The Legacy of German Idealism: The Unconscious

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The conception of the unconscious with which we should be concerned, I will take it, is that of psychoanalysis. There are of course many ways of theorizing mental states which are not conscious – non-conscious representations are standard fare in modern cognitive psychology – but the psychoanalytic conception is the one which, over a century after its insertion into the epicentre of late modern intellectual life, continues to cast a spell and stir controversy; even those unpersuaded of the empirical truth of psychoanalytic claims and skeptical of its value as a therapeutic treatment, recognize in the idea of the unconscious expounded by Freud an intellectually fascinating object. The legacy question resolves itself accordingly into the question of the relation of psychoanalysis to classical German philosophy. However, as I will try to show, in pursuing this topic it is important to attend not only to those elements in the German philosophical heritage that survive into psychoanalysis but also to those which fell by the wayside. Adopting this historical perspective, I will suggest, allows us to understand a great deal concerning the philosophical and other problems of psychoanalysis, and in addition, the way in which psychoanalysis makes manifest the generally complex, ambivalent character of our present relation to the idealist legacy.

I. Kantian and Post-Kantian Origins

1. Since our enquiry concerns the roots of the unconscious in German Idealism, it will be useful to begin with some brief reflections on this concept.

As already indicated, a distinction may be drawn between strong and weak conceptions of the unconscious, or as it may also be put, between the unconscious as such, and mere subliminality, preconsciousness, latent consciousness, sub-personal processing, etc.[1] The notion of contents in the mind that are not present to awareness – and so which are nominally unconscious – occurs in many places in pre-Kantian philosophy and is consistent with all but the most severely Cartesian views of the mind. More is needed for a strong version of the concept of the unconscious, and several criteria suggest themselves.

(1) One standard way of drawing the distinction – which follows Freud's own distinction of *Psc.* from *Ucs.* – is in terms of avowability and accessability, i.e. the possibility of being made conscious: mental states are strongly unconscious if they cannot be rendered available for self-

[1] This is obviously not a strongly unified category – the mental states that ordinary psychology describes as failing to come to mind when bidden, as inaccessible due to self-deception, and so on, are very different from the theoretically postulated contents of sub-personal empirical psychology – but for present purposes it can be allowed to stand.

ascription by ordinary means, and if they are incapable of manifesting themselves in the interior of mental life in the distinctive and immediate way which characterizes the sorts of mental episodes, states and dispositions which are self-ascribed in ordinary, common sense psychology.

(2) Another involves distinguishing causally inert from causally efficacious unconscious elements: strongly unconscious mental contents are ones that are not merely parked inactively on the sidelines of the mind, like memory traces awaiting activation, but that can and do make a difference to mental life in the process of its conscious unfolding, without their becoming conscious. More strongly, it may be held that the causality of unconscious mental items is interdependent with their unconscious status, i.e., that their having the specific kinds of effects which they do presupposes their not being present to consciousness. All of this is involved in Freud's designation of *Ucs*. as 'dynamic'.

(3) A third criterion involves the idea of permanence of structure or systemic distinctness: the unconscious is conceived in strong terms when it is referred to as some sort of enduring, non-episodic particular, capable of changing its specific contents over time and causally disposed to maintain itself in existence. In addition it may be held that the unconscious has its own distinctive nomology, that the laws of its operation are heterogeneous with those of the conscious (part of the) mind; Freud's conception of primary and secondary process, and of reality and pleasure principles, and the post-Freudian concept of phantasy. In this way, the property of unconsciousness ceases to be definable simply in terms of absence of consciousness and acquires a positive meaning, deriving from psychological theory. Thus Freud declared in his later metapsychology that the property of consciousness had lost its theoretical importance, and that the truly significant lines of mental division follow other axes.

(4) A strong conception of the unconscious will involve some claim of non-contingent causal dependence of conscious on unconscious mental functioning: though not necessarily a full-fledged mental substance in its own right, the strongly conceived unconscious will occupy the role of 'substrate' with respect to at least some range of conscious mental states.

(5) It will be argued that contemporary theories of the mind as underpinned by modular information-processing structures meets the preceding conditions. One final condition is needed therefore, in order to distinguish the unconscious from what we would now call the properly sub-personal. It is hard to formulate the idea which we need to introduce here in a way which is satisfactorily precise, but the basic thought is not hard to grasp: The states which compose the unconscious, however heterogeneous from my conscious states, must be ones which are not metaphysically remote from me in the way that the states of (say) my muscle fibres are, i.e., they must be states which I can *identify* with, the inaccessibility of which I can grasp as entailing some

sort of failure of self-knowledge. As Thomas Nagel puts it, they must fall within the bounds of 'inner space'.[2]

(6) It is a consequence of the personal rather than sub-personal character of unconscious states that there is at least a loose analogy, in the distinction of the unconscious from the conscious mind, to the distinction of two agents.[3] Whether or not a theory of the unconscious presses the interpersonal analogy to the point of explaining an individual's mental functioning on the model of two people conscious of their distinctness from, and bearing attitudes and intentions towards, one another, strong conceptions of the unconscious grant at least a toehold for the thought of the unconscious as the subject's 'Other'.

2. To the extent that a conception satisfies these criteria, it approximates to what we find in Freud. Henceforth I will use the term unconscious in this sense. To what extent do we find such a proto-psychoanalytic conception, or the roots thereof, in classical German philosophy?

The historical origins of psychoanalysis have been investigated intensively.[4] The picture which emerges from the major studies is of a huge diversity of confluent historical sources, which do indeed include some philosophers from within the idealist tradition – Schelling, Romantic *Naturphilosophen*, Schopenhauer, Gustav Carus, Eduard von Hartmann – but which also encompasses numerous figures outside it, such as Hermann von Helmholtz and others in nineteenth-century experimental psychology, along with a great number of natural and human scientists from other disciplines.[5] If we restrict our attention to more local, biographical influences, the latter camp predominates overwhelmingly. Those who taught Freud or with whom he had professional associations in the early part of his career – Ernst Brücke, Josef Breuer, Theodor Meynert, Jean-Martin Charcot, Wilhelm Fliess – were, like Freud, trained physicians whose conception of organic functioning had been thoroughly purged of 'vitalist' elements. Brentano provided Freud with direct exposure to philosophy, but stood opposed to the idealist orientation.[6] Thus to the extent that we concentrate on Freud's proximate intellectual background, we will be led to regard psychoanalysis as a development, albeit somewhat exceptional, within the nineteenth-century German psychological tradition, unlikely to bear more than remote and accidental connections to idealist philosophy.

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[2] See Nagel 1969.
[3] The insight is elaborated in Davidson 1982.
[4] For a helpful synopsis, see Gödde 2010 and 2011.
[5] See Ellenberger 1970, Ch. 7, Sulloway 1979, and Kitcher 1992.
[6] See Freud's report of a discussion with Brentano in 1875, quoted in Gödde 2010: 266. Brentano's *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874) contains a systematic critique, with reference to Hartmann, of the notion of unconscious mentality.

The logical nature of psychoanalysis makes this, moreover, the most natural view to take. Psychoanalysis is an empirical discipline, a form of individual and social psychology little concerned with cognition and orientated instead towards the explanation of affective and conative phenomena, in particular those exhibiting an irrational character, a theory which exhibits furthermore pronounced naturalistic traits; on all counts, then, an utterly different creature from the systems of idealism.

But we are not obliged to leave matters at this point. One vital consideration that should incline us to a broader view of psychoanalysis' sources, and to consider seriously the possibility of a deep underlying connection with idealism, lies in Freud's own development. In his first attempt at a theory of the mind, the *Entwurf einer Psychologie* of 1895, Freud drew on exclusively materialist and mechanist concepts. In this work Freud developed a model of mental functioning based on the bare idea of flows of energy along neural pathways, the total quantity of energy being determined by external stimuli and motor discharge, and its distribution across the mental apparatus by variation in the capacities of different types of neuron to impede the transmission of energy.[7] Clearly, had Freud stuck with these austere theoretical resources, psychoanalysis would never have been born: its development presupposes, not necessarily abandonment of materialism in some form or other, but the admission of properties of a type not countenanced in the *Entwurf*.[8] And this change in Freud's outlook cannot be regarded as a minor ontological relaxation. Once intentionality and unreduced mental content are allowed to be explanatory, the restrictive methodology appropriate to neural hypotheses has to be abandoned, and the entire history of philosophical reflection on the nature of the mind, and so of human subjectivity in its most general respects, assumes direct relevance. Freud's recognition that the discovery of the unconscious had transported him across an intellectual boundary and set him in the mainstream of humanistic Western thought, shows itself everywhere in his writings, and is not contradicted by his continued insistence on the scientificity of psychoanalysis. The question whether psychoanalytic theory draws from idealist sources is thereby thrown open.

It has been argued that, even before we come to Schopenhauer and the other salient figures of nineteenth-century thought, there is a deep connection of psychoanalysis with the original Kantian and post-Kantian transcendental project, and I think this claim is basically correct.[9] The

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[7] The *Entwurf* treats 'psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles thus making these processes perspicuous and free from contradiction' (Freud 1895: 295). See Wollheim's summary, 1991, Ch. 1. Affirming that Freud's theory, though abandoned by him, was on exactly the right track, see Centonze *et al.* 2004.

