

Picturing the Mind: On Freud's Methodology and Metapsychology

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Abstract: What is the relationship between a philosophical or theoretical conception of mind, and the mind's conception of itself? Should the latter constrain the former? And how does the mind itself understand a theory of mind, that is, a theory of itself? I raise these questions by means of Freud. Freud suggested that the mind cannot merely theoretically comprehend psychoanalytic concepts but must be able to "recognize" and "sympathize" with them. I call this *the recognition requirement*. This idea clarifies the rationale behind Freud's last metapsychology of Id, Ego, and Super-ego. I close by asking: when should a theory of mind try to meet the recognition requirement? I propose that a theory of mind should be structured according to the recognition requirement when that theory is connected with practical aims, specifically, when the theory is concerned with the life of the mind and with facilitating the mind's own self-understanding.

Key words: Freud; philosophy of mind; moral psychology; metapsychology; self-knowledge.

§1. The Mind and its Theory

What is the relationship between a philosophical or theoretical conception of mind, and the mind's conception of itself? Should the latter bear on or shape the former? And how does the mind understand a theory of mind, that is, a theory of itself? What kind of understanding is this?

The present paper explores these questions by way of Freud, by developing a methodological framework for understanding Freud's last metapsychology. In the late essay "A Question of Lay Analysis" (1926), Freud develops his structural metapsychology of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich*, and makes two significant (if slightly submerged) methodological observations.

First, Freud notes that his analysis of the mind into *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich* is not a radically novel theoretical innovation but is rather continuous with pre-theoretical ways of thinking and talking (a continuity that is lost in Brill and Strachey's translations into the Latinate *id*, *ego*, *superego*). Freud writes:

In psycho-analysis [...] we like to keep in contact with the popular mode of thinking and prefer to make its concepts scientifically serviceable rather than to reject them. There is no merit in this; we are obliged to take this line; for our theories must be understood by our patients. (1926, 195).

Psychoanalysis is "obliged" to link its vocabulary with popular psychological concepts and to make the latter "scientifically serviceable." But we can ask, why? Why should a psychoanalytic theory of

mind be in any way beholden to popular psychological concepts? In response, Freud suggests a methodological constraint on psychoanalytic theorizing: a psychoanalytic theory is “obliged” to ground its vocabulary in popular psychological concepts *because* such a theory “must” be understood by its patients. Which is to say that the *object* of psychoanalytic theory must be able to understand, in some sense, its own theorization.

I want to push this methodological constraint slightly further. It is not that psychoanalytic patients must be able to abstractly comprehend psychoanalytic theory. Rather a psychoanalytic theory of mind must be such that its object—the mind—can, in some way, *understand itself* in the theory. The object must be able to *find itself understood* in the theory. As we shall see, Freud characterizes the relevant kind of understanding not as abstract theoretical comprehension, but as involving a kind “sympathy” and as constituting an (unusual, uncanny) kind of “recognition.” So I will call this *the recognition requirement*: psychoanalytic theory must articulate a theory or conception of mind in which the mind can, to some extent, recognize itself, a conception of mind that the mind can, to some extent, recognize *as* itself.¹ Psychoanalytic theory involves what I will call an epistemology of recognition. In the many places where Freud anticipates that his audience would resist the claims of psychoanalysis, he is not suggesting that they would not be able to comprehend the claims theoretically, but that they would resist this recognition. And in fact he suggests that a failure to recognize or sympathize with the theory constitutes a failure of understanding.

The *second* methodological proposal is as follows. In the same paper (and in several other places) Freud insists that psychoanalysis must leave aside the question of what *material* the mental apparatus is constructed of, thus leaving matters of the brain to physiology. Freud writes, “we shall leave entirely on one side the material line of approach, *but*” he insists, “*not so the spatial one*” (1926, 192). Psychoanalytic metapsychology takes a *spatial* approach to the mind, it will conceptualize or better, it will *picture* the mind as a space with further inner spaces, with its own insides and outsides, with inner figures and mental items. Call this the spatial approach to the mind.

Bringing the two methodological commitments together, my thesis is that Freud’s justifies the spatial approach to the mind, picturing the mind as composed of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich*, *because* it “keeps contact with the popular mode of thinking” and *thereby* articulates a theory of mind that the mind itself is able to recognize *as* itself. The spatial approach to the mind is justified because it meets the

¹ Here, as I discuss shortly, I follow the work of Gardner (2007; 2012), Moran (2011), and Wollheim (1969; 1981).

recognition requirement. This suggests, as we shall see, that at some level the mind already pictures itself in spatial terms and that the theory reflects or “keeps contact” with this.

Now notoriously, a spatial approach to the mind faces immediate problems. It could certainly seem that Freud is populating the mind with homunculi or illegitimately anthropomorphizing mental structure, transforming functional psychological units or processes into little inner figures with big personalities. This approach to mind has been criticized many times over in the history of modern philosophy. To take just a few examples: Kant is perhaps the first philosopher to criticize the tendency of pre-Critical rational psychologists to illegitimately substantialize the mind and its capacities, describing this fallacy as “the subreption of hypostatized consciousness” (A402). The fallacy involves the category confusion of conceptualizing what is the activity or form of thinking as if it were a real, substantial thing or entity. Nietzsche diagnoses the tendency to analyze human activity as though there were a discrete and substantial agent—an “indifferent substratum” (GM I:16)—standing inside the mind and freely directing such activity. Nietzsche also frequently explains this error as involving some kind of conceptual confusion, taking the grammatical subject for a metaphysically substantial inner agent or thing. And he argues that positing an inner agent does nothing to explain activity, since this only “doubles the deed,” purporting to explain the outer agent’s outward activity by citing some inner agent’s activity. And in the 20th century Gilbert Ryle elaborated Wittgenstein’s diagnosis of the philosophical habit of extending the conceptual framework or grammar of *objects* and *spaces* beyond their proper home, leading us to picture mental activity and mental states as though they were inner movements or private objects, inside of the mind as if it were a space, the way a beetle might be inside of a box or a ghost inside a machine. The concern in each case is with the philosophical tendency to substantialize and reify the mind as though it were a real inner space populated by metaphysically “queer” inner items and agents.

Now, it would seem that Freud repeats this very tendency. On such an interpretation, Freud makes the naïve mistake of objectifying or hypostasizing the mind, misrepresenting psychic capacities or structures as quasi-spatial inner things or personified agencies. In fact Freud himself worried about this perception of his theory, writing, “I hope you have already formed an impression that the hypothesis of the superego really describes a structural relation and is not merely a personification of some such abstraction as that of conscience” (1933, 64). The worry is that “mere personification” would be an overly theatrical and misleading form of psychological explanation: couldn’t we explain

mental structure without anthropomorphism? Given that Freud himself saw the perils of this pictorial approach, what justifies it?²

What could justify such a picture if this is how, at some level, the mind already pictures itself, its own activity and structure, *and* if picturing itself in these terms is somehow essential to the mind's activity, that is, if the mind operates in light of this conception or picture of itself. This is the interpretive strategy proposed by both Richard Wollheim and, following him, Sebastian Gardner (2006, 181; 2012, 47).³ Wollheim writes that

[Freud's structural] theory not only provides a model of the mind and its workings, but also coincides with or reproduces the kind of picture or representation that we consciously or unconsciously make to ourselves of our mental processes. The theory, in other words, tries to capture or reproduce the fundamental concepts under which the activities of the mind occur. 1981, 203.

Wollheim's claim is that the mind already pictures or represents itself and its own activities in the way described by the structural theory of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich*, and so the structural theory neither simply describes the mind's structure nor does it personify the structure merely for the sake of facilitating theoretical comprehension; rather the structural theory's picture "keeps contact with" the mind's own picture of itself. The idea is that the figures of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich* are not naïve or illicit anthropomorphizations of mental structure but *principled* anthropomorphizations insofar as they comprise a conception or picture of mind that resembles or reproduces the mind's picture, or fantasy, of itself.

These ideas raise several questions:

First, when we theorize about the body or the brain, there is no expectation that the object of the theory should be able to understand the theory, so what is it about the nature of the mind that calls for a recognition requirement? Why *should* a theory of mind be continuous with how the mind pictures itself?

