

Freudian Psycho-ontology: A Philosophical Critique

Alfred I. Tauber

In the final analysis, in its transcendent constructions and its best phenomenological texts, Freudianism holds deep within it what our era most lacks. That is undoubtedly the reason – despite its theoretical uncertainties, contradictions, even absurdities – for its strange success. Psychoanalysis therefore does not belong to the body of the sciences of man to which it is now attached and from which it will here be carefully dissociated. It is rather, the antithesis of those sciences. (Henry 1993, p. 7)

Psycho-ontology strikes me as a plastic term, one that may cover quite a diverse set of philosophical issues. Indeed, the latitude of interpretations presented in this conference suggests that ‘psycho-ontology’ may be parsed in different ways, but let us begin with the announcement of our organizers that “‘psycho-ontology’ can be defined as the investigation of the relationship between human cognition and features of reality.” In the 20th century, Freud offered the most influential theory of that relationship, and in my comments today, I hope to refresh our understanding of his project and in that exercise examine its current relevance. I suggest that Freud, in many respects, made the last great attempt to establish a philosophy of the mind firmly grounded in modernity’s metaphysics, and in that effort his formulation of a psycho-ontology still holds a firm grip on broadly accepted conceptions of personal identity: Commonly understood, we are strangers to ourselves, inasmuch as a powerful unconscious bedrock of teeming emotions, drives, and instincts exert their clandestine desire on thought and behavior. Reality emerges in the encounter of those inner forces with a world whose elements are configured and manipulated by what Freud called, fantasies.

For Freud, reality is an obstacle and defined as such, for the line between fantasy and reality is no longer something like the difference between a mental event and a real event (Cousins 2005). "I am always in a fantasy as long as I meet no obstacle to the satisfaction of a wish." The *Unc.* – whether lodged in the ego or the id – alienates the subject from full acceptance of external reality, so that ultimately the subject is the battleground over which reality and fantasy lay their respective claims. If fantasy dominates, the primary narcissism of the subject then must struggle in its rejection of the stimuli of the outside world, or, alternatively, desire seeks its object and reality becomes the site for its gratification. Accordingly, reality is a melded product of mind and nature (per Kant), and the mental is an aggregate of conscious and unconscious faculties, of which the latter dominates.

Put in less orthodox psychoanalytic terms, intentions both shape reality and structure responses to obstacles and opportunities for the satisfaction of desire. To comprehend and master unconscious forces is not only the immediate therapeutic task of psychoanalysis, but that project, enlisted in the great Western tradition of moral philosophy, frames much of contemporary social and ethical theory. Simply put, despite rejecting Freud’s scientific pretensions and the specifics of the psychological mechanisms he proposed, he remains the master architect of contemporary notions of self-identity. So I maintain that in Freudianism, we find the most compelling contemporary conception of psycho-ontology as the inter-face of cognitive faculties and the world, for better and for

worse.

Freud recognized the philosophical stakes in his ambitious project. In the posthumously published *Outline of Psycho-analysis* (1940), Freud reiterated his earlier conviction and presents the “psychical apparatus” as a *noumenon*:

In our science as in the others the problem is the same: behind the attributes (qualities) of the object under examination [the Unconscious] which are presented directly to our perception, we have to discover something else which is more independent of the particular receptive capacity of our sense organs and which approximates more closely to what may be supposed to be the real state of affairs. *We have no hope of being able to reach the latter itself*, since it is evident that everything new that we have inferred must nevertheless be translated back into the language of our perceptions, from which it is simply impossible for us to free ourselves. But herein lies the vary nature and limitation of our science...*Reality will always remain ‘unknowable.’* (Freud 1940, p.196; emphasis added)¹

Please note, beyond Freud drawing a parallel between the unconscious and the Kantian noumenon (Tauber 2010), he required a “language of our perceptions,” by which he meant a system of representations. The remainder of my paper explores the consequences of this philosophical move.

Affectivity and the Limits of Representation

Having summarized the first meaning of ‘psycho-ontology’ as a ‘reality-mediator’ in a Freudian vernacular, I now turn to a second consideration. This second sense of psycho-ontology concerns the foundational aspects of Freud’s theory, namely that the unconscious is the basis of the Freudian mind. Accordingly, the unconscious, whether considered as an entity or as a locale of sub-consciousness mental activity, serves as the bedrock of the psyche and the continuous source of the mental. Note, ‘mental’ at this primordial level reaches back in phylogeny to include instincts, drives, and emotional states that ascend and metamorphose into consciousness and more developed forms of rationality. In the psychoanalytic scenario, the same subject-object divide that appears so clearly in the Cartesian schema of capturing external reality also applies to representing psychic life.

These inner states are different in character than discerned ‘knowledge’ of external reality. One difference pertains to the ‘product’ of the cognitive process: Physical objects may be objectified, by which we mean that different observers might agree on what the object is; of course that agreement may or may not correspond to the same assessment and in the end, only measurement suffices for some ‘final’ objectivity,

¹ Freud goes on to draw parallels between psychoanalysis and physics, since he regarded each discipline as following the same basic scientific strategy: perceptive abilities are constantly improved; sense perceptions permit connections and dependent relations to be made, which are “somehow reliably or reproduced or reflected in our internal” thought; “understanding” follows that in turn permits prediction and control (Freud 1940). He concludes his primer on scientific method with another parallel to physics:

We have discovered technical methods of filling up the gaps in the phenomena of our consciousness, and we make use of those methods just as a physicist makes use of experiment. In this manner we infer a number of processes which are themselves ‘unknowable’ and interpolate them in those that are conscious to us. (ibid, pp. 196-7)

In sum, just as a physicist must infer the character and placement of a particle, so must the psychoanalyst infer the character and expression of the psychical apparatus.

but the knowledge rests on *shared* experience. With subjective states, one's representation to oneself is private and when articulated it becomes a second order report. So, while subjective experience might be expressed in the same representational language used to discuss the external world, the feeling or emotion exists as such, in some sense, trapped within the mental life of the individual.² That Freud claimed that affections are immediately known does not mean that they then can be related to oneself (much less to others) as *representations*. This is the crux of Wittgenstein's critique of private language. Inner states exist as such; their immediacy requires no mediation. Only upon reflection does the emotion require (and acquires) ideas (and their corresponding representations). At this point, the problem of the representation itself is at issue. To this matter we now turn.

