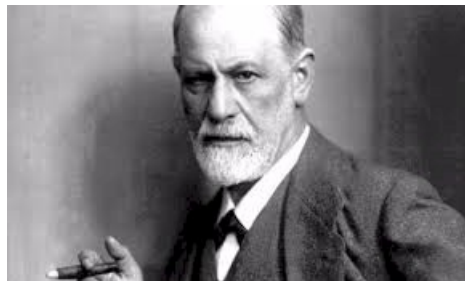


## **The Myth of the Unconscious Mind**

*Therapy Breakthrough: Why some psychotherapies work better than others.* Michael R. Edelstein, Richard K. Kujoth and David Ramsay Steele.

The book covers the old Freudian psychotherapy and the new Cognitive Behaviour Therapy [CBT] that has largely replaced it over the last 60 years. The main difference seems to be that, bit by bit and in their own innovative way, during the last 60 years the various followers of Freud have tended to abandon the Unconscious Mind idea, or meme, such that many authors and psychotherapists today think it is an idea that is no longer useful. Some still do retain it, as they do the importance of childhood experience, but few narrow Freudians hold views that would have been typical of them in 1930s. Many broad Freudians might not now call themselves Freudian at all. From the mid-1950s the various followers of Freud and emerging post Freudians have tended to abandon the idea of the Unconscious Mind. I agree with these therapists and with the authors of this book that there is no Unconscious Mind.



### **Sigmund Freud, theorist of the Unconscious Mind**

The authors say that Freud made a distinction between fantasy, or conscious whimsy, and phantasy that never could be other than the unknown wishes of the Unconscious Mind. He did not always follow up on this distinction but his disciples, like Melanie Klein, did. This distinction between fantasy and phantasy allows the authors to correctly say that all such phantasy is mere fantasy on the part of any psychoanalyst (p194) who still thinks that it exists. Here and below, I use a similar distinction between what is usually unconscious, like the workings of the autonomic nervous system [ANS], and the capitalised fantasy of the Unconscious Mind. We are always aware of our own

thoughts, though many of them, indeed all of them that are on the periphery of our mind, as Michael Polanyi might put it, will be tacit, fleeting and very easy to forget. Thoughts monitoring our habits or skills are rather like that, but unlike the authors, who do say they are unconscious, these thoughts that monitor our skills seem quite conscious, as far as I can see.

Although there was some psychotherapy in the USA before the arrival of Freud – indeed Benjamin Rush practised it even before 1776, as well as many years after that date – Freud’ ideas and techniques soon conquered the culture of psychotherapy in the 1920s following his visit there. Soon the Unconscious Mind meme ruled the psychotherapist roost such that the whole practise was very nearly uniform in being pristine orthodox Freudians for about twenty years up to 1945. After then, the Freudian orthodoxy began to become fragmented with a general gradual drift towards what we today would label CBT, which the authors call the new psychotherapy.

Early on, the authors contrast the old with the new paradigms of psychotherapy. Today we would find various mixtures: from the few old Freudians, to various post-Freudians, and onto many partial or even complete CBT users, but with many others still retaining some version of the old ideas. The old therapy held that our childhood was very important. The new therapy tends to hold that any emotional problems that we may have is more to do with our very recent, or even our current thinking or outlook (p3). Usually, particular dysfunctional thoughts relate to a particular problem area rather than any explicit philosophy or general outlook that we may have.

Basically CBT recommends clear thinking. It revives the old Stoic idea that it is not so much the world that upsets us as the way we react to it. A leading advocate of CBT, Albert Ellis, held that we make unrealistic demands on ourselves that we “must” do this or that, or even that the world “must” be as we expect. He favours replacing this with a less rigid preference rather than the absolute imperative “must” that we mistakenly attempt to maintain. Other CBT users have not always followed Ellis on his idea of unrealistic “musts”.



### **Albert Ellis, leading advocate of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy**

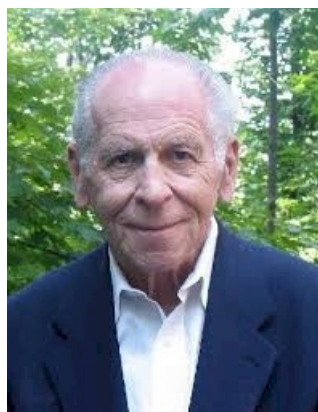
There has also been a rise in the use of drugs to varying degrees in the last 60 years. The authors do not take a stance against that, but they do hold that drugs need to go with, rather than instead of, CBT therapy. The authors favour dropping psychoanalysis altogether but that has not yet been done by many psychotherapists. Almost none of them still practice psychotherapy as it was in the 1930s heyday but the shedding of the pristine narrow Freudian outlook as been gradual.

Both the old and the new remain techniques rather than wholesale ways of thought. The old paradigm holds that our Unconscious Mind is our own worst enemy, so it is near the adage that we are all our own worst enemies. The new paradigm tends to hold that there is no Unconscious Mind, even though brain activity, like most physiological activity will be unconscious, in that it has nothing to do with the mind at all. The old outlook holds that emotional problems spring from repressed memories, the new that what we have forgotten is more or less inactive as an influence on whatever we do. The old that dreams can show us what we no longer know about ourselves and can tap into the Unconscious Mind. The new tends to hold the dreams are less important than our current waking ideas about things in relation to any problems that we may cause ourselves by ordinary error or delusion [i.e. false belief in the ordinary sense rather than any fixed false belief; fixed belief is as much of a myth as is the Unconscious Mind but, sadly, the authors tend to retain that myth, especially in their Paris example]. This contrasts with the old Freudian idea of some perverse self-opposition; or is the Unconscious to be taken as second agent in the mind?