² For one example in contemporary popular cognitive science, where an author both makes heuristic use of such personification of cognitive processing and worries about his readers taking it too literally, see Kahneman (2013). He writes: "System 1 and System 2 are so central to the story I tell in this book that I must make it absolutely clear that they are fictitious characters. Systems 1 and 2 are not systems in the standard sense of entities with interacting aspects or parts. And there is no one part of the brain that either of the systems would call home [...] The characters are useful because of some quirks of our minds, yours and mine. A sentence is understood more easily if it describes what an agent (System 2) does than if it describes what something is, what properties it has" (29).

³ Gardner was the first to recommend Wollheim's work to me in a conversation, so I am indebted to him for the reference.

Second, isn't psychoanalysis in the business of demystifying, rather than confirming, the popular picture of mind? Doesn't psychoanalysis discover something radically new and heretofore unknown about the mind?

Finally, third, to what extent could this recognition requirement generalize? Does it hold for other philosophies of mind or moral psychologies? When should a theory of mind be constrained by the demand that the mind be able to recognize itself in the theory?

While much of the paper constitutes a response to the first question, in the final section of the paper I will offer tentative responses to the latter two. To anticipate, I suggest that reflecting on the purposes of psychoanalytic theory suggests a possible criterion for when for a philosophy of mind or moral psychology should be subject to the recognition requirement. The tentative proposal is that a philosophy of mind or moral psychology is subject to the recognition requirement to the extent that its aim is *therapeutic*, where the purpose and aspiration of the theory is not merely to intellectually understand the mind as an object of study, but to facilitate the life of the mind by facilitating the mind's own self-understanding.⁴

Freud's theoretical advances progressed in lockstep with his clinical efforts to understand the unique ways in which the mind can suffer in its efforts to understand and live with itself. The theory aims to clarify the ways in which the mind both suffers and distorts its own suffering, makes its suffering incomprehensible, and then to facilitate the mind's relief by facilitating some kind of new self-understanding. By this I don't mean "making the unconscious conscious," but facilitating a more expansive self-conception that can tolerate and acknowledge the fact that there is more to one's own mind than the *Ich*. In this way, psychoanalytic therapy involves, not theoretically understanding, but coming to recognize and sympathize with the psychoanalytic picture of mind.

This therapeutic aim of facilitating the life of the mind by facilitating the mind's own self-understanding is not just an aim of psychoanalysis but is also one of the traditional aims of philosophy. I will not claim that all philosophy does or should contribute to the practical-therapeutic project of self-understanding, and so I would not claim that all philosophy of mind and moral psychology should be constrained by the recognition requirement. But my proposal is that when the theory is concerned with the life of the mind and with facilitating the mind's own self-understanding, then the recognition requirement can be brought to bear: the object of the theory must come to be able to not only understand the theory, but to recognize itself in it.

⁴ Thanks to Jenann Ismael, who suggested this phrasing in conversation.

This is not to say that the recognition will be straightforward or immediate or easy. Freud's picture of the mind is not just unusual but rebarbative; as he knew, there will be resistance, not to understanding his theory, but to accepting his theory as true of oneself. But still, my suggestion is that Freud articulates his theory in light of the prospect of such recognition.

In the next section (§2) I step back to engage with some of the meta-philosophical or methodological commitments of contemporary moral psychology in order to situate my discussion of Freud in some contemporary debates. In §3 I turn to Freud: first introducing the very idea of a metapsychology and then discussing Freud's idea of a "psychical representative." I then turn in section §4 to the final, structural metapsychology in order to substantiate the two methodological commitments: the recognition requirement and the spatial approach. In section §5 I briefly describe how Freud's theory of psychic development sheds some light on *why* the mind pictures itself in spatial terms. Finally, I conclude in §6 with tentative proposals for how we should understand the recognition requirement apart from the specifics of psychoanalysis.

§2. Philosophical Methodology: The Reflexive Tradition and the Standard Method

While I am primarily interested in the recognition requirement as a constraint on psychoanalytic metapsychology, something like this has been articulated in recent, Kant-inspired work in philosophy of mind and moral psychology. I will call this the *reflexive tradition*. One of the central questions in this tradition is: how does the nature of the mind constrain how we theorize about it? Those working in the reflexive tradition are committed to two interrelated theses, which, stated most neutrally, are:

1. The mind is essentially *reflexive*, it has a perspective on itself that is (at least partially) constitutive of what the mind itself is.
2. Philosophy can do justice to this essential reflexivity by theorizing the mind "internally," where this involves articulating a conception of mind from within the perspective of the mind itself.⁵

Because the mind is essentially reflexive (1), any adequate conception of mind must involve or reflect this reflexivity, and the proposal of (2) is that reflecting this reflexivity involves theorizing the mind "from the inside," that is, from the mind's own perspective. What I have called the recognition requirement would seem to follow: only a sufficiently "internal" philosophy of mind articulated from

⁵ See, for instance, Taylor (2012), Korsgaard (2009), Moran (2001; 2011)

the mind's own perspective would be such that it could be understood and recognized by the mind itself *as* itself.⁶ Thus:

3. An “internal” analysis of mind provides a conception of mind that the mind can recognize as itself.

The mind is not just some *thing* but something *for* itself and constituted in part by that perspective. An internal analysis captures or reflects that perspective. This means that the object of the analysis—the mind—should be able to recognize itself in the philosophical analysis, since its own perspective is being reflected. So it is because the mind is reflexive, has a view on itself *and* on how it is being described, that the recognition requirement has legitimacy. As Richard Moran puts it, in the case of the mind, as opposed to any other non-reflexive phenomenon, the object of knowledge exerts a *pressure* on the theory or knowledge claimed of it, “a pressure that it can in principle recognize itself in this knowledge” (2011, 253). In the case of the mind, the object of knowledge claims a legitimate say with respect to the terms in which it shall count as understood (*ibid.*, 254).

This should be enough to get a grip on what the reflexive tradition is rejecting, which is a conception of mind that regards it as a kind of object that can be analyzed observationally or “externally,” “in something like the way that someone doing natural science is related to the object of scientific inquiry” (Schapiro 2021, 19). So, for example, one might analyze the mind as a system of sub-personal information-processing modules, or as one part of a central nervous system. Here, the mind is conceived as a very complex object to be studied by the philosopher-observer, where the mind's reflexivity, its having a perspective on itself, is not emphasized and so the philosophical method involves no special “internality.” Consequently, the mind's being able to recognize itself in the theory is no condition on the theory's adequacy. When the mind is approached as an object, there is no question of the theory needing to be understood or recognized *by* the object (Moran 2011, 252), the mind has no legitimate say over what counts as adequately understanding it. Following Schapiro, we can call this object-observation method the *standard method*.

Now, on the face of it, a Freudian or psychoanalytic approach to the mind could seem to follow the standard method, not the reflexive tradition.

First, Freud frequently affirms his “intention to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science” (1895, 295). And while he rather quickly departed from his early materialist ambitions to “represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles”

⁶ The idea of a recognition requirement is not as frequently discussed in this literature, but see Gardner (2012, 47) and Moran (2011).

(ibid.), it is still true that all the way through to his final writings Freud would speculate about, say, the literal cerebral location of psychical agencies.⁷ So there was an ambition to make psychoanalysis a natural science according to which one can study the mind as a natural object, and such study constitutes the exemplar of the standard method.

Second, insofar as his object is *unconscious* mental activity and contents, it could seem that Freud is analyzing and theorizing the mind precisely *not* as reflexive but, again, as a complex, non-conscious causal system, analyzable into drives and principle of mental functioning, where consciousness is only an occasional “quality.” If so, then, this would seem to recommend approaching the mind with the standard, observational rather than the reflexive, internal method.

Finally, if understanding the real unconscious causes behind conscious phenomena casts suspicion on the latter, then it would seem that the popular picture or conception of mind would be falsified by Freudian theory, and so we should not expect the mind to recognize itself in the Freudian picture. Again Freud anticipated just this in his repeated warnings that his readers or listeners would resist or recoil from his proposals, would find them rebarbative, which seems to suggest that he believed they (we) would find his theories *unrecognizable*.

Given all this, it would seem that Freud adopts the standard rather than the reflexive method for analyzing the human mind, and that his theory of the unconscious mind would not—indeed could not—proceed “internally,” from within the mind’s perspective, since that perspective is taken to be constitutively opaque. Finally, then, it would seem both that the Freudian picture would be precisely unrecognizable and that this picture could not be legitimately beholden to the recognition requirement.