The issue hinges on two different meanings of the unconscious. When regarded from the representational perspective of consciousness, the unconscious becomes an object of consciousness, and thus attains meaning as it is deciphered to a conscious understanding. A second meaning refers to a deeper ontology, where the primordial psyche lies ineffably beyond representation realm and thus fundamentally inaccessible to representation. Only conscious constructions translate those affections into a public language. When the second meaning is subordinated to the first, the unconscious, originally the ego's radical other (not representable), now has, through representation, lost its thorough alterity. Simply, once represented, the unconscious is no longer *the Unconscious*.

Freud, because of his own philosophical and scientific commitments, was guided by the ultimate desire to reduce the unconscious to a physical reality (i.e. a product of brain states) and then, in practice, he settled for a reduction to conscious thought through representative modalities (via language, symbols, secondary manifestations), which he identified (defined) as epiphenomena of unconscious processes. From this perspective, Freud embraced an "internalist view according to which the role of language [consciousness] is to give expression to 'ideas' that are prior to and logically independent of it, ideas that are entirely subjective and internal" (Cavell, 1993, 47). Quoting Freud, through "interposition [of word-presentations] internal thought-processes are made into perceptions" (Freud, 1923, 23). Therefore, because consciousness establishes conditions that preclude direct "observation" of the unconscious and, correspondingly, because the unconscious has no "language" (as normally construed) and functions with a "logic" alien to conscious thought, a new representational method was required for its discernment. Thus psychic experiences are re-presented with a new vocabulary and grammar; the objective reality of our judgments arises from a merging of conscious perceptions mediated by psychic "categories of understanding," and their synthesis in a consciousness capable of self-reflection offered psychoanalysis its basis of study.

² We must remind ourselves that Freud adamantly rejected the equation of mind with consciousness, which served as the primary scaffolding of those philosophies inspired by Kant. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), he drew a bead on the crucial philosophical issue of defining mind and went to some length to describe, as he had many times previously, the repressed character of the unconscious, the transitory nature of consciousness, the latency of pre-consciousness, and most beguiling, the utterly different logic employed by the unconscious relative to conscious thought. And most importantly, the unconscious *is* the mind and psychoanalysis is the means of revealing its true character.

Freud posited that the drive which characterizes the unconscious escapes the laws of consciousness and functions as an ‘other,’ whereas an instinct (*Trieb*) is represented to consciousness as an idea (*Vorstellung*) by which we ‘know’ it:

The antithesis of conscious and unconscious is not applicable to instincts. An instinct can never become an object of consciousness – *only the idea that represents the instinct can*. Even in the unconscious, moreover, an instinct cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea.³ (Freud 1915, p. 177, emphasis added)

With this conceptual structure, as already mentioned, Freud held to a version of knowledge steadfastly based on a subject-object relationship, one amenable to scientific investigation. Indeed, using representation as the epistemological mediator between the two psychic domains, psychoanalysis radically asserts its ability to accomplish just this task: Because

we know for certain that they [unconscious processes] 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. Indeed, we are obliged to say of some of these latent states that the only respect in which they differ from conscious ones is precisely in the absence of consciousness. Thus we shall not hesitate to treat them as objects of psychological research, and to deal with them in the most intimate connection with conscious mental acts. (Freud 1915, p. 168; emphasis added)

However, the matter hardly ends here. Freud also accounts for psychic drives as being experienced *directly* through the affects that express them qualitatively (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, p. 13), but this hardly constitutes *knowledge in the usual sense*. Indeed, from the same passage quoted above, Freud goes on to make a crucial addendum: “If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea *or manifest itself as an affective state*, we could *know* nothing about it” (Freud 1915, p. 177, emphasis added). So, as an alternative to the mediation of an ‘idea,’ namely, a conscious ‘idea,’ the affect presents itself directly as experience without representation, and, note, the affect is included as a way of *knowing*. For example, one might describe pain and find language incapable of capturing the experience, and analogously, the phobia of Little Hans has no conceptual intermediaries for the child (1909). The affect (feelings, emotion) displaces representational knowledge with something else, namely a direct visceral experience. Indeed, following this logic, the unconscious *is* affect and to the extent we *know* the

³ The problematic relationship between an ‘idea’ and its unconscious association was recognized at the beginning of psychoanalytic theorizing and was commented upon by Josef Breuer in the jointly authored *Studies in Hysteria*: “The objections that are raised against ‘unconscious ideas’ existing and being operative seem for the most part to be juggling with words. No doubt ‘idea’ is a word belong to the terminology of conscious thinking, and ‘unconscious idea’ is therefore a self-contradictory expression. But the physical process that underlies an idea is the same in content and form (though not in quantity) whether the idea rises above the threshold of consciousness or remains beneath it. It would only be necessary to construct some such term as ‘ideational substratum’ in order to avoid the contradiction and to counter the objection” (Freud and Breuer 1895, p. 223). Note, that Breuer directly links the mental state to the physical brain state to justify his nomenclature, and in that easy translation of categories, he echoed Freud’s own efforts (in the “Project for a scientific psychology” [Freud 1895]) to correlate a hypothetical neurological system with the psychology they were describing at the same time.

unconscious, it is by this direct affective experience. When distilled through psychoanalysis, the “affective or emotional impulse is perceived but misconstrued” (Freud 1915, p. 177), precisely because of the distortion imposed by the attachment to an idea, i.e., a representation, that has been, for defensive purposes, displaced from the initial emotional event.