[8] It is implied by Ellenberger, 1970: 449, that the change in Freud's intellectual identifications, with Goethe taking the place of Brücke, Meynert, etc., can be dated to November 1897.

[9] Marquard's (1987) brilliant study, which deals with the topic in its entirety, deserves extended discussion, for which space does not allow. Since I have followed Marquard's account in broad outline, I should say briefly how my approach departs from his. On Marquard's account − in barest summary − transcendental philosophy undergoes a

connection of transcendentalism with psychoanalysis which I have in mind does not require us to deny, or even to play down, the points of contrast just indicated. In particular, it does not involve recasting psychoanalysis – as some schools of thought have done, Lacan's being the best known – as a philosophical theory of the subject masquerading as psychology.[10] The weaker but nonetheless substantive suggestion which I shall defend is that there is a distinctive conceptual shape in the background of psychoanalysis, determining the contours of psychoanalytic theorizing about the mind, the original formulation of which is the work of post-Kantian idealists. Talk of conceptual shape is admittedly nebulous, but I will try to make it sufficiently definite for the claim to carry conviction.[11]

3. We should first consider some of the ways in which it might be supposed that the historical roots of the concept of the unconscious go back to Kant himself.[12]

It has been suggested that Kant opens a door to the unconscious in consequence of the profound modification to the Cartesian view of the mind involved in Kant's theory of self-knowledge, which tells us that awareness of what is in the mind is not immediate but involves supplementary conceptual operations; in other words, that mental contents are not conscious *per se*, in and of themselves, but need to be *made* conscious.

'Depotenzierung': finding that it cannot make good on its claims for reason, it turns to Nature in search of a support, a strategy which can succeed only as long as an aesthetically grounded interpretation of nature can be sustained; and when this interpretation collapses, as modernity's progressive *Entzauberung* entails that it must, psychologism returns, in which movement psychoanalysis is born, reproducing in a different modality the original concepts of transcendental philosophy. The idea of a buried, strict logic to the historical development is of course extremely attractive, but it seems to me uncertain that a single intellectual current runs its course in the way that Marquard supposes. Neo-Kantianism seems to demonstrate the capacity of transcendentalism to survive the collapse of the aesthetically grounded view of nature. If on the other hand transcendentalism is identified with the *original* transcendental programme, then it must be regarded as simply extinguished, supplanted by an ascendant naturalism, making Marquard's strong claim for the identity of transcendental with psychoanalytic concepts hard to understand. My approach, developed in what follows, centres the connection of psychoanalysis with classical German philosophy on the subject's reflexivity, but does not construe psychoanalysis' appropriation of the concept of the unconscious forged in the context of idealism as the *effect* of a *Depotenzierung* of transcendental philosophy (however much it may presuppose it historically). As I see it, the concept of the unconscious is generated by idealism in consequence of attempts to follow through the transcendental programme beyond the point where Kant left it, but its reappearance in psychoanalysis is not connected with the philosophical problems of transcendentalism. In addition to Marquard, I have found Redding 1999, which traces connections of Freud with German Idealism concerning the idea of a 'logic of affect', while paying close attention to the shift from idealism to naturalism, extremely helpful.

[10] Although, as will become clear, on my view there is some truth in the approach which finds in psychoanalysis a 'decentring of the subject', I do not think that it has the metaphysically subversive character which at least some French psychoanalytic theory ascribes to it: Freud is not positioned beyond and against the classical conception of the subject.

[11] Some writers imply that we need to proceed at a very high level of abstraction if we are to grasp the relevant connections. Foucault (1974: 326) is one influential example, identifying psychoanalysis with an entire shift of 'episteme'.

[12] References to Kant appear in Freud – in particular, a comparison is drawn of the unconscious with Kant's thing in itself (Freud 1915: 171) – but as might have been expected in view of the prevalence of neo-Kantianism, Freud is chiefly interested in Kant *qua* epistemologist, in connection with the problem of how to warrantedly claim reality for unobservable entities. Situating Kant in relation to his predecessors on the topic of non-conscious ideas, see the editors' Introduction to Nicholls and Liebscher 2010. On Freud and Kant, see Pettigrew 1990, Brook 2003, and Tauber 2009.

The importance of this point should not be exaggerated, however. Kant is more accurately described as concerned not with the relation of mental content to consciousness as such, but rather with the relation of *objective* mental content – cognition of objectivity – to *self*-consciousness, and in whatever way we interpret it, the main theses of Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding have no direct bearing on the existence or non-existence of the unconscious: even if Kant is required to grant the possibility, or even to affirm the actuality, of representations 'in' us which are nothing 'to' or 'for' us (A120),[13] he is not committed to denying that those non-objective representations are accompanied by some species of consciousness, nor that they play a causal role in non-cognitive sectors of mental life.[14]

A closer approximation to the unconscious is provided, it may be suggested, by Kant's theory of synthesis, when this is read in transcendental-psychological rather than narrowly logical terms. Again, caution is required. Even if Kant's agencies and acts of synthesis are allowed to be hypostatized, it remains the case that non-conscious synthetic activity manifests itself directly in conscious mental life – necessarily so, since otherwise there could be no reason for positing its existence. There is consequently a good sense, vital to the epistemological purposes which drive the theory of synthesis, in which synthetic activity is *implicitly present* to consciousness, in a sense not terribly different from that in which the faculty of memory and acts of recall are implicitly present whenever something is remembered. The yield of the theory of synthesis as regards the concept of the unconscious is thus, at most, not much greater than what we find in Leibniz's doctrine of *petites perceptions*. To underline this point about the relative remoteness of synthetic activity from the concept of the unconscious, it may be observed that on several recent accounts the logical space occupied by Kant's theory of synthesis corresponds to that of cognitive psychology,[15] an indication that (irrespective of whether we endorse the proposed naturalization) the theory lies closer to the properly sub-personal than it does to the unconscious.[16]

The third respect in which a hint, though again it is no more than that, of a conception of the unconscious may be detected in Kant lies in his claim concerning the necessary limit of self-knowledge. Relevant here is not Kant's thesis of the unknowability of the noumenal self, the self as thing in itself, but the claim which it presupposes concerning the structure of self-consciousness:

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[13] Kant's *Anthropology*, §5 (1798: 23-26), discusses the 'immense' field of representations which we can be certain that we have, even though we are 'not conscious of them'. Kant classifies these, in rationalist language, as 'obscure' (*dunkele*) representations, and consigns them to 'physiological anthropology'.

[14] In this connection, see Prauss 2002.

[15] E.g., Kitcher 1994.

[16] Relevant here is C. C. E. Schmid's critique (noted in Frank 1997: 805, note 6) of the notion of 'bewußtseynslose Vorstellungen'; see Schmid 1791: 216-218, 281. Only components of representations, and other items that fall short of the logical nature of a representation (i.e. relation to an object), are allowed by Schmid to exist without consciousness. It is significant that Schmid offers an earlier version of the psychologistic interpretation of Kant advanced later by Fries, which I cite below as an example of non-idealist Kantianism in which the concept of the unconscious has no place, and that Schmid was later subjected to harsh criticism by Fichte.

namely, that it is impossible to know the self as thinking subject. Famously, Kant states in the Paralogisms that '[t]hrough this I or he or it (the thing) which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of the thoughts = X ... known only through the thoughts which are its predicates' (A346/B404). This claim derives from the fact that any attempt to cognize the self *qua* subject of thought 'can only revolve in a perpetual circle, since any judgment upon it has always already made use of its representation' (A346/B404); the self *qua* subject of thought is that '*through*' which any object is cognized, and it is 'very evident that I cannot know as an object that which I must presuppose in order to know any object' (A402). What of course separates this denial of cognition of the transcendental subject from any positive conception of an unconscious is Kant's general thesis of the limitations of our knowledge, but the notion that self-consciousness contains a species of aporia – implied by Kant's affirmation of the necessity of the *representation* of oneself as '= X' – is plainly relevant.

The concept of the unconscious cannot, therefore, be ascribed a direct Kantian origin, even though we can detect in the contexts just described the seeds of, pointers to, relevant later developments.

4. The situation changes, however, when we turn to the development of Kant's ideas about mental content and its conditions by his early contemporaries; these take us considerably closer to the dynamic unconscious. The first to be considered is Fichte.[17]

The Theoretical Part of the *Wissenschaftslehre* takes the place of Kant's theory of synthesis in giving an account of the preconditions of empirical consciousness in the form of a complex theory of mental acts. It amounts, however, to a very different kind of theory.[18] The thickly multi-layered, oppositional structure of Fichte's account of the absolute I's positing and counter-positing – in which elements are cross-related in horizontal structures, identified without reference to determinate types of representation, and form genetic series in which later forms displace their predecessors – is set at a vastly greater distance from the surface of conscious mental life than the synthetic structures postulated by Kant, meaning that there is no comparable sense in which Fichte's structures are implicitly present in consciousness: we cannot be thought to, as it were, *see* the I's positings in empirical consciousness, in the way that we can be thought to discern Kant's syntheses in the conceptually shaped sensible given. This is a direct consequence of Fichte's greater philosophical ambition: natural consciousness must be, Fichte thinks, not merely underwritten as regards its claims to knowledge, but allow its complete sufficient ground to be brought to light.