This is what I want to contest. I will argue that Freud’s late structural theory should be understood as providing a kind of internal analysis of the mind as essentially reflexive, and so as picturing the mind in a way that is “on a footing,” as he will put it, with how the mind pictures itself. And so the Freudian picture, in its obscure way, meets the recognition requirement.

Before turning to Freud’s texts, it is important to notice that the reflexive tradition in contemporary philosophy typically analyzes the mind not merely as essentially reflexive but more specifically as essentially *self-conscious*. And so the three theses would need to be re-formulated as follows:

1. * The mind is essentially *self-conscious*, it has a *conscious first-person perspective* on itself that is (at least partially) constitutive of what the mind itself is.

⁷ On Freud’s scientific development and its relationship both with his contemporaries and with contemporary cognitive science, see Glymour (1991). See also Kitcher (1992).

2. * Philosophy can do justice to this *essential self-consciousness* by proceeding “internally,” by articulating its conception of mind from the *conscious first-person perspective*.
3. * Such internal analysis provides a picture of mind that the *conscious mind* or *person* can recognize as itself.

Crucial to what I argue here is that there is conceptual space for the mind to be reflexive but not necessarily or everywhere self-conscious. And I will argue that this is how we should understand the Freudian mind. So even unconscious mental activity exhibits a kind of reflexivity or *for-itselfness* that distinguishes it on the one hand from wholly sub-personal causal processes and on the other hand from full-blown, unified self-consciousness. I begin making the case for this conceptual space in the next section by working through the idea of a “psychical representative.”

§3. Metapsychology and the Mind’s Reflexivity

Metapsychology is psychoanalysis’ “speculative superstructure” (1925a, 32), the most philosophical part of psychoanalysis, providing a broad theoretical “standpoint” on the mind that is both informed by and guides empirical and clinical research. These are Freud’s pictures of the mind. Freud articulated four metapsychologies. They are not meant to replace one another; rather they offer different perspectives or frameworks, and are mutually consistent. I will initially follow Laplanche and Pontalis’ suggestion that the fourth, structural model of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich* represents a change in method or form—a shift, to use the terminology introduced earlier, from a broadly standard method of analysis to a more internal or reflexive model—but will then complicate this picture by looking more closely at Freud’s concept of a “psychical representative.”

The first metapsychology is the *dynamic* model, which analyzes the mind’s parts in terms of active intrapsychic conflicts. It is not just that certain mental contents are unconscious in the sense of: not presently on one’s mind or not conscious. On a dynamic way of thinking, some mental contents are *pushed* out, rejected, held away from consciousness by force (defense and resistance). Psychoanalysis is a theory of mind built on the observation of resistance in the clinic, which observation recommends drawing a distinction between what is merely descriptively unconscious (presently not conscious) and what is dynamically unconscious (unconscious and incapable of being recognized).

Second, the *economic* model—about which I’ll say more in a moment—analyzes mental structure, activity, and content in terms of mobile mental energy or drives, and the mind’s capacities for facilitating and discharging that energy. Colloquially, drives are meant to account for certain ideas

and experiences being intensely charged, phenomenologically or affectively “too much.” The economic theory is often characterized as both the most speculative of the metapsychologies (Freud calls it “our mythology” [1933, 95]) and also the theory most indebted to physiology, and so the theory that is least distinctively psychoanalytic; as Freud writes, it “rests scarcely at all upon a psychological basis but derives its principal support from biology” (1914, 79).

Third, the (first) *topographical* or “systematic” model analyzes the mind into psychical groupings or systems: unconscious, preconscious, and conscious psychic “places” or parts, where these parts are differentiated not in terms of anatomical or cerebral localization but with reference to each part’s characteristic forms of mental functioning (distinctive processes and principles) and their mutual interaction. Here, “unconscious” and “conscious” denote not qualities of the mental (as in the first metapsychology) but “mental provinces” (1933, 72). This is the first *spatial* model of mind.

Finally, the second topographical or *structural* model analyzes the mind into *Es, Ich, and Über-ich*, “realms, regions, or provinces, into which we divine an individual’s mental apparatus” (ibid.). Freud describes this as his second spatial model. The need for second but still spatial model came largely from Freud’s observation that ego activity is not always or necessarily conscious, and so ego and consciousness are not simply coextensive. On the second topographical model, the mind is pictured in terms of “realms, regions, or provinces,” but they are distinguished not with respect to consciousness or unconsciousness, but in terms of the type of mental activity proper to each. The id names the instinctual region of the total psychical personality governed by the primary processes and the pleasure principle. The ego is the site of psychic order, reason, and commonsense, governed largely by the secondary processes and the reality principle, and “puts itself forward as the representative of the whole person” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1974, 452). The superego, again governed by primary processes and the pleasure principle, is the inner agency of self-observation and self-criticism, constituted by the internalization of parental demands and prohibitions (I discuss the structural theory at length in the next section).

Reflecting on all four metapsychologies, Laplanche and Pontalis suggest that the final theory provides not just new ideas about the mind but represents a methodological departure from the first three. They write:

It is clear even from the choice of names for the agencies that the model here is *no longer one borrowed from the physical sciences* but is instead shot through with anthropomorphism [...] To this extent then, the theory of the psychical apparatus tends to resemble the way the subject comprehends and perhaps even constructs himself in his phantasy-life. 1974, 452-my emphasis.

Laplanche and Pontalis make essentially the same point as Wollheim's above: the final structural theory pictures the mind as the mind pictures "and perhaps even constructs" itself in phantasy. This constitutes a change in *method* with respect to the earlier metapsychologies because the dynamic, economic, and topographic models all analyze the mind as a kind of complex object, and provide external or observational or "third-personal" theories of the mind's functioning: the observer-theorist pictures the mind as a network of energies or as a complex apparatus governed by different kinds of mental processes and contents. The mind's reflexivity is not emphasized and so is not reflected in the theory. As such, Laplanche and Pontalis suggest, these metapsychologies can be seen as modeled on the kind of explanation offered by the natural sciences. By contrast, according to a more reflexive model, the mind's reflexivity—its "comprehending and constructing itself"—is emphasized and informs the theory; Laplanche and Pontalis suggest that the fourth metapsychology takes this approach.

And yet, this sharp distinction needs to be qualified, since this will help set up the discussion of the structural theory. I suggest that the mind's reflexivity is already emphasized where one might least expect to find it, as an essential component of Freud's economic or drive theory.

According to the second metapsychology, the mind is animated by drives and has recourse to different forms of mental functioning (primary and secondary processes) that serve to discharge and to organize ("bind") the drives. As is well known, drive (*Trieb*) is different from instinct (*Instinkt*), and Freud mostly reserved the latter for describing non-human animals (see Strachey 1895, xxv). An animal instinct is innate, has a fixed purpose, and has a proper object: for instance, the instinct to procreate is innate and can only be satisfied by procreating; the instinct for nourishment is innate, inflexible, can only be satisfied by eating that animal's food; the bird's instinct to build a nest is innate and can only be realized by making a nest (see Lear 2015, 76).

By contrast, Freud describes drives as demands on the mind for activity or "work," yet where there is no fixed object (like food or shelter) and no fixed activity (like procreating, eating, or nest building). Freud writes:

The drive is a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body. 1915a, 121-122.

My interest is the idea that the drive is or has a *psychical representative* and thereby makes a demand on the mind for work (for anything that will satisfy or resolve the stimulation). What is crucial for our purposes is that Freud here describes the drive as a demand on the mind to do something (work) and

where this demand is not a quantum of sheer energy or brute force that pushes the mind around; rather the drive shows up *for* the mind as a *psychical representative* [*psychische Repräsentanz* or *Triebrepräsentanz*]. This latter concept is difficult and essential but underdeveloped in Freud,⁸ and it will be crucial for my interpretation of id, ego, and superego. For as we shall see, Freud describes id, ego, and superego not only as functionally differentiated mental agencies or groupings of mental activity, but as the “psychical representatives” of those agencies. So the mind is not only active but generates psychical representatives of its own activities, and moreover, functions *by* generating such representatives.

