thirdly: the intuitive support for CP4) is derived from our intuitions about the mentality of an unconscious sleeping person; such intuitions may, or may not, count against unconscious mentality in general, Searle needs further argument to show that what is the case for the sleeping man is also the case for the conscious, wakeful, person who is unconscious of certain intentional processes and states. I conclude that Searle's explicit case in favour of CP4) is unsatisfactory. This is not to say that CP4) is unsupportable, rather, it is that Searle does not offer convincing reasons for accepting CP4) at the particular point when he introduces the assumption. We now must turn to the question of whether CP4) can be supported in some other way.

### 2.3 The implicit support for Searle's argument

Let us recall the four steps of Searle's argument against deep unconscious mentality and unconscious mental occurrences:

CP1) All and only mental phenomena have ontologically subjective features.

CP2) Unconscious mental phenomena have ontologically subjective features.

CP3) Ontologically subjective features cannot be exhaustively or completely characterized solely in terms of third-person, behavioural, or even neurophysiological predicates. None of these is sufficient to give an exhaustive account of subjective ontology.

CP4) The ontology of unconscious mental states, at the time they are unconscious, consists entirely in the existence of purely neurophysiological phenomena.

All of the above assumptions are disputable. However, I want to focus upon Searle's commitment to CP1) and CP4).

Without CP1), CP2) would need independent support. CP1) is a problematic general claim about what mentality consists in; it sets up a block against characterizing unconscious mentality in terms of third-personal predicates. But, even if we accept CP1)-CP3) we are merely committed to the claim that if there are unconscious mental states then, qua mental, they cannot be exhaustively characterized in terms of objective, third-person predicates.

In the last section I argued that Searle's explicit arguments in favour of CP4) are unsatisfactory. I suggest that what underlies and motivates Searle's commitment to CP1) and CP4) is his commitment to the deeper, more general, assumption that all genuinely mental states must be conscious. Consider the following quotations:

[W]e really have no notion of the mental apart from our notion of consciousness (RM 18)

The reason for emphasizing consciousness in an account of the mind is that it is the central mental notion. In one way or another, all other mental notions - such as intentionality, subjectivity, mental causation, intelligence, etc. - can only be fully understood as mental by way of their relations to consciousness. (RM 84)

If I am right in thinking that consciousness and subjectivity are essential to the mind, then the conception of the mental employed by the [materialist] tradition is misconceived from the beginning, for it is essentially an objective, third-person conception. (RM 19) (Emphasis mine.)

This second quotation makes Searle's position particularly clear. The kind of subjectivity that is essential to the mental is the subjectivity of consciousness (whatever that may amount to). Consciousness is the 'central mental notion'; not intentionality or subjectivity. It may seem strange that Searle does not save himself the trouble of the seven steps of his argument for the Connection Principle by simply arguing:

i) All mental states must be conscious.

ii) Unconscious mental states qua unconscious can only be mental in some derivative, relational, sense.

He could then go on to argue that a causal/dispositional relation is the only appropriate candidate for the relation in ii). But this direct rejection of deep unconscious mentality and unconscious mental occurrences has far less rhetorical force than the argument for the Connection Principle which, on the surface, makes certain assumptions about the nature of intentionality but draws general conclusions about the coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality. At first sight the argument does not appear to presuppose the outright denial of the possibility of unconscious mentality.

In Section 2.2 I argued that the explicit argument for CP4) was inadequate. Unless we are to reject the argument for the Connection Principle out of hand we must suppose that certain other assumptions explain Searle's commitment to CP4). The quotations above reveal Searle's commitment to the notion that consciousness is essential to the mind. In Sections 2.1 and 2.2 I re-formulated his argument in terms of subjectivity. This characterization allowed us to examine the argument without immediately being forced to consider the issue of whether the argument is question-begging or redundant (in so far as the rejection of the deep unconscious is a simple consequence of his assumption that all mental states must be conscious). But subjectivity is only essential to mentality because it is an 'ineliminable' (RM 56) feature of consciousness. The adequacy of Searle's argument against deep unconscious mental phenomena and unconscious mental occurrences depends upon the support that can be offered for the following claim:

S) All mental states must be conscious states.

The explicit argument for CP4) fails. If S) can be supported then the argument for the Connection Principle

with its general mental conclusion can be supported.<sup>8</sup> To conclude this section: given the inadequacy of the explicit support for CP4), the argument for the Connection Principle will be more convincing if Searle can argue that we should accept S): the claim that all mental states must be conscious. If he can do so then the intentional version of the argument becomes somewhat redundant, as the rejection of deep unconscious mental phenomena and unconscious mental occurrences is a simple consequence of S). The challenge to Searle is as follows: he must be able to show that all mentality must be limited to conscious mentality in the way that he suggests. If he cannot, then we need not follow him in his categorical rejection of deep unconscious mental states and unconscious mental occurrences.

#### 2.4 Searle's conception of mind and the support for S)

I want to begin by considering two ways in which S) might be supported. I shall argue that neither of these two lines of support for S) can explain Searle's commitment to S). I shall then go on to make a suggestion as to what really underlies Searle's commitment to S).

The first line of support for S) is to treat S) as an general empirical claim. The thought would be that S) is a well supported empirical hypothesis because all the mental states that anyone has ever experienced have been conscious mental states. This line of support can be quickly dismissed. Firstly, we should keep in mind the modal nature of S). Searle is not merely claiming that the

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<sup>8</sup> The assumption S) supports the argument for the Connection Principle; S) does not entail the specific details of each of the steps of the argument. For example S) is consistent with the claim that intentional states are non-mental and with the claim that some mental phenomena do not have subjective ontological features. All that I am saying here is that given Searle's argument for the Connection Principle, if S) can be shown to be true then S) can be appealed to in support of it (this is especially true of step CP4)).

hypothesis "all mental states are conscious" is well corroborated. He claims that all mental states must be (in some sense) conscious.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, if the empirical support for S) comes from one's conscious experience of one's own mental states the conclusion that all mental states must be conscious seems to beg the question against the notion of unconscious mentality. One would be appealing only to evidence that could never support the claim that there are unconscious mental states. S) is not an empirical hypothesis so we should not concern ourselves any further with questions of how it may be corroborated.

The second line of support for S) is one that makes appeal to the epistemic differences that exist between conscious and unconscious mental states. Unconscious mental states are epistemically peculiar. For conscious mental states it is assumed that the subject of the states has a particular first-person authority, or epistemic privilege, with regards to those states. With conscious states the person who experiences them is normally taken to be the final arbiter of the content of those states.<sup>10</sup> With unconscious states there is a loss of this epistemic privilege. Other people, from the third-person point of view, may stand in an equally privileged, or more privileged, epistemic relation to the contents of my unconscious mental states than I do myself.

How can the existence of differences in epistemic privilege lend support to S)? One strategy would be to argue that the epistemic privilege that a subject has, relative to her conscious mental states, is the

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<sup>9</sup> The question of what kind of modality is inherent in S) will be discussed below (p.32).

<sup>10</sup> One can accept that there is a loss of first-person authority in the case of unconscious mental states without being committed to the view that first-person authority is to be explained in terms of 'privileged access' to private mental objects. See the discussion of Davidson in 4.4 below.

distinguishing mark of mentality.<sup>11</sup> One could then argue that any state, that does not have this particular epistemic feature, is not a mental state. Unconscious states do not have this feature so, while they are unconscious they cannot be mental states.

There are two problems with this line of argument. The first concerns the question of why privileged access should be taken to be the essential distinguishing feature of mental states. The motivation seems to be that privileged access is a feature of (only) conscious mental states and, as mental states must be conscious, we can use the epistemic notion as a way of distinguishing between mental and non-mental states. But now we have assumed S) as part of the support for the argument that makes appeal to the epistemic features of unconscious mental states. We cannot use the latter argument as support for S) in a non-circular way.

Even if some non-circular version of the argument can be formulated there is a second problem that must be addressed. The argument uses the assumption that there is a disparity between the epistemic features of conscious and unconscious mentality. However, my first-person authority or epistemic privilege is lacking with regards to the mental states of others. There is a lack of epistemic privilege with regards to both unconscious mentality and the mentality of others. Unless we take Searle to be committed to some form of solipsism we cannot suppose that this line of support for S) is one that he utilises. For Searle, the notion of an unconscious mental state is incoherent but the notion of another mind is not.<sup>12</sup> Given that Searle allows the existence of other minds but denies the existence of unconscious mentality: it cannot simply be

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<sup>11</sup> For an example of this line of argument see Thomas W. Smythe, 'Privileged Access as a Criterion of the Mental,' Philosophical Forum IX.4 (1978) pp. 400-408.

<sup>12</sup> Searle offers his solution to the "problem" of other minds at RM pp. 71-77.

a consideration of the epistemic features of unconscious mental states that motivates his rejection of unconscious mentality. S) cannot be supported by making appeal to the epistemic peculiarities of unconscious mental states unless one is committed to solipsism. Searle maintains that there is an important disanalogy between the notion of unconscious mentality and the notion of other minds: the former is incoherent whilst the latter is not. It cannot be epistemic considerations alone that motivate his commitment to this disanalogy. We must now address the question of why Searle supposes that there is this disanalogy between the notion of unconscious mentality and that of the mental states of others (for neither kind of mentality is experienced from my first-personal, conscious point of view in the way that I experience my own conscious mental states).

The disanalogy will be intelligible if S) is true. If all mental states must be conscious states then we must reject claims about unconscious mental states but we can allow it to be the case that other people have minds: so long as those other minds are conscious minds. We still need to uncover why it is that Searle is committed to S). It will be helpful here if we recall two of the quotations from a few pages ago (p.26):

[W]e really have no notion of the mental apart from our notion of consciousness (RM 18)

The reason for emphasizing consciousness in an account of the mind is that it is the central mental notion. In one way or another, all other mental notions - such as intentionality, subjectivity, mental causation, intelligence, etc. - can only be fully understood as mental by way of their relations to consciousness. (RM 84)

What Searle is claiming here is that our conception of the mind is such that our notion of mentality is conceptually, or logically, connected to our notion of consciousness. Underlying Searle's commitment to S) is the following

assumption:

C) The concept of a mental state is only correctly applicable to conscious states.

Searle's commitment to C) explains his commitment to:

S) All mental states must be conscious states.

S) expresses some kind of conceptual necessity. If some state is not conscious then one would be mis-applying the concept of mentality if one were to assert that such a state is a mental state. We can of course use the term "mental" in any way that we please; but Searle will argue that our concept, the concept, of a mental state is logically tied to the concept of consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Searle's commitment to C) explains his insistence upon the following points:

[W]e have no conception of an unconscious mental state except in terms derived from conscious mental states. (RM 19)

For deep reasons our notion of an unconscious mental state is parasitic on our notion of a conscious state. (RM 153)

The 'deep reasons' alluded to above must be our concern now. Searle assumes that our concept of mentality is logically connected to our concept of consciousness. We may call certain deep unconscious states, or unconscious occurrences mental but, for Searle, this involves a misapplication of our concept of mentality.

The argument for the Connection Principle, an argument which aims to show that deep unconscious mental states are

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<sup>13</sup> For Searle the use of the term "mental" is not simply a matter of convention or definition. The facts about the mind determine how the concept and term "mental" should be used.



impossible, has its foundation in the assumption C) above; the assumption that our concept of a mental states is only correctly applicable to conscious states. If we are to rescue the notion of unconscious mentality from Searle's charge of conceptual incoherence we must consider the 'deep reasons' that support Searle's commitment to C).

## 2.5 The naive first-personal conception of the mind

There are two questions that need to be addressed. The first is: why does Searle suppose that the concept mental must be constrained in its correct application to just conscious states? The second question is: must we accept that the concept mental should be constrained in such a way?

With regards to the first question Searle does not offer any explicit argument for it. He takes it to be an obvious truth. Much of The Rediscovery of the Mind can be seen, not as a defence of C), but as an attack on those who fail to see certain self-evident truths about the nature of mind. He describes one of his aims as giving 'a coherent account of the facts about the mind without endorsing any of the discredited Cartesian apparatus' (RM 14). There are 'obvious facts about mental states' (RM 13) that one should accept. The point that I want to stress here is that Searle's conception of the mind is naive. By "naive" I do not mean childish or ill-thought out. Rather, the term "naive" is meant to capture certain important features of Searle's conception of the mind.

Searle himself describes his own view of the mind as 'naive mentalism' (RM 160). His conception of the mind is naive in the sense that it is assumed that mental phenomena, mental entities, mental categories, even mental ontological features, are correctly discoverable by thinkers just in virtue of their attending to their

conscious experience in some appropriate way.<sup>14</sup> Certain facts about consciousness are manifest to anyone not in the grip of some materialist tendency:

I know, for example, that I am now conscious, and that this conscious state that I am in has the subjectivity I have been referring to. (RM 96)

Searle describes such facts as 'facts that are right in front of our face' (RM 96).<sup>15</sup> For Searle, we are conscious of beliefs and desires and we can come to know, not only the content of our beliefs, but, also facts about the ontology of consciousness, and of mind, simply by attending to our conscious experience. Searle vehemently opposes those who argue that certain mental entities (such as beliefs and desires) are merely explanatorily useful theoretical entities with no real existence.<sup>16</sup> The subjective ontology of beliefs 'is not dependent on the truth of a special theory' (RM 61). Beliefs and desires are not 'postulated', we 'simply experience conscious beliefs and desires' (RM 59).