[17] On Fichte and the unconscious, see the excellent study in Völmicke 2005, Ch. 3.
[18] The question of its ontological status, as with Kant's theory of synthesis, does not need to be decided here, and for present purposes we may again proceed on the basis of a realistic reading.

Hence the greater depth of Fichtean transcendental grounds, and their consequent opacity from the standpoint of natural consciousness.

Among the important features distinguishing Fichte's theory from Kant's is the new role Fichte assigns to productive imagination, which extends the sense in which, for Fichte, transcendental grounds are screened off from empirical consciousness. In a way that recalls early modern rationalism, and that had enormous inspirational value for the German Romantics, Fichte introduces the idea that the transition to empirical consciousness, because it involves an abrupt discontinuity which has no conceptual solution, must be effected by imagination.[19] Imagination, according to Fichte, is the faculty responsible for the conversion of purely rational structure into the kind of mental content that an empirical subject can recognize as its own. On Fichte's analysis, experience depends upon an interplay and 'clash' of opposed (finite and infinite) components, but this is possible, he argues, only if the 'boundary' between them is positively represented, and this is something which no purely intellectual function can do: mere thought can grasp them only as contradicting and so as cancelling one another. Productive imagination thus steps in, giving phenomenologically concrete, intuitable form to a structure which thought can grasp only as a relation of irreconcilable mutual exclusion; Fichte draws an analogy with the way in which instants of light and darkness can be given in experience as alternating only if the boundary between them is extended into a temporal instant.[20] By relating to itself through the medium of imagination – which entails, in Fichte's full story, representing oneself in space and time – the I is able to grasp itself as distinct from its objects and to figure as an object for itself.

On Fichte's account, the contribution of productive imagination, along with all other aspects of the movement from absolute I-hood to empirical self-consciousness, covers its tracks: as Fichte never ceases to emphasize, the standpoints of life and philosophical reflection are distinct, and how things appear from the one is an inversion of the way in which they appear from the other.[21] To the extent that the transcendental standpoint expresses itself in empirical self-consciousness, it does so only obliquely, in the form of moral consciousness: the genetic sequence which produces empirical self-consciousness also gives rise to the existence of the subject as a purposive practical being, the ultimate object of whose striving is the restoration of the full reflexivity of the absolute I: our vocation, represented in the terms of natural consciousness, is to fulfil the moral law, but expressed transcendentally, it is to achieve complete self-determination. Morality thus comprises, so to speak, unconscious knowledge of the absolute I.

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[19] Fichte 1794-95: 187-188, 193-194, 200-201.
[20] Fichte 1794-95: 187-208.
[21] Fichte 1794-95: 207-208. Natural reflection stops at the understanding, and if it were aware of the work of imagination, it would (mistakenly) consider empirical reality 'deception'.

One way of understanding Fichte's alterations to Kant, helpful for present purposes, is to regard the *Wissenschaftslehre*'s theory of the I's positings as reinterpreting, and eliminating, the aporia that Kant locates in self-consciousness: the subject of thought is indeed, as Kant says, not given objectually within empirical self-consciousness, but it is not thereby rendered unknowable; philosophical insight into the self-positing I *is* knowledge of the '= X' that Kant locates in self-consciousness.

5. Though for Fichte the transcendental grounds of ordinary mental life are invisible to the non-philosophical subject, and the standpoints of life and of philosophy cannot be occupied simultaneously, the relation between them remains expressly rational in character and is open to full philosophical comprehension. This epistemologically optimistic claim is upheld, as we will see, in Schelling's earlier philosophy.

Not all post-Kantians affirmed this self-transparency, however. The supposition that, through the application of philosophical reason, it is possible to grasp the transcendental grounds of ordinary consciousness, as distinct from merely knowing that such grounds must exist, is challenged in different ways by Maimon and the early German Romantics.

Maimon denies that Kant's theory of cognition, or Reinhold's reworking of it, succeeds in its aim of establishing the necessary conformity of the sensible given to the conditions of the pure understanding: Kant's transcendental theory leaves a gap, according to Maimon, between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements of ordinary consciousness, which the Humean skeptic is free to exploit. The idealist epistemology to which Maimon is led through his criticisms of Kant's transcendental idealism postulates 'infinitesimals of sensation', differential elements of perceptual cognition akin to Leibniz's *petites perceptions*, which belong to the subject *qua* passive. The synthesis of these elements proceeds without consciousness, and the rules which govern it are not given to our understanding, whence the appearance of an *a posteriori* sensible given. Maimon's difference from Kant is therefore that, while Kant of course agrees that sensation represents a surd for our understanding, Maimon locates its ground *within* the subject, implying that the cognitive limitation which is constitutive of ordinary consciousness derives from a deficiency of self-understanding. What is missing from the self-understanding of ordinary empirical consciousness nevertheless *ought* to be available to it, and this normative shortfall, grasped by the subject itself, drives it to seek to perfect itself. In a fully perfected and self-transparent consciousness, the Kantian divisions between receptivity and spontaneity, and aposteriority and apriority, would be overcome, and such a subject would grasp itself as part of, and its power of cognition as depending on, an infinite mind or reason.

6. A skeptical conclusion similar to Maimon's was also reached – at a slightly later historical point, and through reflection not on Kant but on Fichte's endeavour to complete the transcendental task – by the early German Romantics, who put it to more radical use than Maimon (for whom Kant's shortcomings direct us back, in effect, to early modern rationalist doctrines). Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank have illuminated greatly the importance for Romantic post-Kantians of the notion that the ground of consciousness, while not properly external to it and thus in some sense lying within it, is necessarily inaccessible to discursive reflection.[22] It lies at the root of Hölderlin's conception of the aesthetic as the proper mode of pursuing the task of philosophy once it has run up against the limits of discursivity, and of Friedrich Schlegel's elevation of irony to a position of philosophical supremacy, regulating our (necessarily ambivalent) attitude towards the possibility of a true and complete system of philosophy.

Most significant for our purposes, however, is Novalis' response to the *Wissenschaftslehre*.[23] For reasons which go back to Jacobi's thesis that an original relation to *Sein*, anterior to all judgement, must be presupposed in order for thought to have any sort of meaning, Novalis rejects Fichte's claim that the concept of positing is adequate to expose the absolute ground of self-consciousness and consciousness of objects: positing involves structures of opposition and non-identity which, Novalis supposes, we can know to be alien to being as such. The consequent problem of elucidating *Sein* prior to our (in absolute terms, defective) representation of it in predicative and identity statements, is handled by Novalis by means of the concept of *Gefühl*. Because *Sein* is free from any objectual character, its manifestation within us must be similarly non-objectual, i.e., it must comprise a mode of consciousness which is not intentionally directed, which is as much as to say that it must have the character of feeling. *Gefühl* must however stand in some relation to our judgementally articulated consciousness, otherwise it would not qualify as a transcendental ground. Its relation to *Reflexion* – conceptually articulated consciousness – is that of content, *Stoff*, to *Form*, but these two elements do not conjoin on the relatively straightforward hylomorphic model of Kant's epistemology. Their relation involves what Novalis calls a principle of '*ordo inversus*': reflection reverses the true relations obtaining within the subject, on the analogy with a mirror image, so that when *Reflexion* takes up *Gefühl*, the *Sein* which is manifest in the latter is lost from view, while the status of being *something*, a '*Was*', is attributed to what has been conceptually formed.

Following a different route from Fichte, Novalis has arrived at the idea that intentional, propositionally articulated consciousness as such is dependent on a source which, though it cannot be strictly determined as the being of either the I or that of the world, does not lie outside us and

[22] See Henrich 1992 and Frank 1997.
[23] Frank 1997, Vorlesungen 32-33.

comes before us in the shape of feeling, i.e. as a modification of our subjectivity, and so approximates to the unconscious in one of its many possible senses. But whereas Fichte supposed it possible to step behind the scenes of natural consciousness and reverse its inverted image of reality – and Maimon affirms at least the possibility of absolute cognition – Novalis relinquishes altogether the idea of an achieved cognitive grasp of the unconscious ground of subjectivity. Our proper relation to this absolute ground Novalis conceives instead as *practical*, but not in Kant moral sense – rather it takes the form of seeking 'connection with the whole', 'enlargement' 'to a whole' of the subject's compass.[24] This might sound like Kant's account of the understanding proceeding under the regulative direction of reason, but what Novalis has in mind here is not the narrowly conceived natural scientific project of Kant but rather the *Romantisierung der Welt*, which subsumes enquiry into nature (in appropriately non-mathematical, *naturphilosophisch* forms).

In terms of our narrative, then, Novalis' innovation is to reconceive the unconscious as theoretically impenetrable and, for that reason, the motor of practical life.