Both the old and the new paradigms tend to think we cause problems for ourselves but the old one tends almost to think that there are two minds. The new that there is just one mind that may err in regard to the problems

causing concern. The old outlook recommends that we should let our anger out, for to bottle it up inside might lead to later problems. The new outlook of CBT holds that Aristotle was right in that we often learn by doing. To practice anger will merely aid it on its way to becoming our second nature, or a habit. Thus practise will make us prone to being angry more often rather than getting it off our chest (p3). The old outlook holds that once we have relived the old problem causing traumatic childhood repressions then the problems they caused will be solved. There is a bit of truth-likeness here as whenever we see error, as error, we do automatically correct it. We normally tacitly eliminate the errors as soon as we ever realise them and we do not need to be told to do this. The CBT reply is that we do not need to recall the distant past to see error but we can have errors in our current thinking, where they are usually not one whit repressed in any way but rather all too conscious, even if not yet seen as error. Our emotional problems arise from what we openly think currently or in the very recent past, rather than from a merely imagined mythical Unconscious enemy within (p4) that was formed in early childhood.

The authors are a bit Politically Correct [PC] in that they prefer to say “she” to “he”, maybe on the PC grounds of making up for all those decades where authors, of both sexes, used to put “he” instead of “she” (p4ff]. PC usually ironically offends whilst pretending to be out to dodge offence. It is often intolerance under the guise of pretending to be tolerant. It has been said that the therapists are usually male whilst the clients are usually female so that might be the reason ‘she’ is used over ‘he’.



### **Thomas Szasz, who thought mental illness was a myth**

The authors report that the mass media have not noticed the emergence of CBT to replace the old Freudian outlook (p5). This might be because there was not a single mass sea change that might have been hard to

overlook. Rather there were a series of sporadic changes over 60 years, with the odd rapid conversion here and there. Even authors like the late Thomas Szasz, whom we might have expected to be up to date in those things, tended, rather surprisingly, to overlook the rise of CBT almost completely (p7) despite continuing as an active psychotherapist. He never wrote about his practical ideas on therapy but he did once have a debate with Albert Ellis, so he certainly knew about CBT (p8). New leaders in pop psychology or management leadership, like Anthony Robbins, are more up to date, though a few like Wayne Dyer, have passed through CBT on their way to fashionable mysticism (p8) after plagiarising many of Ellis's ideas (p227). Most of the media maybe overlook the rise of CBT owing to its usage being eclectic or mixed, or sporadic, and the fact that it arose over 60 years rather than there ever being an overall clean break (p9). The remaining psychodynamic therapists nowadays rarely claim to be Freudian as the group of pristine orthodox Freudians has now become very tiny. The authors distinguish between narrow Freudianism of the 1930s and the broad Freudianism, that has dropped many of Freud's ideas apart from the Unconscious and the importance of early childhood. Only a few therapists remain narrowly Freudian but the authors point out that broad Freudianism is still very influential.

Though the authors hint early on that college psychology never did adopt Freud, or even any psychotherapy, they do not explicitly say so till later on (p236). It would have been better to say it in the opening pages as it might have made things clearer to their readers.

This academic neglect of psychotherapy may well be because college psychology sees itself as a science rather than being anything that is 'applied' in any way. Any form of therapy might look to be more like technology than science proper. In its quest to be a proper science, college psychology has tended to latch onto biology about as much as it decently can do so. But the odd bod, like the late Hans Eysenck, did have a few ideas that the authors might classify as mainly new paradigm. He did pay attention to what those he was out to help said and he did tend to change their current behaviour without worrying much about the Unconscious Mind or their childhood experiences. His son, Michael, is listed as belonging to the new CBT outlook (p272).

The authors set out to explain why the old Freudian ideas were wrong and rightly think that CTB is on roughly the right lines, even if it may still need to make more progress. They feel that the common idea that drugs are enough without any psychotherapy is mistaken too, but they do not

thereby rule out drugs entirely, as it is fashionable to do. They admit that drugs will become ever better designed but they add, so will CBT.

However, the idea of the Unconscious Mind does look to be quite false. If this is right, there has been some progress over the last 60 years as, during that time, CBT has been replacing the Freudian outlook. But while narrow Freudianism is now almost defunct, broad Freudianism continues (p10). Some CBT ideas are adopted by the broad Freudians even if they credit their old theory with the results. They retain the Unconscious Mind. They might even deny that they are Freudians at all, but they retain ideas like the importance of childhood and other broad Freudian ideas. They are often called Psychodynamic therapists. They will have dropped many of the pristine ideas of psychoanalysis, such as the Oedipus Complex but still retained some of Freud's basic ideas.