Putting aside the emotional dynamics, from the psychoanalytic perspective – one that emphasizes the phenomenological, curative (as opposed to theoretical, scientific) aspects – the representational lies superficial to, or by the side of, affective life. Then to observe that we do not *know* the unconscious becomes the inadequacy of representations to capture that reality. Instead, an altogether different kind of ‘knowing’ is required.⁴

Affirming the Affective

Needless to say, Freud, while steadfastly holding onto an epistemology that would serve his science, understood the limitations of his theory. Given that the unconscious is not governed by logic, time, causality, or *telos* characterized in conscious thought, how then would this ontologically separated domain register in the realm of representations? After all, the medium of affective transmission is ‘unconscious’ in the sense of not being ‘represented’ by any conceptual structure, but rather affectivity is expressed directly through passion, love/hate, instinct, all of which fall well beyond the control of reason and its progeny. Freud, stepping outside his scientific ambitions and accepting the pragmatic therapeutic requirements of his method, recognized this cardinal fact and taught the analyst to be sensitive to his/her own unconscious as a receptacle of affective transmissions of the analysand: Accordingly, the analyst

⁴ Representation, in the Kantian meaning, never is the thing itself, but stands in as *re-presentation* to the mind. In cybernetic-inspired theories, representations are phrased in terms of a defined code – symbolic and static – that comprises a vocabulary governed by syntax. However, this code translates from a contingent reality that is not intrinsically significant. Psychologists who have attacked the “representational-computational view of mind” (RCVM) (Shanon 1993) have built on a Wittgensteinian-inspired conception of a more dynamic, context-dependent understanding of cognition and mental life. To replace a computer-based reductionist notion of code composed of fixed representations, the alternate view offers a “presentational” formulation rooted in ordinary-language philosophy and phenomenology, where mind is lodged firmly in body, action, and culture in dynamic inter-play. This view rests on the impossibility of fixing meaning, and only in the plasticity of language (i.e., context) might signification be determined. On this view, language is effective to the extent that words cannot be reduced to necessary and sufficient semantic features, for meaning shifts with circumstances and applications that cannot be fulfilled with fixed meanings of a code. Simply, language is “incomplete” and polysemy allows language the plasticity to present the world and thought dynamically.

Inasmuch as RCVM creates the problem of reference for itself, the ‘solution’ lies in the integration of knower and known: “Given that the world which is perceived cannot be defined independently of the agent who perceives it, there is no gap to be breached. Furthermore, since the world is structured by the activities of the perceiving agent, all the information that makes for perception is in the world itself. In Gibson’s terms, rather than being detected and encoded, the information is picked up. Consequently, no mediation by representations is needed. Perception is, in other words, direct” (Shanon 1993, p. 122). This orientation is indebted to the ecological perception psychology of J. J. Gibson, who maintained that what is perceived is not raw, senseless sensory data, but meaningful, species-specific information (ibid.). In other words, the world cannot be described independent of the agent who perceives it, and thus the epistemological gap of RCVM vanishes as a metaphysical artifice of the Cartesian divide. Cognition is already structured and meaningful. This general orientation complements the philosophical critiques of Kant’s representational model of the mind.

must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient....so the doctor's unconscious is able, from the derivatives of the unconscious which are communicated to him, to reconstruct that unconscious. (Freud 1912, p. 115-6)

The translation of those feelings into language was to heighten awareness of emotional content, but in the end, this translation only served a deeper affective recognition process. Freud's 'science' devolved to an inter-personal interpretation about feelings.

Note, in the Freudian schema, the affect becomes conscious and must be conscious for the repression to be broken and the drive acknowledged for what it is in its own terms: "It is surely of the essence of an emotion that we should be aware of it, i.e. that it should become known to consciousness" (Freud 1915, p. 177). And the consequences of this categorical observation correctly place the horse before the cart: "Thus the possibility of the attribute of unconsciousness would be completely excluded [if not attached to an idea] as far as emotions, feelings, and affects are concerned" (ibid.).

Because "representability as such allows only one of all available psychical contents to be known to consciousness" (Henry 1993, p. 288), Freud widened his approach. Indeed, the commitment to the affective domain shifts Freud's therapeutic strategy from a primary focus on the rational reconstruction of psychic trauma to the *instrumental* use of reason as a step towards establishing direct emotional contact with the affect that has been repressed through its association with a psychic 'idea.' Or put another way, only through the affect might direct engagement with the unconscious occur.⁵ On this view, Freud's commitment to a representational model of the mind obstructed his ability to construct a theory of the affects beyond some undeveloped linkage to a biological conception of emotions and the various formulations of the pleasure principle seeking its fulfillment. After all, the basis of psychic life, namely that which occurs within the unconscious domain, is firmly lodged in the affections, which are presented in a first order way as feelings, moods, passions of various sorts – in short, emotions. Freud imposed a representational model of the mind with a new scientific language to represent that which was experienced *without* mediation. To *represent* affections then served his science, or interpretation, which intellectualized, and thus veiled the emotion.⁶

⁵ In line with the disjunction between the representational mind and the affections, Freud observed (an insight amply confirmed by his psychoanalytic followers) that conscious recognition and recollection is insufficient for psychic cure. The therapy ultimately requires a corresponding affective response linked to the representational recall and insight. The reconfiguration of psychic conflicts and their history must occur within the emotional domain for effective therapy. What amounts to a psychic re-enactment, which begins with transference and culminates in catharsis, psychic conflict is resolved upon the reconfiguration or redistribution of emotional trauma. Simply, intellectual analysis alone fails to curatively modify the analysand's *emotional* 'life' (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, p. 13).

⁶ In spite of his own love of art, and the aesthetic obsession of his social milieu, Freud makes a startling confession in "The Moses of Michelangelo:" He only enjoyed works of art that he could *explain* to himself *intellectually*, i.e., "to explain to myself what their effect is due to. Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure" (1914b, p. 253). Freud, who clearly enjoyed the arts and reveled in artistic achievements, admitted that he could only enjoy art through his intellect, and more specifically, through an *interpretation*. In a sense, therefore, it is only when art is turned into science, into his science, that he found pleasure: "Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that

Since affectivity has its own mode of ‘knowledge,’ the representational mode must be limited to approximations, metaphors, elliptical reference, and poetic allusion. Accordingly, the unconscious (affective experience) cannot be truly represented and consequently, psychoanalysis invariably misrepresents unconsciousness by forcing affections into a translation comprised of concepts, symbols, and complex interpretations contextualized within an intellectualized story.⁷ The traditional analytic fulfills one function; the transference and abreaction fulfills another. *Understanding* the affective is part of the psychoanalysis, but in service to the essential emotional engagement that results from the analytic strategy of identifying the repression, the conflict, and finally the ‘cause’ of anxiety. Thus the traditional analytic fulfills one function; the transference and abreaction fulfills another.⁸

I will not dwell further on this issue and suffice it to observe here that ‘ideas’ are not the affections with which they associate, but remain ‘only’ their representation. The philosophical issue then appears: Although representations serve as the *métier* of science, does psychoanalysis require another kind of discourse to capture the mind and the emotions? Although Freud goes to great lengths to show how *different* the unconscious is from the dynamics governing the conscious ego (i.e., the lack of intelligible notions of time and space; the seeming a-rationality and a-morality of dreams; the inscrutable disjunctions of sequences that pass for loss of causality), nevertheless, in the key metapsychological paper, “The Unconscious,” he declares that despite all distortions of reasoned thought, unconscious ‘mentation’ will be treated in the same terms we characterize conscious thought: “all the categories which we employ to describe conscious mental acts, such as ideas, purposes, resolutions, and so on, can be applied to them [unconscious latent states]” (1915a, p. 168). He cannot resist making the unconscious discernable in the same terms used to describe conscious mentation, simply

affects me” (ibid.). This intellectualization made literature most accessible to him, and music, the least (ibid.). (I am indebted to my student, Jeremy Fogel, for pointing out these passages.) Perhaps the *rationalization* of Freud’s experience might also explain his inability to have proposed a theory of the affects beyond translating that experience into ideas and concepts, as discussed in later chapters.