7. Fichte, Maimon, and the German Romantics agree, then, in conceiving the empirical subject as defined by an aporetic self-relation – empirical subjectivity is, or makes itself, possible on the condition that its grounds, *while these yet lie in the subject itself*, are not given to, or represented within it. Their differences concern the nature and significance of this limitation: for Kant, it is merely one instance among many of the general boundedness of human cognition; Fichte regards it as a reflection of the dual absolute/empirical structure of the I, expressed in the infinite task of practical reason and capable of being made philosophically transparent; Maimon considers it a skeptical consequence of the impossibility of completing the transcendental task in Kant's manner, but again as comprehensible by *wissenschaftlich* means; while the German Romantics treat it as providing the basis for a variety of aesthetic projects, in ways that lead away from philosophical rationalism.

The image of the subject as eclipsing, covering, veiling, etc., itself, is an original historical development.[25] The notion that we are imperfect, that we fail to fully know ourselves and to realize completely our proper final end, is of course in no sense original: what is innovative in German thought is the idea that subjectivity *as such* comprises limited reflexivity, that the operation whereby we are opened up to ourselves involves also a dimension of self-occlusion. This thesis is maintained on an immanent basis, without any presupposed objective teleological framework, meaning that the purely formal concept of an incomplete self-relation has priority over any

[24] Novalis 1795-96, Group V, no. 566, pp. 167-168 (summer 1796). Concerning the unconscious in Romantic aesthetics, see Görner 2010.

[25] Even if, as may plausibly be argued, the notion surfaces in some form in European thought at an earlier point – with Rousseau, and in early stirrings of Romanticism, such as *Sturm und Drang* – it remains the original achievement of German philosophy to have provided its explicit articulation.

contentful doctrine of the human being's proper ends. And this conceptual figure, though not articulated in these explicit terms within psychoanalytic theory, is put to work in the way that Freud's and post-Freudian metapsychologies picture the mind as a self-concealing structure, and again in the practical perspective of psychoanalytic therapy considered as an unending task of self-retrieval.

8. To conclude this part of the discussion, let me underline the point just made concerning the reflexive character of idealist antecedents to the concept of the unconscious, by means of a historical contrast.

The transcendental project, Henrich has claimed, is staked on the idea of constructing a theory of the subject in which the subject can recognize itself – the transcendental image of the mind should be, or correspond to, the mind's own image of itself; it specifies the conception under which the mind operates, deployed implicitly in order to make those operations possible.[26] This provides one measure of validation for the theory. But as we have seen, it does not bind transcendental theory to representing the subject as fully self-transparent: gaps in the transcendental theory of the mind, under this reflexive construal, will imply regions of opacity in the subject's apprehension of its own grounds, and these areas of darkness will necessarily figure for it as *belonging to the subject itself*.

Insistence on our ignorance of the grounds of cognition is in the foreground of Fries' recasting of Kant's theoretical philosophy. The import of the Copernican revolution, Fries argues, is that cognitions are to be traced back by means of a regressive analysis to their subjective sources, and this enquiry must be conducted furthermore from a 'psychological' or 'anthropological' standpoint, meaning that it should have an exclusively *a posteriori* character.[27] The fact that knowledge of the causes of our cognition is absent from natural consciousness, and awaits empirical investigation, represents however no reflexive deficiency: the absence is not registered subjectively because, in Fries' view, our pre-philosophical epistemic stance of taking on trust our basic convictions and immediate doxastic episodes, though deserving of philosophical elucidation, is unimprovable and skeptically unassailable. In this non-transcendental, naturalistic light, the subject needs only as much causal information concerning the generation of its mental states as may be required to keep belief-formation on the correct epistemic tracks; whatever else may be going on behind the back of consciousness belongs to the merely sub-personal and is not the subject's 'Other'. Fries' *philosophische Anthropologie*, because it does not take up the reflexive conception of Critical

[26] This is also, significantly, the characterization applied by Richard Wollheim to Freudian theory: see in the first instance Wollheim 1972.
[27] See Fries 1798 and 1807.

philosophy, does not create space for the concept of the unconscious: it points not in the direction of psychoanalysis but in that of Helmholtz and later nineteenth-century psychology.

II. The Unconscious in Nineteenth-Century Thought

1. The proto-psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity described in the previous section is transmitted through intellectual history in complex interconnection with a rich set of further developments originating at the very end of the eighteenth century and extending to the last decades of the nineteenth, in which the concept of the unconscious is for the first time formulated explicitly. These developments are distinguished by their commitment to a *positive* idealistic understanding of nature, which goes beyond the Kantian-Fichtean, epistemologically orientated determination of nature as mere appearance, by elaborating idealistic metaphysics and the theory of nature in terms of one another. This allows the subject, so far treated in isolation, to be set logico-genetically into a pre-existent order, on which basis a conception is formed of nature as *existing within us* in a sense denied by Kant and Fichte. This, in turn, facilitates the formation of new types of speculative hypotheses concerning the content and determinate character of human motivation. The unconscious figures in this development on the one hand as a way of conceiving nature itself and as a whole, and on the other as a way of conceiving the nature within the individual subject.

While we are obviously here drawing much closer to Freud, it is important to recognize that the historical developments viewed in their own right do not comprise a narrative of increasing approximation to psychoanalysis. They provided the materials, distributed over a variety of different figures and currents of thought, out of which Freud fashioned the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious, but if we want to understand how they themselves came into existence then we need to grasp them in their own terms.

2. The unconscious first appears by name as a technical philosophical concept in Part Three of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, in the context of Schelling's theory of productive intuition.[28] The theory is intended to explain how it is possible for the self *qua* 'absolutely illimitable' activity to nonetheless intuit this activity as 'intuited', *Angeschautes*, not as 'intuitant', *Anschauendes*, and thereby cognize itself as something limited. To resolve this contradiction, Schelling argues, we must posit activity which is unconscious, un-intuited. The conscious thinking self that stands opposed to the products of its productive intuition is in reality united with them by an act of the self, but this act has no intuition of itself: 'thus the acting sinks, as it were, out of consciousness, and only the opposition remains *qua* opposition therein'; the act is 'lost from

[28] Schelling 1800: 74ff. On Schelling's concept of the unconscious, see Völmicke 2005, Ch. 4, and Bowie 2010.

consciousness'.[29] The finitization of the self effected through unconsciousness creates a distinction 'between what comes from without and what comes from within' and allows us to understand 'how the intelligence can forget itself in its products'.[30]

Thus far, Schelling may seem to have merely restated the *Wissenschaftslehre* in slightly different terms, but the next stage of his argument shows his difference from Fichte. Schelling claims that the activity which binds the thinking self to its products 'must also emerge in the product',[31] leaving some trace of itself, and that it does so as *force*. Accordingly, under the heading of a 'deduction of matter',[32] Schelling turns transcendental theory towards *Naturphilosophie*: gravitation, electricity, and the chemical process are each argued to correspond to a different component of the absolute synthesis of self-consciousness.[33] The difference from Fichte, then, is that the different stages in the transcendental idealist genetic story which Fichte treats – at least some of the time, and whether or not consistently – as mere theoretical constructions, are accorded full reality by Schelling: earlier stages in the genetic story do not evaporate but subsist, and their continued existence is that of Nature in its determinate forms. The ontological ambiguity surrounding the status of the *Wissenschaftslehre*'s structures of positing is thus eliminated in favour of a plain metaphysical realism.

In addition to the theoretical aim of providing a fully systematic account of the possibility of objectivity, Schelling is also pursuing the project, which goes back to earlier eighteenth-century sources such as Rousseau and Herder, of achieving freedom, and realizing the Good, through the recovery of a positive relation to Nature. These two elements, theoretical and practical, are tied together in Schelling's philosophy in a way that sets him in a direct line of descent from Spinoza and in opposition to Kant and Fichte: grasping our identity with the natural order, and the true nature thereof, holds the key on Schelling's view to a correct understanding of freedom, which is in turn a prerequisite of the conception of autonomy formulated (but inadequately grounded) by Kant.[34]

For Schelling, then, the concept of the unconscious points in two directions: as much as it, in Spinozistic and Freudian fashion, forces the human subject back into the natural order, so equally it reveals the spiritual potential of nature itself and leads to the affirmation that we stand at nature's

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[29] Schelling 1800: 77. In recovering this act, art finds its place in Schelling's system: works of art exemplify of the unity of conscious and unconscious factors in the constitution of reality; without their exhibition of this unity, philosophy cannot grasp it adequately. Marquard 1975 develops the analogy of psychoanalytic therapy with the role of art in Schelling's *System*.

[30] Schelling 1800: 74, 75.

[31] Schelling 1800: p82.

[32] Schelling 1800: 82-91.

[33] Schelling 1800: 83ff.

[34] Schelling (1800: 581-582) regards morality as dependent on nature as conceived in his *Naturphilosophie*, and declares contradictory Kant's conception of self-determination as pure self-legislation proceeding without any constraint or ground beyond the individual's power of reason (1804: 538-540).

metaphysical summit; the unconscious incorporates both a moment of absorption into nature, and of transcendence of it. The latter is absent from Freud.