One contrast is that the client, or patient, who needs the psychotherapy never gets to clearly comprehend the Freudian outlook, especially the Unconscious Mind that remains forever hidden, or mysterious. In contrast, CBT is simple and up front and tends to free the client whereas psychoanalysis tends to reinforce the client as a client in the pristine serf-like dependent sense (p12). The authors do adopt this word "client", as do many companies, but have they looked it up in the dictionary? My dictionary says it means a vassal, a dependent, or a hanger on.

The old outlook, similar to the *Bible*, tends to distract the searcher for solutions to life problems with ideas tangential to their actual problems. Their problems might vanish owing to the mere passing of time, or by being crowded out by new preoccupations, rather than by direct dealing with the problems, as the more germane CBT does. "Several years in therapy would be perfectly normal"(p26) but during that time many personal problems that we have will simply ebb away in any case. So a lot of credit will have been given to psychotherapy by the fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*.

As parts of the new CBT outlook have been pragmatically adopted by nearly all surviving versions of psychotherapy, some of the success of even the very oldest surviving versions might be down to the bits of CBT that have been adopted (p17) say the authors. But it might also be down to displacement by other things, or by the mere passing of time, as well as by sheer placebo, a faithful ally of all medicine.

Aspects of Buddhism do not seem alien to CBT but even more is it the case that CBT is rather like the old Stoic ideas of the Greeks, and their

Roman epigones some 2000 years ago, especially Epictetus (p24). The Stoics were often slaves, so they were clients in the pristine sense, but they still learnt that we had to solve our own problems (p25). One of them even became a Roman Emperor. There were a lot of such Stoic philosophers. Some of them were also pioneers in modern logic, not rediscovered until the nineteenth century by Frege. So CBT comes from a home of outstanding theoretical success.



### **Epictetus was a Greek sage and Stoic philosopher**

CBT is not just a talking cure but also requires what some Christians call repentance, or reform of our old behaviour, or habits, as well as in our ways of thought. As the authors put it, CBT also involves homework exercises for the client that can be done “by herself” away from the therapist (p25). They later add that it might even be seen like maths training. Though this reform may take a while, it is not often going to be years and usually, it takes no more than about twelve forty-five-minute sessions (p28) with some home practice in between.

People often feel they should be upset at least now and again, if they are to be normal at all, when bad things occur. If they suffer an ordeal they feel they might suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] (p29) or when a beloved friend, or sibling, or parent dies, then many people today even feel it shows that we never even loved the departed at all if we do not openly demonstrate our emotions. This is a mere myth, for it certainly does not follow. In such indulgence, we may merely just needlessly prolong our sorrow to no useful end, for we cannot thereby aid the dead beloved (p31). Richard Kujoth, one of the authors, was thought to be inept when he suggested that we might be better not to be so

disturbed by the death of a beloved person as it hardly aids anyone to indulge in such flamboyant emotion (p33). Emotion is not inside people and so pent up if it is not released, as Freudianism suggested. Rather, it is created by our current ideas as part of an overall experience.

The old idea of depression saw anger as being directed against oneself. If the anger is released then the depression will vanish. But this is not how anger is (p34). It is not stored up inside but rather exists only to the extent that it is felt or produced at the moment. We may be disposed to anger, just like we may be disposed to believe this or that, but both need some current activity to actually exist. Mere disposition can only be a factor in the final phenomenon of either anger or belief. The authors feel that belief is not like anger in that respect, but they do hold that our memories are. They are right on anger and memories but not on belief. To be merely disposed to anger is not to be actually angry (p34). Anger flows from foolish current thought, which we overlook as such, (p35) such as when we think that things should not be as we can see that they actually are. We may cool anger or prevent it, if we more realistically accept things as they are, rather than protesting at things, especially thinking they just should/"must" be different. Some who indulge temporarily think that their anger is actually a useful form of magic, to be used instead of more realistically doing something practical about things. Our expressing any emotion tends to reinforce it (p36). We tend to build it into a habit. To cure anger, we need to see it as foolish. In nearly every case, it will be based on unrealistic ideas, a sort of magical thinking that reality can respond to our angry wishes, as it might do if used by the gods, whose thoughts or feelings, presumably, have more impact on reality. If ever we think clearly, then our anger will dissolve. Clearer thought is likely to be more accurate in reflecting reality (p46).

The authors warn the reader of the book that merely reading about psychotherapy will no more allow one to benefit from it than will watching people exercising cause one to lose weight (p40). But it will aid an understanding of the different sorts of therapy. If the description given of CBT in the book is right, then indulging in Stoic-like clear thinking will yield some of the benefits of it in the way that some physical exercise might aid us to lose a little weight. We may need to both shed our delusions on the one hand and develop skills that deal more realistically with our particular problems on the other (p46).

David Burns has two ideas of fortune telling: assuming a known fixed future and mind reading, which tends to assume that others are thinking



the worst about things. Both might be attempting to prematurely settle matters on the downside to gain a relief from more realistic or open uncertainty, but clearer thought might get us to resolve the uncertainty by checking up instead (p52).

Viktor Frankl had the idea of paradoxical intention, where one might deliberately attempt to bring about a fault that may be feared, like a stammer, for in this deliberate attempt the fear we have of it might well diminish (p64). This looks like the inverse of the celebrated meme of the law of reversed effort, which holds that when the will and the imagination clash, then the will tends to lose out. If we wilfully reject something like smoking, or wilfully keep to a diet, then the imagination might aid us to think that smoking just the one cigarette or eating just the one slice of cake is very tempting. Usually, we do not stop at just one. This is why diets with no limiting rules, like the Atkins diet, can do better as they remove this imaginative temptation by allowing us to eat as much as we want.