⁷ A tale of obstructed energies and rising tensions hardly fulfills the requirements of a metapsychology of the so-called primitive affective life, which Freud described in terms of a psycho-biology, but ended with a psychoanalytic myth:

For example, the child forms his mother’s image, the presence of which is for it at times an irrepressible need. For all that, it does not form the meaning “needing its mother,” wanting to sleep with her,” or, to accomplish that, “killing its father.” In truth, it does not even know what its *mother*, in our sense of the word, is – or its *father*. “To sleep with its mother and kill its father” then [then according to Freud] becomes its unconscious. (Henry 1993, p. 293; emphasis in original).

⁸ More precisely, Freud held that it is the *representation* that is unconscious, and, through repression, the representation may be displaced from its original connection to the affect. “If we restore the true connection, we call the original affective impulse an ‘unconscious’ one. Yet its affect was never unconscious; all that had happened was that its *idea* had undergone repression” (Freud 1915, pp. 177-8). The work of psychoanalysis is to restore the original meaning of the representation, i.e., more closely link the idea to the affect and correct the displacement and thereby relieve repression and ultimately anxiety (Freud 1916b, pp. 403-4; 409). So, while the affect moves from one representation to another, and the representative experience repressed, the feeling remains (Henry 1993, p. 304).

because he must pursue his project *scientifically*, i.e. through representations as elements of conceptual structures: “Thus we shall not hesitate to treat them [unconscious latent states] as objects of psychological research, and to deal with them in the most intimate connection with conscious mental acts” (ibid.).

In sum, the unconscious is “the other” of the *representational* mind, a testament to the disjunction (and distortion) imposed by the Cartesian subject-object metaphysics of selfhood. Accordingly, Freud’s psychic universe of representations – myths, mechanisms, interpretations, etc. – is precisely that, a system unto itself portraying an underlying affective phenomenology. And the cardinal finding of this reading drives to an ironic result: While representations and their associated ideas are repressed and thus point to an intra-psychic ‘other,’ the *affective* unconscious does not exist as such (ibid., p. 315), but appears only as the artifact of its representational status. Once the representational mind loses its hegemony, the affections may make their just claims on answering the underlying beguiling question that must emerge in psychoanalysis: *Who* is the subject? – the ego, the unconscious, the entire psyche?⁹ After all, at the end of the critique of the representational model, one must still inquire, *what* is the self-conscious knowing agent (or in another vernacular, the analysand), whom in the end is the target of our study? Or to put the question more formally, putting aside the ontology of physical brain states, what constitutes the ontology of the human psyche?

Following this orientation, the effort to *represent* the unconscious introduces a philosophical obstacle (or error) that arose from Freud’s uncritical acceptance of a representational mind. Instead of applying “ideas” to the *unconscious*, which is essentially a (mis-)translation of affective effects, “emotion” must be accounted for on its own terms. Specifically, the ontology of the unconscious psyche requires its own grammar and lexicon to explore its structure. So Freudianism directs us, in recognizing the restrictions of a representational model of the mind, to explore whether other modalities might be adopted to revise the psychoanalytic project.

Consciousness

When the deeper reaches of the self becomes the object of the analysand’s inquiry, we are faced with what Husserl described as the “the paradox of subjectivity: being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world” (Husserl 1970, p. 178). As a therapeutic project, psychoanalysis seeks to uncover that mysterious Other hidden from the conscious knower’s inspection. That formulation, while clearly representing a dominant meta-view of Freudianism, over-simplifies the mature theory, namely, the neat

⁹ The ‘return’ to the affections (emotions) unencumbered by a contrived unconscious, an artifact if you will of consciousness, might appear as a return to an older metaphysics of the self, when the ‘sentiments’ were there to behold and deal with as best one could. However, nothing has been the same since Freud introduced the profound insecurity raised by the doubts produced by an unconsciousness that defies efforts to comprehend its workings, much less to contain its desire. Once that instability was introduced, modern sensibility assumed a new set of coordinates, one in which the portrayal of the human psyche beset with repression, conflict, and anxiety, displaced the ‘given’ character of personal identity. Both author of, and commentator on, this modern persona, Freud articulated and bequeathed a profound challenge, perhaps best characterized as a Wittgensteinian kind of philosophical ‘problem,’ i.e., one not necessarily coincident with the reality of some fundamental characteristic of human nature. And what philosophy bestows may also be removed, or as Wittgenstein famously observed, philosophy’s task is “to shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle” (1968, p. 103e), namely, to show how some philosophical problems are not problems at all, but erroneous ways of thinking.

division between an ego-consciousness and an unruly unconscious. The dichotomy belies a far more complex psychic structure and dynamics, which I will not detail, and suffice it to note that in regards to the basic division between consciousness and unconsciousness, Freud allowed no doubt as to where his interest lodged, and more critically, what the mental *is*. So, “Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psycho-analysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object” (Freud 1915, p. 171).¹⁰ Simply, Freud had little truck with self-awareness, which he dismissively described as “the arrogance of consciousness” (1910, p. 39).¹¹ Instead, he confidently asserted that “the unconscious is the true psychological reality” (Freud 1900, 5:613), which

in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs (ibid.; emphasis in original).