3. Though Schelling postulates a dynamic unconscious with real existence, logically connected with Nature, the Schellingian unconscious has no specific role in psychological explanation, and Schelling does not ascribe an unconscious to human subjects in an individuated, particularized form.[35] However, the conception of the individual human personality as formed out of and around a subsisting unconscious core evolved rapidly in Schelling's wake, in the work of followers such as Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert and Ignaz Paul Vital Troxler, and in the following generation, Karl Gustav Carus and Gustav Theodor Fechner. On display in this phase of the theory of the unconscious are a host of figures of thought characteristic of the *Goethezeit* and *Romantik*, many of which had been formally theorized by Schelling – the concepts of polarity, of conflicts of forces and their generation of new products, of Nature as a single organism, along with the teleological recasting of Spinoza – but which are really the intellectual property of the age as a whole: the formalism of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* merges with Herder's expressivism and Goethe's conception of *Urphänomene*,[36] and themes previously explored chiefly in literary contexts, such as the demonic and abnormal, the sorts of phenomena on which Karl Philip Moritz's *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde* focused with therapeutic intent, are absorbed into speculative theory.

The elaborate schemas of Schubert and Troxler are likely to strike us as arbitrary in their detail, but their ways of thinking about the mind's place in nature are readily intelligible in light of the basic principles of German Idealism, and they show why *naturphilosophisch* psychology necessitates a conception of the unconscious. Schubert conceives Nature as existing in historical form, its upward development propelled by oppositions and the necessity of their resolution, with man's position lying on the border separating ontological strata, on the cusp of transfiguration, resulting in a doubling of the self. And since the mind is not merely embedded in nature as in a surrounding and supporting context, rather nature holds sway within the subject, mental contents express the sense or *meaning* of Nature: the mind is able to – reflexively, but not reflectively – look through itself into the heart of Nature. Whence Schubert's striking conception, in his *Symbolik des Traumes* (1814), of dream, delirium and kindred states as a *sui generis*, pictorial mode of thinking, a 'Hieroglyphensprache' concerned with matters beyond the bounds of the individual self.[37]

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[35] An unconscious mind within the individual person (of a sort) is affirmed by Schelling in his later writings (see Beach 1994: 53-54), chiefly in connection with his metaphysical theory of the grounds of evil, but this involves a broad change of philosophical context and a corresponding shift in view, whereby the unconscious is associated with (positive, intrinsic) irrationality. For the sake of preserving a relatively linear narrative, as well as reasons of space, I am leaving aside the unconscious in Schelling's later philosophy (for brief discussion of which, see Beach 1994, Ch. 3).

[36] On Goethe's own involvement with the concept of the unconscious, see Nicholls 2010.

[37] Schubert 1814 [1862]: 8.

Reflecting the doubleness of man, we find in dreams both the *Nachtseite* of 'die träumende Natur in uns', which is associated with man's *Seele*, and intimations of the higher spiritual order to which man's *Geist* is directed.[38]

In Troxler's system, the structure and themes are highly similar – mental development conforms to a metaphysically predetermined order, of which rational conscious subjectivity represents only one moment, and oneiric states are cognitively privileged – but the spiritualistic tendency of Romantic psychology is more pronounced: man's deepest unconscious consists in his divinity, an ecstatic condition which may equally be described as *super*-consciousness. The concept of the unconscious here shows an ambiguity, the potential for which was present from the transcendental outset, and which is completely consistent with the 'union of opposites' doctrine of Romanticism: if the unconscious comprises, as it were, the region across which the subject's reflexivity fails, then it may also be taken to correspond to, or to contain implicitly, our reflexive completeness. Construed in this forward-looking way, the unconscious defines our *telos*.[39]

Notwithstanding his differences from Schelling and the more exuberantly Romantic forms of *Naturphilosophie*, Hegel's notion of the 'feeling soul', *die fühlende Seele*, which receives an extended treatment in his Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Spirit,[40] also belongs in the present context. The concept refers, on the one hand, to a sublated moment of rational self-consciousness: the feeling soul comprehends the person's 'intrinsically unconscious predisposition, temperament, etc.', as well as everything belonging to their character (all their 'ties and essential relationships'), and it exists for them in the form of underlying 'merely implicit material', distinct from the unfolding play of their consciousness.[41] But it can also exist either independently of rational subjectivity or in opposition to it, and in both cases we find it 'in its immediacy', *in ihrer Unmittelbarkeit*. The first case is that of the child *in utero*, passive and without its own individuality. The second is the *relapsed* condition displayed in dreaming and, in an extreme form, in insanity, where there emerges an '*actually twofold* soul-life', with one side orientated towards objective reality and the other, broken away from it, towards the psychical, the two negatively related sides preserving awareness of one another.[42]

Hegel's notion of psychical regression belongs to the *Ideengut* of Romanticism, but his account of how the psychic (*das Seelenhafte*) distinguishes itself in pathological cases from rational

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[38] Schubert 1814 [1862]: 19-20.

[39] On Schubert, Troxler, and later figures, see Béguin 1946. On Carus and Fechner, discussion of whom I omit for reasons of space, see Bell 2010 and Gödde 2010.

[40] Hegel 1830/42, §§403-406; most relevant are the Zusätze to §405, pp. 90-92, and §406, pp. 98-99, and the later section §408.

[41] Hegel 1830/42: 90.

[42] In the Zusatz to §406, Hegel calls this, because of its independence, 'the *real* subjectivity of the feeling soul', as opposed to the '*formal* subjectivity of life' exhibited in dreaming, foetal life, and ordinary rational life (Hegel 1830/42: 98). On this topic, see Berthold-Bond 1995, Ch. 5.

consciousness, and of how the partition is maintained, comes closer than any of his contemporaries to the Kleinian conceptualization of psychic reality as an inner world. What limits Hegel, in terms of his degree of anticipation of Freud, is the absence of a substantial account of the causes of regression and partition.[43] This refusal to acknowledge a quasi-autonomous substrate sponsoring psychic reality, is reflected in Hegel's comparison of the regressed, segregated feeling soul with mere states of reduced consciousness (dreaming and somnambulism). In Freud's terms, Hegel, like Pierre Janet, postulates only a 'second consciousness'.[44]

4. The impetus to the Romantic *naturphilosophisch* development derives originally, as I indicated, from sources independent of transcendentalism, with which *Naturphilosophie* has diminished connection after Schelling. A relation to Kant, if not to transcendental philosophy in the strict sense, is however restored by Schopenhauer, whose status as a fore-runner of Freud is well recognized.[45]

Schopenhauer famously represents his system as a direct development from Kant entirely independent of Fichte and Schelling, but the true historical relation is certainly more complex. Schopenhauer's characterization of the world as *Wille* bears too much similarity to the Fichtean-Schelling thesis of primordial infinite activity, for the connection to be regarded as merely accidental.[46] But we do not need to untie the relevant knots – or to engage with the difficulties raised by Schopenhauer's interlacing of physiological materialist explanation with idealism – in order to identify the ways in which Schopenhauer steers the idealist *naturphilosophisch* development in a Freudian direction. What gives Schopenhauer's philosophy its proto-Freudian character is Schopenhauer's transposition of his asymmetric dualist metaphysics of *Wille* and *Vorstellung* into a theory of the human subject, according to which the sphere of consciousness cum intellect is subordinate to and in all regards expressive of an underlying conative reality. The key tenet that permits Schopenhauer to elaborate this picture is his thesis of the intrinsic blindness of *Wille,* i.e. of the nonsensicality of the application to it, despite its capacity to translate itself into objectual form, of concepts of teleology or of any other species of rational structure. When this general metaphysical structure is reproduced within the individual subject, it entails that the subject's practical reason is not just a necessarily obedient but also a necessarily unwitting slave of the passions: whatever I self-consciously set myself as an end cannot *be* (or adequately represent) the true motivating ground of whatever I do; to the extent that the ends at which I take myself to

[43] This comes to the fore in Hegel's discussion of insanity in the Zusatz to §408 (Hegel 1830/42: 116-121).
[44] Freud 1915: 170.
[45] For a brief summary of the striking points of convergence, see Gardner 1999: 376-380. In more detail, see Assoun 1976, Pt. II, Young and Brook 1994, and Janaway 2010.
[46] To make a start on this issue, we might examine Schelling's reasons (1800: 35) for rejecting the possibility that the self's activity is 'blind': Schopenhauer's doctrine of *Wille* can be understood as resulting from his own rejection of specific (implicit) assumptions appealed to by Schelling.

aim determine my actions, my having those ends, and their power to determine my actions, are matters which transcend my practical reason; motive force necessarily outstrips the representations which it conditions. The notion that subjectivity is aporetic receives here a new, very strong interpretation, which turns on Schopenhauer's dissociation of the concept of expression – central to all *naturphilosophisch* psychology – from the idea of rational articulation: when *Wille* expresses itself in the phenomena that it grounds, it does not thereby fulfil itself; in Hegel's terms, it does not in assuming objectual form achieve its truth, become actual or 'for-itself'.[47]

This account raises many questions, but one in particular is worth indicating here. The conative ground of the self must have an individuated character, and it must bear relations to the world-as-representation, if Schopenhauer's claims regarding, e.g., the psychological explanatory role of the sexual drive, are to make sense: if an individual's sexual desires are instrumental in relation to the *Wille zum Leben* as it is expressed in the human species, then that *Wille* must incorporate some notion, *ergo* some representation, of species-propagation, and this channelled, determinate form of *Wille zum Leben* must owe its existence to some more basic mode of *Wille*, which must in turn be accounted for. And yet Schopenhauer declares *Wille* as such – the ground of all determinate things – uninfected by anything ideational. Eduard von Hartmann and Nietzsche may be regarded as proceeding from this point.