A lot of rather foolish ideas that Freud adopted were also largely adopted by common sense, in the conventional wisdom sense, with the result that they do not seem as silly as they otherwise might (p69).

Freud did not invent the idea of the Unconscious Mind (p72) for many authors, e.g. Nietzsche, had it beforehand and he even got it from Schopenhauer. Both philosophers had the idea before Freud was born. Those authors are greatly over-rated as truth finders but, like Freud, they did not do such a bad job at producing good literature, even if all three failed as truth seekers. We are told that Freud added many false ideas now associated with the Unconscious Mind and that may well be the case, but the two authors that I cite here as forerunners did have very clearly false ideas about it too. They are also two authors that Freud read, at least to some extent. Indeed, Freud wrote that Nietzsche's premonitions and insights often agree in the most amazing manner with the laborious results of psychoanalysis. But the reader of this book will get a more accurate account of how truly laborious Freud was in those pursuits.

Popular ideas are a bit more realistic. Often people seem to assume a false but reasonably realistic idea, such that if we sleep on a problem, in mathematics say, then it might well be clearer the next day or when we look at the problem again later (p72; also p207-8). This is because our brain is not completely unlike our muscles, which we break down in heavy exercise but will then rebuild stronger to cope with the task better after a day or two, usually to be strong enough to cope with the fresh

work that we need to do. Similarly, a new tough problem in mathematics, especially when we are learning along a well beaten path, as school pupils do, might lead us to cut new dendrites in the brain that, after a day or two, might well lead to a better trained mind. The improved mind may well see the problem as way easier, or more familiar, but this dendritic growth will be a mindless physiological development, like muscle development, rather than one in an unknown, or absurdly unaware, Unconscious Mind. As Sartre said, the Unconscious Mind looks to be intrinsically contradictory, but as the authors repeat, many developments in the brain are quite unconscious but not thereby to do with a rival mind of any sort. The brain itself is not a mind, though the working brain may well be what gives rise to consciousness.

The authors say that Freud changed his mind in 1897 from holding that all had sexual experiences in their first six years to the more realistic, if still false meme, that we all tended to merely imagine that something like that has happened to us. But Freud never openly admitted to this amendment till many years, even decades, later. It held that we all only wanted to be seduced in our first six years rather than his earlier idea that it actually happened to us (p73). This is far more realistic. It better fits the actual fact that such early sex only rarely happens. But even merely wanting it, according to Freud, was only in the Unconscious Mind, so there was no chance of us ever getting to know this without the benefit of prolonged and rather expensive sessions in psychoanalysis.

The authors note a distinction between phantasy and fantasy such that the former is only of the Unconscious but of the latter we will be quite aware, even if others never are. This infant desire for sex is a phantasy that we cannot ever quite recall. Freud requires us all to begin with male minds such that we all suffer from the Oedipus Complex, but girls later develop a female mind. [This myth tends ironically to be the reverse of the later testosterone washing in the womb that, according to modern biology, makes the male]. This idea of the later female was made a sacred dogma of psychoanalysis such that anyone questioning it would be expelled as not a proper psychoanalyst (p73). The two sexes diverge at about the age of five when boys fear castration whilst girls experience, at least in the Unconscious, penis envy (p74). This tends to make girls feel inferior.

Imagine a man who says that he never wanted to kill his father or to run off with his mother, as he usually prefers younger females. This man must be resisting the truth, so he must be in some sort of trouble (p74) for he will certainly be in denial of Freudian theory. But any conscious plans to replace the father as the mother's lover that he might confess to, if ever

he was that eccentric in life, would not relate to psychoanalysis at all. For it all needs not only to be in the Unconscious Mind but also to be a mere wish that we never experience in an aware way, even in our first six years of life (p75). It is held to be only an Unconscious experience.

Psychoanalysis became very popular in the USA, though it was a country that Freud despised (p78). Popular movies like Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945) helped to popularise it (p79). It became part of folklore or common cultural knowledge in the way that most people know that vampires hate daylight. Any denial of this was evidence that Freud was right. Freud knew that all his female patients fell in love with him (p81) but, like Mandy Rice Davis, he fully expected that they would deny it if ever they were asked, for they would, wouldn't they?

However, though psychoanalysis did well in psychiatry and in wider popular culture, it never did so well in academic psychology (p83) that was dominated by behaviourism. It had a better run in the colleges in literature courses than in psychology courses, which is apt as Freud's books are not so bad as literature. Similarly Schopenhauer, who greatly influenced Freud, though himself greatly influenced by other philosophers like Kant and Plato, is way more like JRR Tolkien in his literary output. More than most philosophers, Schopenhauer tends to abandon the aim of mere mundane truth, but he writes very clearly.



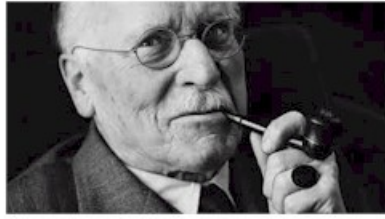
### **Arthur Schopenhauer was an influence on Freud**

As a method of treating depression, psychoanalysis all too often gets things exactly wrong as with the idea that depression is pent up anger and the solution is to get the person to let the anger out. Depression is rather the idea that the world, or things in general, are worthless. Anger usually arises from things not going as smoothly as we expected in a particular project, so there is not likely to be any anger in the depressed person to let out (p83).