Searle's conception of the mind is not just naive it is also first-personal:

Because mental phenomena are essentially connected with consciousness, and because consciousness is essentially subjective, it follows that the ontology of the mental is essentially a first-person ontology. Mental states are always somebody's mental states. There is always a 'first-person,' an 'I,' that has these mental states. The consequence of this

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<sup>14</sup> The notion of naivety will surface again, in a slightly different sense, in Chapter 4 with regards to the third-personal conception of the mind.

<sup>15</sup> Similar claims about what we can know about the mind simply in virtue of attending to our experience can be found at RM pp. 96-99.

<sup>16</sup> Especially in RM pp. 58-63: his targets are Stephen Stich and P.M. Churchland.

is . . . that the first-person point of view is primary . . . it is important to emphasize that what we are trying to get at when we study other people is precisely the first-person point of view. (RM 20)

Searle assumes that we can come to know what makes a state a mental state just in virtue of our attending to our own conscious experience from the first-person point of view.

How does Searle's conception of the mind motivate and support his commitment to C) (and thus his rejection of unconscious mentality)? Searle is committed to the naive first-personal epistemological assumptions: i) that one can come to know facts about the mind via one's first-personal experience; ii) that, for certain subjective facts about the mind one may only come to know these via one's first-personal experience of one's own mind. But Searle is not merely committed to these assumptions: he is also committed to the specific claim that mental concepts are only correctly applicable to conscious states. It is important to note that the general epistemological assumptions do not entail the specific claim C). Searle assumes that he can discover facts about the nature of mind just in virtue of attending to his own conscious mental life; and, as a result of attending to his own conscious mental life, he finds it compelling to believe that all mentality is conscious mentality. Searle assumes that what he discovers in virtue of attending to his own mind is true of mentality in general; the epistemological assumptions alone do not support this specific claim.

From now on I shall refer to Searle's conception of the mind as the naive first-personal conception of the mind. The naive first-personal conception of the mind is a conception of the mind that makes the general epistemological assumptions noted above and also accepts the claim C) (that our mental concepts are only applicable to conscious states).

But should we accept C)? Should we agree with Searle

that our mental concepts are only correctly applicable to conscious mental states? One serious problem that Searle faces is that there is a tension between the naive first-personal nature of his conception of mind and the generality of the conclusions that he aims to draw. His commitment to a naive first-personal conception of the mind allows him to suppose that he can discover facts about the mind just by attending to his own conscious mental life. Even if we accept that a naive subject can come to know certain facts about their own conscious mental life just in virtue of their attending to it in some appropriate way; it is another matter to suppose that such a subject is justified in drawing a general, universally applicable conclusion about all mentality.

Searle's claim C) is based upon his experience of his own conscious mental life. On the basis of this experience he comes to believe that his conscious states have 'an ineliminable subjective ontology' (RM 56). But he also claims that this subjectivity is essential to mentality (RM 19; 56). But how can Searle claim that the kind of subjectivity that he discovers in his own mental life is essential to all mentality? Unconscious mental states, and the mental life of other people, cannot be known from the first person point of view in the way that his own conscious mental states are. If there are any facts that are there in front of Searle's face they are facts about his own conscious mind. The epistemological assumptions grant no epistemic privileges with regards to the mentality of others or about the nature and plausibility of unconscious mentality. The claim C) is a universal claim about the general application of our mental concepts. If C) is to be supported by the naive first-personal epistemological assumptions then Searle will have to be committed to the view that he is in a position to come to know the nature of all mentality. But, even if Searle embraces solipsism then the naive first-personal epistemological assumptions grant him epistemic privilege

only relative to all conscious mentality (if he is the only mind, all and only conscious mentality will be accessible, and knowable, from his first person point of view). But the naive first-personal epistemological assumptions do not support any epistemic privilege with regards to unconscious mentality. Unconscious mentality, qua unconscious will not be accessible, or knowable, from the first person point of view. Alternatively, if Searle can argue for some form of idealism, whereby it is granted that all the ideas that exist are conscious ideas then he can reject unconscious mentality. Searle does not argue for any such position. He is not a solipsist; nor is he an idealist. Searle's claim C) is not justified even by the epistemological assumptions of a naive first-personal conception of the mind. The epistemological assumptions of a naive first-personal conception of the mind do not entail the rejection of unconscious mentality.

Searle believes that he knows the nature of mind and the general applicability of our mental concepts. He believes that he is justified in making the claim C) because it seems to him self-evident. Unless Searle is committed to some kind of solipsistic idealism he cannot claim that all mentality is manifest to him in the way that his own conscious states are. Searle cannot justifiably claim to uncover the general boundaries of the mental just in virtue of attending to his own conscious experience. The mental states of others, and unconscious mental states will not enter into his experience. Searle needs further argument to support the claim that his naive first-personal conception of the mind is exhaustive. Searle offers no such argument. The naive first-personal conception of the mind favoured by Searle simply begs the question against the possibility of unconscious mentality.

In response to this objection, the defender of Searle may be tempted to reply that we all can come to see the evident truth that mental states must be conscious. We can all attend to our own mental life and simply see the 'facts

that are right in front of our face' (RM 96). The debate would then centre upon two issues: a) whether we can come to know truths about the nature of mind just in virtue of our naive mental experience; b) whether one of the truths, learned in this way, is the general truth that our mental concepts are only applicable to conscious mental states.

A full treatment of these issues is beyond the scope of this thesis. But we should note the particular rhetoric involved in Searle's attempt to convince us. We are meant to attend to our own conscious thoughts and to agree that our mental concepts are only applicable to such conscious states. What if we disagree? What if we seek and do not find the subjective ontology that Searle finds in his own conscious experience? Are we to suppose that our mentality is different from Searle's? Who is right? Searle's position may be hard to refute but it is similarly hard to defend. It is instructive to note the way that Searle expresses his disdain for those who fail to see what he sees in his own conscious mental states. Those who disagree with him are akin to a 'compulsive neurotic' (RM 31) whose neurosis consists in the rejection of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. The unconscious source (RM 31) of the rejection of his views of the mind can be traced to, he suggests, an irrational 'terror of consciousness' (RM 55).

We should bear in mind that our concern is with the coherence and plausibility of the notion of unconscious mentality. The naive first-personal conception of the mind is, as it stands, inconsistent with the conceptual coherence of unconscious mentality. If the notion of unconscious mentality is to be rescued from conceptual bankruptcy it seems that we must reject the naive first-personal conception of the mind. I have argued that there is a case to be made for the rejection of the naive first-personal conception of the mind but I have also pointed out that this conception of the mind is notoriously difficult to refute or defend. But we are still faced with the

questions of: whether the notion of unconscious mentality is coherent, and whether it can be rendered coherent by a naive conception of the mind. If the notion of unconscious mentality is to be vindicated some positive conception of the mind that renders the notion conceptually coherent must be defensible.

What are the options for the advocate of unconscious mental states? There seem to be three main options:

i) Argue that the naive first-personal conception of the mind should be rejected and some naive, but not first-personal, conception of the mind is supportable; such that this conception of the mind renders the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually coherent. This is the strategy that will be discussed in Chapter 4 (Sections 4.3 and 4.4).

ii) Argue that the naive first-personal conception of the mind should be rejected and that some non-naive conception of the mind is supportable; such that this non-naive conception of the mind renders the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually coherent. This strategy will also be discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1).

iii) Argue that the naive first-personal conception of the mind can be supplemented or extended in some way such that the extended conception of the mind renders the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually coherent. This strategy will be examined in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have been concerned with Searle's argument against the notion of unconscious mentality. I traced the support and motivation for Searle's argument to the assumption C): that mental concepts are only applicable to conscious states. I noted that one can accept naive first-personal epistemological assumptions without being committed to C). Searle's naive first-personal conception of the mind (what I refer to as the naive first-personal

conception of the mind) involves more than just a commitment to certain epistemological assumptions. Searle believes that he can come to know the general limits to mentality just by attending to his own conscious experience. On the naive first-personal epistemological assumptions that Searle accepts, such a general conclusion about the mind could only be warranted if Searle can argue for some form of solipsistic idealism. He does not do so. Nor does he offer any other argument for C). Searle simply begs the question against the notion of unconscious mentality.

Rather than attempt to refute, or argue against the naive first-personal conception of the mind the rest of this thesis is concerned with the following issue: if the notion of unconscious mentality is to be vindicated we must be able to show that some conception of mind, other than the naive first-personal one, is defensible. But, before we deal with alternative conceptions of the mind I want to turn to Searle's positive account of unconscious mentality: though it may appear paradoxical, Searle believes that his conception of the mind is consistent with the existence of unconscious mental phenomena.



## CHAPTER 3

UNCONSCIOUS MENTALITY ACCOMMODATED:  
EXTENDING THE NAIVE FIRST-PERSONAL CONCEPTION OF THE MINDIntroduction.

In this chapter I shall attempt, in Section 3.1, to place Searle's conception of mind, a conception of mind with negative implications for unconscious mentality, within a broader context. Though Searle's account of the mind may be idiosyncratic in many respects I want to draw attention to the important similarities that exist between Searle's conception of the mind and that of other thinkers in history. The assumptions that motivate and support Searle's rejection of unconscious mentality are not peculiar to Searle. The naive first-personal conception of the mind was, for a long time, the orthodox conception of the mind.

Section 3.2 outlines Searle's attempt to reconcile his commitment to the naive first-personal conception of mind with his commitment to the mentality of some unconscious phenomena. To achieve this rapprochement between his conception of mind and unconscious mentality Searle offers a dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality. I argue that the dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality offered by Searle is inadequate and should be rejected.

3.1 The naive first-personal conception of mind as orthodoxy

Though Searle's philosophical account of the mind has certain idiosyncrasies and peculiarities that make it very much Searle's conception of mind, there are similarities that exist between his conception of mind and that favoured by many other thinkers. In Chapter 2 I drew attention to the naive and first-personal nature of Searle's conception

of the mind. There are two assumptions that I took to be central to Searle's conception of the mind. The first is the general methodological assumption that a subject may come to know, just in virtue of her naive experience of her own mental life, the nature of mind and the correct application of the concept mental. The second assumption, one that Searle is committed to on the basis of his naive experience of his own mental life, is the claim that our mental concepts are only correctly applicable to conscious states. Searle is not alone in holding these views. Consider the following claims:

As to the fact that there can be nothing in the mind, in so far as it is a thinking thing, of which it is not aware, this seems to me to be self evident.<sup>1</sup>

[W]e cannot have any thought of which we are not aware at the very moment when it is in us.<sup>2</sup>

For it is altogether as intelligible to say, that a body is extended without parts, as that any thing thinks without being conscious of it, or perceiving that it does so.<sup>3</sup>

[I]t being hard to conceive that any thing should think and not be conscious of it.<sup>4</sup>

The first two quotations are from Descartes, the second two from Locke. These quotations alone are not meant to be taken as conclusive proof that either philosopher is committed to a conception of mind that resembles Searle's.

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<sup>1</sup> Rene Descartes, 'Fourth Replies' in Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings trans. J Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p.130.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p.130.

<sup>3</sup> John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690) (II.i.9)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* (II.i.11)

However, I am assuming that it will be apparent to anyone familiar with the work of these philosophers that both philosophers share at least the assumption of the priority of the first-personal point of view and the assumption that what is revealed in consciousness constitutes the mental realm. They are committed to the notion that mental facts exist, mental phenomena are not the hypothetical entities of some theory. They are committed to the assumption that our concept of a mental state is only properly applicable to conscious states, though they may disagree about what is to be included as purely mental (rather than, for example, bodily).<sup>5</sup>

Descartes and Locke are not the only thinkers who are committed to these assumptions about the nature of mind. In the Nineteenth Century William James and Franz Brentano were similarly committed to the view that the concept of mentality is such that only conscious states can truly be mental. But, by the late Nineteenth Century, questions about the nature of mind were not solely the domain of philosophers. Empirical psychology began with certain background assumptions about the nature of mind. The assumptions were, in the main, those of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. The implications of such assumptions for the methodology of empirical psychology are considerable. William James, in his Principles of Psychology informs us that:

Introspective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always. The word introspection hardly needs to be defined - it means, of course, the looking into our own minds and reporting what we there discover. Everyone agrees that we there discover states of consciousness. (Emphasis his.)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In the case of memory the matter is somewhat more complicated. Locke, like Searle, allows that memory may count as mental in a dispositional sense.

<sup>6</sup> William James, The Principles of Psychology Vol 1, (First published 1890; London: Macmillan & Co, 1891) p.162.

He then goes on to tell us that he takes the above principle (of the priority of introspection) to be the 'most fundamental of all the postulates of psychology' adding that he will reject any inquiry as to the correctness of this assumption as 'too metaphysical for the scope of this book'.<sup>7</sup> James is not alone in his assumption that attention to conscious experience should form the basis of any adequate psychology.<sup>8</sup> Franz Brentano shares with Searle and James the commitment to the assumption that psychology should be, primarily, the study of conscious mental states:

We must consider only mental phenomena in the sense of real states as the proper object of psychology. And it is in reference only to these phenomena that we say that psychology is the science of mental phenomena.<sup>9</sup>

For Brentano, mental phenomena are conscious mental states. Of the term "consciousness" he tells us that he 'prefer[s] to use it as synonymous with "mental phenomena" or "mental act"'.<sup>10</sup>

If it is assumed that psychology is the study of the mind and also assumed that the mind is constituted by conscious phenomena then there is little room for an

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p.162

<sup>8</sup> The "founding father" of empirical psychology Wilhelm Wundt shares James's commitment to the thought that psychology is properly the study of consciousness; the object of psychology is 'the investigation of conscious processes and the modes of connection peculiar to them'. W. Wundt, Principles of Physiological Psychology trans. E.B. Titchener (First published 1874) (London: Swann Sonnenschein, 1904), p.2.

