

THE *ABSURDITIES* OF THE  
METAPSYCHOLOGY OF THE  
PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FREUD

*PARADOXES IN REGARD TO THE  
UNCONSCIOUS, THE APPARATUS OF THE  
MIND AND THE EGO.*

**BY**

**COLIN LESLIE DEAN**



THE *ABSURDITIES* OF THE  
METAPSYCHOLOGY OF THE  
PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FREUD  
*PARADOXES IN REGARD TO THE  
UNCONSCIOUS, THE APPARATUS OF THE  
MIND AND THE EGO.*

BY

COLIN LESLIE DEAN

## **GAMAHUCHER PRESS: WEST GEELONG**

### **VICTORIA AUSTRALIA 2003**

The psychoanalytic shibboleth of the unconscious has a major effect upon what the mind is like i.e. its structure and function. We shall see the unconscious makes the mind's structure and function, in terms of Aristotelian logic, illogical and thus cannot be meaningfully used and applied. Rather than construct a model of the mind this essay will focus on two models of the mind used in contemporary psychoanalysis; and show how the mind's apparatus is built up as a consequence of the psychoanalytic concept the unconscious. The meaninglessness and uselessness of the concept of the unconscious is because when models of the mind are constructed using this concept the mental apparatus collapses into absurdity or self-contradiction and paradox. Freud constructed two models of the mind based upon his notion of the unconscious and his attempt to account for repression. These models are the topographical and structural. These changing models of the mind constructed upon the concept of the unconscious have logical consequences which undermine any meaningful understanding of the mind and thus undercut any psychoanalytic usefulness of the mind, and the concept of the unconscious, from an Aristotelian logic point of view – the question of clinical usefulness of such models will not be discussed. Also it will be seen that the concept of the unconscious epistemologically undermines its own epistemology and thus makes it useless due to this epistemological paradox. It will be seen that in Freud's structural model he even admits that the concept of the unconscious has become so ambiguous to hinder any further conclusions. It will be shown that the central reason why these models

reduce to meaninglessness and uselessness is because they violate the laws of Aristotelian logic, particularly the law of identity and non-contradiction by creating entities i.e. the Ego, censor, and the mind which are *coincidentia oppositorum* – in the mind’s case this is its conscious unconscious dichotomy. These entities, of *coincidentia oppositorum*, contradictory opposites violate the laws of entity and law of non-contradiction; and as Aristotle notes “the simultaneous predication of contradictories is impossible.”<sup>1</sup> This does not mean Freud’s models and the unconscious are not meaningful and useful from some other logic’s point of view. What it means is that so long as we use Aristotelian logic is used to interpret and construct them then they will collapse into meaninglessness. It must be noted that this collapsing of the mind apparatus into meaninglessness and uselessness stems from trying to account for repression and the repressed content of the unconscious. Historically the clinical phenomena of resistance led both to the theory of repression and the inferring of the unconscious to account for it<sup>2</sup>.

Freud in *The Ego and the Id* criticizes those who maintain that the notion of an unconscious mental is absurd and illogical - because it is self-contradictory- because they have not had any clinical experience.<sup>3</sup> If they had this clinical experience Freud maintains they would see the sense in an unconscious mind<sup>4</sup>. Now this unconscious mental is as we shall see is a *coincidentia oppositorum* and as such leads to absurdity in regard to Freud’s models of the mind. We shall see that because an unconscious mind etc

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Penguin, 1998, p.94

<sup>2</sup> S. Freud, “The Unconscious”, in *On Metapsychology*, Pelican, 1987, pp 167-221.

<sup>3</sup> S. Freud., “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Pelican, 1987, p.351.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.351.

is a self-contradiction, like all *coincidentia oppositorum*, then what must flow from any logical analysis of Freud's models is the discovery of paradox and contradictions which are the inevitable consequences of any *coincidentia oppositorum*. When contradictories come together in a *coincidentia oppositorum* the problem then is the mechanism that mediates between them - in Freud's model this is the censor and Ego - must itself contain elements of the contradictories. This then leads to the problem that the simultaneous co-presence of contradictories in an entity lead to paradox and self contradiction - as Aristotle noted.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that Freud does the very thing in creating these *coincidentia oppositorum*, in his construction of the mental apparatus, that he says is a phenomena of dreaming –which is an hallucination of a sort- and he accuses neurotics of doing, namely of avoiding mutual contradiction.<sup>6</sup>

Strachey translated Freud's terms *psyche* as "psyche" and "Seele" as "mind", but as Rycroft notes the two terms are synonymous as are "psychical and "mental"<sup>7</sup> Bettelheim argues that Freud's term "Seele" should be translated as soul not "mind" and accuses Strachey of both mistranslation and misrepresenting Freud's ideas.<sup>8</sup> Freud's terms the psychical apparatus and mental apparatus in fact refer to the mind's apparatus.