As his theory evolved, Freud contemplated the integration of the ego and the Unconscious (*Ucs.*). While he clearly thought intra-psychic divisions were maintained, he allowed for some exchange, both through repression from ‘above’ and unconscious ‘derivatives’ (e.g., “instinctual impulses”) thrust into pre-consciousness (*Pcs.*) and then potentially making their way to consciousness (*Cs.*), as the case may be. Especially, in regards to the latter dynamic, Freud disavowed any clear-cut distinction between *Ucs.* and *Pcs./Cs.*, and furthermore he had a most circumspect view of consciousness:

Consciousness stands in no simple relation either to the different systems [*Ucs.* and *Pcs.*] or to repression. The truth is that it is not only the psychically repressed that remains alien to consciousness, but also some of the impulses which dominate our ego – something, therefore, that forms the strongest functional antithesis to the repressed. The more we seek to win our way to a metapsychological view of mental life, the more we must learn to emancipate

¹⁰ Similar comments appear in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1900, 615-17), but reference to Kant is not made there, rather only to a general analogy between the sense organs and conscious thought processes.

¹¹ I am using the commonsensical notion of “conscious thought as object-relevant or task-relevant cognitive or affective thought processes that occur while the object or task is the focus of one’s conscious attention” (Dijksterhuis and Nordgren 2006, p. 96). Accordingly, I agree with LaPlanche and Pontalis (1973, p. 84) that Freud assumes the same general understanding and he makes no attempt to define consciousness and takes it as a given (2010, p. 192), a view opposed by others (e.g. Natsoulas 2001). As Freud wrote in his late *Outline*:

We know two things about what we call our psyche (or mental life): firstly, its bodily organ and scene of action, the brain (or nervous system), and on the other hand, our acts of consciousness, which are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description. Everything that lies between is unknown to us and, so the data do not include any direct relation between these two terminal points of our knowledge. If it existed, it would at most afford an exact localization of the processes of consciousness and would give us no help towards understanding them. (Freud 1940, pp. 144-5)

ourselves from the importance of the symptom of 'being conscious.' (1915, p. 192-3)

He consistently contrasted this view with those philosophers committed to the mind as coincident with consciousness, and he tirelessly defended what I call his 'incompleteness theorem:' the mind consists of conscious and unconscious domains, and while conscious mental function may be mapped, such depictions are *constitutively* partial of any description of thought. That insight has been amply confirmed.

On this view, self-consciousness, and conscious will in particular, is postulated as arising as an evolutionary mechanism to appreciate and remember what we are doing and furthermore, consider future action (Wegner 2002). If one becomes self-aware of options and choices, then action follows a kind of primitive reason or "cognitive feeling" (Clare 1992). Simply, self-consciousness serves as a means of monitoring states of the self in these deliberations. "Conscious will is the mind's compass;" serving "like a compass reading, the feeling of doing tells us something about the operation of the ship... Just as compass readings do not steer the boat, conscious experiences of will do not cause human action" (Wegner 2002, pp. 317-18). Conscious will then appears as an "emotion of authorship" (ibid.), which means that "the perception of control is not the same thing as actual control" (ibid., p. 332), so in the end, conscious will is a product of self-monitoring, a sense of the will's autonomy when in fact it is an epiphenomenon of a particular form of mental self-appraisal. Thus for Freud, the unconscious is the ontological mental, and consciousness is an evolved derived faculty developed for self-scrutiny and testing against the world-at-large.

Whether assessed through cognitive science studying perception or through psychology assessing motivation, unconscious mentation has been conclusively demonstrated (Wilson 2002). But whether there is *the Unconscious* (a separate entity) and how it may function in a Freudian depiction is another matter altogether. Today, the particulars of Freud's mechanistic descriptions and meta-psychological constructions are highly problematic even for the psychoanalytic community, and Freud himself regarded his theory as only a preamble to future models of the mind (Freud 1926, p. 266). However, the outline of his key insights remains.

Mental functioning occurs on parallel tracts: 1) a continuous unconscious stream of uninterrupted mental events follows its own 'logic,' which may be discerned by episodic manifestations in conscious thought, emotion, and behavior, and 2) interspersed in this unbroken flow, punctuated consciousness skips from one intentional object to another as determined by external stimuli and unconscious motivations. According to this view, the mind is fundamentally a continuous unconscious mental stream, which erupts in discontinuous foci of consciousness, and thus the conscious mind is *intrinsically incomplete*. Indeed, on this view, consciousness is a fragment of the mind, whose ontological basis resides in the unconscious substratum.

When Freud wrote, "The more we seek to win our way to a metapsychological view of mental life, the more we must learn to emancipate ourselves from the importance of the symptom of 'being conscious'" (1915, p. 193), he clearly understood the deepest cognitivist implications of his theory. Indeed, broad philosophical issues emerge from this position, for beyond the epistemology bequeathed by Freudianism, a powerful metaphysical challenge has also been offered, namely, the precarious status of human autonomy raised by uncovering unconscious processes. The metaphysical challenge of

an autonomous and determinative unconscious appeared at the base of Freud's own theory. Consistent with his dualistic approach, he embraced two apparently conflicting metaphysical positions. One derived from his scientific training: the causation witnessed in the natural world, coupled to naturalism, made Freud a determinist. The other derived from his humanistic metaphysics, namely that humans are endowed with a consciousness that employs reason to navigate the world – psychologically, socially, and biologically. Because deterministic unconscious forces comprise the central tenet of psychoanalytic theory, wherever in his writings Freud discusses free will, he admonishes readers who assert their belief in such freedom as harboring a deep illusion. However, the very promise of psychoanalysis builds upon the ability of reason, albeit with emotional reconciliation, to reveal the secrets of unconscious drives and thereby better live with them. Simply, psychoanalytic theory is based on a central paradox – we are determined, yet free (Tauber 2010).

Given contemporary studies of reason's own unconscious processes, Freud would likely have argued that the notion of free will had been further humbled (see below). Accordingly, agents have the capacity to navigate the world through reasoned stratagems and choices, but the exercise of such rationality operates under unconscious constraints that are determinative. To the extent that the self as a monitoring system *feels* 'free' only characterizes its epistemological location and function as an observer of deeper mental functions. In some sense, the self-conscious self must experience freedom in order to fulfill its functional judgment role. Or, as Kant maintained – with an entirely different basis – Reason must judge itself.