<sup>9</sup> F. Brentano, Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint (First published 1874) Trans. A.C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell & L.L. McAllister, (London: Macmillan, 1973), p.100.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p.102.

account of unconscious mentality in empirical psychology.<sup>11</sup> It should now be clear that the conceptual issues raised in our examination of Searle are not merely an abstract philosophical concern. Empirical psychology began with the background assumptions of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. Not only does the naive first-personal conception of the mind render the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually incoherent; but, as the conception of the mind accepted by early empirical psychologists, it removes the study of unconscious processes and states from the domain of psychology (perhaps placing it, as Searle does, in the domain of neurophysiology).

I have aimed to place Searle's conception of the mind within a broader context. Our concern in this thesis is with the notion of unconscious mentality. The assumptions that fuel Searle's rejection of unconscious mentality are not peculiar to Searle. Not only are the assumptions not peculiar to Searle but the range of their influence is not restricted to debates in the philosophy of mind. The point that I hope to have made in this section is that, with regards to unconscious mentality, the assumptions that constitute the naive first-personal conception of the mind are of great significance for philosophy of mind; empirical psychology and the notion of unconscious mentality.

But, if unconscious mentality is incoherent and not an object of proper psychological study, how should we treat the phenomena of memory? How should we treat those beliefs that we are not currently entertaining? Must these phenomena be denied mental status? Naively, we consider memory and belief to be mental phenomena. It might now seem that the naive first-personal conception of the mind denies too much. Searle believes that memory and unentertained belief can be accounted for, as mental

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<sup>11</sup> Both Brentano and James argue at length against the notion of unconscious mental states. Brentano, op. cit. Bk.II Ch.2; James, op. cit. pp. 162-176.

phenomena, without his having to reject the naive first-personal conception of the mind. The account of memory and unentertained belief, is, he believes, applicable to all phenomena that may properly be described as unconscious.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2 Extending the naive first-personal conception of the mind: Searle's Dispositional Analysis of Unconscious Mentality

Searle makes the following claims that might seem paradoxical given his commitment to the claim that all mental states are conscious:

The explanatory power of the notion of the unconscious is so great that we cannot do without it, but the notion is far from clear. (RM 151)

Of course, at any given point in that person's life, most of the mental phenomena in that person's existence are not present to consciousness. (RM 18)

[A]t any given point in our waking lives only a tiny fraction of our mental states is conscious. (RM 84)

Why does Searle make these claims? Searle, and other theorists who are committed to the naive first personal conception of the mind, need to bring unentertained belief and memory within the aegis of the mental. However, there seems to be a tension between the assumption that consciousness is essential to the mental and the naive supposition that these non-conscious phenomena are mental even though they are unconscious. If the naive first-personal conception of the mind is to accommodate the phenomena of memory and unentertained belief it must be supplemented or extended in some way such that it does not restrict mentality (at time t) to just those states that

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<sup>12</sup> Unconscious as opposed to not-conscious where the latter is taken to imply a complete lack of mentality.

are occurrently conscious (at time  $t$ ). Searle's proposed extension of the naive first-personal conception involves a dispositional analysis (RM 160) of unconscious mental phenomena.

In Chapter 2 we looked at the first five steps of Searle's argument for the Connection Principle. We stopped at the fifth step. By that point Searle had assumed the following: unconscious mentality is genuine and not 'as-if' mentality; the ontological subjectivity of mental states is not exhaustively describable in terms of third-personal predicates; finally, he introduced the problematic assumption that the ontology of unconscious mentality is purely objective: unconscious phenomena are exhaustively describable (at the time they are unconscious) in third-personal predicates. We spent some time examining the support that could be offered for this fifth step (CP4). Searle uses, as examples of unconscious intentional states, the unentertained beliefs of a sleeping person:

Imagine that a man is in a sound dreamless sleep. Now while he is in such a state it is true to say of him that he has a number of unconscious mental states. For example, he believes that Denver is the capital of Colorado, Washington is the capital of the United States, etc. (RM 159)

To account for the mentality of such unconscious phenomena Searle introduces two more steps to his argument.

6. The notion of an unconscious intentional state is the notion of a state that is a possible conscious thought or experience.

7. The ontology of the unconscious consists in objective features of the brain capable of causing subjective conscious thoughts.

Memory and unentertained belief are to count as mental because they are possible conscious thoughts or experiences. The ontology of unconscious mentality is unlike that of conscious mentality: it is not subjective,

it consists in 'objective features of the brain' that are capable of causally bringing about certain conscious thoughts.

Searle's dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality is introduced as a way of explaining how unentertained beliefs can still count as mental. How does Searle's dispositional account of unconscious mentality fit into the themes that are being explored in this chapter and this thesis? We are concerned with the plausibility and conceptual coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality. In this chapter, and in Chapter 2, we have been examining the naive first-personal conception of the mind. At first sight it seemed to exclude memory and unentertained belief from the mental. Though this conception of the mind seems to restrict the mental to occurrent conscious mental states Searle proposes that the naive first-personal conception of the mind can be extended. He summarises his position in the following way:

All my mental life is lodged in the brain. But what in my brain is my "mental life"? Just two things: conscious states and those neurophysiological states and processes that - given the right circumstances - are capable of generating conscious states. (RM 162)

Searle proposes an extension of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. The important point for our purposes is that this extension, that which comes with the addition of the dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality, is meant to be sufficient to account for all unconscious mentality. The extension of the mental that Searle proposes is meant to be exhaustive. All mental states must be either: occurrent conscious states or, if they are not, then they must be brain states capable of causing conscious states. Nothing else can count as mental for Searle. Searle's dispositional account of unconscious mentality may seem to offer the prospect of a rapprochement between the naive first-personal conception of the mental



and the existence of unconscious mental states. We must now assess whether Searle's extension of the naive first-personal conception of the mind is adequate.

Searle does not spell out his dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality in much detail. Central to his account is the thought that an unconscious mental state, qua mental 'must be the sort of thing that can be brought to consciousness' (RM 160); 'it is the sort of thing that is in principle accessible to consciousness' (RM 60). Searle seems to run together the notions of causing a conscious state, being accessible to consciousness, being available to consciousness and so on.<sup>13</sup> To some extent this apparent conflation can be excused if we are sensitive to the context of each claim: from the third person point of view, we can describe the neurophysiology of the brain in terms of its ability to cause, or bring about, conscious states. From the first person point of view it seems that Searle believes that it is appropriate to talk of such states being accessible to consciousness. One point must be stressed about this notion of accessibility. Searle vehemently objects to the notion that unconscious states are already mental states that may or may not be lit up by the 'flashlight' of consciousness (RM 168). He attributes this view to Freud (RM 168). For Searle, it is not that the conscious subject accesses mental states that already instantiate the subjective ontological features that are characteristic of all mental states; rather, it is that the brain causes certain subjective phenomena to come into existence in certain conditions. The unconscious states of the brain are only mental in this relational, dispositional, sense. 'Access' and 'accessibility' are, perhaps, not the most felicitous terms that Searle could have chosen. From the naive first person point of view it

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<sup>13</sup> For example: see RM 162 (first paragraph). Searle shifts from talks of processes that are 'capable of generating conscious states' in one sentence; in the next he seems to refer to the same phenomena as 'states that are in principle accessible to consciousness'.



appears that we access our memories. We can attend to them time and time again. Let us be extremely charitable to Searle and suppose that the notions of accessibility to consciousness on the one hand, and the notion of causally bringing about consciousness on the other hand can be reconciled if we register the fact that the use of the former is appropriate to a first-personal characterization of the phenomenology and epistemology of consciousness, whilst the latter is appropriate to a third-personal characterization of certain causal features of brain activity.

Even if we are charitable in this respect there still seems to be a problem with another area of his dispositional analysis. Searle takes the mentality of unconscious states to consist in the causal potential of brain states to bring about conscious states. Searle does not specify what this causal potential is meant to be. Searle offers the analogy of poison. A bottle of poison remains dispositionally poisonous even if no-one ever ingests it. In the 'right circumstances' it would have certain effects and these effects partly contribute to the identification of the stuff as poison. But Searle offers us no account of what he takes the 'right circumstances' to be in the case of the unconscious states of the brain and the conscious states that such unconscious states may bring about.

One problem for Searle's account is that, in a loose sense, the brain will have some causal role to play in bringing about all our conscious experience, including perceptual experience. Searle cannot be making the claim that, for example, all the perceptual experience we will ever have is, at present unconscious mentality in our brain just because our brain, 'given the right circumstances' will bring about these experiences. Perhaps Searle can reply that the 'right circumstances' are those where there is no external influence upon the brain. But this seems to be too strong a condition: I may recall some memory because

I am asked a question. The event external to the brain (the questioning) had some causal role to play in bringing about the recall of the memory. If we restrict the dispositional account to cases where brain states bring about conscious states without any 'external' influence, we will end up dismissing a great deal of what Searle wants to include as unconscious mentality.

Even if Searle can find some adequate way of excluding those cases where the brain plays some causal role in bringing about conscious perception on the one hand; and those cases where external events make some causal contribution to the brain's bringing about a conscious state on the other: there is still the problem of imagination. When I imagine, or dream, my brain brings about conscious mental states. My brain currently has the causal potential to bring about countless thoughts. Searle's treatment of unconscious mentality in this way seems to attribute far too much unconscious mentality, in an indiscriminating way, to the brain. Unfortunately Searle does not offer any account of the what he takes the 'right circumstances' and the right causal relation to be. In short, Searle says very little about just what conditions must hold for a brain process, or state, to count as a mental one.

In addition to the problems raised so far there is also the question of the individuation of unconscious mental states. For example, in Freudian theory a particular unconscious motive or wish may be attributed to the subject on the basis of interpretation of actions, word-associations, dreams and so on. The content of the attributed state will feature in explanations of the subject's action and bear some logical relation to the description of that action.<sup>14</sup> But this process of individuating unconscious mental states is one that Searle rejects. (RM 166). One problem that Searle faces arises

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2, below.

because a particular brain process or state can make some causal contribution to bringing about many different conscious states. Either the brain process is many unconscious mental states (in Searle's dispositional sense) or Searle needs to spell out just what it is for an unconscious mental state to causally bring about a conscious state. He needs to give some account of how we are supposed to, even in principle, individuate unconscious mental states in accord with his dispositional analysis (if we are to take seriously his account of unconscious mentality). The following passage seems to offer a hint of what Searle may have in mind in as an answer to this problem of individuation:

There are plenty of unconscious mental phenomena, but to the extent that they are genuinely intentional, they must in some sense preserve their aspectual shape even when unconscious, but the only sense that we can give to the notion that they preserve their aspectual shape when unconscious is that they are possible contents of experience. (RM 159/160)

What sense can we make of this notion of preservation of aspectual shape? This notion makes sense if we bear in mind that the paradigm examples of unconscious mentality that Searle is attempting to reconcile with the naive first-personal conception of the mind are memory and unentertained belief. In both these cases Searle can draw upon the assumption that the intentional content is somehow fixed in consciousness; the problem is then to account for how that content can be preserved in a non-conscious form.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gardner discusses, and rejects, what he calls the 'Lockean condition' that unconscious states must previously have been conscious in 'The Unconscious', The Cambridge Companion to Freud ed. Jerome Neu, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Whether or not the 'Lockean condition' holds for some kinds unconscious mentality is not the issue here. Our concern is with the question of whether the condition must hold for all unconscious mentality. If the individuation of unconscious mentality depends upon the truth of the 'Lockean

There are two points that arise in this quoted passage: firstly, Searle is making a claim about what kinds of phenomena can be mental. He informs us that 'to the extent that they are genuinely intentional' phenomena they must preserve some feature, aspectual shape, which is, for Searle, a feature only of conscious states. The second point is that Searle is making some claim about what it is for aspectual shape to be preserved. What Searle says here is ambiguous: one reading would be that aspectual shape can actually exist in some way in the brain, but this is inconsistent with what he says elsewhere about the relation between aspectual shape and consciousness; the other reading is that, though the brain, at the time of unconsciousness, does not have any real aspectual shape or mentality, it can bring about a conscious state with that particular aspectual shape. If we take Searle's use of the term preserve seriously then it seems that he is committed to the view that unconscious mentality preserves formerly conscious content.<sup>16</sup>

What reading correctly reflects Searle's views? This is not an easy matter to settle. On the one hand he wants his account, his dispositional analysis, to include certain unconscious mental phenomena that cannot become, or be made available to consciousness. An unconscious mental state can be intentional even if its capacity to bring about a conscious state (with that content) is 'blocked by some other interfering causes, such as psychological repression or brain damage' (RM 160). In such cases it may happen to be that the state or process in question cannot bring about any conscious states; but, in these cases, what is

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condition' then those kinds of unconscious mentality for which it does not hold will be beyond the individuating resources of Searle's theory.