It is still common sense to look for agreement, but Karl Popper in the twentieth century (p91) saw that tests may not refute a theory even if it is false. The mere passing of tests is no indication that the theory is true, as any number of ideas may seem to confirm almost any theory. Way fewer ideas might provide one that refutes it. As refutation narrows in on germane testing, we would do better to attempt to use evidence to refute than to confirm. However, a failure to refute does not mean the theory is actually true, so we always need to retain the rather odd Popperian duty to continue, indefinitely, to try to refute our pet theories, just in case they might be false. This vital aspect of Popper is still alien to common sense.

Popper saw that Einstein had a different outlook from Freudianism, Adlerism and Marxism in that he did not bother with mere confirmation but rather tested his ideas by attempted refutation. We would be more to the point to ask what difference it would make to the world if the theory were false rather than asking if we can see how the theory might be true (p92). Sidney Hook used to ask the psychoanalysts how we might know if a child lacked the Oedipus Complex. He put that question to them for over the forty years that he paid attention to them. He asked what an adult who lacked the Unconscious desire in the first six years might be like (p95) but he got no answer on this over all that time. Instead of answering, the Freudians rather thought that Hook was a bit twisted for even asking that question (p96).

Whenever psychoanalysts disagreed with Freud they tended to be expelled from his movement. Soon both Adler and Jung were thrown out and they each set up their own movement. Both retained the Unconscious Mind but both revised their ideas about it. Most people concerned overlooked that their two widely distinct conclusions seemed to be just as if there was no Unconscious Mind at all (p96). All three paradigms had plenty of confirmations but if any one of them were true the other two would have to be false. They did often contradict each other (p96), and there was always the possibility that all three of them might be false. How would we know? It was not like in chemistry or physics, where experiments needed to be reproduced by other scientists, for that was not needed in psychoanalysts (p96). In science, an experiment gets nowhere near a physics textbook until it has been repeated many times (p97). But the free association of psychoanalysis can lead to any number of different results (p98) as it is all rather arbitrary. It is the input of the psychoanalyst that determines the conclusion rather than the discovered congruence of the assumptions made with the external world that we get in normal science.



### **Adler and Jung both quarrelled with Freud**

Freud set the emerging psychotherapy movement back by his 1909 visit to the USA with Jung and Ferenczi. The likes of William James and Josiah Royce were developing a form of psychotherapy that was way ahead of psychoanalysis in being germane to anyone's actual problems (p114). Freud began a fashion that wasted some fifty years in the normal progress of psychotherapy by his wild goose chase into his revised version of Greek mythology. It was mainly his bogus idea of the Unconscious Mind that allowed the wild goose chase to go unchecked, or even go unnoticed as such.

Freud tended to be cultish by falling out with those who disagreed with him. He began with Dr Josef Breuer who would not agree with the sexual basis of neurosis that Freud had assumed. He rejected Breuer for not agreeing, only to take up with Dr Wilhelm Fliess instead. But he soon rejected Fliess for not fully agreeing too. In each case he retained many of the ideas that the rejected men had contributed as part of their joint outlook (p115). In addition to rejecting his former friends, Freud also held that they were mentally ill so that he did not need to deal with them seriously afterwards, or even to speak to them at all. He tended to do the same with later rejected followers, saying that Adler had insane ambition (p117). Similarly with Wilhelm Sketel (p118) from whom he retained some ideas on dream interpretation (p119).

For years, Carl Jung was due to take over after Freud, but gradually Jung developed his own ideas, one of which was that the mind was the collective Unconscious (p121) external to the body, rather as Plato held before rejecting it in his old age, along with the meme of the soul and even his Forms. Jung also took an interest in Gnosticism, which is also a rather Platonic paradigm. Jung's version of depth psychology is today more patronised, or endorsed, by people than is Freud's outlook, but it is no more useful as a technical psychotherapy (p123). Adler is the most realistic of the big three as he alone took notice of what the patents said as they meant it, rather than using it as mere cues to parts of their imposed psychoanalytic drama (p117).

Indeed, Adler was never a complete Freudian (p124). He went on to reject the basic myth of the Unconscious Mind entirely but he still retained the major idea of Freud of the vital importance of early childhood.

Recent studies, such as those of Judith Rich Harris, have suggested that how our parents bring us up does not matter very much to how we turn out as adults (p135). Peer groups in our pre-teens, and teens, seem to be a bigger influence than do our parents (p135). In any case, we soon very often feel to be different from how we were when we were young. But even if we do not, the influence of experience from decades ago is not likely to restrict our fresh thought today. We are free to re-think. Any influence we have from earlier decades will be to do with our recent quite conscious affirmations of it rather than it relating back to our infancy. Still less will it relate to the non-experience of our Unconscious Mind back then, as Freud oddly held, and as he attempted to superimpose onto his patients rather than learning from his clinical experience.