5. The problem just referred to is appealed to explicitly by Eduard von Hartmann in justification of the synthesis of Schopenhauer with Hegel proposed in his *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (1868).[48] The ideational component which is problematically absent from Schopenhauer's account of *Wille* is supplied, Hartmann argues, by Hegel's theory of the Idea, which through its marriage with the metaphysics of *Wille* finds itself protected against Schelling's criticism that the Hegelian system is mere 'negative philosophy' without objective reality. This might lead us to think of Hartmann's philosophy – since it affirms the reality of the differentiated object world but bases it on will rather than conceptuality – must correspond to that of late Schelling, who is indeed Hartmann's main source of inspiration. Hartmann's great difference from late Schelling, however, is that he abandons entirely Schelling's apriorism, commitment to freedom, and residual transcendental orientation, in favour of what he maintains is a rigorously natural-scientific foundation – hence the work's sub-title, *Speculative Resultate nach inductiv-naturwissenschaftlicher Methode*. Hartmann argues that through inference from the data supplied by contemporary, materialist and mechanistic life science we can infer, first, the existence of a relative unconscious within each individuated organism, and

[47] The full story – with Book IV taken into account – is of course more complicated, but for present purposes this characterization is sufficient.
[48] For a sketch of Hartmann's views, see Gardner 2010.

second, the ultimate unity and grounding of all relative unconsciouses in a single 'absolute' Unconscious, to be equated with a fusion of Schopenhauerian *Wille* and Hegelian *Idee*.

Hartmann's unconscious, like Schelling's, has no special connection with problems of human psychology; its rationale is strictly philosophical. The key to Hartmann's inference to unconsciousness is that manifolds of causally convergent phenomena (e.g. the various contributions of different bodily organs to the maintenance of a living being) are best explained by positing a single, end-directed cause, viz. a volition, which evidently cannot be conscious.[49] Hartmann defends this principle of inference as a form probabilistic reasoning, but we might think it better regarded as a putative inference to the best explanation, and to that extent as comparable with the justification Freud gives for the unconscious in his 1915 paper.[50] More broadly, Hartmann may be regarded as setting a model for Freud in the loose methodological sense of showing that a systematic theory of the unconscious can present itself on inductive grounds, as a hypothesis forced on us by the facts of experience, and so claim *bona fide* scientific authority. Here Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious exhibits in grosser form the kind of historical double allegiance which, I will later suggest, we also find in psychoanalysis: Hartmann belongs, as it were, at both ends of the nineteenth century, among those convinced of the inestimable value of the legacy of German Idealism, and at the same time in agreement with the late nineteenth-century scientific community that the proper method of enquiry into nature presupposes the rejection of all idealism, vitalism and *Naturphilosophie*.

6. Whereas Hartmann preserves the idealistic monism of Schopenhauer, and makes no significant original proposals regarding human psychology, Nietzsche's thought, considered as a development of Schopenhauer, does exactly the reverse, letting go the doctrine of trans-individual *Wille* and instead extending massively our conception of what sorts of psychological forces operate unconsciously and in what ways they condition consciousness.

The Freud-Nietzsche relation falls within our purview, however, only to the extent that we regard Nietzsche as relaying or in some way bearing on the legacy of idealism, and this raises, like everything in Nietzsche, thorny interpretative questions.[51] What can be said with reasonable security is that in whatever ways we interpret Nietzsche – as a positivist, or a skeptical materialist, or a Lange-inspired neo-Kantian, or a metaphysician of the Will to Power – the great pieces of concrete psychological analysis in Nietzsche's texts, such as those in the *Genealogy*, are not presented as derived from or as presupposing any anterior philosophical commitments, and that

[49] Hartmann gives a clear account of his methodology, aims, and relation to his predecessors in the Introduction to the work.
[50] See Freud 1915: 169.
[51] The relation of Freud and Nietzsche is dissected in Assoun 2000; see also Liebscher 2010.

Nietzsche does not attempt to extract from his analyses an organized, systematic psychological theory. There is in consequence nothing that can readily be called Nietzsche's model of the mind: if we speak of Nietzschean psychology, it is a chiefly negative matter, defined by rejection of soul-substance, of a single referent for the I, of a power of free choice, of the autonomy of consciousness, etc. This results in the curious situation that Nietzsche appears to be in possession of all the pieces needed to construct the psychoanalytic metapsychology, and even articulates some of its propositions in informal and often metaphorical terms, while, as it were, declining to officially discover the unconscious.

The explanation for Nietzsche's having come to the brink of psychoanalysis but no further lies, plausibly, in the fundamentally practical orientation of his own project. Systematic knowledge of the unconscious of the sort that Freud claims to deliver – in which we fix ourselves as objects of knowledge and suppose that we can thereby fully and finally possess ourselves – could not assist and can only obstruct the radical task of self-transformation which Nietzsche believes necessary. In part this outlook reflects Nietzsche's criticisms of the will to truth as expressed in modern science, but it can also be regarded as continuous with the notion that we saw in Novalis of an essentially expressive – affective, aesthetic, practical – relation to the unconscious ground of our empirical self-conscious existence. Novalis, however, did not oppose this expressive relation to a theoretical relation: on the contrary, the forms of practical activity by which we relate negatively to the Absolute include philosophizing and all manner of encyclopaedic cognitive pursuits. Nietzsche rejects this harmony of theoretical and practical reason: in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the Dionysian is opposed to the Socratic, and in later works there is no real restoration of reflective practice.[52]

In terms of his relation to the legacy of idealism, then, what should be said to be exemplified by Nietzsche's treatment of the concept of the unconscious is his conviction – after his abandonment of *The Birth of Tragedy*'s attempt to employ idealist concepts in a fictionalist spirit – that the practical-axiological aims which, Nietzsche understood well, drive German Idealism, are not furthered but frustrated by it.

III. The Conceptual Problems of Psychoanalysis as Attesting to the Idealist Legacy

1. Classical German philosophy plays, I have suggested, a formative role in relation to psychoanalysis at several levels: in the provision of the basic conception, formulated in the earliest phase of post-Kantianism, of the subject as constituted by incomplete reflexivity; in the conception of the subject as rooted in and expressive of nature, developed in Romantic, *naturphilosophisch*

[52] Nietzsche's practicalism also helps to explain the very considerable differences between Freud and Nietzsche at the level of substantive psychological claims: Nietzsche's conclusions are different, because his psychological enquiry is dominated by a specific set of *explananda*, determined by his agenda of morality critique.

strands of post-Kantian idealism; and in more concrete speculative claims concerning the content and character of human motivation, advanced by Schopenhauer and pursued by Nietzsche.

But we should also take stock of what has been discarded, and the most obvious, fundamental change is the naturalization of Nature – the movement in the course of the nineteenth century towards progressively more austere, 'disenchanted', views of the fabric of the natural order, the triumph of which is reflected in Freud's *Entwurf*. In this section I argue that we can see in psychoanalysis, alongside surviving idealist elements, the consequences of its renunciation of the full metaphysical commitments of idealism. These show themselves in the conceptual problems that philosophical scrutiny of psychoanalytic theory brings to light.

2. The heart of the issue is identified in these comments of Sartre's:

> By the distinction between the 'id' and the 'ego', Freud has cut the psychic whole into two. I *am* the ego but I *am not* the id. I hold no privileged position in relation to my unconscious psyche. I *am* my own psychic phenomena in so far as I establish them in their conscious reality [...] But I *am* not those psychic facts, in so far as I receive them passively and am obliged to resort to hypotheses about their origin and true meaning [...] I can know myself only through the mediation of the other, which means that I stand in relation to my 'id', in the position of the *Other*.[53]

Sartre considers this conceptual situation paradoxical – and goes on to argue, in his famous criticism of Freud's hypothesis of a censor mechanism responsible for repression, resistance and other putative interactions between *Cs*. and *Ucs*., that psychoanalytic explanations are either contradictory or empty.[54] The nub of that argument is that Freud, having on the one hand declared that the id, or *Ucs*, is properly conceptualized as not-I, is on the other hand obliged to treat it as having all of the features that define I-hood. The inconsistency is concealed through verbal means – the systematic ambiguity of psychoanalysis' theoretical terms.

Rather than examine the censor mechanism argument, I want to maintain focus on the issue identified by Sartre, concerning what Freud does with the 'I'.