<sup>16</sup> For Searle, intentional content is not preserved in the form of intentional content. The brain can bring about a state with that same content (type) as some original content-fixing event. There will be some causal chain connecting the original event and the later recall.

important is that the state or process is 'in principle' available to consciousness.<sup>17</sup> But his proposed analysis of cases of brain damage and pathology raises problems for Searle. Take the case of some pathological perceptual condition such as blindsight. The patient is able to make discriminations about the external world in part of their visual field even though they are not conscious of any stimuli of that sort (in their visual field). Searle seems to be claiming that such a phenomenon can count as mental because it is the 'sort of thing that can be brought to consciousness' (RM 160). The blindsight case is accepted as involving mental processing by Searle because it is only some pathological 'blockage' that stops the perceptual content from being conscious. Searle's belief that his account is appropriate to a treatment of blindsight suggests that he cannot accept the claim that consciousness is necessary for fixing intentional content. In the blindsight case, perceptual discriminations about the external world occur. But they are not based upon any conscious experience. In this case the hypothesized unconscious phenomenon has content in some sense, but such content is not the result of the 'preservation' of the content of some previous conscious state. Searle counts blindsight as mental because the kind of unconscious process involved is, in principle, available to consciousness (i.e. if the pathological blockage were removed).

The notion of 'blockage' seems to be inconsistent with the notion that consciousness plays an essential role in fixing content. Searle's dispositional analysis applies to cases where conscious states have certain features

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<sup>17</sup> Searle is unclear about what this 'in principle' should be taken to mean. A loose construal will have anything and everything accessible in principle. A tighter construal will deny mentality to phenomena that Searle will wish to include as mental. See the comments by Chomsky, and Block criticizing Searle's notion of 'in principle' accessibility in Searle (1990) op. cit. pp. 596-632

preserved or retained: memory and unentertained belief. The notion of being a 'sort of thing' that could be conscious, in this case, is the notion of something that could once again be conscious. The sleeping man had, at one time, formed the belief that the capital of the USA is Washington. His brain has the causal capacity to bring that belief to consciousness in the 'right circumstances'. But, in the case of blindsight, and other forms of non-conscious sensitivity to events in the world (non-conscious processing of social information; neglect; subliminal perception and so on). In these cases of unconscious processing Searle is faced with a dilemma: either he rejects the condition that mental features must be formed and fixed in consciousness; or, he must deny that, in these cases of nonconscious perception, what explains the discriminative ability is not any mental or intentional content. Searle must be committed to the latter; he wants to deny the possibility that some state, some perceptual state, could have mental features at the time that it was unconscious.

There is a tension between Searle's commitment to the naive first-personal conception of the mind and his attempt to account for and explain unconscious mentality. His account is primarily applicable to memory and unentertained belief. Searle gives very little in the way of detail about how this dispositional analysis should be construed. There are technical problems that Searle must address: what are the 'right circumstances' for bringing about a conscious state? (how broadly or narrowly must they be specified?) what is accessibility 'in principle' meant to consist in? Even if such technical problems can be overcome there is still the question of applicability; what kinds of unconscious mentality is the dispositional analysis applicable to? Searle wants the dispositional analysis to apply to cases when there is some blockage, or pathological barrier, that stands in the way of the process's bringing about the conscious states that that

sort of process would normally bring about. The deep dilemma that faces Searle, concerning his dispositional analysis is that he must choose between the following:

- i) An unconscious brain state B counts as a mental state, if and only if the following three general conditions hold:
  - a) B is causally able (in principle) to bring about some conscious state C'.
  - b) B is an essential part of a causal chain from some earlier conscious state C where C and C' have the same content F.
  - c) The content F was fixed via the occurrence of the initial conscious state C.
- ii) An unconscious brain state B counts as a mental state if and only is B is able (in principle) to bring about some conscious state C'.

If Searle is committed to i) there is at least the possibility that he can develop some account of the individuation of unconscious mental states. This might provide a basis for Searle to rebut the objection that he can offer no account of the individuation of unconscious mentality. If Searle is committed to i) then he can claim that unconscious mental states have the content that they do because some conscious state had a particular content and this particular brain process has the causal potential to bring about (repeat) instances of that content in the 'right circumstances'. The problem with this choice is that it disallows those states whose attributed content is deemed to be formed unconsciously. The first option restricts the role of content formation and fixing to conscious mental states. Blindsight; subliminal perception; neglect; any process whereby some form of intentional content is deemed to be formed, unconsciously, in response to some stimulus: all these will have to be denied mentality (contrary to what Searle says about blindsight (RM 163)).

On the other hand, if Searle takes the second option, whereby unconscious mentality is constituted by the causal



potential to produce some conscious state or other 'in principle', Searle will face the problem of how to individuate unconscious mentality and of how to distinguish non-mental neurophysiological causal sources of conscious states from mental ones (he will need to specify why the causal potential to imagine, dream and so on, do not constitute unconscious mentality). To provide an adequate account of individuation Searle will have to address the problems of a) what he means by 'capable of causing conscious states' (RM 162) b) what he means by 'right circumstances' (RM 162); c) what he means by 'in principle accessible to consciousness' (RM 160). Searle's dispositional analysis requires an account of individuation that is relational: unconscious mental states are to be individuated in terms of conscious states that they may, in principle, causally bring about. For this to work, Searle needs an account of how the brain causes conscious states in a detailed way that he does not even attempt to provide.

To summarise: Searle's dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality is beset with problems. The lack of detail provided by Searle means that we cannot take the account seriously as a positive explanatory hypothesis; if this were the case it would have to be rejected out of hand as too vague and as raising more problems than it purports to solve. Perhaps we should see the dispositional analysis merely as a method for distinguishing between mental and non-mental phenomena (without having to individuate phenomena within each category). But the lack of detail and the problems raised above mean that it cannot be used even for this more general purpose.

Searle's account of unconscious mentality is a very general, philosophical account of what the nature of unconscious mentality must be if we are committed to the naive first-personal conception of the mind. Thus, the dispositional analysis can afford to be painted in broad, impressionistic strokes, for it is not meant to be a positive psychological account of unconscious mentality.

Searle's account of unconscious mentality serves as a way of reconciling the notion of unconscious mentality with his commitment to the naive first-personal conception of the mind. At the very least, Searle needs an account of memory and unentertained belief; these are features of any naive conception of the mind. Such phenomena may be amenable to a dispositional account in some sense, but one that would need much spelling out.<sup>18</sup> However, Searle is not simply offering an account of memory and unentertained belief. The naive view of unconscious mentality is taken by Searle and applied generally. It is meant to be suitable for a characterization of all unconscious mental phenomena. One consequence is that non-dispositional unconscious mental phenomena are to be rejected.

What of the unconscious mental states that Searle does allow? The unconscious (dispositional) phenomena that remain, are not really mental in the way that conscious states are. They are only mental in a derivative, relational, sense. They count as mental states only because of their causal potential to bring about genuinely (i.e. conscious) mental states. What reasons do we have for accepting Searle's dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality, an account that relegates unconscious mentality to a relational, derivative, second-class form of mentality? We only need to accept such an account if we are, like Searle, committed to a naive first-personal conception of the mind. If we are not, then we have no a priori reason to dismiss and deny the possibility that there could be unconscious mental states (where mentality is taken to be on a par with conscious mentality).

The dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality is the result of Searle's attempt to retain his commitment to the naive first-personal conception of the mind. Upon that

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<sup>18</sup> Searle does not address the issue of how unentertained belief and tacit belief are to be distinguished.

conception there is no room for non-dispositional unconscious mentality, for mental states that are both mental and unconscious mentality. Searle's dispositional account of unconscious mentality appeared to be an extension of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. It now seems clear that it does not extend the mental very far. For Searle the boundaries of the mental are still determined by the naive first-personal conception of the mind. Those who advocate unconscious mental states that are not merely dispositions to cause conscious states must be committed to some other conception of the mind (if they are not, then they are misapplying our concept mental).

It is instructive to place Searle's account of unconscious mentality in a broader, historical, context. Searle's strategy for reconciling the naive first-personal conception of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality is not new.<sup>19</sup> J.S. Mill suggests the same solution to the problem of unconscious mentality.<sup>20</sup> Mill's specific target is Sir William Hamilton's doctrine of 'unconscious mental modifications'.<sup>21</sup> The indirect target is Leibniz: the source of Hamilton's doctrine.<sup>22</sup> Mill narrows down the debate to one key issue: 'The real

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<sup>19</sup> Searle's insistence that prior to the Twentieth Century people 'found the notion of consciousness unproblematic and the notion of unconscious mind puzzling, perhaps even self-contradictory' (RM 151) suggests that Searle has focused his attention upon one side of the debate only.

<sup>20</sup> John Stuart Mill, An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy (First published 1865) (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Sixth Ed. 1889) p. 347.

<sup>21</sup> W. Hamilton, Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic Vol 1, Lecture XVIII. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1859).

<sup>22</sup> Leibniz's doctrine of insensible perceptions can be found in the Preface to his New Essays Concerning Human Understanding (Begun in 1698; Preface 1704; first edition 1765). Also in his 'Principles of Nature and Grace' #4; and Monadology Section 14, in The Monadology and other philosophical writings trans. R. Latta (London: OUP, 1925)

question is, can I undergo a present actual mental modification without being aware of it?'<sup>23</sup>

He argues that this cannot be so. Of the unconscious 'mental modification' that constitutes our ability to use language he claims that 'It is not a mental state, but a capability of being put into a mental state'.<sup>24</sup> Such states are 'future contingent states, not present actual ones'.<sup>25</sup> Mill even uses the same analogy as Searle: that of a poison having the disposition to bring about some effect when it is not actually poisoning. Finally, Mill concedes that some of the processes connecting mental states should not be characterized in terms of dispositions to cause conscious states; exactly like Searle, such processes can only be neurophysiological processes:

I am myself inclined to agree with Sir W. Hamilton, and to admit his unconscious mental modifications, in the only shape in which I can attach any very distinct meaning to them, namely, unconscious modifications of the nerves.<sup>26</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter I began by placing Searle's conception of mind within a broader historical context and I noted that the naive first-personal conception of the mind was the orthodox conception of mind for early empirical psychology.

Section 3.2 began with the thought that the naive first-personal conception of the mind seemed to deny too much. It denies mentality to memory and unentertained belief. Searle offers a positive account of unconscious mentality, his dispositional analysis, that is meant to

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p.344.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p.342.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p.344.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p.355.

accommodate memory and all other unconscious mental phenomena. Such an account denies mentality to non-dispositional unconscious mental states and relegates the mentality of the remainder.

But, I argued, Searle's account is no more than a promissory note for a theory of unconscious mentality. Searle does not offer the details that would allow us to determine whether his account is at all plausible. It should be clear that the primary motivation for the dispositional analysis is simply commitment to the naive first personal conception of the mind.

The two conclusions that may be drawn from this chapter are: firstly, the debate about the coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality is not a local concern of Searle's. Searle's return to the old orthodox conception of the mind simply raises old, widely discussed, issues about the plausibility of unconscious mental states. The second point is that the proposed extension of the naive first-personal conception of the mind does not have favourable implications for the notion of unconscious mentality. Certain kinds of unconscious mental phenomena are rejected outright: deep unconscious mental states and unconscious mental occurrences. The remaining, allowable, kinds of unconscious mental states are such that their mentality is of a secondary status. The naive first-personal conception of the mind in its non-extended form disallows unconscious mentality as incoherent: all mental states are conscious states. The extension of the naive first-personal conception proposed by Searle disallows certain kinds of unconscious mentality and diminishes the mental status of the remainder. Our examination of the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality has, so far, uncovered mainly negative results: the naive first-personal conception of the mind does not have favourable implications for the notion of unconscious mentality. It is now time to turn to a positive case for unconscious

mentality: Freud's arguments for the existence of unconscious mental states.

## CHAPTER 4

## UNCONSCIOUS MENTALITY VINDICATED?

## EXTENDING THE NAIVE THIRD-PERSONAL CONCEPTION OF THE MIND

Introduction

So far our examination of the notion of unconscious mentality has been focused upon considerations that are taken to count against the possibility of unconscious mental states. The naive first-personal conception of the mind, favoured by Searle, disallows "deep" unconscious mentality. Searle's extension of the naive first-personal conception to accommodate the notion of unconscious mentality has the implication that unconscious mentality must be seen as a derivative, secondary form of mentality. If we accept the naive first-personal conception of the mind it would seem that we must also accept that the notion of unconscious mentality is either incoherent, or, at best, that unconscious mental states are not mental in the way that conscious mental states are. The apparent incoherence of the notion of unconscious mentality raises the question of what sense are we to make of certain positive claims in favour of unconscious mentality?<sup>1</sup> Consider the following quotations from Freud:

In the psychology which is founded on psycho-analysis we have become accustomed to taking as our starting-point the unconscious mental processes, with the peculiarities of which we have become acquainted through analysis. We consider these to be the older, primary processes, the residues of a phase of development

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<sup>1</sup> Searle will claim that he is positively committed to the notion of unconscious mentality. However, in this chapter I shall be concerned with a positive commitment that does not relegate unconscious mental states to some kind of secondary status (in contrast to the primary mentality credited to conscious states).

in which they were the only kind of mental processes. (1911: XII 218)<sup>2</sup>

[B]eing conscious cannot be the essence of what is psychical. It is only a quality of what is psychical. . . . The psychical, whatever its nature may be, is in itself unconscious and probably similar in kind to all the other natural processes of which we have obtained knowledge. (1940 [1938]: XXIII 283)<sup>3</sup>

These claims made by Freud are inconsistent with the assumptions of the naive first-personal conception of the mind. If Freud is committed to the naive first-personal conception of the mind then he is, by his own standards, making incoherent claims. Let us charitably assume that Freud is not committed to a conception of the mind that renders his central explanatory notion incoherent.<sup>4</sup> This raises the question of what conception of the mind it is that Freud is, or better still, should be, committed to.