Freud regarded every thing mental as being unconscious. As he states: "Psycho-analysis regarded everything mental as being in the first place unconscious; the further quality of

---

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, op.cit, p.94-97, pp.107-108.

<sup>6</sup> S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.191.

<sup>7</sup> C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1995, p.103.

<sup>8</sup> B. Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul*. Chatto& Windus, 1983.

“consciousness” might also be present, or again it might be absent.” Freud inferred the unconscious from the clinical phenomena of resistance and his theory of repression<sup>9</sup>. Thus the reasons Freud had for the existence of the unconscious were empirical but Freud’s conception of the unconscious is conceptual.

The unconscious was inferred from consciousness to fill in the gaps of consciousness.<sup>10</sup> The unconscious is inferred from the clinical phenomena of resistance and transference.<sup>11</sup> Fantasies, wishes etc which are repressed in the unconscious only become conscious after the removal of some resistance.<sup>12</sup> Dynamic unconscious processes conform to the primary processes of thought while pre-conscious processes refer to the secondary processes of thought. The primary processes are displacement, condensation, with features of these processes being timelessness, freedom from contradiction and negation, replacement of external reality by psychical reality.<sup>13</sup>

Freud in the 1920s renamed the unconscious as the id. The notion of the unconscious amounts to the idea that there are mental processes that operate outside of consciousness and which play a role in a person’s behavior. The unconscious is a container of the repressed.<sup>14</sup> These repressed impulses can affect a person’s behavior adversely in the form of neuroses.<sup>15</sup> It is the source instinctual impulses that seek an object.<sup>16</sup> The

---

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p.353

<sup>10</sup> S. Freud, “The Unconscious”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.168.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp.167-173.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.183-189.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>14</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsycology*, Penguin, 1984, p.pp.362-363.

<sup>15</sup> S. Freud, “Repression”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp.159-161.

<sup>16</sup> S. Freud, *op.cit.*, pp.380-388.

unconscious though not containing the instincts<sup>17</sup> is nevertheless close to them and contains instinctual ideas, or representation.<sup>18</sup> The unconscious contains content that can never become conscious as well as content that being repressed can appear to consciousness once resistance to it is alleviated.<sup>19</sup>

This notion of the unconscious raises certain epistemological problems which make psychoanalysis meaningless as an objective discipline and its finding of wide universal use untenable. As we saw Freud noted that “Psycho-analysis regarded everything mental as being in the first place unconscious”. In *The Ego and the Id* he adopts Groddeck’s argument “that what we call our ego behaves essentially passively in life and that ... we are ‘lived’ by unknown and uncontrollable forces.”<sup>20</sup> On this point Freud states :

“ we feel no hesitation in finding a place for Groddeck’s discovery in the structure of science I propose to take it into account by calling the entity which starts out from system Pcpt (preconscious) and begins by being Pcs the ego and by following Groddeck in calling the other part of the mind into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were Ucs (unconscious) the id.”<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> S. Freud, “The Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.118.

<sup>18</sup> S. Freud, “The Unconscious”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.190.

<sup>19</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp.357-366.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p.362

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p.362



This account of Freud is a form of psychologism and in fact implies epistemological relativism. This has two epistemological consequences one weak and the other strong both of which undermine the objective truth of psychoanalysis. Firstly if conscious mental events are caused by unconscious mental events then all the products of the mind are due to unconscious processes and content then none of our feelings, thoughts - even our scientific and psychoanalytic thoughts - have any claim to objective truth as all these flow from their originators unconscious and are thus colored by the originator's own primary processes and personal mental dysfunction i.e. hysteria neuroses, narcissism, paranoid-schizoid, identifications, ego-object etc. Secondly in a strong sense if all our thoughts originate from our unconscious and each individual's unconscious content is somewhat unique then psychoanalysis is only then the product of Freud's mind and only relevant to his mind . It says more about his mind than any one else's. This point is amply verified in regard to Freud's views in regard to the formation of dreams. Silberer observed and noted the part played by the person watching or observing himself when dreaming or waking i.e. the dreamer's own perception of his dreaming or waking. Freud noted because he does not do this self-observation then he did not take it into account in his views on the formation of dreams. As he states " probably the reason why I overlooked it is because it does not play any great part in my own dreams ..."<sup>22</sup> Thus psychoanalysts who use his models are in fact making an epistemological mistake as these models can only be of use in regard to Freud's mind and no one else's if we accept Freud's presentation of the mind's apparatus. Rothstein captures the thrust of these epistemological problems when he notes each creator of a model offers an explanation of puzzling characteristics of human behavior. " Clearly each investigator finds his puzzle

---

<sup>22</sup> S Freud, "On Narcissism", in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.91.