Neurology in the last thirty years has relaxed its central dogma of fixed brain cells and the idea that any attempt at late training is futile. No longer is it thought that we become rather set in our ways about the age of thirty. Instead they today hold that we have a more plastic brain, capable of being reset even quite late in life. Few today would hold it futile to train in mathematics very late in life, though Thomas Hobbes did give us an early seventeenth century example of fairly successful late training beginning in his fifties, even if he was not truly better than the best mathematicians in the world, as he tended to think, after this rather successful late training. The idea that it is hopeless to re-think after the age of thirty, which Keynes expresses in the final page of his over-estimated 1936 book, is as false as his supposedly new economic theory that the book introduced. That this is not a more common experience for most of us is owing to our desire rather than to natural limitations, for, as Dr Johnson said, we tend to use the excuse that we are too young right up till we can use the excuse that we are too old, but both are mere excuses rather than good reasons.

In 1923, Freud innovated the id, the ego and the superego where all three were held to have both conscious and Unconscious aspects (p130). This new theory was more realistic, as it related to common experience for we often do feel that others feel the same as we do, for example (p131).

Carl Rogers has a person centred therapy (p136) but he usually shuns saying anything by way of instruction (p137). Rather, in the spirit of Socrates who insisted that he knew nothing, he leaves it to the patients to sort things out for themselves, as he merely aims to draw the ideas of the patient out, or to assist in their self-actualisation (p138). The authors say it could be the nearest thing in psychotherapy to a placebo (p138) but all medicine is aided by similar confidence.

The authors say that with existentialist psychotherapy there is a flat contradiction between the notion of no prior essence and self-actualisation (p140). This is the case if we follow Sartre, but not so with Heidegger or Jaspers whom Sartre thought he was at one with. Both disowned the idea of existence preceding essence in the immediate wake of Sartre's famous 1945 lecture. Heidegger, in particular, thought there was a set historically unique authentic self that we would seek out if ever we are to ever truly care; if we shun that task to merely conform to convention then we will be inauthentic.

The authors note that academic psychology never adopted psychoanalysis as they had instead adopted behaviourism. Academics looked rather at conditioned learning (p145) as well as linking up with biology, so that college psychology might be accepted as a science better, just as Pavlov was accepted as physiological science. It even won the Nobel Prize. Conditioned learning uses aversion therapy that associates the pleasure we might be indulging in too much, like alcohol, with an electric shock to discourage it. Sometimes, and more humanely, the patient was asked to imagine an unpleasant thing that might thereby be associated with it (p146) and this might be seen as less sadistic than the shocking alternative. The authors say that it has not been very effective, so it is not now often used.



**Joseph Wolpe, behavioural psychologist who treated phobias**

Joseph Wolpe, a medical officer in the South African army, found that just talking about the phobias they had rarely got affected soldiers to shed them. He favoured behaviour therapy so he attempted to get the patients

to relax whilst, by degrees, thinking of things similar to the phobias. Finally, the patients thought about the phobias, thus learning to be more relaxed about things that they had earlier feared (p146). This showed that the pristine experience of learning the phobias did not need to be recalled and, maybe, the Unconscious Mind was not involved (p146). Learning a new association was enough. But it did involve the conscious cognitive mind and the patient's imagination. It worked well for phobias, but less well for depression, as it still tended to ignore the beliefs of the patients that was the main cause of depression. By the 1950s, many were converging from the failure of the earlier therapy to pay more attention to whatever the patient thought was the case (p147). Both within and without psychoanalysis, there was a tendency for critics and reformers towards looking at how the patients felt at the moment, or currently. Therapy was ready for a breakthrough.

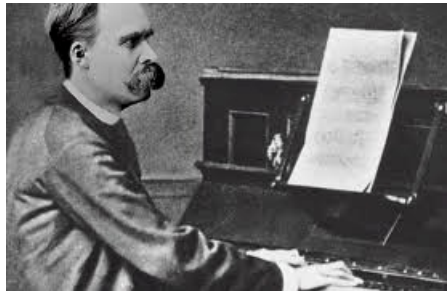
Since the 1970s, many have begun to think that Freud might be dishonest. We now know that he was habitually inventive in both his research and in his reporting of those laboriously earned case results (p149). Some critics have blamed this habit of dishonesty onto the use of cocaine that Freud indulged in and that he even recommended to his fiancée, as well as to his patients (p152). Freud had first thought that the best idea was that all neurotics had experienced sexual encounters in childhood. Later he realised that it was better to hold that such instances were merely imagined in the Unconscious wishes in all people and that the neurotics had not quite successfully repressed them as normal people did.

Freud made this change, from the actual experience of neurotics to the imagined experience of all people, to his ideas in 1897. It was important as it led to psychoanalysis (p153). Jeffrey Masson in his book *The Assault on Truth* (1984) held that Freud was thereby covering up the near universal fact of the molestation of children. This idea delighted many feminists but it was just as hopelessly wrong as was Freud (p153). Freud was merely assuming both of those ideas for the sake of his developing theory (p154) but he never held that it was the parents who thus abused their children. He even had this theory of infantile sex before he thought up the Oedipus Complex (p154). On the old idea that Freud was honestly reporting the cases that he had laboriously worked on then this change in the patients clinical testimony occurring neatly in 1897 would be remarkable. All reported abuse beforehand but none afterwards might then seem a bit odd (p155). However, the revision was imposed on the evidence by the theory rather than being empirically found by Freud in the clinic. Freud was interpreting the patient all along in terms of his theory rather than merely following what they actually said. This change



of theory never was based on what they ever said to him (p156). That the cases he reported were ever clinical, or discovered at the bedside, which is the pristine sense of what is clinical means. It springs from what medicine did at the bedside in hospitals in France after 1789. Freud was never empirically clinical in that sense, though he did introduce the famous couch.