#### 4.1 Freudian Theory as Scientific Psychology

Perhaps we should understand Freudian theory as dependent upon a conception of the mind that is not connected to a naive conception of the mind. One possibility would be that Freud is introducing some new, non-naive, notion of mentality in order to explain certain phenomena. On this interpretation of Freud there is no conceptual barrier

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<sup>2</sup> Freud references in this chapter are to the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud in 24 volumes, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74). References will be placed in text as date of publication followed by volume and page number of the Standard Edition. (See bibliography for more detail.)

<sup>3</sup> Freud's use of the terms 'psychical' and 'mental' suggests that he takes them to be synonymous.

<sup>4</sup> In 'The Ego and the Id' (1923: XIX) p.13, Freud notes that 'The division of the psychical into what is conscious and unconscious is the fundamental premiss of psycho-analysis'.



against his positing unconscious mental entities that are radically different from those attributed in naive psychology. He may, for pragmatic reasons use our naive psychological vocabulary to describe these phenomena (unconscious beliefs, unconscious wishes and so on) but, for example, Freud's use of the word 'wish' in 'unconscious wish' would pick out an entity that is of a radically different kind from wishes as we naively conceive them to be. Similarly, Freud's use of the term mental, as applied to unconscious mental states, would not be taken to be an application of our naive concept of mentality, but it would be seen as the application of some new concept. Unconscious mental states would not be mental states as we naively (and, for Searle, correctly) conceive of them. To avoid a confusion of the Freudian concept of "mental" with our naive concept, some new technical predicate e.g. "Freud-mental", or "F-mental" could be introduced.

The thought that Freudian psychology involves a departure from our naive conception of the mind is not implausible. There is evidence to suggest that Freud is committed to a scientific account of the mind. On such an account mental entities will be those that are necessary for an adequate science of the mind. Commitment to a scientific conception of the mind does not, in itself, entail the rejection of all of our naive mental concepts.<sup>5</sup> Some, or many, of our naive mental concepts might be retained if they proved to be of explanatory value and empirically supported. But the scientific conception of the mind need not retain a commitment to our naive, pre-theoretical notions: as with other sciences, our naive notions may be revised or discarded as the science progresses and develops a rich explanatory and predictive

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<sup>5</sup> The fact that a conception of the mind is scientific does not imply that it is an eliminativist conception of the mind.

framework.<sup>6</sup> A scientific psychology may, if explanatorily necessary, end up supporting a conception of mind that is autonomous of our naive conception of the mind.

A scientific conception of mind need not conceptually block the notion of unconscious mentality; Freud would no longer be constrained by the conceptual boundaries imposed by, for example, the naive first-personal conception of the mind. Freud's commitment to the notion of psychoanalysis as a science would allow him to introduce hypothetical entities and technical terms so long as they offer explanatory advantages and are consistent with other assumptions in his scientific psychology.

There is explicit, textual, support for the view that Freud was committed to some non-naive, scientific, conception of the mind: for example, Freud claims that his view 'which held that the psychical is unconscious in itself, enabled psychology to take its place as a natural science like any other' (1940: XXIII 158).<sup>7</sup> His commitment to a conception of the mind that is autonomous of any naive conception of the mind allows him to hypothesise that certain kinds of unconscious processes and states are radically different from the kinds of states that we naively experience and attribute to others: 'Belief (and doubt) is a phenomenon that belongs wholly in the system of the ego (the Cs) and has no counterpart in the Ucs [i.e. the unconscious]' (1897: I 255). Furthermore, certain unconscious phenomena are deemed to be governed by laws

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<sup>6</sup> Chomsky has recently noted that: '[T]he sciences postulate whatever finds a place in intelligible explanatory theory, however offensive that may be to common sense. Only on unjustified dualistic assumptions can such questions be raised specifically about the domain of the mental, not other aspects of the world', 'Language and Nature', Mind 104 (1995) pp.1-61 (p.5).

<sup>7</sup> Freud is explicit about the status of psychoanalysis as a science in 'The Question of a Weltanschauung' (1933 [1932]: XXII) especially pp.158-9; At p.174 Freud notes that psychoanalysis progresses by using 'observation', 'put[ting] forward formal conjectures' 'construct[ing] hypotheses which we withdraw if they are not confirmed'.

that differ from those that (we might suppose) govern naive psychological phenomena: 'We have found that processes in the unconscious or in the id obey different laws from those in the preconscious ego' (1940: XXIII 164). To summarise: there is some evidence to suggest that Freud's conception of the mind involves a radical departure from our naive conception of the mind. If such a view is correct then Freud's notion of unconscious mental states need not be conceptually incoherent because Freud's concept of mentality is not that of the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

Does this mean that our investigation into the plausibility of the notion of unconscious mentality is at an end? At first sight we are faced with a simple choice: we accept the naive first-personal conception of the mind but also deny, or relegate, unconscious mental states; or, on the other hand, we reject the naive first-personal conception of the mind, introduce some notion of mentality that is autonomous of the naive conception of the mind and thereby allow the possibility of unconscious mental states. It may seem that the advocate of unconscious mentality can simply reject the naive conception of the mind and introduce some radical notion of mentality which does not presuppose that mental states must be conscious states. If this is the case then Freud's notion of unconscious mental states can be rendered conceptually coherent if we take Freud to be committed to a conception of the mind that is autonomous of the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

The view that Freudian theory involves the introduction of a radical conception of the mind is discussed by Richard Wollheim in his essay 'Desire, Belief, and Professor Grünbaum's Freud'.<sup>8</sup> Wollheim notes that people are agreed that Freud changed our thinking about the

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<sup>8</sup> R. Wollheim, 'Desire, Belief and Professor Grünbaum's Freud' in his The Mind and its Depths (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) pp.91-111

mind. Wollheim is concerned with the question of how we should characterize the change in our thinking that Freud brought about:

On the more extreme view [of how Freud altered our conception of the mind], what Freud did was that he reconceptualized the mind from scratch. He rejected the traditional concepts used to grasp mental phenomena, and he asked us to substitute other concepts that he devised for this purpose.<sup>9</sup>

On this extreme view, as I noted above, unconscious mental states may be allowable; but they may only be so because Freud has rejected our naive conception of the mind. But why should this be a problem? Why should we not just accept that Freud 'reconceptualized the mind from scratch'? There are a number of problems that arise if we take the 'extreme view' of Freud.

The first problem, noted by Wollheim, is as follows:

[I]f the extreme view were in fact true, if Freud's concepts were concocted totally de novo, if the traditional schemata for the mind had been totally abandoned, it would not be easy to see how psychoanalytic theory offered us any form of explanation.<sup>10</sup>

Wollheim does not go into any detail as to the reasons why the extreme view has this implication. There are, however, a number of reasons for supposing that the extreme view commits Freud to a problematic conception of the mind. One line of objection would be as follows: not only does the naive conception of the places constraints upon what notions of mentality can be intelligible to us; but, in addition, our mental notions must be constrained by our naive conception of mind. For example, Donald Davidson is

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.* p.90

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p.92 Wollheim notes that such a line of objection can be found in Wittgenstein and Rorty.

committed to the view that our naive conception of the mind places limits upon what we may intelligibly describe as mental.<sup>11</sup> Davidson argues that there are 'norms of rationality that apply to thoughts' and that 'we all have such norms' (i.e. without having to make appeal to scientific theories of the mind); he then adds that:

[W]e cannot recognise as thought phenomena that are too far out of line [from our norms]. Better say: what is too far out of line is not thought.<sup>12</sup>

If Davidson is right, then the extreme view commits Freud to a conception of mind that, in so far as it is a departure from our naive conception of the mind, is not properly a conception of mind at all.<sup>13</sup> Our naive psychological experience and competences determine the boundaries of the concept of mind. If the Freudian notion of unconscious mental states can only be supported by a non-naive conception of mind then, so the objection goes, it is unclear that the posited unconscious states are mental.

We may object to the autonomous conception of the mind for another reason. The objection would be that if Freud is committed to the extreme, autonomous conception of the mind then he is distorting and misusing certain mental terms. The charge would be that Freudian explanations are misleading for they are couched in terms that serve to

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<sup>11</sup> Donald Davidson, 'Representation and Interpretation' in Modelling the Mind ed. by K.A. Mohyeldin Said et al (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) pp.13-26

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p.24

<sup>13</sup> We should note that this line of objection is not restricted to a Davidsonian conception of the mind: for example, John Searle would agree with the thought that our naive conception of mentality constrains our mental concepts in such a way as to render the claims of an autonomous conception of "mind" unintelligible. He will, of course, disagree with Davidson about what constitutes our naive conception of the mind.

conceal the radical (and if the objections above are correct, non-explanatory) nature of psychoanalysis.

A final problem that arises if we take Freud to be committed to some radical conception of the mind, a conception that is autonomous of our naive conception of the mind, is that psychoanalytic claims may have to be assessed in a way that is, methodologically, quite distinct from the ways of assessing the claims that feature in ordinary psychological explanation. In particular, if Freud is taken to be committed to the view that psychoanalysis is a science, then the appropriate criteria for assessing psychoanalytic claims will be those of science, and not those of naive psychology. The objection would then be raised that, as a science, psychoanalysis fails: for example, Karl Popper argues that psychoanalysis fails to be science because its hypotheses are unfalsifiable; Adolf Grünbaum on the other hand, argues that psychoanalysis is falsifiable but methodologically unsound and radically uncorroborated by empirical evidence.<sup>14</sup>

A few pages ago it seemed that the advocate of unconscious mentality was faced with simple choice: accept the naive first-personal conception but reject unconscious mentality; or, reject the naive first-personal conception and allow unconscious mentality. But to express these options in such a way belies the costs and disadvantages of the latter option. We have already examined the negative implications of the naive first-personal conception of the mind for the notion of unconscious mentality. Taking Freud to be committed to a conception of the mind that is not constrained by naive psychology provides a way of vindicating unconscious mentality. But such a commitment seems to lead to serious problems: the autonomous

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<sup>14</sup> Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations: the Growth of Scientific Knowledge (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1963) p.37. Adolf Grünbaum, The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)

conception of the mind posits mental states that are divorced from our naive psychological categories; they are distanced from our naive psychological understanding of ourselves as thinking beings; worse still, it may be unintelligible how they should be mental states. There are also the methodological problems that arise: psychoanalytic claims would not be judged according to the implicit methodological canons of our naive psychology but would be judged as scientific claims (and, qua scientific claims, they may fail to be supported). The simple choice has been transformed into a dilemma. Accept the naive first-personal conception of the mind and deny, or relegate, unconscious mentality; or, accept some non-naive autonomous conception of the mind but face the serious problems outlined above.

In the remainder of this chapter I shall be concerned with a particular way of avoiding this dilemma. It will do no harm to reveal the solution now: the dilemma forces us to choose between the naive first-personal conception of the mind and some autonomous, scientific account of the mind. To allow unconscious mental states one must reject the former conception but the latter places unconscious mentality in a fragile position (in so far as it is distanced from the rest of our naive psychology and methodologically under threat). The dilemma can be avoided if there is some coherent conception of the mind that i) allows unconscious mental states; and ii) is not autonomous of our naive psychology.

In chapters 2 and 3 I emphasised the fact that the first-personal nature of Searle's naive conception of the mind contributed to, and supported, Searle's rejection and relegation of unconscious mentality. In contrast to Searle's naive first-personal conception of the mind, Richard Wollheim, and other philosophers including Jim Hopkins and Donald Davidson have offered an interpretation of Freud that takes Freud to be committed to a conception of the mind that is not autonomous of our naive conception

of the mind, but this conception of the mind is not a first-personal conception of the mind: they argue that Freud's conception of the mind is an extension of a naive third-personal conception of the mind.<sup>15</sup>

But is this claim not at odds with the evidence that suggests that Freud is committed to an autonomous, radical conception of the mind? Wollheim, Hopkins and Davidson offer an interpretation, or a reconstruction of Freudian psychoanalysis. They build upon features of psychoanalytic explanation that are explicit in Freud's work. In Section 4.2 I shall outline Freud's arguments for unconscious mental states in order to pave the way for Section 4.3 in which I lay out the naive third-personal interpretation of Freud. We will then be in a position to assess whether this interpretation of Freud renders the notion of unconscious mentality coherent. But to begin with we must consider Freud's own case for the existence of unconscious mental states.

#### 4.2 Freud, Unconscious Mental States and Psychological Explanation

In his 1915 paper 'The Unconscious' Freud tells us that we need to posit unconscious mental states and processes if we are to explain certain mental phenomena that seem to resist explanation in terms of other conscious mental

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<sup>15</sup> Examples of this interpretation of Freud can be found in: R. Wollheim, op. cit.; Jim Hopkins, 'Epistemology and depth psychology', in Mind, Psychoanalysis and Science ed. by Peter Clark and Crispin Wright, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) pp.33-60; Donald Davidson, 'Paradoxes of Irrationality' in Philosophical Essays on Freud ed. by R. Wollheim and J. Hopkins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp.289-305. Sebastian Gardner in his Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) argues that psychoanalytic explanation is an extension of commonsense psychological explanation but he rejects the Davidsonian "attributionist" characterization of psychoanalysis favoured by Hopkins, Wollheim and, unsurprisingly, Davidson himself.



phenomena:

Our assumption of the unconscious is necessary . . . because the data of consciousness have a very large number of gaps in them; both in healthy and sick people psychical acts often occur which can be explained only by presupposing other acts, of which, nevertheless, consciousness affords no evidence. (1915: XIV 166)

Freud then lists some of these 'psychical' (i.e. mental) acts that cannot be explained in terms of conscious phenomena: 'parapraxes and dreams in healthy people, and everything described as a psychical symptom or an obsession in the sick' (1915: XIV 166). Freud then goes on:

All these conscious acts remain disconnected and unintelligible if we insist upon claiming that every mental act that occurs in us must also be necessarily experienced by us through consciousness; on the other hand they fall into a demonstrable connection if we interpolate between them the unconscious acts which we have inferred. (1915: XIV 167)

Freud is claiming that we need to posit unconscious events and processes to explain these apparently unintelligible phenomena. We are justified in positing such phenomena, even though we have no direct conscious experience of them, because, Freud claims, 'A gain in meaning is a perfectly justifiable ground for going beyond the limits of direct experience' (1915: XIV 167). In short, the point here is that we are justified in inferring the existence of certain unconscious phenomena in order to explain certain conscious ones.