On this view, *reason* becomes a grammar by which the conscious subject judges options and choices. Such human self-awareness fulfills an important cognitive function of observing itself in a challenging environment. The conscious self then becomes a sixth sense, a monitoring system of a deeper unconscious self that may be metaphorically regarded as the jockey atop a blinkered horse. The rider, astride his Other, may think he may dismount, but in fact, as Freud knew all along, he cannot. Further, the horse will follow its own course, albeit guided to a certain extent by a jockey, who is only along for the ride. And as we watch the on-going dynamic of horse and rider, we may well ask, Who is the Self and who is the Other? The meta-issue concerning the Other cannot be resolved along the original lines of ego versus unconscious desire. Indeed, Freud's notion of the ego kept changing and was never defined except in relation to "mediator" with reality.¹² And correspondingly, "the Other" cannot be defined intra-psychically, simply because without an ego/self there can be no Other. In sum, from the Freudian perspective, "reality" – as the obstruction to, and potentially the gratification of, desire – is the other.

In sum, Freud formalized our vague intuitions that we are not necessarily the identities we project (or even know), he radically altered Western notions of personal identity. This ironic sense of self-consciousness has been strengthened by recent psychological studies outside psychoanalysis which join a philosophical skepticism dating to Hume that selfhood is an array of "bundled perceptions" and its handmaiden,

¹² See Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, pp. 130-43) for an excellent review of the ego's multiple shifts and meanings in Freud's evolving theory. Note, Freud never uses the word, "self," in his writings and the various notions of personhood appear in different informal guises (Tauber 2010, p. 266-7). Simply, "personal identity" escaped Freud's interest.

consciousness, is but the piecemeal aggregate of those perceptions – fragmentary, often incoherent, frequently rationally disordered, and powerfully driven by the “passions.” Such a mind commands only a circumspect confidence that it faithfully depicts reality.

Towards an Integrated Model of the Psyche

Freud’s positivist modality has brought us only part way in defining a psycho-ontology consistent with contemporary findings. That *the Unconscious* exists in anything resembling Freud’s original presentation is highly problematic, but unconscious thinking and emotionally-derived behaviors have firm scientific standing. Recent experimental cognitive science and psychology amply have demonstrated the dynamic exchange between conscious and unconscious modes of mental activity, and the point is not to place Freud in intellectual purgatory, but to recognize that his efforts of establishing a foundation for psychic life testifies to on-going efforts to do just that.

Given the limits of his theory, we must ask, How else might the basic intuitions of Freudianism be better understood? Put another way, if his scientific offering has become suspect, is there another formulation that better suits the widely shared appreciation of the relevance of the psychoanalytic quest? Current research suggests a close integration of conscious and unconscious thinking, and the challenge remains as to how to formulate these new experimental results into a coherent philosophy of the mind.

Much evidence may be marshaled to confirm the basic structure of Freud’s model. But as he himself recognized, the psychoanalytic depiction requires a contextualization of conscious and unconscious domains. Freud’s ‘incompleteness theorem,’ – where extra-logical (largely unconscious) factors play a *constitutive* role in evaluative properties – suggest that the subordination of consciousness to unconscious mental processing also occurs in the setting of complex reasoning. Controlled psychological experiments have tease out unconscious reasoned choices that directly map onto conscious processes. Indeed, if one accepts the basic conception of the mind as unconscious, the implications for philosophy are profound. Simply, beyond the current pre-occupation with consciousness, unconsciousness as a philosophical and scientific object of study commands attention.

Recent studies have dramatically demonstrated that the limited capacity of conscious thought requires delegation to unconscious sorting, relational, and rational deliberation. Conscious thinkers, using gross heuristics or a top-down strategy, characteristically form a conclusion that leads to stereotyping¹³ and hasty prejudgment (where in complex evaluations a premature conscious evaluation is made that distorts later information), whereas unconscious thought (“deliberation-without attention” or DWA), with its high capacity to process information, slowly integrates large bodies of

¹³ “Participants were asked to form an impression of a target person. First, they were given a stereotypical expectation (“you are now going to read information about Mr. Hamoudi, a Moroccan man”), and then they read more detailed behavioral information. Some of this detailed information was congruent with the activated stereotype, and some was incongruent with the stereotype. Later on, we assessed participants’ impression of the target person and memory for information about the target person. Some participants were requested to think consciously about their impression of the target person before engaging in the judgment and recall tasks, whereas others were distracted and engaged in unconscious thought. Our findings clearly demonstrated that conscious thinkers applied stereotypes more than unconscious thinkers did” (ibid. p., 98).

data to form more rational (objective) summary judgments. Whether assessed as an evaluative process, recall, or goal-directed activity, those permitted time for unconscious reckoning in a variety of tasks did better than those engaged immediately in the designated deliberation and thus fully conscious of their decision-making (Dijksterhuis and Nordgren 2006).¹⁴

Hasty prejudgment (i.e., in complex evaluations a premature conscious evaluation is made that distorts later information), whereas DWA thought, with its high capacity to process information, slowly integrates large bodies of data to form more rational (objective) summary judgments. So with the greater capacity to process information, unconscious thought processes (in the range of complexity of these studies) – if provided with a goal (Bos, Dijksterhuis, and Baaren 2008) – are better able to weigh alternative choices as well as to employ divergent thinking (as opposed to the convergence strategies of conscious thought). These studies have important implications for understanding selection strategies, impression and attitude formations, problem solving, and creativity. Beyond confirming the common adage, “Let me sleep on it” before making important decisions, we derive important insight in understanding the discontinuity in time between thinking of a problem and its resolution as the result of an active unconscious process (Smith 2004, 82-4; Dijksterhuis and Meurs 2006). Beyond the greater capacity to process information, unconscious thought processes are better able to weigh alternative choices as well as to employ divergent thinking (as opposed to the convergence strategies of conscious thought). Of course, information-gathering and certain rule-based thinking is best done consciously (e.g., arithmetic or logic exercises), but the general insight of how much deliberative thinking is conducted unconsciously, and how effective such thought is in complex scenarios, potentially displaces the current pre-occupation with elucidating conscious thought processes.¹⁵

¹⁴ The basic structure of the experiments supporting an active “pre-conscious” has come from various sectors in psychology and cognitive science. Studies directed by Ap Dijksterhuis over the past decade serve as an example and may be summarized with an iconic experiment that tests the “deliberation-without-attention (DWA) hypothesis:” Participants were presented with information about four hypothetical cars and were told to choose the best one. One of the cars had more positive features than the others. The amount of information upon which the choice was based varied across conditions. The problem was either relatively simple (each car was described by 4 features, for a total of 16 pieces of information) or difficult (12 features per car). Participants indicated their choice either after a few minutes of conscious thought or they were re-introduced to the car problem following other tasks that were designed to divert their conscious consideration of the initial task. The results showed that those deliberating over the more complex problem without their direct attention did decidedly better than those who consciously pondered their choices immediately.