out of his own psychological makeup; it is an important aspect of psychoanalysis that all theories are subject to psychoanalytic understanding and reconstruction.”<sup>23</sup> But he is wrong when he states “ any product of the human mind can be scrutinized psychoanalytically, but that does not affect the scientific validity of the model that has been constructed.”<sup>24</sup> He is wrong since epistemologically, as we have noted, these models or theories can have no objective truth, or validity, or universal usefulness since they are the products of a particular unconscious with its particular mental dysfunctions - as Freud states “ a healthy person, too, is virtually a neurotic”<sup>25</sup> - another *coincidentia oppositorum*. This epistemological problem leads to a paradox namely if Freud’s theory of the casual dependence of consciousness on the unconscious is correct then his theory must be incorrect. This is because Freud’s theory of the mind is in terms of his theory which in terms of his theory is determined by *his* unconscious content and processes. Thus unless Freud is an objective source, or epistemological ground, of truth then his theory can only be subjective to his personal mental process and thus cannot be a source of objective truth regarding the aetiology of other peoples consciousness – unless they have his exact psychological profile. Thus the paradox is: if the theory is true it must be false. This epistemological paradox generated by the concept of the unconscious makes psychoanalysis nothing more than a well disguised product of the psychoanalysts own mind. Thus epistemologically being more about the psychoanalyst’s own mind then we have to attach little weight to the models of the mind, the unconscious and its dynamics, illness aetiology etc all these being products of a particular mental profile and thus of questionable universal application. Thus due to the epistemological paradox any model of

---

<sup>23</sup> A. Rothstein, *Models of the Mind*, International Universities Press, 1985, p.17.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.17

the mind constructed from the notion of the unconscious will be a disguised, account of the psychoanalyst's own mind contaminated by his/her personal neuroses.

It should be born in mind that these epistemological problems about objective truth have an even greater problem apart from that due to the unconscious nature of our natures. This stem from Freud arguing that all psychological processes must in the long run be based upon somatic phenomena. Freud argues “ ... the fact cannot be long overlooked that psychological phenomena are to a high degree dependant upon somatic influences and on their side have the most powerful effect upon somatic processes.”<sup>26</sup> Now where the above products of our mind are dependent upon unconscious process this account of Freud's makes the products of our mind dependent upon our body more specifically our material brain. This would mean that all the products of our mind are due to organic causation and thus makes all our thoughts and feelings flow from the particular state of their possessor's body at a particular time. Epistemologically this means that nothing Freud, or any other psychoanalysts, said would be of relevance to any one else this undermines his models as these models then become only the product of his own particular organic constitution at any particular time. His modification of his models and theories thus only takes place in relation to his changing somatic disposition through time e.g. indigestion, cancer etc. Thus again the paradox is, if his theory is true it must be false; since it is the product of his own unique somatic profile and thus all his models, dynamics of the unconscious etc are due to his own unique somatic profile and thus only relevant to himself and thus of questionable universal usefulness.

---

<sup>25</sup> S. Freud, “Analytic Therapy” in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, p.510.

<sup>26</sup> S. Freud, “*Some elementary lessons on psycho-analysis*”, S.E, Vol. 23, 1940, p.283.

Freud constructed two models of the mind i.e. the mind's apparatus dealing with the dynamic unconscious. These models fall under what Freud called Metapsychology. These models try and account for the nature of repression and try to explain how repression works. Freud said of this Metapsychology that any part of it can be altered or changed without loss or regret once it proves inadequate.<sup>27</sup> The first model is what he called the topographical model – where a spatial model is used to localise the different psychological functions of unconscious, preconscious and consciousness – and a structural model – a model of the interrelation of structures such as Id, Ego, and Super-Ego. The structural model is reflected in the works of the ego psychologists Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein, the developmental analysis of Anna Freud and the work of Melanie Klein. It is to a significant extent still the major influence in psychoanalytic conceptualisations.<sup>28</sup> Though there are now questions raised in contemporary psychoanalysis as to the suitability of this model of the mind, such as those raised by Brenner.<sup>29</sup> Freud intended the structural model to replace the topographical model but nevertheless still used the topographical model to formulate some of his post structural model thoughts.<sup>30</sup> Gill claims that “in their basic conception these two sets of systems are not different as is sometimes assumed.”<sup>31</sup> On the other Arlow and Brenner claim that

---

<sup>27</sup> S. Freud, “An autobiographical study”, S.E, vol.20, 1925, p.32

<sup>28</sup> J. Sandler, A. Holder, C. Dare, A. Dreher, *Freud's Models of the Mind*, International University Press, 1997, p.184.

<sup>29</sup> C. Brenner, “The mind as conflict and compromise formation”, *J. Clin. Psychoanal.*, 1994, Vol. 3, pp. 473-488.

<sup>30</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.355.