But why are these hypothetical phenomena deemed to be mental? The starting point for Freud, as noted above, seems to be that certain, apparently irrational, phenomena are not readily explicable in terms of consciously accessible mental states: these phenomena constitute the explanandum. How should we deal with these phenomena?

There are four options:

- a) Reject the need for any explanation. Accept that certain phenomena are just inexplicable.
- b) Provide an explanation such that the explanans does not make appeal to mental entities or processes: a non-mental explanation.
- c) Provide an explanation such that the explanans does make appeal to mental entities or processes but it does not require or assume that the entities or processes are akin to those that feature in explanation of rational thought and action: a mental but non-rationalizing explanation.
- d) Provide an explanation such that the explanans does make appeal to mental entities or processes and it requires or assumes that such entities and processes are akin to those that feature in explanation of rational thought and action: a mental and rationalizing explanation.

The initial question that concerns us is why we should suppose that c) or d) are appropriate as opposed to a) or b). I shall not consider a), the rejection of any need for explanation. There are then two questions that need to be addressed: i) why does Freud suppose that an explanation in terms of (unconscious) mental phenomena is appropriate? ii) is he correct in that supposition? Freud, in 'The Unconscious' explicitly addresses this issue of the mentality of the unconscious phenomena posited by psychoanalysis. He considers the objection that latent, and repressed mental states should be correctly described only as 'residues of somatic processes from which what is psychical can once more arise' (1915: XIV 167). The objection, that unconscious phenomena should not be characterized in mental terms, is motivated (so Freud claims) only by the question-begging equation of 'what is conscious with what is mental' (1915: XIV 167). It may be that Freud is right in his claim that we should not discount the possibility of unconscious mentality (which is what the question-begging 'equation' entails) but Freud still needs to show why we should accept that these

unconscious phenomena, the ones that are meant to causally explain dreams, neurotic symptoms and so on, are correctly described as mental.

Freud offers a number of reasons in support of the mentality of the unconscious phenomena. Firstly he makes a claim that to equate consciousness with mentality 'disrupts psychical continuities' (1915: XIV 167) and it 'plunges us into the insoluble difficulties of psycho-physical parallelism'. The fact that Freud raises the question of psycho-physical relations here suggests that he may have in mind some metaphysical notion: perhaps that certain mental events can only be brought about by other mental events. However, this is not Freud's only argument in favour of unconscious mental phenomena. A few paragraphs earlier Freud makes appeal to a form of continuity, or connectedness, that is not so concerned with the metaphysics of mind. Freud argues that we are justified in positing unconscious mental acts because they allow disconnected conscious thoughts to 'fall into a demonstrable connection'. If this is to be taken as an argument in favour of some mental explanation of the otherwise unintelligible phenomena it must be because Freud supposes that only a mental explanation, that is, one that makes appeal to mental entities, can offer the explanatory advantages that he alludes to. The first reason for supposing that certain unconscious states are mental is the metaphysical notion of continuity; the second is that only a mental explanation can appropriately and adequately explain certain otherwise unintelligible phenomena.

The thought that Freud is committed to the view that given the particular explananda in question (i.e. dreams, neurotic acts and so on) only mental explanantia are appropriate, receives further textual support in the third reason offered by Freud in support of unconscious mentality: a claim that no non-mental explanation is available to satisfactorily explain these phenomena. Freud asks us to consider what we know about these unconscious

phenomena:

As far as their physical characteristics are concerned, they are totally inaccessible to us: no physiological concept or chemical process can give us any notion of their nature. (1915: XIV 168)

On the other hand, when we consider what we know about these phenomena with regards to their relationship to other conscious mental phenomena:

[W]e know for certain that they have abundant points of contact with conscious mental processes; with the help of a certain amount of work they can be transformed into, or replaced by, conscious mental processes and all the categories which we employ to describe conscious mental acts, such as ideas, purposes, resolutions and so on, can be applied to them. (Emphasis mine) (1915: XIV 168)

This quotation suggests further reasons for supposing that these unconscious phenomena are mental: the fourth reason is that they can be described in a mental vocabulary in a particular way: the unconscious entities lend themselves to being described in just the way that we would describe conscious mental states: as 'ideas, purposes, resolutions and so on'. The fifth reason is that certain unconscious mental states can be transformed into conscious states in such a way that we are warranted in supposing that the content of the conscious state is connected in some intelligible way to the content of the unconscious state (the simplest case being when it is argued that the conscious state has the same propositional content as the attributed repressed state). The sixth and final consideration offered in support of unconscious mentality is that our attribution of unconscious mental states is based upon the same kind of behavioural and linguistic evidence, and utilises the same kind of interpretative methods, as our attribution of mental states to other

people:

The assumption of an unconscious, is, moreover, a perfectly legitimate one inasmuch as in positing it we are not departing a single step from our customary and generally accepted mode of thinking. Consciousness makes each of us aware only of his own states of mind; that other people, too, possess a consciousness is an inference which we draw by analogy from their observable utterances and actions, in order to make this behaviour of their's intelligible to us. (First emphasis Freud's; second, mine) (1915: XIV 168)

We interpret the behaviour and speech of others and infer the existence of certain mental events that explain that behaviour and speech. In chapter two I noted the existence of a parallel between the relative opacity of other minds and unconscious mental states. Freud argues that such opacity is no barrier to our attribution of thoughts to others; similarly, it need be no barrier to the attribution of unconscious thoughts to ourselves:

Psychoanalysis demands nothing more than that we should apply this process of inference [attributing thoughts to others] to ourselves also. . . . [E]xperience shows that we understand very well how to interpret in other people (that is how to fit into their chain of mental events) the same acts which we refuse to acknowledge as being mental in ourselves. (1915: XIV 169)

The point that Freud is making here is that, in our everyday interactions with other people, we interpret the behaviour of others and attribute mental states to them in order to make that behaviour intelligible. In certain cases, in order to explain otherwise unintelligible phenomena we must attribute mental states to a subject even though no conscious state of that kind can be found to play the causal-explanatory role.

The notion of interpretation plays a key role in psychoanalytic practice. Freud goes into much more detail

about this interpretative method in an early paper 'The Psychotherapy of Hysteria' (1893-5: II). In this paper he describes his method of uncovering 'hidden unconscious motives' via the method of tracing back 'piece[s] of logical thread' (1893-5: II 292). The assumption that Freud makes is that there will be a connection in terms of the content of the symptom, dream or behavioural idiosyncrasy, and the content of the unconscious mental cause of that symptom, dream or behaviour. Freud insists that even for the apparently irrational and unintelligible thought of an hysterical patient 'we may make the same demands for logical connection and sufficient motivation . . . as we should from a normal individual' (1893-5: II 293). Apparently irrational and otherwise inexplicable behaviour and thought can be rendered intelligible and explained if we posit unconscious motives of a certain kind. Freud seems to have in mind some a priori assumption that mental activity, and apparently intentional behaviour, must obey, and be explicable in terms of, psychological laws: he claims that it is only a 'prejudice' that irrational and hysterical subjects are 'at liberty . . . to throw overboard the common psychological laws that govern the connection of ideas' (emphasis mine) (1893-5: II 294). Though irrational behaviour and the disconnected trains of thought of the hysterical patient may seem to be disconnected, Freud claims that 'It is not within the power of a neurosis' (1893-5: II 293) to 'relax' the logical and causal relations that exist between mental events.

Let me summarise the six considerations in favour of taking the unconscious phenomena to be mental:

- i) Metaphysical Continuity: attributing mental causes avoids the problems of psycho-physical parallelism.
- ii) Explanatory Gain: if we attribute unconscious mental causes we can explain why certain apparently irrational acts takes place; attributing mental causes makes neurotic behaviour, slips of the tongue, dreams and so on intelligible to us.

iii) No alternative explanation: no non-mental explanation is available owing to our lack of knowledge of the physiological underpinnings of mind.

iv) Applicability of our mental vocabulary: many of the categories that we use in our taxonomy of conscious mental states are applicable to unconscious states without distortion.

v) Latent content: attributed content can, on occasion, be brought to consciousness. It is assumed that the content was, in some sense, latent and mental whilst unconscious. Underlying this is the assumption that mental states persist and can become or cease to be conscious.

vi) Parallel with other minds: the same considerations with regards to interpretation of behaviour and attribution of mental states apply to unconscious mental states and the mental states of others.

I have introduced Freud's notion of unconscious mentality in a particular way. The reason for this is that I want to stress certain themes in Freud's account of psychoanalysis and the unconscious. To summarise, the account of unconscious mentality I have outlined so far suggests that we should see Freud as a theorist who is driven to posit unconscious mental states in order to explain otherwise unintelligible behaviour and thought. The method of attributing unconscious mental states is a particular application of our ability to interpret human behaviour and language and, on the basis of interpretation, to attribute mental causes that explain certain apparently irrational and otherwise unintelligible phenomena. The attribution of mental causes utilises the assumption that there are logical and motivational connections that underlie apparently inexplicable and irrational phenomena. This picture of Freud is, to some extent, a selective and partial one. For example: I have said nothing about the extremely tight connection that Freud takes to hold between unconscious mentality and repression; I have said nothing about the relationships, conceptual and epistemic, between

unconscious and conscious mental states; about the nature of unconscious, as opposed to conscious states; about the existence of qualitatively different kinds of unconscious states. Much could be said on all of these matters. However, I have been selective in my introductory outline of Freud's notion of unconscious mentality so that we may examine a particular interpretation of Freudian theory. Our concern is with the relationship between Freud's conception of mind and his notion of unconscious mentality. In particular we need to address the question of whether the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality can be rescued from the dilemma noted in the introduction. In order to answer this question I shall now expand upon this partial portrait of Freud's notion of unconscious mentality by looking at a recent interpretation of psychoanalytic explanation. We will then be in a position to address the question of whether the conception of mind attributed to Freud upon this interpretation i) renders unconscious mentality coherent and plausible; ii) avoids the problems that arise if Freud is taken to be committed to a conception of the mind that is autonomous of our naive conception.

#### 4.3 The Davidsonian interpretation of Freud

I noted above that certain philosophers, including Richard Wollheim, Jim Hopkins and Donald Davidson, have offered an interpretation of psychoanalytic explanation that places particular emphasis upon certain of the features of Freud's psychological theory as I introduced it above. One of their main aims is to vindicate psychoanalytic explanation by showing that it is a form of explanation that is a valid extension of certain naive, or commonsense, forms of psychological explanation. In this naive form of psychological explanation actions are explained by attributing certain beliefs and desires that are deemed to cause the action, and to explain why that action was



performed. In such cases the desire and belief may be said to rationalize the action.<sup>16</sup> Why did the chicken-farmer cross the road? Because he desired something, or, that something be the case, and he believed that by crossing the road he would achieve this. The belief and desire jointly form a reason that explains why he crossed the road and, it is supposed, this reason, in some way, caused the road-crossing behaviour.

Note the salient features of this form of naive psychological explanation: there is some phenomenon, an action, that needs to be explained. The action is truly describable as a road-crossing. Given our naive psychological abilities to interpret other's rational and intentional behaviour we then attribute certain desires and beliefs that such that the description of these mental phenomena have a logical connection to the description of the action. The point stressed by those who wish to vindicate psychoanalytic explanation is that commonsense psychological explanation employs notions such as: i) interpretation of behaviour; ii) attribution of motives and reasons such that the description of the content of the attributed motives and reasons is logically related to the description of the behaviour, and the motives or reasons are deemed to causally bring that behaviour about. These features of commonsense psychological explanation can be found in Freud's accounts of psychoanalytic explanation. My outline of Freud's arguments for the unconscious in Section two revealed Freud's commitment to the central role of interpretation in psychoanalysis. Furthermore, he explicitly draws a parallel between the attribution of unconscious mentality and the attribution of thoughts to others: we are driven to posit unconscious mental phenomena on the basis of our interpretations of some subject's

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<sup>16</sup> For the seminal discussion of rationalization as a form of causal explanation see Donald Davidson 'Action, Reasons, and Causes' (1963) in Davidson Essays on Actions and Events (Oxford: OUP, 1980)

behaviour and speech, and the posited phenomena are deemed to have both a causal and a logical relation to the behaviour or speech that needs to be explained.