Again, the idea of a psychical representative is obscure. The first question is: is the drive the somatic stimuli to which a psychical representative attaches? Or is the drive *itself* the psychical representative of somatic stimuli?⁹ Jonathan Lear provides a helpful framework (see also Tort 1974). We can consider the drive in two ways or from two perspectives: we can consider the drive physiologically (and this perspective and inquiry lies outside the scope of psychology), *or* we can consider the drive psychologically (1999, 122), a perspective that places the drive within the purview of psychoanalytic study. To view the drive psychologically, or as it shows up psychically, is to attend to the drive’s psychical representative. As Freud writes:

A drive can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the drive can. *Even in the unconscious*, moreover, a drive cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea. If the drive did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it (1915b, 177).

Paraphrasing Kant (B132),¹⁰ Freud’s proposal in this passage is that a drive without a psychical representative would be either impossible or else at least nothing *for* the mind, not just for

⁸ See especially Green (1985), Laplanche and Leclaire (1972), and Tort (1974) for discussion of this concept.

⁹ Strachey argues that in early writing (1911, 1914) Freud adopted the latter framework (drive *is* the psychical representative of somatic forces), while in later writing (1915a, 1915b, 1915c) Freud draws a distinction between the instinct, as something non-psychical, and its psychical representative (idea or affect) to which it attaches. As a “frontier concept,” we should perhaps accept some of such ambiguity or undecideability. And in any case, what is consistent through the two possible interpretations is that the drive is *psychical* insofar as it is or has a *representative*.

¹⁰ Kant writes: “The I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me that could not be thought at all, which is as much as to say that the representation would be impossible or else at last nothing for me” (B132). The task of connecting Kant and Freud is enormous and fruitful. See Longuenesse (2016). But briefly: what the idea of an unconscious psychical representative suggests is a) a drive must have a psychical representative to be mental, b) as subject to the primary processes and the pleasure principle, and as indifferent to logical and temporal ordering (secondary processes), a psychical representative will not be *consciously thinkable* even if it can still be something quasi-representational *for* the mind. So Freud makes room for “representations” that cannot be “consciously”

consciousness but even in the unconscious. As Laplanche and Leclaire put the point, the drive “enters into the circuit of mental life only through the mediation of the “*Vorstellungs-Repräsentanz*” (1972, 144). Given that the *Vorstellungs-Repräsentanz* is unconscious, governed by the primary processes and indifferent to the law of non-contradiction and temporal order, this will not be any ordinary, straightforwardly thinkable “representation.” And obviously it is difficult to say positively what an unconscious *Vorstellungs-Repräsentanz* is like, given that we have no direct access to the unconscious. But Freud proposes that psychical representatives take the form of a *Vorstellungsinhalt* (typically, a crude, primary process idea, image, wish, or fantasy) or *Affekt*; these can be held together—the affect can attach to the *Vorstellungsinhalt*—or split apart—for example, the affect can displace and attach to an associated idea or impression. The main point is that drives are psychological, they “enter the circuit of mental life,” only insofar as they are or are attached to some psychical representative. This is how drives show up *for* the mind.

What is the relevance of the idea of a psychical representative for our purposes?

Recall that our target is a conception or picture of mind that emphasizes and reflects the mind’s reflexivity, the fact that the mind is not just some thing but something *for* itself. It initially seemed that this is exactly what an economic theory could not do, since it initially seemed that drives were sheer forces. But in the foregoing, we have seen that when considered psychologically, the drive is or has a representative: the drive does not just energetically animate the mind, but shows up as something *for* the mind as or attached to an idea or affect. This means that the mind registers its own activity quasi-representationally: the mind is something *for* itself. As Sebastian Gardner puts this important point, “the assumption [of psychoanalysis] is that *the mind experiences itself*, and that it does this in a sense that amounts—although it is different from and much cruder than propositional self-knowledge—to its *self-representation*” (2007, 143). So the psychoanalytic mind is essentially *reflexive*—the mind experiences itself, is *for* itself, in a way that amounts to a kind of self-representation—and yet is not everywhere *conscious*. This marks the difference between the psychoanalytic conception or level of mindedness and the level of wholly sub-personal cognitive processing (see Gardner 2007, 175-202). There can be forms of mental activity that still involve a kind of reflexivity and psychic significance, but where this is not conscious and cannot be straightforwardly translated into ordinary representations or propositions. So the distinctively Freudian level of analysis and the distinctively Freudian conception of mind is of the mind as reflexive but unconscious. So even in the unconscious, the mind is, in some

thought, but these will be very strange “representations,” and again, formally unlike anything that can be consciously, straightforwardly thought.

crude and opaque (to consciousness) sense, representing itself to itself. The mind is, in an extended sense, picturing itself.

We can now turn to the structural theory of *Es*, *Ich*, and *Über-ich*, which, Freud suggests, articulates a conception of mind that is continuous or in contact with how the mind pictures itself. It will also become clear over the course of the discussion in this section and the next why the structural theory reflects the mind's image of itself in a way that the earlier metapsychologies do not. This is because the mind as theorized in the structural account is a later developmental achievement. The articulation and differentiation of psychic agencies does not exist in the individual from the start, but has to be developed (1914a, 77). What we will see is that the mind does not simply develop these distinct agencies or systems, as an organ develops parts, but develops in part *by* developing certain self-representations of these agencies or systems. That is, the mind develops by picturing itself.¹¹

§4. The Spatial Approach and the Recognition Requirement in the Structural Theory

In this section, I analyze passages from “The Question of Lay Analysis,” written three years after *The Ego and the Id*. Freud begins his presentation of the structural theory with a demand:

I must beg you not to ask what *material* [the mental apparatus] is constructed of. That is not a subject of psychological interest. Psychology can be as indifferent to it as, for instance, optics can be to the question of whether the walls of a telescope are made of metal or cardboard. We shall leave entirely on one side the material line of approach, but not so the spatial one. (1926, 192).

Again, while psychoanalysis should abandon the material approach, Freud insists that it cannot abandon a *spatial* approach, a quasi-pictorial analysis of the mind in terms of realms, objects, and their relationships and interactions. It remains to be seen why we need to take such an approach, and whether it functions as something more than a heuristic or metaphor. For now simply note Freud's stipulation: a psycho-analysis must take a spatial approach to the mind.

Freud continues, making another surprising claim about his methodology:

Putting ourselves on the footing of everyday knowledge, we recognize in human beings a mental organization which is interpolated between their sensory stimuli and the perception of their somatic needs on the one hand and their motor acts on the other, and which mediates

¹¹ Here is one parallel between psychoanalytic theory and contemporary, developmental cognitive science, specifically so-called “theory-theory,” which proposes that the infant mind develops by developing abstract “theories” of mind. See especially Gopnik (1993). What especially distinguishes psychoanalysis is its interest in idiosyncratic differences or individual variations of stage-specific pictures, and in how earlier, more rudimentary pictures of mind can be reactivated in conditions of pathology. As Wollheim puts this point, “the delusions of adult life are the phantasies of normal childhood revived” (1981, 219).

between them for a particular purpose. We call this organization their '*Ich*' [I]. Now there is nothing new in this. Each one of us makes this assumption without being a philosopher, and some people even in spite of being philosophers. (ibid., 195)

What is surprising is that Freud describes his metapsychology, his "speculative superstructure," as *nothing new*, but as "on the footing" with popular psychological concepts and self-conceptions. With regards to a certain mental organization that psychoanalysis calls *Ich*, Freud says that without being a philosopher and with no specialist's knowledge, each us already "makes this assumption" that I am or that have an I. Psychoanalytic metapsychology thus gives a name to a feature or capacity of the mind that each of us, as minds, already assumes about ourselves, using the term we already use.

Freud is making a significant claim here: it is not just that the mind in fact *has* a mental organization and organizing agency that psychologists call "*Ich*," in the way that I can be said have a frontal lobe or mirror neurons or even certain cognitive modules, perhaps without knowing this. Rather the mind has a certain organization and each of us already assumes this: we take ourselves to be such an organization, to be an I. Put more precisely and strongly, to be or have an I *is* to take oneself as such (to "make this assumption"). For the mind to *be* organized is for it to experience or take itself to be organized. As Lear puts this quasi-idealist, reflexive point, "the I must have psychological reality *for itself* [...] part of what it is to be an individual is to recognize oneself to be one" (1999, 134; 135-my emphasis).¹² If I did not take myself to be or have an I, I could not take the world to be real and distinct from me, I could neither differentiate myself from nor identify with my body, I could not experience my mind as my own, etc. This in turn indicates that the failure or inadequate inability to assume this, to take oneself to be an organized, unified, single I, constitutes a real form of psychic disorganization: the mind really would be disorganized (either in the case of pathology, or in the case of early development).