<sup>31</sup> M.M. Gill, “Topographical and systems in Psychoanalytic Theory”, *Psychological Issues, Monograph 10*, International university Press, N.Y

“ the topographical and structural theories are neither compatible nor interchangeable”<sup>32</sup> Sandler et al claim on the other hand that “the topographical and structural models overlap in many respects and that one cannot entirely replace the other.”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless Sandler, et. al note that at the present there is no single all-embracing psychoanalytic theory.<sup>34</sup> In regard to Freud using both models Bateman & Holmes point out that psychoanalytic concepts are elastic and allow for theoretical contortions to occur.<sup>35</sup> Similarly they note that rather than new ideas superseding the old the new ideas are grafted onto the old.<sup>36</sup>

The topographical and structural models, amongst other things, were attempts, to account for the repressive and distorting process. Now as we shall see Freud’s attempt at a construction of the mental apparatus to account for this repression is a model that contain entities that violations of the laws of Aristotelian logic. We shall see that in the topographical model this entity is the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the censor and unconscious/conscious dichotomy of the mind. And in the structural model it is both this and the Ego which is a *coincidentia oppositorum*. In the jargon of analytic philosophy this coalescing of contradictories means that we get the result as G. Marshall states that Freud’s models “ demands a theory of mental functioning that makes it both intentional and involuntary. It is mediated by belief and desire as so is rational enough to be intentional but it often appears to be not under conscious control to be and so it seems

---

<sup>32</sup> J. Arlow & C. Brenner, *Psychoanalytic concepts and the Structural Theory*, International University Press, NY,1964

<sup>33</sup> J. Sandler, et.al., op. cit, p.187

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.167.

<sup>35</sup> A. Bateman & J. Holmes, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, NY, 1995, p.19

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

involuntary. Contradictions lurk.”<sup>37</sup> It is in this regard that Freud’s entities of *coincidentia oppositorum*, which violate the laws of Aristotelian logic, which make Aristotelian logic then discover all the paradoxes and contradictions in Freud’s models and theories; thus making them meaningless and useless and the unconscious as well. Freud did see all this but chose, based upon his clinical work, to shrug off and ignore it. As he states philosophers “ could not conceive of such an absurdity as the “unconscious mental” this idiosyncrasy of the philosophers could only be discarded with a shrug.”<sup>38</sup> Here Freud in accepting that the unconscious mental is a logical absurdity is doing exactly what he accuses neurotics of doing namely avoiding mutual contradiction.<sup>39</sup>

From 1897 to 1923 Freud developed the topographical model. In his earlier period Freud thought that neuroses was due to early sexual seduction and its repression. With the formulation of the topographical model the mental apparatus was constructed along the view of its functioning in harnessing the instinctual drives and wishes that represented them.<sup>40</sup> In the topographical model neurotic symptoms result from a compromise between the reality-orientated censorship and the unconscious drives. Symptoms represent a distortion of the unconscious wish, under the influence of censors that opposes the fulfillment of the wish.<sup>41</sup> Behavior and subjective experience are surface derivatives of instinctual wishes and drives from the unconscious after being modified by censors on

---

<sup>37</sup> G. Marshall , “How far down does the will go”, in M. Levine ed, *The Analytic Freud*, .Routledge, NY, 2000, p.36.

<sup>38</sup> S. Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, SE, Vol. 20, 1925, p.31

<sup>39</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.192.

<sup>40</sup> J. Sandler et al, op.cit, p.56.

<sup>41</sup> S. Freud, The paths to symptom-formation, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, pp.404-424.

their way to consciousness.<sup>42</sup> The forces from within came to play a greater role than the forces from with out.<sup>43</sup> The individual was seen as being mostly at the mercy of instinctual forces such as drives and wishes. These forces where seen as arising from the unconscious of the mental apparatus. The conflict in the mental apparatus arose between the drives of the unconscious conflicting with the self-preservative drives of consciousness.<sup>44</sup> Here we see conflict as arising between the unconscious and the conscious [ thus making the mind a *coincidentia oppositorum*]. In this regard Freud's mental apparatus was an explanation of how the drives of the unconscious are controlled or repressed from consciousness and the resulting consequences when they attempt to reach consciousness. This mental apparatus has been called the topographical model. Freud in outlining this model used the term metapsychological to refer to the presentation.<sup>45</sup>

Sandler notes that Freud attempted to describe in the topographical model "... the "topography" of the mind with emphasis on the psychological interrelationships and the interaction of qualitatively different strata of the apparatus."<sup>46</sup> The topographical model is made up of three systems: the unconscious, the preconscious and the conscious. Boundaries exist between these systems.<sup>47</sup> The system unconscious (Ucs) contents are dynamically unconscious, the system preconscious (Pcs) contents are preconscious and the system conscious (Cs) contents are conscious.<sup>48</sup> The nature of the Ucs has already

---

<sup>42</sup> J. Sandler et al op.cit, p.166.

<sup>43</sup> ibid., pp. 60.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.61.

<sup>45</sup> S. Freud, "The Unconscious", in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.184.

<sup>46</sup> J. Sandler et al, op.cit., p.63.

<sup>47</sup> S. Freud, "The Unconscious" in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp.167-223.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp.174-178.

been outlined above. What need to be outlined now is the nature of the preconscious and conscious and the mechanisms that stop or repress content from the Ucs reaching Cs.