¹⁵ How might we place these findings into the Freudian context? Strictly speaking, from the psychoanalytic perspective, the unconscious domain consists of two parts: 1) that which is repressed, but nevertheless that material can be brought to pre-consciousness (*Pcs.*) and then to consciousness, and 2) a deeper part that remains unknown and forever inaccessible (Freud 1923). By these criteria, the thinking conducted within DWA resides in the *Pcs.* and not the deeper *Unc.* Dijksterhuis made no attempt to differentiate *Pcs.* and *Ucs.* (nor did he even consider this issue), and thus these investigations do not address the classic topological domains devised by Freud. And there the matter might rest. But the question then remains, how is the *Ucs.* to be examined? One approach is to simply collapse the *Pcs./Ucs.* distinction and leave a continuum in its place. This formulation might be adopted if the clinical aspects of psychoanalytic theory are bypassed and repression in its classic Freudian formulation is not invoked. So, Freud “without Oedipus” leaves a ‘cognitive unconsciousness’ and there the matter rests, where the original

These findings have important implications for understanding selection strategies, impression and attitude formations, problem solving, and creativity, namely, in these controlled experiments, unconscious *rationality* operated more effectively in diverse deliberative settings than in subjects conducting conscious choices. Note, a normative framework organizes unconscious deliberation as it does conscious thought – the ‘better’ result is measured. And if such rational standards are effectively applied (perhaps in differential fashion but nevertheless effectively registered in consciousness), then the line dividing conscious from unconscious mind does not simply fall on the rational/non-rational division.¹⁶ So instead of assigning reason to one domain and a-rationality to the other, one must now ask, how does the normative operate in both arenas? Indeed, how would the unconscious learn normative behaviors?

Part of an answer rests on the inconsistency of the rational. A vast literature in psychology converges on a central conclusion: what is rational depends on a host of contextual elements, and as these are altered, choices based on certain options must correspondingly change as well. From another vantage, the rational normative, which floats on a sea of human factors ultimately defines, and restricts, rational thought, where intentions function in a complex calculus of subjective vectors, historical determinants, biological demands, and cultural influences. Particular choices become more or less important as framed by these underlying considerations. In this sense, reason is instrumental, that is, it is a tool to achieve goals, and goals may not be explicit, consistent, or conscious, and often times, not rational.¹⁷ Freud opined that the ego was

division between *Ucs.* and *Pcs.* is combined and subsumed under the general heading of ‘unconscious’ (or ‘sub-conscious’) thinking. And if the unconscious is rigorously defined in terms of repression that Freud described, then the DWA discussion resides squarely in the ‘pre-conscious’ domain. With these considerations, DWA provides a way of examining unconscious cognition, but makes no attempt to approach the Freudian deep unconscious, which is characterized by the affectivity of psychic life. Accordingly, unconscious *thinking* becomes a topic of scientific investigation, where the emergence of ideas and the logic that controls their use is opened to study.

¹⁶ Considering that DWA thought has been revealed as exhibiting a *normative* organization, one might well re-consider Freud’s identification of the *rational* ego controlling or directing an instinctually driven *a-rational* id (Freud 1923, p. 25) – a dichotomy arising from the requirements of a theory oriented by sexual gratification and neurotic wish fulfillment – fails as a comprehensive paradigm for the complexity of the unconscious-conscious exchange. Freud was skeptical about the ability of the unconscious to function in dialogue with the ego: “It is doubtful how far the processes of this system [consciousness] can exert a direct influence on the *Ucs.*; examination of pathological cases often reveals an almost incredible independence and lack of susceptibility to influence on the part of the *Ucs.* A complete divergence of their trends, a total severance of the two systems, is what above all characterizes a condition of illness. Nevertheless, psycho-analytic treatment is based upon an influencing of the *Ucs.* from the direction of the *Cs.*, and at any rate shows that this, though a laborious task, is not impossible....But we may safely assume that a spontaneously effected alteration in the *Ucs.* from the direction of the *Cs.* is a difficult and slow process” (Freud 1915, p. 194).

¹⁷ When subjects are presented with standardized complex problems involving logical deductions, their choices are dictated by the context of the problem and the kinds of options open to them for making rational elections (Wason test [Hanna 2006]). Not surprisingly, illogical selection often dominates, as certain idiosyncratic heuristics may determine conclusions and hidden biases can easily distort interpretations and estimation of outcomes. In short, while humans obviously have varying degrees of intelligence, how that intelligence is exercised reflects processes extending outside logic to combine with wish, fantasy and prejudice. The general lesson from these investigations and commentary characterizing

not master of its own house (1923), where he might have added, the ego may not even know in which house s/he lives.

To conclude, the empirical basis for assessing unconscious practical reasoning reveals both coordination for successful attainment of conscious goals as well as failure, in which unconscious reasons subvert apparent conscious intentions and tasks. Integrating these findings by building upon Freud's basic architecture of the mind (while subtracting the clinical and mechanistic aspects of psychoanalytic theory) leaves a cogent psycho-ontological presentation: The world is a reality organized by the mind's intentional desire (conscious and unconscious), mediated by a complex normative rationality coupled to emotional drives. Despite contemporary philosophy of mind's preoccupation with consciousness, perhaps Freud was fundamentally correct: The secrets of the mind will be revealed as we study unconsciousness. So putting aside Freudian stratagems and mechanisms, a Freud without Oedipus, contemporary studies have provided a window into the prominence of unconscious thinking in what passes for self-generated behaviors. Indeed, from the perspective of the cognitivist paradigm, this Doppelgänger, unburdened by Freudian theory, is beginning to emerge in its complex array.