Sartre is not denying that there is something extremely puzzling in the psychological phenomena which comprise the core *explananda* of psychoanalysis. The *explananda* are genuine, not a product of psychological theory; in Sartre's own language, they comprise the *conduites* of the for-itself in bad faith.[55] Sartre's complaint is that psychoanalytic theory loses sight of the problem

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[53] Sartre 1943: 50-51.

[54] Sartre 1943: 53-54.

[55] It takes many forms. Repression, resistance, etc., exemplify a relatively complex puzzle arising from the subject's reflexive counter-purposiveness. St Augustine articulates a closely associated but much simpler puzzle: 'Although it is part of my nature, I cannot understand all that I am. This means, then, that the mind is too narrow to contain itself entirely. But where is that part of it which it does not itself contain? Is it somewhere outside itself and not within it?

which they confront us with: what it offers as a solution implies directly that what seemed to be the problem (viz., how can a subject lie to itself, work against its own purposes, etc.?) was in truth just another causal process (the mere mechanical interaction of elements within the psychic aggregate). To draw a relevant comparison: If the problem of self-consciousness is solved simply by postulating representations of representations, then there is no real problem to begin with; the reflexivity of self-consciousness presents a problem, only if it can *not* be analyzed in that fashion.

This takes us to a second statement of the problem, by Ernst Tugendhat, which again hits the nail on the head, and does so with sensitivity to the complexity of the issues involved:

> [...] it is striking that Freud not only does not refer to the ordinary way of talking about the 'I' but also does not even speak of a relation of oneself to oneself. The 'ego' is an objective power within the psychical reality, just like the 'id' and the 'superego'; the only difference is that in contrast to the latter it is an 'organisation' and has a synthetic function [...] Since Freud grasps not only (like Plato) sensuality and normative consciousness but also what he calls the ego as an objective power, the ego is reduced to an anonymous organization with an integrative function. In so doing he discards precisely that aspect which was the basis for the orientation toward the expression *I*: the relation of oneself to oneself. Since Freud simply left this aspect out of consideration, he avoided the structural absurdities that result if one is intent upon understanding the relation of oneself to oneself in accordance with the traditional model of the subject-object relation. Hence, Freud's own theory of the ego has the advantage of not containing absurdities, and it has only the disadvantage that it is in no sense a theory of the relation of oneself to oneself. But such a theory would have to follow from his own assumptions as soon as one attempted to translate the substantives *id*, *ego*, and *superego* into terms that are behaviourally relevant, that is, as soon as one specifies the modes of being of the person for which the substantives stand. In the case of the term *ego* this would mean examining the relation of the person to himself, and without a concept of the relationship of oneself to oneself it does not appear possible to understand something like self-determination.[56]

Tugendhat makes the point, of which we do indeed need to be reminded when our attention is fixed on German Idealism, that philosophical elucidation of self-consciousness was not on Freud's agenda and is nowhere claimed by Freud to be furnished by psychoanalytic theory. But, as Tugendhat indicates, this does not absolve Freud. Precisely because Freud does not address the issue, it is easy to suppose – and quite probably Freud did suppose; so Sartre assumes at any rate – that the psychoanalytic theory of the ego, from which all of the conceptual obscurities of Kant, Fichte and Schelling's treatments of the topic are blissfully absent, tacitly solves the problem of self-consciousness. And this, as Tugendhat indicates, would be a mistake: Freud cannot duck the question of 'the relation of oneself to oneself', because psychoanalytic attributions need to be

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How, then, can it be part of it, if it is not contained within it? I am lost in wonder when I consider this problem. It bewilders me.' (*Confessions*, 10.8).

[56] Tugendhat 1986: 131-132.

translated into 'terms that are behaviourally relevant', i.e. grasped as 'modes of being of the person'.[57]

Essentially the same point is made from the opposite quarter, that of those who think that self-relations and modes of being of the person do not provide good philosophical currency. Michael Moore writes:

> Freud's metapsychology and its theoretical unconscious is caught in a dilemma: the mentalistic vocabulary of persons in terms of which clinicians prompt patients to recapture unconscious wishes and so on is not a vocabulary in which it makes sense to construct a deep theory such as the metapsychology purports to be [...] the metapsychology should be seen as an exercise in homuncular functionalism [...] To construe the metapsychology as an exercise in homuncular functionalism provides a plausible enough insulation of the theory from any metaphysical embarrassment.[58]

The point at issue is helpfully formulated by employing the personal/sub-personal distinction, which I introduced earlier in distinguishing the (psychoanalytic) unconscious from the merely non-conscious. In those terms, psychoanalysis is a kind of theoretical duck-rabbit, founded on a systematic confusion of the personal and sub-personal levels. This is what enables the sleight of hand which Sartre thinks can be found in all psychoanalytic explanation: psychoanalysis is premised on a conceptual move from the level of the person as a whole to the sub-personal level, but it ends up re-importing the personal level at the sub-personal, in its account of the actions of the sub-personal modules. Moore's proposal is that the confusion be resolved once and for all by an all-out, explicit, rigorous sub-personalization.

There is a very great deal more to be said about all of this,[59] but for present purposes the issue can be said to come down to the following: Psychoanalysis leaves us unable to truly understand how its talk of mental parts and unconscious processes, the bits and pieces which compose its map of the mind, is to be coordinated with our reflexive understanding, which it actively draws on, of ourselves as self-conscious self-determining subjects. The problem arises because its mereological analysis is cast in the terms of modern, post-idealistic naturalism, and those terms, which foreswear the (teleological, dialectical, etc.) conceptual forms of idealism, are too spare to allow us to grasp the sum of mental parts as forming the kind of whole with which ordinary self-consciousness presents us. And this situation has a historical explanation:

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[57] Düsing (1997: 36-39) puts the point well: though Freud does not address the philosophical problem of self-consciousness, his structural theory is an implicit criticism (continuous with that of Ernst Mach) of classical theories of the self.

[58] Moore 1988: 148, 154, 156. There are many versions of the cognitive psychological approach to psychoanalysis: see, e.g., Boden 1977, Erdelyi 1985, and Kitcher 1992. Kitcher's study (1992) is primarily historical and so has particular relevance to the present context. Kitcher's reservations about psychoanalysis concern the prematurity of the naturalistic, sub-personal interdisciplinary synthesis which she regards it as attempting.

[59] I explore this issue at greater length in Gardner 2000.

psychoanalysis retrieves from idealism a conceptual form, which provides it with its foundation, but not its accompanying conceptual context.

3. The result is that psychoanalysis *in toto* incorporates more commitments than can be synthesized without readopting an idealistic Romantic standpoint. This is reflected in the quite extraordinary diversity of (mutually antagonistic) forms of psychoanalytic thought, which range from those who think that psychoanalytic traffics in the species of narrative truth appropriate to edifying literary fictions, to the view that psychoanalytic explanations are meaningless unless they are taken to have neural referents supplying them with a possibility in principle of verification.[60] The extent and depth of the disagreements which separate different schools of psychoanalysis, and the palpable difficulty of finding any moderately determinate set of Freudian claims endorsed by a significant sub-set of positions, make it reasonable to doubt the unity of the discipline or the existence of any single research project; we do better, it may be suggested, to reserve the term psychoanalysis for those that stick reasonably close to Freudian orthodoxy and to concoct a different heading – 'dynamic psychotherapy', e.g. – for the plethora of forms of thought and clinical practice which stand in some or other line of descent from Freud. Issues of taxonomy and terminology aside, the important point for our purposes is that the fracturing and pluralization of post-Freudian theory has a firm conceptual root in Freud's original conception of psychoanalysis, and that Freud's conception of psychoanalysis an all-embracing theoretical unity was no arbitrary projection: Freud was exactly right to suppose that, if all of the commitments of late modernity are to be honoured – its Kantianism as well as its naturalism – then an intellectual structure along the lines of psychoanalysis is necessary. The ambitious aim of supplying a comprehensive theory of man remains hard to shake off: it is reflected in the way that different schools of psychoanalytic thought fail to cohabit peaceably, while repeated attempts to synthesize their different theoretical perspectives fail to gain acceptance.

4. Two further, corroborative implications of psychoanalysis' abandonment of idealism are worth noting.

The teleologically structured Nature of idealism and Romanticism is permeated with normativity. When the unconscious is located within Nature so conceived, it too has direct normative import. Given the origin of the unconscious in the theoretical concerns of transcendentalism, this is just what should be expected. Even anti-rationalist Romanticism – Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* – grants the unconscious normative authority (the Dionysian is the source, or at least the principal necessary condition, of the Good).

[60] For a basic survey of developments, see Gedo 1999.

The ethics of psychoanalysis are a complex topic, and there are many ways in which, it has been argued, values can be extracted from (or located in) psychoanalysis, but it can be said with confidence that there is no similarly direct, conceptually transparent route from psychoanalytic explanations to practical norms. The emancipatory value of psychoanalysis, and its potential for serving purposes of social critique, exploit this value-freedom. Thus, whereas idealism guarantees the unconscious a positive role in sustaining personal autonomy, the implications of psychoanalysis for human autonomy are much less clear – indeed, are hotly disputed – despite the fact that psychoanalysis is presented by Freud as a major further step in the unfinished project of Enlightenment.