Although the contents of the preconscious descriptively speaking, are unconscious, they are nevertheless capable of becoming conscious.<sup>49</sup> The workings of the Pcs operate on the secondary process and those of the Ucs the primary process.<sup>50</sup> Now though some preconscious content can freely enter consciousness other content cannot unless it is disguised in some form or some other content can be repressed into the Ucs before it reaches consciousness.<sup>51</sup> Freud noted that “we have arrived at the conclusion that repression is essentially a process affecting the ideas on the border between the systems Ucs and Pcs [ another *coincidentia oppositorum*].”<sup>52</sup> The mechanism that represses certain content is what Freud called the censor.<sup>53</sup> There is a censor between the Ucs and the Pcs as well as between the Pcs and the Cs.<sup>54</sup> Sandler et al make the important point that has been obscured and neglected in relevant psychoanalytic literature.

“that repression not only occurs at the transition from Unconscious to Preconscious system, but may equally well affect the content of the Preconscious itself, including derivatives of the system unconscious at some point in their development towards surface expression ... repression and the other mechanisms of defense do not constitute a static boundary or dam at the border of the Unconscious and Preconscious systems.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.175.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.190.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp.174-175

<sup>52</sup> ibid, p.183.



Wishes arising in the Unconscious are regarded as passing through the Preconscious on their way to surface expression, being transformed in the process of becoming “derivatives” of the unconscious. Such derivatives bear the stamp of preconscious mental functioning, but may be defended against at any point in their journey to the system Conscious (or even after they have entered that system, as when a conscious wish-fulfilling daydream is repressed) and may be relegated to deeper layers of the apparatus. In order to attain the system conscious (i.e. to achieve “discharge) the derivatives of the wish from the Unconscious must be sufficiently disguised so as to evade the censorship’s: we may thus assume the creation of successful derivatives of instinctual wish until one is formed that appears to be sufficiently innocuous to be allowed to proceed.”<sup>55</sup>

This censoring takes place outside consciousness. Now this censoring of instinctual wishes their derivatives and repressed ideas must involve the existence of an unconscious awareness in the Pcs. Now it is this censoring mechanism that in effect reduces this topographical model to meaninglessness and hence uselessness because it is a *coincidentia oppositorum* and thus paradox and contradiction must flow out of such an entity .

---

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 194-199.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp.194-199.

<sup>55</sup> J. Sandler et al *op.cit*, p.70.

Freud in *The Ego and the Id* notes that there are endless obscurities and difficulties in trying to derive neurosis from the conflict between the unconscious and conscious in this topographical model [ due to the *coincidentia oppositorum* of its nature]. As he states “ we end in endless obscurities and difficulties if we keep to our habitual forms of expression and try, for instance, to derive neurosis from conflict between the conscious and unconscious”<sup>56</sup> Sandler note that one of these difficulties was that the notion of a censor between the Ucs and Pcs “ led to the paradox that preconscious content included forces that were not simply “latent” but were, in fact, accessible to consciousness should attention be directed to them.”<sup>57</sup> Sandler goes on to note that to solve this paradox Freud introduced the concept of the second censor between the Pcs and the Cs.<sup>58</sup> Now all that this solution of the second censor did was to create a second paradox.

Freud, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, in talking about the dreamer and the meaning of his dream captures very clearly the paradox that was to arise in his notion of the second censor in his topographical model. Freud state that the dreamer “... does not know that he knows it [the meaning of his dream] and for that reason thinks he does not know it.”<sup>59</sup> This is the same central paradox of the second censor. Sartre states it as “ the censor was conscious [of] being conscious of the drive to be repressed but precisely in order not to be conscious of it.”<sup>60</sup> A similar paradox is that the conscious must be aware of what it wants to repress but at the same time unaware that it is aware of what it wants to repress. This must also be the same problem of the first censor between the Ucs and

---

<sup>56</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.356.

<sup>57</sup> J. Sandler et al, op.cit, p.156.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.

the Pcs. The conscious must inform the censor of what it wants repressed but at the same time be unaware that it knows what it wants repressed [ the problem due to its *coincidentia oppositorum* nature]. As Freud said above, in regard to the dreamer and his dream, the conscious does not know that it knows what it wants repressed and for that reason thinks it does not know it. The conscious then must be conscious of what is to be repressed it must be conscious of what has been pushed back under repression. Freud acknowledges that the conscious does know what it wants repressed when he states, "... we may conclude without hesitation that the amount of energy expended by the system Cs on repression ..."<sup>61</sup> Thus when Freud states that psychoanalysis is a method of making "... what is unconscious into what is conscious ..."<sup>62</sup> his model of the mind assumes that the conscious is aware of what is unconscious already as the conscious knows what it is repressing in the unconscious. Thus if the conscious is aware of what is being repressed then it is not repressed so then the Freud's explanation of mechanism of repression is useless. Sartre makes note that "no mechanistic theory of condensation or transference can explain these modifications by which the drive itself is affected for the description of the process of disguise implies a veiled appeal finality."<sup>63</sup>

It is instructive to note that Freud himself regarded the notion of Usc, Psc, Usc and censor as being incorrect. Freud when outlining his notions of the two halls, i.e. the

---

<sup>59</sup> S. Freud, "The Technique of Interpretation", *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, p.130

<sup>60</sup> J. P. Sartre *Being and Nothingness*, trans H. Barnes, Methuen & CO LTD, 1974, p.53.