The assumption, that it is justifiable to draw a parallel between psychoanalytic explanation and naive, or commonsense, psychological explanation, forms the basis of a number of arguments that aim to show that psychoanalytic explanation is an extension of our naive psychological form of explanation. Wollheim argues that Freudian psychological explanation 'is an expansion, effected step by step, of that provided by the commonsense conception of the mind'.<sup>17</sup> Hopkins notes that 'psychoanalytic theory seems to be an extension of commonsense understanding of motives'.<sup>18</sup> Davidson too, takes Freud to be offering an extension of our commonsense psychology:

[P]sychoanalytic theory extends the reach of teleological or reason explanation by discovering motives, wishes and intentions that were not recognized before. In this respect, as has often been noted, Freud greatly increased the number and variety of phenomena that can be viewed as rational: it turns out that we have reasons for our forgettings, slips of the tongue, and exaggerated fears.<sup>19</sup>

Though psychoanalysis introduces new phenomena, and new forms of explanation, it does not do so by radically departing from the commonsense conception of the mind. This is the claim argued for, and agreed upon, by Davidson, Wollheim and Hopkins (even if they diverge in their individual detailed accounts of what that extension of the commonsense conception of the mind consists in).

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<sup>17</sup> Wollheim, op.cit. 93. Wollheim lays out, in some detail, the many ways in which psychoanalysis can be seen as a step by step extension of commonsense psychology. I shall not go into these details here.

<sup>18</sup> Hopkins, op.cit. 37

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, op.cit. 291

The claim that there is significant parallel between commonsense psychological explanation and psychoanalytic explanation has a useful application as the basis of a defence of psychoanalysis against the objection that it fails to support its hypotheses in a suitably inductivist, scientific, fashion. For example, it is argued in defence of Freud that psychoanalysis need only license predictions in so far as commonsense psychology does. Psychoanalytic hypotheses need not be tested in the way that hypotheses in physical science are. The failure to license falsifying predictions emphasised by Popper, is no objection to psychoanalysis.

Even if a methodological defence of psychoanalysis is one of the main aims of those who argue that Freud is committed to an extension of our naive, commonsense, psychology; methodological vindication is not the only significant result of such an argument. The argument has broader implications for psychoanalysis and the notion of unconscious mentality. The methodological defence involves interpreting Freud, or reconstructing Freud's theories, in a particular way: emphasising the continuity between psychoanalytic explanation and commonsense psychological explanation.

So far I have focused upon the parallels that exist between psychoanalytic explanation and naive psychological explanation. But our direct concern is with certain psychoanalytic entities: unconscious mental states). We should note that, even if it is the case that psychoanalytic explanation exhibits a certain formal similarity to commonsense psychological explanation, it does not immediately follow that all the existential claims made by Freud are thereby vindicated. For example: one could claim that there is a close parallel between commonsense psychological explanation and explanation of irrationality by the attribution of evil spirits. In order to make madness intelligible we attribute an evil spirit that has certain rational aims that are inconsistent with

the aims of the possessed subject. But: the parallel in explanatory form alone does not support the existence of evil spirits.

We should also note that it is possible that psychoanalytic explanation has certain formal features in common with naive psychological explanation even if the psychoanalytic conception of the mind, that supports psychoanalytic explanation, radically differs from the naive conception of the mind. Different conceptions of the mind may support forms of explanation that are similar in certain ways. If this is the case then we cannot simply imply a similarity of underlying conception of mind from a similarity in form of explanation. However, it is clear that Wollheim believes that: i) psychoanalytic and naive psychological forms of explanations are similar; but also ii) psychoanalytic, and naive psychological forms of explanation, are supported by a similar conception of the mind:

[T]he kind of psychological explanation that Freud made possible is an expansion, effected step by step, of that provided by the commonsense conception of the mind.<sup>20</sup>

As there is no pressing reason for supposing otherwise I am going to assume that Hopkins and Davidson are similarly committed to the view that Freudian theory should be interpreted as presupposing a naive conception of the mind.

But what is this conception of the mind that Wollheim, Hopkins and Davidson attribute to Freudian theory in their reconstruction of Freudian psychoanalysis? So far I have only indicated that it must be, if it is to avoid the dilemma posed earlier, a conception of the mind that is i) not autonomous of the naive conception of the mind; ii) not first-personal (in the way that Searle's conception of the mind is first-personal). The philosophers above have in

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<sup>20</sup> Wollheim, op. cit. p.93

mind a Davidsonian conception of the mind.<sup>21</sup> Such a conception of the mind avoids the problematic dilemma: it is naive in the sense that it is a philosophical account of the mind that is based upon our naive, pre-theoretical, ability to interpret the behaviour and speech of others; and it is, unlike Searle's conception of the mind, third-personal. Davidson rejects the notion that mental states have intrinsic subjective features that are only properly accessible from the first-personal point of view.<sup>22</sup> On the Davidsonian conception of the mind what is important for mentality is that a subject's behaviour and speech be interpretable from the third person point of view:

Thoughts, desires and other attitudes are in their nature states we are equipped to interpret; what we could not interpret is not thought.<sup>23</sup>

What a fully informed interpreter could learn about what a speaker means is all there is to learn; the same goes for what the speaker

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<sup>21</sup> There are differences between Hopkins, Wollheim and Davidson in terms of their degree of commitment to a Davidsonian conception of the mind. However, with regards to the basic conceptual coherence of the notion of unconscious mentality these differences are not vital. They become extremely significant when we come to address the question of how unconscious phenomena should be characterized.

<sup>22</sup> See D. Davidson, 'The Myth of the Subjective' in Relativism, Interpretation and Confrontation ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) pp. 159-172. From now on I will use the expression "naive third-personal conception of the mind" to mean the Davidsonian conception of the mind. This exclusive usage should not be taken to imply that Davidson's is the only viable account of our psychological competence in attributing thoughts to others. Alvin Goldman argues for an alternative account (a so-called 'simulation theory') in 'The psychology of folk psychology', Behavioral and Brain Sciences 16 (1993) pp.15-28.

<sup>23</sup> D. Davidson, 'Representation and Interpretation', in Modelling the Mind, ed. by K.A. Mohyeldin Said et al (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) pp.13-26 (p.14)

believes.<sup>24</sup>

On the Davidsonian conception of the mind, in sharp contrast to Searle's conception, it is not assumed that it is necessary that a state be conscious in order for it to be mental. What is necessary is that a state should be interpretable. What implications does the Davidsonian conception of the mind have the notion of unconscious mentality? At first sight it seems that unconscious mentality is rendered entirely coherent. The fact that mental states must be interpretable from the third person point of view seems to pose no conceptual block against the possibility of unconscious mentality. In certain cases, Davidson notes, when we interpret the behaviour and speech of some agent, we may be driven to attribute mental states to that agent only to find that:

The agent denies he has the attitudes and feelings we would attribute to him. We can reconcile observation and theory by stipulating the existence of unconscious events and states, that, aside from awareness, are like conscious beliefs, desires and emotions.<sup>25</sup>

So, in contrast to the naive first-personal conception of the mind favoured by Searle the Davidsonian conception of the mind, a naive third-personal conception, seems to allow a coherent notion of unconscious mentality. Furthermore, in so far as it is a naive conception of the mind, the states that it allows one to posit will be, in some sense, similarly naive, thus avoiding the serious problems of intelligibility that arise with the autonomous, scientific

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<sup>24</sup> D. Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' in Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson ed. by Ernest LePore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) pp.307-319 (p.315)

<sup>25</sup> D. Davidson, 'Paradoxes of Irrationality' in Philosophical Essays on Freud, ed. by R. Wollheim & J. Hopkins (Cambridge: CUP 1982) p.305

conception of the mind.

It may seem that the Davidsonian interpretation of Freud, as I have outlined it so far, vindicates the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality. But we should not be too hasty in our conclusions. We must ask whether the interpretation vindicates the notion of unconscious mentality that Freud is committed to. To answer this question we need to look, in more detail, at both the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality and at the notion of unconscious mentality that is licensed by the naive third-personal conception of the mind. In particular I want to address the following questions: i) what kinds of unconscious mental states may be attributed on the naive third-personal conception of the mind; ii) what is the significance of the distinction between conscious and unconscious mental states upon the naive third-personal conception of the mind. If the Davidsonian interpretation of Freud is to be accepted, the naive third-personal conception of the mind must be able to: i) license the attribution of the kinds of unconscious mental state attributed in Freudian theory; and, ii) support a distinction between conscious and unconscious mentality that is as significant as that found in Freudian theory.

#### 4.4 The character of unconscious mentality

Consider the following quotations from Freud:

The laws of unconscious mentality differ widely from those of the conscious. (1913 [1911]: XII 266)

Belief (and doubt) is a phenomenon that belongs wholly to the system of the ego (the Cs) and has no counterpart in the Ucs. (1897: I 255)

To sum up: exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (mobility of cathexes), timelessness, and replacement of external by psychical reality - these are the characteristics which we may expect to find in processes belonging to the system Ucs. (Emphasis Freud's)

(1915: XIV 187)

The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss of psychoanalysis. (1923: XIX 13)

Two things should be clear from these quotations: firstly, that Freud maintains that there are important differences between conscious mental states and some unconscious mental states; secondly, that the distinction between conscious and unconscious mentality is of great significance for psychoanalysis. These two points are related. Certain unconscious mental processes and states have particular features that explain certain phenomena: e.g. hysterical symptoms, neuroses and the content of dreams. Some of these explanatorily significant qualities attributed to unconscious mentality are not found in conscious mentality. Unconscious mental processes are less rational, less sensitive to external reality than conscious mental states and processes. Given that certain neurotic symptoms are to be explained in terms of the peculiarities of unconscious impulses it is clear that the distinction between conscious and unconscious mentality indicates something of key significance for Freudian theory. I am not suggesting that Freud was committed to the view that all unconscious mental states are radically different from conscious ones. The points that I do want to stress are: i) Freud maintains that there is a heterogeneity between at least some unconscious mental phenomena and conscious mentality; ii) because of i), the distinction between conscious and unconscious mentality has explanatory significance for Freudian theory.<sup>26</sup>

But what of the Davidsonian interpretation of Freud? What kind of distinction between conscious and unconscious

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the important qualitative differences between unconscious and naive psychological states and those of psychoanalysis see Gardner, Irrationality op. cit. Ch.4 (especially 4.1 and 4.9).



mentality is licensed by the naive third-personal conception of the mind? Davidson insists that there is a distinction to be made between conscious and unconscious mentality: 'loss of [first person] authority is the main distinguishing feature of unconscious mental states'.<sup>27</sup> The loss of first person epistemic authority follows, Davidson supposes, from the lack of consciousness.<sup>28</sup> In certain cases a person, perhaps an analyst, may be in an epistemically more authoritative position, with regards to the mental states of an individual, than the individual herself.

On the Davidsonian conception of the mind the epistemic differences between conscious and unconscious mentality are simply a result of the lack of accessibility to consciousness in the latter case. On the Davidsonian interpretation, as we have construed it so far, the attribution of unconscious mentality involves an application of our naive third-personal methods of interpretation and attribution. As the attribution of unconscious mentality utilises the same resources and methods as the attribution of conscious mentality to other people there is no motivation for claiming that unconscious mentality is of a radically different kind (in some non-epistemic way) from conscious mentality. We use the same interpretative methods and attribute the same kinds of states. Given that it is our naive psychology that supports the attribution of unconscious mentality it is understandable that Davidson should talk of 'unconscious events and states, that, aside from awareness, are like

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<sup>27</sup> D. Davidson, 'First Person Authority', Dialectica 38 (1984) pp.101-111 (p.105)

<sup>28</sup> For Davidson, this loss of first person authority is not taken to be the result of the inaccessibility of some 'mental object'. He aims to 'get rid of the metaphor of objects before the mind'. D. Davidson, 'Knowing one's own mind,' Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Associations 60 (1987); reprinted in Q. Cassam (ed) Self Knowledge (Oxford: OUP, 1994) (p.62).

conscious beliefs, desires and emotions'.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that Freud sometimes talks of unconscious mentality in a similar way.<sup>30</sup> But it is also clear that it is not the case that Freud supposes that all unconscious mental phenomena are such that they may be adequately described in our naive psychological vocabulary. On the Davidsonian interpretation it seems that the most salient feature of unconscious mentality is an epistemic one: the loss of first person authority. For Freud, there is much more to the character of unconscious mentality than just this epistemic peculiarity. We now seem to be faced with a problem. The naive third-personal conception of the mind does not license the attribution of mental states that are of a significantly different kind from those found in our naive psychology. Freudian theory claims that certain unconscious mental phenomena are of a significantly different kind from those found in our naive conception of the mind. The Davidsonian interpretation of Freud, at best, offers only a partial account of Freudian theory. But, we should note, for Freudian theory the distinction between unconscious mental phenomena (that are not simply unconscious beliefs, desires, doubts etc.) and conscious mental phenomena is of the utmost importance: Freudian theory explains neurotic symptoms, dreams and so on in terms of the features of certain unconscious mental processes and these features are not found in (naive) conscious mental states. The Davidsonian interpretation of Freud is not only partial but it cannot account for certain fundamental features of the theory that it aims to vindicate.

To summarise the problem: the naive third-personal conception of the mind, in so far as it is a naive

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<sup>29</sup> D. Davidson, 'Paradoxes of Irrationality' p.305

<sup>30</sup> For example: (1915: XIV 168) where he says, of certain latent states that 'the only respect in which they differ from conscious ones is precisely in the absence of consciousness'.

conception, supports the attribution of certain kinds of mental states (beliefs, desires, wishes, hopes etc.). Upon such a conception of the mind the notion of an unconscious belief, desire or wish is not conceptually incoherent: consciousness is not deemed to be essential to mentality. But the notion of unconscious mentality is still constrained by the naivety of the conception of the mind. If we are to avoid the dilemma that faced Freudian theory in Section 4.1 we need to find some way of accounting for the attribution of unconscious mental states such that: i) the attributed states may have features that are not found in the mental states of naive psychology; ii) the conception of the mind that licenses the attribution of such states is not autonomous of all naive conceptions of the mind.