These psychologically significant, psychically organizing distinctions of I and other, inside and outside, are realized by the mind's assuming them to be real; they are real insofar as they are real *for* the mind, for me. Finally, in making this assumption, each one of us *identifies* with that organizing center, with the *Ich*. The person or conscious individual identifies himself with this psychic agency or

¹² Making the same kind of point, Wollheim writes: "the development of the ego's self-awareness, and, in consequence, the development of the ego itself, are essentially bound up with the concept of the ego. Without such a concept neither self-awareness nor, ultimately, existence itself could be attributed to the ego [...] The concept of the ego is essential to the development of the ego" (1981, 215).

mental province. So if the Ich does not exhaust the entire psychic personality, this means that there will be other “parts” of the mind that the person does *not* identify with and may actively disavow.

Continuing, Freud writes:

But [the *Ich*] does not, in our opinion, exhaust the description of the mental apparatus. Besides this ‘I’, we recognize another mental region, more extensive, more imposing and more obscure than the ‘I’, and this we call the ‘*Es*’ [‘it’]. The relation between the two must be our immediate concern. Ibid.

Here Freud suggests that “we analysts” recognize another mental region, the obscure *Es*. This might suggest specialist’s knowledge and specialist’s terminology, and so a departure from popular psychology. But more surprisingly, Freud suggests that not only is the *Ich* already familiar to each of us, so too is the *Es*:

You will probably protest at our having chosen simple pronouns to describe our two agencies or provinces instead of giving them orotund Greek names [FR: or Latinate names, like Strachey’s *ego* and *id*]. In psycho-analysis, however, we like to keep in contact with the popular mode of thinking and prefer to make its concepts scientifically serviceable rather than to reject them. There is no merit in this; we are obliged to take this line; for our theories must be understood by our patients, who are often very intelligent, but not always learned. The impersonal ‘it’ is immediately connected with certain forms of expression used by normal people. ‘*It shot through me,*’ people say; ‘*there was something in me at that moment that was stronger than me.*’ ‘*C’était plus fort que moi.*’ (ibid.-my underline).

Keeping in contact with popular thinking involves demonstrating that even “more extensive, more imposing and more obscure” *Es* is in some sense, however obscurely and indirectly, already known by ordinary people. This is surprising, since it would seem that if anything could count as a genuine psychoanalytic revelation vis-à-vis popular psychological thinking, it would be the “discovery” of the unconscious or the *Es*. But against this, Freud insists that each of us already exhibits a kind of indirect awareness of the *Es*, as evidenced by forms of expression and self-description that are at once normal and unusual. For example: “the idea shot through me,” or “something in me was stronger than me,” or for example, “I don’t know what came over me,” or “I don’t understand where this feeling came from,” etc. These turns of phrase describe something in the mind beyond the *Ich*, something experienced by the *Ich* as at once “in” me and yet “other.” What unifies these self-descriptions is that they *distance* the I from certain thoughts and feelings, and they do this by *spatializing* the mind and objectifying its contents: it is not *my* idea, it is not *me*; rather *something* other than me somehow *enters* my mind from without, *something* was *in* me that overpowered me. The mind expresses itself by spatializing itself.

Notice also that it is only insofar as I identify myself as *Ich* that I can stand in these kinds of relationships with my own mind, identifying with some thoughts and feelings while distancing myself from others. So on the structural theory, it is not just that conscious and unconscious mental processes operate in accordance with different principles (as in the first topography), it is that one part of the mind—the *Ich*—takes itself to be distinct from and distinguishes itself from another part or region of the mind—the *Es*, the essential characteristic of which is “the fact of its being alien to the ego” (1933, 72). One system or agency being “alien” to another is not the same as two functionally distinct mental systems being different from one another, where such differences can be observed and described third-personally. But *alienness* is not mere difference. In the case of the relationship between ego and id, the ego registers the id as *alien*, the id’s difference from the ego is registered reflexively as psychically significant. It is only *from* the perspective of the ego that the id can be an alien. As Freud puts it in an essay written a year later,

these alien guests even seem to be more powerful than those which are at the ego’s command. They resist all the well-proved measures of enforcement used by the will, remain unmoved by logical refutation, and are unaffected by the contradictory assertions of reality. Or else impulses appear which seem like those of a stranger, so that the ego disowns them; yet it has to fear them and take precautions against them. The ego says to itself: ‘This is an illness, a foreign invasion.’ 1917, 141-142.

The language here makes even clearer that the id is not just a different system than the ego, but is registered by the ego as alien, a foreign invasion, something to be fought or disowned. What all this indicates is that the fourth metapsychology articulates the differences between the systems *reflexively*—as if from the perspective of one of them, the ego—but not necessarily consciously. So, for example, while the *Ich qua* sub-system registers the id as an invasion, at the level of the consciousness the person may simply feel anxiety, or develop a symptom. So it is not that the mind or person is conscious of these negotiations, let alone consciously executing them. And yet they still involve a kind of reflexivity: they are something *for* the mind.

In the above passages Freud suggests that the concepts of *Ich* and the broad idea of *Es* are in a way already familiar to “normal people”: these theoretical posits name something that is already significant, psychically real, to the mind they describe. While the *Ich* is more directly and straightforwardly self-known, the idea of a mental region designated *Es* is known obliquely, as when an idea occurs to me that I cannot make sense of or a feeling strikes me as strange or strangely powerful. In “On Narcissism,” written about a decade earlier than *The Ego and the Id*, Freud makes the same point about the *Über-ich*. He writes:

It would not surprise us if we were to find a special psychological agency which [...] constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal. If such an agency does exist, we cannot possibly come upon it as a *discovery*—we can only *recognize* it; for we may reflect that what we call our ‘conscience’ has the required characteristics. (1914a, 95-my emphases).

Again, this mental agency is characterized as already in some sense familiar to the mind it describes, because we—normal people—already experience ourselves as having a conscience. What Freud calls the *Über-ich* is what we call conscience; a concept from the popular mode of thinking is made “scientifically serviceable.” The theory makes articulate what its object already knows of itself (if obliquely).

What is especially important about this passage is the modality: the *Über-ich* is not and *could not possibly be* a discovery; we can only recognize it. *Discovery* here should be understood as part of the epistemology of the standard method. In the case of empirical observation and inquiry, we can discover something genuinely new and heretofore unknown about the world. Here, the object enjoys a robust reality and independence from the observer, and so it can be straightforwardly *unknown*, until it is discovered. So, for example, it can be simply *not known* that a specific region of the brain is active during the recall of skills but is not involved in the recall of facts, and this fact about the brain can then be discovered. This is something new. Finally, when it comes to this kind of straightforward discovery, say about neuroanatomy, the brain is not regarded as reflexive, with a perspective on itself, and the fact that the inquirer herself has a brain does not bear on her inquiry. There is no special, internal relationship between object and observer-theory.

But Freud says that the *Über-ich cannot possibly* be discovered. It can *only* be recognized. What does this mean?

In this context, *recognition* is an epistemological concept meant to specify a way of apprehending something that is in some sense already familiar, even if only “secretly familiar” (1919, 245). Using Freud’s language in the earlier quotation, it is the strange epistemology of apprehending “nothing new.” The epistemology of Freud’s structural metapsychology is not discovery but recognition. And so to properly understand Freud’s theory is not to discover something radically new, as one can with the standard method, but is to recognize the theoretical articulation of what one, at some level, already knows. But it is not just that Freud gives a name to something in the world that one has encountered before. Rather recognition is in this case reflexive: to properly understand Freud’s theory is not to discover something new as one does with the standard method, but is to recognize the theoretical articulation of what one already knows, at some level, *about oneself* (what is secretly familiar). The object theorized recognizes *itself* in the theory. In the final section we will see that Freud also describes this

special reflexive, recognitive epistemology as not just intellectual or cognitive but, as he puts it, as *affective*. It constitutes what he calls “sympathy” with the theory.