The second implication is connected closely with the first. When Nature is conceived idealistically, our personal identities can be allowed to merge with larger, impersonal objects, without being eroded: under the conditions of idealism, grasping ourselves as individuals is consistent with knowing ourselves to be parts of non-personal wholes, in which we can furthermore consider ourselves at home. The relation of the human subject to (the rest of) nature implied by psychoanalysis is starker and more alienated. The instinct theory which lies at the foundation of Freud's metapsychology requires us to recognize forces of nature at the foundation of our personalities, but the conceptual means provided by Romantic idealism for grasping these as continuous with rational subjectivity have been eliminated, making the relation of personality to instinctual force a confrontation with something antithetic to personality. Psychoanalysis requires us to avow the nature within us, but this nature, in its post-idealistic conception, is too much like nature outside us for avowal to be really intelligible. Again, Sartre's insight that the conceptual demands of psychoanalysis are incongruent with subjective understanding, 'being-for-itself', proves well-founded, and again a historical explanation is available.

5. Post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory, I said, wrestles with the problems generated by Freud's grafting of materialist and mechanistic forms of explanation onto an idealist conception of subjectivity.[61] A comprehensive review of these developments is impossible here, but I want to cite one which seems to me an especially clear illustration of the pressures operating within psychoanalytic thought.

The concept of sublimation occupies a crucial but uneasy place in the psychoanalytic edifice. It is, on the one hand, the concept which has the job of providing for the full transition from animality to the realm of art and culture, in short, to all that we value for its own sake and consider 'highest' in humanity's collective achievements. The difficulty, however, is that Freud's account of

[61] Their focus has been in particular on Freud's theory of instinct or drive, *Trieb*, regarded as the node of transition from the somatic to the psychological.

this psychical function is extremely bare, so much so that the suspicion reasonably forms that sublimation is a mere dummy concept employed when contentful psychoanalytic explanation grinds to a halt in the face of mental phenomena whose richness and complexity it cannot do justice to.

A remarkable attempt to resolve this problem is made in Hans Loewald's short book, *Sublimation*. What is most striking in Loewald's proposals – when viewed in light of the historical perspective we have been exploring – is the degree to which Loewald resorts to conceptual figures which manifestly bear the stamp of German idealism and *Naturphilosophie*. The conception of sublimation which Freud originally elaborated assumes a conception of the ego defined by the function of defence, and identifies sublimation as a transformation of (sexual) instinct cued by inhibition of the original instinctual aim, for which sublimation offers a substitute. Loewald very plausibly considers this inadequate to grasp the specific nature of the non-quantitative transformation involved in the sorts of phenomena which sublimation is held to be responsible for. Accordingly, following Winnicott, Loewald detaches the concept of instinct from that of discharge or diminution of excitation, thereby allowing instincts aims that transcend the mechanistic law of tension reduction which, according to Freud, rules the psychic apparatus.[62] Sublimatory instincts are, according to Loewald, directed towards 'restoration of unity ... a *differentiated unity* (a manifold) that captures separateness in the act of uniting, and unity in the act of separating',[63] 'reconciliation of the subject-object dichotomy'.[64] Their field of operation, the objects over which they range, is furthermore conceived as intra-psychic.

My observation is simply that this overhauling of Freudian theory, designed to give it an explanatory grip on the vast field of human experience in which things are taken as valuable *per se* rather than as mere means to pleasure, appears to involve a complete shift of framework. If Loewald is right that it is necessary to postulate an irreducible, autonomous reflexive drive whose aim encompasses *value* – 'the value of the ego itself as a higher form of psychic organization'[65] – in order to theorize the mental lives of rational subjects, then *Naturphilosophie* and idealism are vindicated: at the base of human subjectivity lies a *Bildungstrieb*.[66] And this is in effect the very lesson drawn by Loewald: psychoanalysis refers us, he says in his conclusion, to a *natura naturans* characterized by a subjectivity vaster than 'human individual mentation'.[67]

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[62] Loewald 1988, Ch. 2.
[63] Loewald 1988: 24.
[64] Loewald 1988: 20.
[65] Loewald 1988: 42.
[66] Loewald maintains a close relation between the higher products of sublimation and their lower corporeal prototypes (1988: 13-14, 33-34), but it is hard to understand how, without a *naturphilosophisch* context, it can be more than contingent. The (re)turn of psychoanalytic theory to *Naturphilosophie* is a rare occurrence, but Ferenczi's *Thalassa* (1924) provides an early precedent.
[67] Loewald 1988: 79-80. More precisely, Loewald considers that this metaphysics coheres with his construal of psychoanalysis, and it is not clear whether he would accept that it is also required by it, as I am urging. Some writing on psychoanalysis does explore the connection with the idealist legacy. Marquard's view is referred to above. Hopkins

6. It might be objected that, contrary to what I may seem to have been assuming, the conceptual problems of psychoanalysis which I have been discussing do in fact have solutions. Certainly the cursory overview which I have offered here does not show them to be insoluble. However, the limited, historically diagnostic claim which I have made does not presuppose their insolubility. only that psychoanalysis exhibit a pattern of tensions. In fact, as regards the non-historical, systematic question, it seems to me likely that, so long as we allow ourselves a sufficiently relaxed scheme of psychological explanation – which helps itself to the notion of mental partition, and to the idea that essentially different types of mental operation can interact coherently within the subject – the tensions can be removed, at least to the extent that it can be shown that psychoanalysis is at no significant disadvantage in comparison with common sense or 'folk' psychology, from which, indeed, its forms of explanation are borrowed, allowing us to describe psychoanalysis as an extension of common sense psychology.[68]

This, however, raises a further question: Is common sense psychology itself free of the sort of conceptual problems which afflict psychoanalysis? For some time now, eliminativists in the philosophy of mind have been arguing that intentional psychology, or at any rate the particular version of it operating in 'folk' psychology, is incoherent. If this assessment is justified, then the argument that psychoanalysis comprises an extension of common sense psychology merely passes the buck, and conceptual problems in psychoanalysis should be regarded as exposing concealed lines of fault in our ordinary conceptual scheme. This is, in fact, exactly the strategy that Sartre is pursuing, with the aim of purifying our conception of psychological explanation by showing the need for expulsion of its naturalistic elements, in a way that recalls Fichte's demand that we expunge from our self-conception all traces of 'dogmatism': Sartre's criticism of Freud is, in effect, that psychoanalysis has abetted the naturalistic degradation of the subject from its correct idealist conception.

The account which I have given of psychoanalysis comprises what is sometimes called a humanistic view, according to which the project of psychoanalysis and that of empirical psychology, however much their paths may cross, are fundamentally distinct. The recurrent preoccupation with psychoanalysis on the part of philosophers who lack any interest in empirical psychology as such shows that this is not a marginal view: Sartre provides one example, but

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1987 and Wollheim 1993 draw parallels of psychoanalytic concepts with those of idealism. Several Hegelian reconstructions of psychoanalytic thought have been proposed, however: see Opatow 1989, Berthold-Bond 1995, Snelling 2001, Mills 2002, and Ver Eecke 2006. The view that psychoanalytic thought requires an injection of non-naturalistic philosophy is evidenced also by Binswanger's attempt to reconstrue psychoanalysis as Daseinanalysis.

[68] This argument is developed in Gardner 1993. There are several versions of the extension view, the original formulation of which is due to Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins. Cavell 1993 argues that psychoanalysis can be freed from its conceptual difficulties through the adoption of a Davidsonian construal of the ordinary conception of mind and meaning. For a different account, see Lear 1990 and 2005.

numerous others may be cited, from Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas, to (post-)analytic contemporaries such as Richard Wollheim, Donald Davidson, and Jonathan Lear. It is therefore a safe conclusion that psychoanalysis contains elements that, at the very least, invite a non-naturalistic construal, and it is these that I have argued may be traced back to German idealism.

But it is equally an implication of what I have argued that psychoanalysis lends itself also to naturalistic construals, which have sound motivation: if psychoanalysis is conceptually problematic in the ways suggested, and if those conceptual problems are reflections of its idealist antecedents, then one way to solve its problems is to cut psychoanalysis fully loose from its non-naturalistic historical sources (this is the force of Moore's recommendation, which we saw above). Notwithstanding the long tradition within the philosophy of science repudiating Freud's claim that psychoanalysis meets the conditions of empirical knowledge,[69] striking attempts have been made, as noted above, to rationalize psychoanalysis by means of its thorough naturalization.[70] Whether the future of psychoanalysis lies in its unification with brain science, evolutionary theory, and cognitive psychology is a systematic question which lies outside the scope of the present discussion. The historical story, however, gives reason to wonder whether sloughing off the legacy of idealism would leave behind anything recognizably psychoanalytic.

[69] Beginning with Popper, but at greatest length in Grünbaum 1984.

[70] A huge number of chiefly North American psychoanalytic theorists might be cited here. Benjamin Rubinstein has been an especially influential proponent of the view that psychoanalysis should reconceive itself as 'protoneurophysiology'.

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