Final Comments

How might the subject-object structure of Freud's conception of the psyche be revised to a better-modeled integration of conscious and unconscious mental processes? Freud himself, at the end of his career, considered such an integration, but he left his tentative revision largely undeveloped (Freud 1923), only to have philosophers across all of the various schools and sub-divisions of Continental and Anglo-American spheres reject the representational models he proposed. Indeed, one might well concur that "the passage to self-representation is the passage to modernity" (Colebrook 2005, p. 1) and the exhaustion of that program the mulch from which postmodernism grew. And in parallel, various psychologies and neurosciences have addressed the model with their own characteristic methods, but have failed to establish the critical linkage between brain states and mental representations beyond some rough topological modeling. Neither the analytic attempts, nor the particular cognitive science theories are our concern here, other than to note the general point that later critics would recognize irredeemable obstructions and limitations to very notion of representation, and for poststructuralists, the "scar of representation" (Colebrook 2005) has become the focus of rigorous efforts to redeem knowledge and experience from what these critics regard as a kind of epistemological and political imprisonment or, more modestly, veil of obstruction.

reason pertains to how values, acknowledged or implicit, govern thought as a normative process (Raz 1999; Skorupski 2010). It is only a small step then to conclude that the variable in the calculus of reason's function is not the rules of reason per se (i.e., logic), but rather the constellation of values within which reason ultimately functions. Here the Hume-Kant debate of emotivism versus practical reason emerges in an empirical guise, which, in turn, has stimulated renewed philosophical comment. Thus the presentation (and acknowledgement) of unconscious "extra-logical" factors in the generation and use of knowledge becomes explicit and thus discernable. But choices may also be regarded (in retrospect) as illogical or a-rational decisions, which again are a product of both the testing of actions against their effects – beneficial or harmful, as the case may be – and the 'logic' employed – following normative guidelines or failing to do so.

From a scientific vantage, the studies cited here suggest that the active collaboration of unconscious and conscious deliberation might replace the classical Freudian Other – the Unconscious – for an integrated psyche conceived as serving, under certain circumstances, the ego’s agenda by learning and exercising normative constructs that guide the ego in its own mission. The dialogue between conscious and unconscious locales of the mind supports those formulations that resisted the dichotomies of a rational ego and an a-rational id pitted against each other, and substitutes instead a conception of the mind that squarely places unconscious mental processes as integral to a functionally effective ego. On this basis, perhaps the metaphorical self, which has organized the subject-object construction of the psyche – Freudian and otherwise – will be replaced with a model of a seamless continuum of conscious and unconscious thinking contextualized within an ecological understanding of individual identity, much as postulated for organismic biology writ-large (Tauber 2008).¹⁸ On this general view, a self is a construction of a third-person point of view and requires the imposition of criteria to establish boundaries and identity to demarcate individuals from the context in which they live in a complex dialectical exchange with the environment and others. To so define individuality offers important means to conceptualize the units of complex systems, but such formulations also impose a constructive order that determines how that larger system is understood. Simply, a subject-object modality of organization inherently restricts a fuller understanding of the organism in its dialectical inter-changes with the world.

When such a contextualized view is applied to the mind, a dialectical model replaces the subject-object dichotomy that now seems ill-fitted to the complexity of its functions. And 20th century philosophy supports this re-vamping of Cartesian metaphysics. Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, just to name the most prominent, each pushed, in their distinctive ways, for a dethroning of the ego perched on an Archimedean point to judge the world and itself in some splendid insularity. The contextualization of the subject serves in various ways to break the subject-object dichotomy and thereby integrate the agent in her world. And one of the casualties of the older metaphysics is the conscious-unconscious divide, where the scrutinizing ‘self’ as such does not exist, and the ‘otherness’ of the unconscious is replaced with a continuum of thought. On this general view, Freud’s project rests upon the rejected metaphysics at

¹⁸ I have extensively argued that the science of self/non-self discrimination, the science that would explain the body’s ability to defend itself against the foreign, employs a *metaphorical* construct called, ‘the self’ (Tauber 1994; 2000; 2008). While genetic, epigenetic, and developmental models of individual identity have been proposed, none capture the intuitive sense of self experienced by Westerners acculturated to a Cartesian ego. The self metaphor in immune theorizing, while useful, is only that, a metaphor borrowed from folk psychology. There is no *self* as defined by a powerful scientific epistemology, only the expressions of immune activity and non-activity (tolerance) to the universe of cognitive objects. Abdicating a firm subject-object orientation governing immune activity mirrors the same intransigence observed in neurologically-based definitions of the self. Instead of an agent or an entity, we observe functions that process information and responding – actively or passively. Those functions may be characterized, but only upon acknowledging expanding contextual spheres of organization. Biological systems are complex not only in terms of their inner workings, but complex in their open structure and the dialectical character of their interactions. This understanding extended to personal identity – and the psyche more particularly – leaves the pursuit of a psycho-ontology highly problematic. Simply, if I reject a *sarco*-ontology, I will be hard-pressed to posit a *psycho*-ontology in any foundational sense.

the base of his enterprise and thus Freudianism appears as a case of psycho-ontology gone awry.

So, how might we judge Freud's 'psycho-ontology' as the investigation of the relationship between human cognition and features of reality? In this first sense, putting aside Oedipus, Freud's general intuition that reality, truth, and objectivity must be formulated within a context that accounts for the inherent non-universal elements of thinking seems unassailable. Not that objectivity cannot be attained, but only through devised boundary conditions can subjective, often unrecognized factors, be accounted. He couched this subjective aspect of reality-formation in a largely discarded psycho-sexual theory, but the general lesson is unchallenged.

Regarding the second sense of psycho-ontology that we have considered, namely the foundational status of his theory, I reiterate my conclusions as a philosopher of biology: Seeking some bedrock psycho-ontology in the Freudian context ultimately rests on disbanding notions of a core self and, perhaps more radically, joining Quine in his dismissal of mental states altogether (Quine 1995), where 'mental' becomes an epiphenomenon of brain states, whose connection to what we experience as self-consciousness remains inaccessible to current scientific understanding. Short of following that course, we still must recognize that a foundational psychic-ontology carries a metaphysical commitment to the very notion that such a foundation may be discerned. This metaphysical quest is what Richard Rorty regaled against as the something hidden that provides the order for comprehending the world (Rorty 1979). So we must ask, Does this historical case example suggest a cautionary comment about psycho-ontology as a metaphysical project? The naysayers join at three philosophical levels: 1) a skepticism that a Cartesian ego exists; 2) a multi-pronged rejection of representational models of the mind (the exercise of such an agent), and 3) a renouncement of a metaphysical commitment to some underlying ontology organizing psychic life dependent on such a representing ego. I count myself a member of each group. To explain why would require a much larger venue.

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