<sup>61</sup> S. Freud, "The Unconscious" in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.188.

<sup>62</sup> S. Freud, " Fixation –The Unconscious" in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, p.321.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p.53.

unconscious and conscious with a watchman [censorship] between repressing instinctual impulses, claims that this model of the mental apparatus is incorrect. As he states “these ideas are both crude and fantastic and quite impermissible in a scientific account I know that they are crude: and more than that I know that they are incorrect.”<sup>64</sup>

Now though some contemporary psychoanalysts still use the topographical model,<sup>65</sup> and Anna Freud thought it useful,<sup>66</sup> its usefulness is undermined by the paradoxes it contains; thus making it meaningless as a model to understand the mind. As a model of the mind constructed to explain amongst other things the nature of repression it is its account of the mechanism of repression which undermines its usefulness both to explain repression and as an account of the mental apparatus. Freud saw the theoretical shortcomings of this model as was indicated above. This led Freud to try and devise a new theoretical formulation of the mind and its apparatus. As Sandler et al note this was brought about by the shortcoming in regard to the nature of the preconscious. As they state:

“ the problem of seeing the Preconscious as a highly organized system with some content inaccessible to consciousness, led to major theoretical difficulties. This was particularly so as the term “Preconscious” was also being used to refer to contents that were capable of entering consciousness freely. As the range of complexities and specificity of the defensive forces

---

<sup>64</sup> S. Freud, “Resistance and Repression”, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, p.337.

<sup>65</sup> A. Batman, & J. Holmes, op.cit, p.32

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.38.

described during the second phase [second censor] increased, the need to change the way in which they were understood became urgent.”<sup>67</sup>

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud sort to remedy these shortcomings by characterizing the mental apparatus as being made of three interrelating structural parts: the Id, the Ego [as we shall see a *coincidentia oppositorum*] and the Super-Ego. The structural model as A. Bateman and J. Holmes note is “... firmly imbedded within the instinct theory.”<sup>68</sup> The model sets out to explain how an individual’s personality structure in light of external reality adapts itself to the demands of instinctual wishes and repression’s. This structural model places more emphasis upon external reality than does the topographical model. As a consequence as A. Bateman & J.Holmes note “ the key issue clinically is not just whether the patient is conscious or unconscious of some aspect of himself, but whether what part of his mind holds sway: is the patient behaving and thinking according to primary processes [Id]; under the dictates of conscience [Super-Ego]; or adaptively [reality testing Ego/consciousness].”<sup>69</sup> The structural model was concerned with the vicissitudes of the instinctual drives, like the topographical but it placed more emphasis on the structures that delay and alter drive expression.<sup>70</sup>

In Freud’s structural model the Id corresponds to the Ucs.<sup>71</sup> Now though the Ucs does not coincide with the repressed nevertheless all that is repressed is Ucs.<sup>72</sup> Consciousness

---

<sup>67</sup> J. Sandler et al, op.cit, p.156.

<sup>68</sup> A. Bateman, J. Holmes op.cit, p.35.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36

<sup>70</sup> J. Sandler et al op.cit, p.166.

<sup>71</sup> S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, p.362.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p.35.

is the surface of the mental apparatus.<sup>73</sup> It is regarded as being the sense organ of the ego.<sup>74</sup> All perceptions from without –external reality- and within are from consciousness [Cs].<sup>75</sup> Freud notes that only a perception that was once conscious can become conscious.<sup>76</sup> The Super-Ego is the psychic representative of the parental authority figures of childhood which have been distorted in some way.<sup>77</sup> The Super-Ego is a differentiation within the Ego.<sup>78</sup> It crystallizes out of the ego as the person develops, as the ego crystallizes out of the id.<sup>79</sup> Freud faced with the clinical phenomena of guilt brought on in some cases by morals etc formulated the notion of the Super-Ego to account for this guilt or conscience.<sup>80</sup> This psychic representative thus is responsible for a persons unconscious guilt.<sup>81</sup> The Super-Ego is a persons conscience as well as the ideal derived through society and the parents.<sup>82</sup> The Ego is a structure that is under the influences of the Id and Super-Ego and consciousness. It is an entity that developed to cope with the demands of the pleasure seeking Id the restrictions of the external reality consciousness [its reality testing role] and the demands of the conscience of the Super-Ego.<sup>83</sup> The Ego faced with these conflicting demands uses its mechanisms of defense to send unwanted content into the Id as repressed content<sup>84</sup> as well as uses its problem-solving and synthetic capacity to deal with all these demands. The Ego “represents ... reason and common