If the *Über-ich*, along with the other psychical agencies or provinces, can only be recognized, this suggests that Freud’s method is reflexive, not standard: the theorist articulates a mental capacity, not by engaging in standard empirical inquiry, but by attending to the mind’s reflexive experience and articulation of itself. Freud is not probing about in the mind like given region of the world, he is *listening* to the mind’s reflexive self-descriptions. Consider how Freud describes what he learns, and does not strictly “discover,” by listening to his patients:

Recognition of this agency enables us to understand the so-called ‘delusions of being noticed’ or more correctly, of being watched, which are such striking symptoms in the paranoid diseases and which may also occur as an isolated form of illness [...] Patients of this sort complain that all their thoughts are known and their actions watched and supervised; they are informed of the functioning of this agency by voices which characteristically speak to them in the third person (‘Now she’s thinking of that again’, ‘now he’s going out’). This complaint is justified; it describes the truth. A power of this kind, watching, discovering and criticizing all our intentions, does really exist. Indeed, it exists in every one of us in normal life. Delusions of being watched present this power in a regressive form, thus revealing its genesis. 1914a, 95-96.

Two points are worth emphasizing. First, it is by listening to persons—minds—describe their experiences of themselves that allowed Freud to theorize the *Über-ich*, and listening, I am suggesting, constitutes a form of inquiry that is reflexive and internal, rather than standard and observational. Just as the alienness of the id can only be apprehended from the perspective of the ego, so too with the “watching” and “criticizing” functions of the *Über-ich*. Freud is not just describing distinct psychic functioning but is characterizing that functioning *from* the perspective of the ego which feels it is being watched. The psychoanalytic theory of mind thus reflects how the mind experiences and voices itself.

Second—and as we will see more in the next section—the exaggerated, intensely personified presentation of the *Über-ich* described in these cases constitutes a regressive, pathological instantiation of this agency which reveals its developmental genesis. Moreover, psychic pathology exaggerates and hence reveals not only psychic structure but the *psychical representative* of psychic structure. For the *Über-ich* names not only the mind’s capacity for self-observation and self-criticism but that the *psychical representative* of that capacity *as* an observing and critical figure. Again, it is not just that the mind has a capacity for self-observation and self-criticism, but also *pictures* that capacity, in spatial terms.

The two methodological proposals are coming together. Freud insists that we retain what he calls a spatial approach to the mind, an approach that analyzes the mind into inner regions, spaces, figures, and their relationships. He also insists that the justification for this approach is grounded in

the “obligation” to keep his theory on a footing with popular thinking, with how the mind already pictures and expresses itself, even if unconsciously. The structural or topographical theory is thus spatial in a way that is continuous with a “spatial” way that the mind pictures itself, reflexively if not fully consciously, in terms of insides and outsides, I and alien, imposing, watchful others. And because of this, because the theory reflects or is continuous with the mind’s image of itself, the epistemology of this theory is not only of discovering, unidirectionally, a given object. Rather the epistemology is one of *recognition*: the theorist, a mind herself, does not simply discover parts of the mind but recognizes them, and the object of the theory, a mind herself, does not merely intellectually understand the theory but must recognize herself, to some extent, *as* its object, and so find herself understood.

In the final section I will say more about why this *must* be the case, as Freud says. Why is it that we “cannot possibly” discover these parts of the mind but can only recognize them? And does this hold for *all* theories of mind? But first, in the next section, I will briefly look at Freud’s developmental theory, since it is there that we gain a sense of why the mind pictures itself spatially, in terms of inner figures, and why such reflexive pictures are in fact constitutive of psychic structure. As we will see, Freud’s theory of psychic development is not a theory of unmediated growth, in the manner of a bodily organ; rather it is a theory of the mind developing by means of developing self-representations, or psychological representatives.¹³

§5. Psychic Development and Psychological Representatives

We saw in the second metapsychology that the drive enters the circuit of mental life only by means of a psychological representative, and that the Freudian mind is reflexive while not necessarily self-conscious. Recalling Gardner’s helpful phrasing: the assumption of psychoanalysis is that the mind experiences itself, in a sense that amounts to a kind of self-representation. In this section I return to the idea of the psychological representative, since Freud uses this same concept to characterize the psychological agencies of id, ego and super-ego. As I will (all too briefly) suggest, on Freud’s theory the mind does not just develop various capacities but develops quasi-pictorial, quasi-spatial psychological representatives of those capacities *and* develops *by* producing such psychological representatives.

The analysis of mind into id, ego, and superego is, on a first pass, an analysis of mind into functionally differentiated units, where these differentiations are explained developmentally. The id is the mind of dis-organized drives and their psychological representatives, governed by primary processes

¹³ Again, see Gopnik’s theory-theory for a contemporary version of the idea that the mind develops reflexively, by developing pictures or representations or theories of the mind.

under the pleasure principle, without awareness of external reality or logical laws. The ego is the part of mind that is functionally differentiated and developed under the influence of the external world, through its association with the perceptual system. The ego's activities are, for the most part, governed by the reality principle: Freud writes, the ego represents reason and common sense (1923, 25). Freud describes the ego as the organized and organizing part of the id, whereas the latter is, as he puts it, "all to pieces." The development of the superego is part of the ego's development, the development of the mind's capacity to take itself as an object.

For Freud, psychic development—including a sense of the distinction between what is imagined and what is real, between inside and outside, between me and not me—arises in response to frustrations and disappointments, that is, to unpleasure. Pain or unpleasure motivates the mind to work, to do something to alleviate potentially unmanageable tension. According to the developmental theory (and speaking schematically), in response to the anticipation of pain at the loss of a loved, needed, and also feared and hated object (which is not yet experienced *as* a fully separate object), the still thoroughly dependent and under-developed mind *identifies* with and *internalizes* that object, its qualities, and the qualities of the relationship. In response to the anxiety of parental authority and the fear or perceived threat of loss of love, or of castration, identification is a psychological strategy for taking that authority in, at once mastering and acquiescing to it, and thereby avoiding the pain of loss. Identification and internalize in turn build and structure the mind. As Freud writes, the ego's "character" constitutes a history of these internalizations (*ibid.*, 29).

Of course, nothing is literally taken into the mind, because the mind is not literally a space. So identification and internalization must be understood as the mind's (crude, oral) *picture* or *fantasy* of its activity.¹⁴ The mind is engaged in activity *and* it pictures or fantasizes that activity. And yet these fantasies of activity do not merely supervene but make a real psychic difference: identification and internalization develop the mind, inaugurating an ideal around which the ego organizes itself, and a capacity for self-criticism that tracks the ego's distance from the ideal. The hallmark of this psychical process is the development of "the capacity to stand apart from the ego and to master it" (*ibid.*, 48), the mind's capacity to take oneself as an object. The specifically reflexive inflection of this idea is that the mind not only develops these capacities but develops *by* picturing or representing them; the mind is not only possessed of capacities, these capacities enter the circuit of mental life, they are something

¹⁴ See Segal (2006); Gardner (2007, 178-185); Lear (2015, 167-180)

for the mind. It is in this context that Freud describes id, ego, and superego, not only as capacities and structures but as “psychical representatives.”

The superego supplies the most straightforward case of a psychical representative. As we saw, the superego is a set of psychic functions that develop by means of identification, it names the capacity for self-observation and self-criticism. But in both early development and in conditions of pathology, the mind pictures or fantasies its own capacity for self-observation and self-criticism *as* a watchful figure, because such an extra-psychic figure was the model for the intrapsychic structure. The superego is the spatialized, anthropomorphized psychical representative of a set of mental functions. Freud describes the superego as a double representative: “the superego is as much a representative of the id as of the external world” (1924, 167), specifically our relation to our parents. So the figure of the superego is the psychical representative of the demands of the id and of the world, where these demands enter the circuit of mental life by means of this representative. Again, what is developed by means of identification is a psychic capacity or structure, but this structure is pictured as a figure valanced with qualities of the original intersubjective relationship. So Freud is right to insist, as we saw in the Introduction, that the superego really describes a structural relation and is not *merely* a personification of conscience, and yet it *is* also importantly and essentially such a personification. What makes it not a *mere* personification is that it is not primarily or only the psychoanalytic theorist who personifies this structure, but the mind itself.