How far was Freud deluded? (p157) How far did he believe what he said? Or was he just a liar? The authors feel he must have known what he said was false in the ordinary mundane sense (p158). But they tend to overlook that, owing to his use of the new sophisticated ideas of truth, like Nietzsche's, (which Freud was so very keen on) the truth is not so much to do with the vulgar everyday honesty. Rather the truth is to do with the superior myths that we find useful, that work for us, or that merely cheer us up, which as the late Richard Rorty noted, was somewhat similar to the pragmatists of the USA. So Freud could be proud of his will to power. He would not see that as backward, or corrupt, no more than Nietzsche did, but quite the contrary, he was rejecting the vulgar or common idea of the truth. The fact that psychoanalysis was not vulgar, or not using the mundane idea of the truth that relates only to mere facts, as the rabble do, was hardly something that a superior person, like Freud, would ever be ashamed about.



### **Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas on the truth influenced Freud**

We are not aware of many things that go on in the brain but we are always aware of our mind, for the mind is just the name we give to what we are aware of. We can call anything that we are not aware of, that goes on in our body, unconscious but it is not likely to ever be a rival agent. Oddly, Freud's idea fits the pristine schizophrenia idea of being in two minds, with the Unconscious Mind as a hostile second agent, but nowadays most books on that topic of schizophrenia disown the two minds idea in the opening pages. As Szasz rightly says, the psychiatrists retain the term as a blanket term for many different symptoms. They are

fond of the mere word, for some reason or other. They do not say that we have two minds.

The authors feel that most of our habitual or skilled behaviour is unconscious (p185) but that looks a bit exaggerated to me. We do monitor our skilled or habitual behaviour. We usually need not only to be awake, but also often, to pay our full attention to our skills. It is almost automatic, I agree, but never quite so. It needs some waking input or attention. But we can often focus on other things when walking, or working at tasks we are skilled in. But even such tasks are never quite automatic, like breathing is, or any other function of the autonomic nervous system [ANS] is. However, the authors write at length as if they feel it is quite the same.

This idea that we type or swim without thinking at all, once we have mastered touch-typing or swimming, (p186) is somewhat similar to thinking that we dream unconsciously simply because we cannot often recall our dreams later. There always is an actual conscious input, even if it is tacit.

The authors similarly conflate knowledge with belief. Knowledge is in the disposition but belief simply needs some current conscious affirmation, which always constitutes some revision or a loose tacit testing. So, out of mind, out of belief too. We are disposed to believe this or that but we only finally believe whatever we do believe because it seems true at the current time we think it is true. That can only last a moment before the next belief or some slight revision appears, the result of us being merely awake. Beliefs are used up about as rapidly as we use up an intake of fresh air. We then need to make a fresh assumption, even if we retain the earlier content almost entirely, or even entirely, in the aftermath of the next belief. Our idea of how things are *now* needs to complement any disposition, or mere bias, that we may have. “We all know many thousands of facts that we are not currently thinking about” (p187) but we have no such beliefs out of our consciousness or outside our minds. It may seem that we store facts in our memory like old photos but with memories, if not quite with beliefs, the authors do realise that is a delusion. But they fail to realise that beliefs, like recall, also need some current fresh input. But knowledge is in our disposition. We might rightly say that we knew it all along even if we fail to recall it when we needed to, in some examination for example.

Freud uses the idea that all we “know” that what we cannot immediately recall is in the Unconscious Mind to try to get this bogus idea home as a

clear reality. He makes a distinction between the Unconscious Mind and the preconscious for the latter is in the vastly bigger Unconscious Mind that we mostly have no access to at all. But we can sometimes recall this supposed preconscious subset (p187) even if we often have mental blocks with it. Repression causes both, holds Freud (p188). It may not be linked to anything unpleasant that we can see as such, but that we cannot see the cause will be owing to repression too. Freud held that most ideas were Unconscious (p189) but otherwise the Unconscious ideas were just like the conscious ideas that we are aware that we have.

Some people might suppose that a modern calculator contains the answers we get out of it whenever we use it, instead of it producing them in response to the keys that we press. They might think that it is the calculator machine that locates the complete answer in its artificial memory (p190). Similarly, when we recall that Paris is the capital of France, but no sooner, we will then reproduce, or become aware that Paris is the capital of France. Oddly, the authors say that after they say this about the calculator: “Knowledge, like belief, is a disposition” (p190). Neither seems to be quite the case. As the calculator example tends to suggest, what is displayed depends on current input rather than mere disposition to freshly produce. That which complements the disposition decides what is displayed, so fresh stimulus matters more to any actual belief than merely the latent capacity, or bias, or what is stored in a fixed way already, in the person concerned.

Moreover, with memory it is common to take time to recall, though we nearly always have a rough idea of what we are attempting to recall, and we more often do recall immediately, but beliefs, by contrast, are always immediate, though subject to change if thought to be wrong. They are basically a check up of our immediate environment as regards to its safety, and the like, at any current moment. Belief is always some reconsideration, or a check on reality as it currently is; it is always revised if not always actually amended.