---

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p.357

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, pp.364-365.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.357.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p.358.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 367-379.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p.367.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp.367-379.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, pp.365-366.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p.374.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp.367-379.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, pp.367-379.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.362-363.

sense, in contrast to the id which contains the passions.”<sup>85</sup> The Ego is not sharply separated from the Id as part of it is the Id, and thus unconscious . As Freud states“ a part of the ego, too and Heaven knows how important a part- may be Ucs, undoubtedly is Ucs And this Ucs belonging to the ego is not latent like the Pcs; for if it were it could not be activated without becoming conscious.”<sup>86</sup>

This characterization of Freud placed him with a problem which he was unable to resolve and from which he was thus bared from making any far reaching conclusions. His postulating a third Usc lead him into difficulties from which he had no solution. Because the unconscious now became an ambiguous concept with many meanings. As he states “ we find ourselves thus confronted by the necessity of postulating a third Ucs, which is not repressed, we must admit that the characteristic of being unconscious begins to lose significance for us. It becomes a quality which we can have many meanings, a quality which we are unable to make, as we should have hoped to do so, the basis of far-reaching and inevitable conclusions.”<sup>87</sup> Thus from the inferring of the unconscious from the phenomena of repression and it being a shibboleth of psychoanalysis it has become in *The Ego and the Id* an ambiguous concept leading to no great conclusions.

Nevertheless as the Ego is merged with the Ucs it is similarly not sharply separated from consciousness either as part of it is merged with the Pcpt- Cs. On these points Freud notes:

---

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.364.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.356.

“I propose to take into account by calling the entity which starts out from the system Pcpt and begins by being Pcs the ‘ego’ and ... on calling the other part of the mind into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were the Ucs, the ‘id’ ... the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by direct influence of the external world through the medium of the Pcpt-Cs.”<sup>88</sup>

Thus we see that the Ego as an entity is a *coincidentia oppositorum* - it simultaneously is unconscious and conscious. This is no more clearly seen when Freud states:

“we have [seen] that the ego is especially under the influence of perception [consciousness] and that broadly speaking perceptions may be said to have the same significance for the ego as the instincts have for the id. At the same time the ego is subject to the influence of the instincts, too, like the id of which it is we know only specially modified.”<sup>89</sup>

The ego uses the mechanisms of defense to repress and modify unacceptable unconscious wishes. The censorship is now no longer a barrier between different psychic parts of the mind it is in fact part of the ego itself. In this regard it can be seen that part of the ego is to protect consciousness from unpleasant content by evaluating and filtering unacceptable content.<sup>90</sup> It can do this by noticing anxiety the consciousness generates when

---

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p.356.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, pp.362-363

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p.380.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, pp.399-401.



unacceptable content is coming through.<sup>91</sup> Now here again we see the paradox of this *coincidentia oppositorum* of the Ego as we saw with regard to the censor in the topographical model. This is because it is both conscious and unconscious.

The paradox is the Ego must not know what it knows it is trying to repress. It must know what the conscious does not want to know about, in which case this part of it being merged with the consciousness then conscious must be aware of what it does not want to be aware of; but this must then defeat the purpose of the repressive defensive mechanisms. On the other hand, because part of the Ego is merged with the consciousness then it must be the Ucs part of the Ego doing the repressing, but then how does it know what the Cs wants to be repressed or avoided.

In a later work *Anxiety and Instinctual life* Freud in offering a more detailed account of how repression comes about completely alters his structural model in trying to avoid the consequences that the ego must be conscious of what it represses. In offering this model of repression Freud adds a fourth component to his structural model. Freud argues that the ego by an experimental thinking "... anticipates the satisfaction of the unquestionable instinctual impulse and permits it to bring about the reproduction of the unpleasurable feelings [anxiety] at the beginning of the feared situation of danger. With this the automatism of the pleasure-unpleasure principle is brought into operation and now carries out the repression of the dangerous instinctual impulse."<sup>92</sup> Now where does this experimental thinking take place? The ego knows what the forbidden instinctual impulse is, since it experimentally thinks on it, so therefore it cannot be unconscious to the ego.

---

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p.399.

The answer Freud gives is in my opinion an attempt by Freud to avoid the contradiction mentioned above i.e. that the ego is conscious of what it is also unconscious of. But this attempt fails because what he does is in fact muddy the waters of his structural account in order to avoid the contradiction by introducing a fourth component into his structural model. Freud says “ first I must admit that I have tried to translate into the language of normal thinking what must in fact be a process that is neither conscious nor preconscious taking place between quota of energy in some unimaginable substratum ... for it cannot be done in any other way.”<sup>93</sup> This unimaginable substratum is not conscious, not preconscious and not the id, or super-ego. Freud's use of Aristotelian logic to construct his account keeps making him introduce more and more subdivision to try and avoid the embedded contradictions of his *coincidentia oppositorum*. This attempt would just throw Freud onto a path of infinite regresses such that he would have to subdivide his unimaginable substratum as well since his problem is to explain what and how the elements of the *coincidentia oppositorum* are mediated. This can not be done using Aristotelian logic since a *coincidentia oppositorum* violates this logic in the first place this logic will only keep on discovering other contradictions.