The ego is the agency of reason, commonsense, and interfacing with the external world, and is characterized by an active tendency towards synthesis; the ego is the organized and organizing part of the mind. But here again Freud describes the ego not only as an organized mental structure or set of capacities but as a psychical representative: specifically, the ego is the psychical representative of the demands of the real external world (1923, 28). The *Ich* is the psychical representative of reason, commonsense, and reality, or put the other way around: the latter become psychically real, work the circuit of mental life, by means of their organized psychical representative. And crucially, the person or individual *identifies* with this representative, takes herself to be her *Ich*, such, from that perspective, that the superego and id are experienced as alien, not me.

Finally, as the disorganized, impersonal, unconscious part of the mind, the id is the mental site or “realm” of drives and their psychical representatives. The id is “all to pieces,” it cannot say what it wants, “it has achieved no unified will” (*ibid.*, 59), it is the alien to the ego. This suggests that the id does not enjoy the kind of organized, personified psychical representative that the ego and superego do. This makes good sense, since ego and superego are later developments, they are products of

identifications and internalizations, they are “closer” to consciousness, and are to that extent more organized parts of the mind with more organized, structured psychical representatives. So when Freud maintains that the superego functions as the psychical representative of the id (ibid., 36), the suggestion is that the drives’ incessant demands on the mind for work can, so to speak, find psychic reality or enter the circuit of mental life *via* the figure of the superego. At the same time, insofar as the id designates the disorganized part of the mind constituted by drives and their psychical representatives, the id can be understood to have innumerable, disorganized, mutually inconsistent, displacing and condensing psychical representatives, all the ideas, fantasies, and affects by means of which the drives show up for the mind.

To recap this brief, dense discussion: according to the structural theory, the mind not only develops structural complexity and distinct groupings of functions, but generates psychical representatives of these capacities and structures. The mind develops reflexively. In this way, the structures and functions become something *for* the mind. Moreover, it is not that the mind develops function and representative in tandem; rather the mind develops and gains complexity *by* generating such representatives, by picturing itself to itself. So it is in Freud’s developmental theory that we find the root of the mind’s spatialized self-representations, where these constitute the broad, spatial, anthropomorphized picture of mind that the structural theory strives to make scientifically serviceable.¹⁵

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud makes the following caveat about his methodology:

Analogies of this kind [picturing the psyche in spatial terms] are only intended to assist us in our attempts to make complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the functions and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus [...] We are justified, in my view, in giving free rein to our speculations so long as we retain the coolness of our judgement and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building. (1900, 539).

¹⁵ I think emphasizing the development of the mind’s pictures of itself as crucial to the mind’s development clarifies why the developmental story, in Freud, is not a *mere* causal history that we can set aside for philosophical purposes. Béatrice Longuenesse makes the same proposal when she suggests that in Freud, psychic development is not just a matter of chronological history but concerns “an ontological order of precedence that stays with us” (2016, 222). I think this idea of an ontological rather than merely chronological order of precedence is key for articulating why psychic development should be relevant to philosophers (rather than treated as an empirical ladder that can be kicked away after we reach psychic maturity, at which point philosophy comes in to analyze the nature of our mature faculties). I have not been able to make the case here, but my proposal is that the mind’s development is reflexive, it develops *through* its developing self-conceptions (or pictures).

Freud is advising his reader that picturing the mind in terms of parts and figures is justifiable insofar as this helps render the mind intelligible. But, he warns, this is permissible only so long as we retain the coolness of our judgment and do not take such pictures literally. The mind *is not* a space, it is not populated by agencies or figures. But if we can bear the merely regulative status of the spatial picture in mind, then such pictures can be useful aids for our understanding.¹⁶

I have been arguing that elaborating such “crude and concrete” pictures is the method employed not only in theory but by the mind itself, in its rudimentary efforts at self-representation and self-comprehension. The theorist’s effort to make sense of the mind by organizing it into spaces and figures is continuous with the mind’s rudimentary efforts to make sense of itself and its experiences by organizing itself into spaces and figures. And just as the theory must not take the crude pictures literally, so too the mind: rigidly and defensively identifying with the ego or experiencing one’s superego as an observing punishing figure or picturing one’s own desires as imposing alien forces are signs of pathology. Here, the mind’s self-image here becomes too crude, *too* spatialized, *too* anthropomorphized (cf. Wollheim 1969).

Consider, for instance, how Freud describes paranoia: “delusions of being watched present the power of conscience in a *regressive* form, thus revealing its *genesis*” (1914a, 96). Here, the mind’s own capacity for self-observation and self-criticism are anthropomorphized and projected as a fantasy of an actual figure. So while intrapsychic relations will initially take the shape of intersubjective relationships and may regress to this crude form in pathology—as Wollheim writes, “the delusions of adult life are the phantasies of normal childhood revived” (1981, 219)—in maturity and in health, the inner picture is less crude and concrete, less personified, less spatialized. In health, at the reflexive level, the psychical representative of the superego is less dramatic, less punitive, and at the level of psychic structure, the ego-functions and super-ego functions are in fact more integrated: representative and function map each other.

§6: Conclusion: Recognition and Sympathy

To conclude I return to the questions raised in the Introduction: first, what is it about the nature of the mind that calls for a recognition requirement? Second, isn’t psychoanalysis in the business of

¹⁶ There are parallels here with Kant’s recommendation in the Appendix to the Dialectic that reason’s ideas and principles have legitimate *regulative* but not constitutive use. This means: there are no objects of experience that correspond to these ideas, but the ideas can be used as guides for empirical exercise of the understanding.

demystifying, rather than confirming, popular pictures of the human mind? Finally, third, to what extent does this requirement generalize? That is, when should a theory of mind be constrained by the demand that the mind be able to recognize itself in the theory? These are questions that this paper raises. I won't be able to fully answer them here. Instead, I offer suggestions for how to go forward with them.

First, as I have been suggesting throughout this paper, it is the mind's reflexivity that generates this special recognition constraint on its theorization, a constraint that does not apply to non-reflexive objects. As Moran writes: "objects do not have a perspective on what it is to be known. The question of their knowability has to be solved on the side of the knower alone, with no 'confirmation' from the side of the known object" (2011, 246). By contrast, minds are things that "do have a perspective on what it is to be properly known, *do* have some say in the matter as to what shall count as being known and being understood" (ibid., 253). It is because the mind is reflexive, self-representing, that—unique amongst objects of inquiry—it can claim a legitimate say as to what counts as being known. Put otherwise, if the mind could not recognize itself in its theorization, this would count as a legitimate criticism. Legitimate, but not decisive. Anticipating the next section, from the fact that the mind cannot recognize itself in its theorization, we do not yet know where the fault lies, in the theory or in the mind. Is the theory misrepresenting the mind, failing to do justice to its representation of itself? Or is the mind refusing, defending against, the prospect of finding itself in *this* picture? (ibid., 253).

For the second question asks: doesn't psychoanalysis provide a radically new picture of the mind that functions precisely to *demystify* the popular picture? And so doesn't psychoanalysis provide a picture of mind that we will precisely, by definition, *not* recognize as a picture of ourselves? Isn't it the case that we take ourselves to be "masters of our own house" and would be shocked to *discover* that we are not?

It is not my aim to domesticate the radicality of Freud's insights, or suggest that his theory is not genuinely shocking or is "nothing new." I want to say that, on the one hand, his picture is necessarily, initially, unrecognizable *and* that recognition is the form of understanding proper to this theory.

In requiring that the mind be *able* to recognize itself in the theory, the recognition requirement does not stipulate that a theory should present a picture of the mind that is immediately recognizable or straightforwardly familiar—Freud's picture obviously is not. And it is not to say that such a theory could not reveal heretofore unrealized or unacknowledged dimensions of the mind or show the mind to be different than we'd thought it was—as Freud's obviously did. Freud so often prefaced his essays

and lectures by warning his audience that they will resist what he has to say. In saying this he wasn't expressing doubt that his audience would be able to *understand* his theory, theoretically. He was advising them that they would find it difficult to *accept*, as true of themselves, precisely because its picture is so incongruent with their (our) ordinary self-understanding. He saw that we would not, or would not want to, recognize ourselves here.