The solution proposed by Hopkins, Wollheim and Davidson is that Freudian theory should be seen as involving an extension of our naive third-personal conception of the mind (and not as involving the naive conception strictly conceived). Freudian theory does not simply involve a straightforward application of our naive psychological methods: Freud deepens, elaborates upon, and extends our naive conception of the mind.<sup>31</sup> Though the three philosophers mentioned above all argue that Freudian theory should be seen as involving an extension of the naive third-personal conception of the mind, Wollheim and Hopkins, unlike Davidson, both argue that Freudian psychoanalysis uncovers unconscious mental states that are significantly unlike conscious mental states.<sup>32</sup> I have not the space to discuss the details of their accounts here. The important point, for our purposes, is that both Wollheim and Hopkins insist that Freud is committed to the view that certain unconscious wishes and unconscious

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<sup>31</sup> Wollheim, op. cit. p.95

<sup>32</sup> J. Hopkins, 'Epistemology and Depth Psychology' pp.45-49; R. Wollheim, 'Desire, Belief and Professor Grünbaum's Freud' pp.94-100.

motives are qualitatively different from conscious desires and motives. The difference between psychoanalytic unconscious states and naive conscious states consists in more than just an epistemic difference: unconscious motives and wishes are less rational than conscious ones; unconscious mental processes operate in a way that is less constrained by one's beliefs about the real world; unconscious wishes are more primitive, more childish in their content. For example, Hopkins notes that unconscious wishes (that are operative in dream production) have a 'psychologically remarkable character'; Hopkins then adds:

In the light of this it might seem that Freud should have introduced a special theoretical term - perhaps something like 'night-time motive derivative' instead of the commonsense term 'wish'.<sup>33</sup>

This quotation does not mean that Hopkins believes that psychoanalytic theory involves a conception of the mind that is autonomous of our naive conception of the mind. The point stressed by Hopkins and Wollheim is that our naive third-personal psychological abilities lead us to attribute new kinds of phenomena that are qualitatively different from the conscious mental states of naive psychology. Hopkins and Wollheim reconstruct the step by step nature of the extension of naive psychology, and the naive third-personal conception of the mind, brought about by Freud. The extended third-personal conception of the mind is not autonomous of the naive conception: naive psychological methods of interpretation and attribution are used but in a more complex and more refined manner.

The extension of the naive third-personal conception of the mind has the following features:

i) As a step by step extension of a naive conception of the mind it does not fall foul of the objections that

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<sup>33</sup> J. Hopkins, *ibid.* p.45

were raised against autonomous theories of mind. The objection, of unintelligibility, ranged against the 'extreme view' of Freud is blocked: Freudian unconscious mental states may not be part of our non-extended naive conception of the mind; but, it is claimed, it can be shown that the attribution of such states does not involve a radical departure from our naive psychological methods of interpretation and attribution of thought.

ii) As a step by step extension of a third-personal conception of the mind it does not render the notion of unconscious mentality conceptually incoherent.

iii) As a reconstruction of Freudian theory it is in accord with Freud's view that conscious and unconscious mentality are qualitatively different in more than just an epistemic respect.

iv) As a reconstruction of Freudian theory it is in accord with Freud's view that the distinction between conscious and unconscious mentality is of fundamental significance for psychoanalytic explanation.

### Conclusion

I have argued that the naive third-personal conception of the mind allows a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality but, qua naive, it fails to license the attribution of unconscious mental phenomena that are of a significantly different kind to naive, conscious, mental states. However, Freudian theory need not be seen as simply presupposing the naive conception; Freudian theory should be seen as extending the naive third-personal conception of the mind. It applies and develops the naive psychological explanatory framework and, in doing so, uncovers unconscious mental phenomena that are of a different character to conscious mental states. The extended naive third-personal conception of the mind supports a notion of unconscious mentality that is both conceptually coherent and significant; and, in so far as it is a step by step

extension of our naive third-personal conception of the mind it does not run into the problems of intelligibility faced by autonomous conceptions of the mind. The extended naive third-personal conception of the mind is a promising one for the notion of unconscious mentality. But, in the next, and final, chapter I shall raise a number of issues that must be addressed if the notion of unconscious mentality is to be methodologically supported and philosophically defensible.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

5.1 Naive conceptions of the mind and unconscious mentality

This thesis has been concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality. The naive first-personal conception of the mind was examined via a consideration of John Searle's argument for the Connection Principle. Upon such a conception of mind the notion of unconscious mentality is conceptually incoherent. However, the naive first-personal conception of the mind begs the question against the possibility of unconscious mentality. The rejection of the naive first-personal conception of the mind will not, in itself, render the notion of unconscious mentality coherent: some adequate conception of the mind that can support a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality must be found.

The view that unconscious mentality can be accommodated by an extended naive first-personal conception of the mind was considered in Chapter 3. Searle and J.S. Mill propose a dispositional analysis of unconscious mentality. Such a dispositional account of unconscious mentality renders non-dispositional unconscious mentality incoherent and relegates the mental status of all unconscious mentality to a secondary status. I argued that Searle's dispositional account, as it stands, is inadequate and that it only serves as a way of reconciling the thought that unconscious mentality has explanatory value with the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

Chapter 4 presented the supporter of the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality with a dilemma: accept a naive conception of the mind and deny unconscious mentality

or accept a non-naive conception of the mind but risk unintelligibility. The solution to the dilemma was found in the naive third-personal conception of the mind. Such a conception of the mind must be extended if it is to allow the attribution of mental states that are of kinds not found in our naive psychology.

We are now in a position to answer the two main questions outlined in Chapter 1: i) Can a naive conception of the mind support a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality? ii) What kinds of unconscious mental states are allowable upon a naive conception of the mind? Although this thesis has mainly been concerned with the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality there are certain conclusions that may be drawn about the relationship between naive conceptions of the mind and the notion of unconscious mentality in general:

a) The non-extended naive first-personal conception disallows all unconscious mentality: the attribution of an unconscious mental state violates the correct application of our naive first-personal mental concepts. If any notion of unconscious mentality is to be conceptually coherent then some other conception of the mind other than the non-extended naive first-personal conception must be defensible.

b) The non-extended naive third-personal conception of the mind disallows the attribution of unconscious mental states that are radically different from the mental states of our naive psychology. If the attribution of unconscious mental phenomena that are not akin to the mental states of our naive psychology is to be justified, then some conception of the mind other than that is not a non-extended naive conception must be defensible.

c) The extended naive first-personal conception of the mind disallows the attribution of unconscious mental states whose mentality does not consist in dispositions to bring about conscious mental states. If we are to allow the



attribution of unconscious mental states whose mentality is not dependent upon their causal potential to bring about conscious states; then some conception of the mind must be defensible that is: i) not a non-extended naive conception; ii) not an extension, as Searle and Mill envisaged it, of the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

The claims a)-c) above are negative conclusions: they refer to certain conceptions of the mind that cannot support certain notions of unconscious mentality. The fourth conclusion is a positive one:

d) If the naive third-personal conception of the mind can be justifiably extended in an appropriate way: it can support a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality and allow the attribution of unconscious mental states that differ from the mental states of our naive psychology in more than just an epistemic respect; the mentality of such attributed states need not simply consist in the causal potential of such states to bring about conscious mental states.

These claims, a)-d), are the main conclusions of this thesis. I have aimed to uncover some of the constraints placed upon the notion of unconscious mentality by naive conceptions of the mind. In Freudian theory and empirical psychology unconscious mental phenomena that are not of a kind found in our naive psychology, are posited. The mentality of such phenomena is not deemed to consist solely in their causal potential to bring about conscious states. If such claims are to be conceptually coherent, the conception of the mind that is accepted by Freudian theory and empirical psychology cannot be: i) a non-extended naive conception; ii) a first-personal conception.

The positive claim d) states that the notion of unconscious mentality found in Freudian theory may be vindicated if an appropriately extended naive third-personal conception of the mind is philosophically defensible. This claim is quite weak. I have not yet shown that an extended naive third-personal conception of the

mind can, in practice, support an adequate, methodologically sound, account of unconscious mentality. I want to bring this thesis to a close by very briefly indicating some of the issues that need further examination if an adequate account of unconscious mentality is to be given.

## 2. Prospects and problems for the extended naive third-personal account of unconscious mentality

The extended naive third-personal conception of the mind has the potential to vindicate the Freudian notion of unconscious mentality. But what of the Cognitive Unconscious of empirical psychology? Can the naive third-personal conception of the mind be extended in such a way as to support the attribution of any of the unconscious mental phenomena that make up the Cognitive Unconscious? Psychoanalytic interpretation, and attribution of unconscious mentality, involve an application of the interpretative resources of the analyst. The attribution of mental states in cognitive psychology is not so closely tied to our naive psychological abilities to interpret others. There are two issues here: the first is that of the status of cognitive psychology with relative to our naive conceptions of the mind. Is the conception of mind presupposed by cognitive psychology autonomous of our naive conception of the mind? If empirical psychology is committed to a non-naive conception of the mind does this mean that its claims about the mind are unintelligible as claims about mentality? The advocate of the Cognitive Unconscious seems to face the dilemma raised in Chapter 4. Even if it can be argued that cognitive psychology is based upon an extended naive conception of the mind; there is the question of whether the methods that it uses to attribute unconscious mental phenomena are similar enough to those used in our naive psychological attribution of mentality to others to inherit the (supposed) methodological virtues of

our naive psychology.

Extending the naive third-personal conception of the mind offers the promise of a vindication of certain forms of unconscious mentality: the question that I am raising here concerns the limits of that vindictory strategy. I am only raising this issue here; I do not have the space to answer it. But it is clear that, if the phenomena of the Cognitive Unconscious are to be appropriately characterized (as mental or non-mental), the issue of how cognitive psychology relates to our naive conceptions of the mind must be addressed.

The issue of the relationship between cognitive psychology and our naive conceptions of the mind leads us to our next problem: the question of the relative merits and demerits of different conceptions of the mind. The debate in this thesis has centred around the question of whether any naive conception of the mind can support a coherent notion of unconscious mentality. I have argued that non-extended naive conceptions of the mind cannot do so. But I have not addressed the question of how we should choose, if choose is the right word, between different conceptions of the mind. Commitment to an extended naive third-personal conception of the mind may vindicate Freudian theory; but, if one of our main reasons for being committed to such a conception is that it vindicates Freudian theory we are in danger of begging the question against those who are committed to other, competing, conceptions of the mind that do not support a coherent and non-dispositional notion of unconscious mentality. The question of how we assess, or choose between, different conceptions of the mind is fraught with problems: the criteria used to assess conceptions of mind may only be appropriate if one is committed to a particular conception.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. those who are committed to the naive first-personal conception of the mind can make appeal to the truths revealed to them in their conscious experience the truths found in conscious experience may be offered in support of the naive first-personal conception of the mind.

Such questions will have to be addressed if an adequate vindication of the notion of unconscious mentality is to be achieved.

Even if the extended naive third-personal conception of the mind can be supported in some non-question-begging fashion there is still the issue of the methodological problems that face any account of unconscious mentality.<sup>2</sup> There are two main problematic areas: the first is that of the justification for attributing unconscious mentality: what grounds do we have for claiming that the posited entities are, in fact, unconscious. What is needed is some indicator of consciousness that is exhaustive; in the sense that it will adequately indicate the presence of all conscious mentality. For example, the use of a subject's assent or denial of a psychoanalysts attributions is not an exhaustive indicator of consciousness: there may be conscious phenomena that the subject is a) unwilling to report (especially if the content is socially proscribed) b) unable to express in words at that time. But, if the indicator is not exhaustive then a lack of consciousness (of some attributed mental state) suggested by that indicator may not be because of a lack of consciousness of that mental state; there may be other reasons why the subject fails to indicate her consciousness of the state or its content. We would then be in danger of attributing unconscious mental states that were, in fact, not unconscious.

The second methodological problem concerns the justification for attributing unconscious mentality. Parallel to the requirement that there must be some exhaustive indicator of consciousness is the requirement

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of these methodological issues see Matthew Erdelyi, Psychoanalysis: Freud's Cognitive Psychology (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1985) pp.74-103. Erdelyi's account of the methodology of the unconscious is criticized and developed in Eyal M. Reingold and Philip M. Merikle, 'Theory and measurement in the study of unconscious processes' in Davies and Humphreys, op. cit. pp.40-57

that the indicator of mentality must be exclusive if we are to avoid attributing mentality to non-mental phenomena.

Even if these methodological problems can be solved there is still the further problem of whether the notion of unconscious mentality is equivocal. In this thesis we have been concerned with the notion of mental states that lack both phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. A full and adequate account of unconscious mentality will require an investigation of the many different notions of consciousness and the different ways in which a state or process can be unconscious. Some forms of unconscious mentality may be more plausible, more coherent, than others. Some forms of unconscious mentality may be more amenable, than others, to methodologically sound measurement and individuation.

I have argued that the naive third-personal conception of the mind may be extended so that it supports: i) a conceptually coherent notion of unconscious mentality; and ii) the attribution of unconscious mental states that are unlike the mental states of our naive psychology such that the mentality of these states does not merely consist in their ability to bring about conscious states. The points raised in this final section make it clear that there are many more questions about the nature and plausibility of unconscious mentality that need serious philosophical attention if the notion of unconscious mentality is to be fully and adequately vindicated.

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