Thus in conclusion we have seen what the mind is like when the concept psychoanalytic unconscious is applied to it. We have seen how this unconscious brings about at least two forms of mental apparatus: the topographical and structural. Freud as we saw stated that psychoanalysis was a method of making the unconscious conscious. We have seen that in his models the conscious is always aware of what is unconscious because the conscious is

---

<sup>92</sup> S .Freud, “Anxiety and Instinctual life” in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1991, p.122.

that which represses unwanted content. This creates a paradox for Freud's models, derived from the term unconscious, in that the conscious is aware, because it does the repressing, of what it is unaware of, because the repressed is pushed into the unconscious. We have seen how the unconscious brings about a major epistemological problem for psychoanalysis namely that psychoanalytic theories are only relevant to their originator. We have also seen how Freud's later characterizations of the unconscious make it an ambiguous concept which as he acknowledges makes its usefulness for any great conclusions in doubt. We have also seen that Freud kept making entities *coincidentia oppositorum* in his models. When these throw up contradictions and paradox he just tries to solve the problem by going deeper into the mind and creating other *coincidentia oppositorum*. In the topographical model there is the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the unconscious / conscious censor. But here the paradoxes and contradictions just again flow out with the result that the censor does not know what it knows and the conscious is not aware of what it is aware of repressing. To solve problem like this Freud constructed the structural model here again with the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the unconscious/ conscious and the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the unconscious/conscious Ego. But once again the paradoxes and contradictions flow out such as the Ego is not aware of what it is aware of repressing. All this makes Freud's models derived from his concept of the unconscious meaningless and useless from a logical point of view because they violate the very laws of Aristotelian logic that are used to interpret them and construct them. This does not say Freud's models and the unconscious are not meaningful and useful from some other logic's point of view. What it means is that so long as we use Aristotelian logic is used to interpret and construct them then they will collapse into

---

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p.122.

meaninglessness. Some other logic may be used on the *coincidentia oppositorum* entities [just like quantum logic is used in the atomic realm because Aristotelian logic is not suitable] contained in the models and some meaning usefulness may be obtained. All absurdities it has been seen stem from the central idea of Freud that of the unconscious mental. He was told by philosophers way back then, which he shrugged of, that this was a self-contradictory idea and his subsequent formulations have just shown that they were right all along.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arlow, J,& Brenner. C, *Psychoanalytic concepts and the Structural Theory*, International University Press, NY,1964.

Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Penguin, 1998.

Bateman. A, & Holmes. J, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, NY, 1995.

Bettelheim. B, *Freud and Man's Soul*. Chatto& Windus.1967.

Brenner. C, "The mind as conflict and compromise formation", *J. Clin . Psychoanal*, 1994, Vol. 3, pp473-488.

Clark, P, Wright, C, *Mind Psychoanalysis and Science*, Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Gill. M.M, "Topographical and systems in Psychoanalytic Theory", *Psychological Issues, Monograph 10*, International university Press, N.Y.

Izenberg. G. N, *The Existentialist Critique of Freud*, Princeton University Press, NJ, 1976

Freud. S, "An autobiographical study", S E, vol.20, 1925.

“Some elementary lessons on psycho-analysis”, S.E, Vol., 23, 1940.

“The paths to symptom-formation”, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982 pp.404-424.

“Fixation –The Unconscious” in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, pp.313-326.

“Resistance and Repression”, in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, pp.327-343.

“Analytic Therapy” in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982, pp.510-519..

“The Technique of Interpretation”, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1982 pp.129-142.

“The Unconscious”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp159-223.

“The Ego and the Id”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp.339-409.

“Repression”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984 ,pp.139-159.

“The Instincts and their Vicissitudes”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp. 105-139.

“On Narcissism”, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin, 1984, pp.59-99.

“Anxiety and Instinctual life” in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1991, pp.113-145.

Marshall. G, “How far down does the will go”, in M. Levine ed, *The Analytic Freud*, .Routledge, NY, pp.36-48, 2000.

Rothstein, A, *Models of the Mind*, International Universities Press, 1985.

Rycroft, C, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin, 1995.

Sandler, J. Holder, A, .Dare, C, Dreher, A, *Freud's Models of the Mind*, International University Press, 1997.

Sartre, J. P *Being and Nothingness*, trans H. Barnes, Methuen & CO LTD, 1974.

Smith, D.L, *Freud's Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Kluwer Academic Publishers. London, 1999.

Wollheim, R, Hopkins, J., *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Wolman,. B, *The Unconscious Mind*, Prentice Hill, N.J, 1968.