On the other hand, Freud maintains that recognition is the form of "understanding" proper to his theory. To be unable or unwilling to recognize the theory is to fail to properly understand it. So understanding, here, involves not just intellectual acuity but recognition, or *sympathy*. As Freud writes in "A Difficulty on the Path of Psychoanalysis" (1917):

I will say at once that it is not an intellectual difficulty I am thinking of, not anything that makes psychoanalysis hard for the hearer or reader to understand, but an affective one—something that alienates the feelings of those who come into contact with it, so that they become less inclined to believe in it or take an interest in it. As will be observed, the two kinds of difficulty amount to the same thing in the end. Where sympathy is lacking, understanding will not come very easily. (137)

Here Freud anticipates that his audience might be willing to try to intellectually understand his theory of mind, but that they would find it affectively alienating, and he suggests that these "amount to the same thing in the end:" if one cannot "sympathize" with Freud's picture, if one remains affectively alienated from it, this constitutes a genuine limit to one's understanding. The suggestion is that when it comes to a theory of mind, proper or genuine understanding involves not just intellectual comprehension but sympathy, or what I have been calling recognition. Again, Freud voiced throughout his writings his appreciation of how difficult it is to sympathize with or recognize his picture of mind *as* a picture of oneself. And yet, he insists, we cannot discover or intellectual comprehend it, we can *only* recognize it.

The task is then to move from affective alienation to recognition or sympathy. Consider that Freud's argumentative strategy often involves drawing connections between what was already available to his readers and what he knew they would resist. For instance, he calls on his readers to notice how they react to children's thumb sucking, their sense of the "naughtiness" of it, so that they might come to recognize childhood sexuality, which he knew they would not immediately recognize but would, initially, actively refuse. Or in the essay we've been analyzing, he reminds his readers of turns of phrase they are familiar with—*it shot through me, it was stronger than me*—so that they will not just intellectually understand his claims about id and superego but recognize them. So while one will certainly at first find Freud's picture bizarre, rebarbative, unrecognizable, he writes in a way that invites the reader to

move from a position of alienation to a kind of recognition, however uncanny that recognition might be.

Note finally that these transitional rhetorical strategies reflect one of his most crucial clinical insights: it does a patient no good for the analyst to simply *tell* them what they have repressed. Not only does this presume that the analyst knows what this is, it is therapeutically counterproductive, functioning as a simple trigger for affective alienation and so greater resistance. Put otherwise, what the analyst claims will be simply unrecognizable, alien. Rather, the clinician must work with what is already available on the surface of the analysand's mind—including her resistances and feelings of alienation—and move along from there, to what is consciously rejected yet secretly familiar.

So to the second question, my response is, on the one hand, to grant the objection: indeed, Freud's picture is, initially and from the perspective of the conscious mind, unrecognizable. What the recognition requirement concerns is what I've called the *epistemology* of recognition, and a rejection of the epistemology of discovery and intellectual comprehension. Freud saw a real risk that his audiences would fancy that they could comprehend his theories intellectually and abstractly, and so come out unscathed. Against this, Freud wanted his audiences to realize that what he was saying was true of *them*, of their own minds, and so to find themselves in sympathy with his unsettling picture. To understand Freud's theory in the full, recognitive, sympathetic sense is to come out scathed.

I want to close with the third question: to what extent does the recognition requirement generalize? And how could reflection on the purposes of psychoanalysis shed light on the scope of this generalization?

Perhaps not all theories of mind must hold themselves to this requirement. It would take much more work to show that they must, or that they fail to the extent that they do not. My tentative proposal is that a theory of mind or moral psychology is legitimately subject to the recognition requirement to the extent that its aim is to facilitate the life of the mind by facilitating the mind's own self-understanding.

Linking the recognition requirement with this therapeutic aim provides a lens for thinking about different philosophies of mind and moral psychologies. For instance, we can recall Socrates' complaint about Anaxagoras' theory of mind in the *Phaedo*, which, he says, makes no use of *mind* but cites "air and ether and water and many other strange things" as explanations, as if, in asking *why* Socrates is sitting in jail one could only cite the nature and interaction of bones and sinews. For Socrates, the mind, whatever we mean by mind, is precisely left out of such a picture (it is rather a

picture of what Freud called the mind's 'organic foundations'). And Socrates' complaint is that this does not help him understand his mind, that is, himself.

Or, on the other end of things, consider Nietzsche's drive psychology. Can one come to recognize oneself in this picture? Can thinking oneself in the terms of this picture facilitate the life of the mind? Whatever the answer, it would be productive to read Nietzsche in order to see whether his psychology meets or is interested in meeting the recognition requirement, and how this intersects with his therapeutic proposals.¹⁷ One way to understand some of Nietzsche's therapeutic proposals is as suggesting that it might *not* be possible to recognize oneself as a site of competing drives (we are, he says, *necessarily* strangers to ourselves) and yet some individuals might be able to *affirm* this. We might not be able to cognitively understand what we are, but we might learn to affirm what we are. On this way of thinking, Nietzsche's psychology does not and does not aspire to meet the recognition requirement, and yet, coming to accept and affirm this very inability, this necessary self-strangeness, could contribute to or constitute a human kind of health.

My point with these brief remarks is of course not to suggest that anyone should accept my brief suggestions regarding Nietzsche or Plato. It is just to indicate that the idea of a recognition requirement on philosophies of mind and the idea that this requirement bears on philosophies of mind with therapeutic ambitions provide useful lenses for interpreting different philosophical psychologies.

Let me close by considering how a psychoanalytic framework can facilitate the life of the mind by facilitating the mind's own self-understanding.

Person-level or folk psychological concepts are concepts we can use to understand ourselves and others by providing the tools for rationalizing, rather than causal, explanations and justifications. Person-level mental states can be thought of as *mine*, and so they enable their subjects to think of themselves as persons or agents (Gardner 2007, 57). They also enable us to think of others as persons, and so to engage with one another as persons and peers. Folk psychological concepts also play a regulative role: in learning to self-ascribe these concepts, we do not only describe ourselves but shape ourselves as persons (McGeer 2007; 2015).

Psychoanalytic states and concepts do not lend themselves immediately or straightforwardly to this kind of first- or second-personal employment. But they are not completely beyond its reach. What a psychoanalytic picture of mind provides is something like an adjacent conceptual framework that accommodates dimensions of mind and activity with which the conscious individual cannot

¹⁷ See Gardner (2009; 2015) for an extremely illuminating discussions of how Nietzsche's drive psychology intersects incongruently with the evaluative perspective of agency.

identify but where our experiences of mind and selfhood would be impoverished, made shallower, if we had to relegate those dimensions to the realm of the wholly sub-personal and impersonal dimension of cognitive functioning. For example, in characterizing my own activity using concepts like *identification* or *projection*, or in seeking to understand the contours of someone's superego, we are still seeking to understand the person—oneself or an other—in terms of the significances and meanings that they attach to certain experiences, we want to understand how they interpret and represent themselves and others, even if unconsciously. I am not immediately or first-personally aware of the various sedimented configurations of unconscious significance that shape my experience, and insofar as they are organized in accordance with primary processes and the pleasure principle, there is a sense in which I can *never* become immediately or first-personally aware of them. They do not lend themselves to that kind of conscious self-ascription, and so dimensions of who I am will necessarily elude my first-personal grasp even though they are still *me*. As Freud suggests in a late essay on dreams, “if, in defense, I say that what is unknown, unconscious and repressed in me is not my ‘ego’, then I shall not be basing my position upon psycho-analysis, I shall not have accepted its conclusions” (1925b, 133). Rather, to have genuinely understood the conclusions of psychoanalysis, I must acknowledge that the unknown, unconscious dimension of my mind “is a part of my own being” (*ibid.*).

Thus, what the psychoanalytic picture allows for are dimensions of psychic life that I can characterize neither as *me* (objects of straightforward, first-personal identification) nor *not me* (wholly beyond the purview of identification and person-level psychology, or an alien invasion). This suggests an aim of psychoanalysis that is different than the oft-assumed aim of “making the unconscious conscious.” In articulating a dimension of mind that hovers between the first- and third-personal, one therapeutic possibility involves learning to relate to the fact of unconscious mental life less defensively. Paraphrasing the passages from Freud above, one might learn, not to intellectually understand or identify with, but to sympathize with this dimension of one's mind.

What all of this suggests is that when a theory pictures the mind differently than we'd initially thought it to be, and yet we can come not just to understand the picture but to recognize it, to recognize ourselves in it, then such a theory thereby changes what the mind takes itself to be, which is to say: it changes our minds.

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