Paris has been the capital of France for decades but English speakers have altered Peking to Beijing relatively recently, and few people will miss that change of name if you ask them what is the capital of China is today. Had the name of Paris been changed recently they would not have missed that either. What it was called in 1950 is not one iota germane to what we believe today.

The normal human mind revises, or even errs, way more than any normal calculator ever will. But then the authors know that the mind is not like a

calculator (p191). They know that memory requires current input, which is what the calculator example is used by them to emphasise. What is cognitive is never a simple repetition, as we often get with the ANS, that is usually unconscious, and not one whit of the mind, but certainly of the brain, most of which seems to be free of ideas: indeed there are no unconscious ideas (p192). But all beliefs are to do with currently thought ideas too, though the authors do not seem to realise that fact. Beliefs are similar to their description of memories, created to fit current usage.

Fresh data is always sought whenever we think, be this in recall or in what we think is the case (p192). But we often feel, as when we think that Paris is still the capital of France, that there is no fresh relevant data in many particular cases. Sometimes that is right. To revise is not thereby to amend the contents. But it is to seek to amend them. To think at all involves some revision of what the world is like, even if it is only our immediate world. To believe is always to slightly test. It is to come to a slightly fresh conclusion. Thus when we say we have believed things for ages, that is not literally true. As one breath of air can last for no more than a moment, so is it with actual physical belief. When we say we have believed in some fact, or quasi-fact, for years, this suggests that we have checked it over many times but repeatedly thought it to be true over the time we say that we have believed it. It has passed the slight momentary tacit tests of normal belief provided by the production of actually fresh ephemeral beliefs, tests done about as often as we take in fresh air, usually by use of our five senses, but done of abstract ideas we have of what is true or not also. Our belief is the idea that the content is true, not the mere reproduction of the content itself. So how things are now is what matters to current belief most, as nearly any content can change in status. We can reproduce the mere content just as well once we feel quite sure that it is false. So we do reconsider all things quite automatically.

Dreams are quite conscious (p194) though we usually forget them rather rapidly, as they do not relate so well to real objects as do to our waking experiences. They lack natural mnemonics that aids most of what we usually do recall, as most of what we do recall is by recognition. As we tend to forget most dreams, so we tend to underestimate how aware we are whenever we do experience a dream. We similarly forget most of our off-focus thinking in what we habitually do but, contrary to what the authors argue in their faulty account of habit, we are presumably still quite aware at the time when we do act. Habit may well sometimes require less attention, but it always does require at least some attention.

“We do have unconscious dispositions to have thoughts, memories, and emotions” (p195) say the authors. But experience needs to complement them to become ideas, though they do, for some reason, want to deny that beliefs need to be conscious ideas or current, automatic, fully aware assumptions of what is true.

The authors adopt an idea of logic as relating only to language rather than also to viable options when they say that logic “alone doesn’t give us any information about what may or may not happen” (p197). But logic is about valid options as well as about inferences between propositions. If we can prove that something is impossible then we are not talking about mere language, or what we can coherently say, but rather about realistic external options. Logic is sometimes called proof theory. Logic is better at ruling things out than at discovering fresh things though. But it does not only rule out statements or theories. It tells us about external reality too, even if only negatively.

One of Freud’s ideas is the rather common one that people cannot stand too much reality. But “there is no such thing as repression” (p198). This idea that people cannot tolerate reality seems to be the opposite of the truth, which is that what most people find very hard to stand much of is what they take to be sheer stupidity. False ideas rather than true ideas tend to upset them. Many people openly tell us that they just cannot tolerate fools.

Reality is automatically sought after by our innate belief system, so what looks to people to be stupid, be that truly so or not, is thereby automatically rejected. Even the physics experts testify that a lot of modern physics seems to be quite absurd and thus it is not so easy for most people to tolerate. However, we do believe the most unwelcome news, like the death of beloved friends, near relatives or our parents, in a jiffy, though we may then lament the bad news for decades. We do not usually repress such bad news, if any of us have ever done so at all. The sentence “I can’t believe it!” usually, ironically, reports that we plainly do believe it.

The book only considers declarative long-term memory, as that is the only kind that involves the Unconscious Mind meme. It does not thereby deny other kinds of memory (p203). There maybe a Pavlovian association that affects us unwittingly that we have forgotten (p204) but the authors say that is not an indication of an Unconscious Mind. Our skills are not all in the mind. We do forget the ideas that were involved in learning them.

Most Pavlovian associations soon fade, of course. Training can result in associations that soon ebb. The saying “use it or lose it” is often applied to such past training. Anyway, what is truly unconscious has no mind (p205). Our skills are physiologically stored. They soon become completely tacit.

But the authors do not deny that future word usage might take a lot of the clearness out of Sartre’s repeated statement that the Unconscious Mind is a contradiction in terms. However, they note that it has not happened yet; despite the popularity of the Freudian outlook over the last hundred years or so, and the use of the Unconscious Mind meme by other paradigms like Artificial Intelligence, philosophers like Daniel Dennett, and others. Current usage still makes Sartre’s criticism look pertinent.



**Richard Hulbeck analysed Albert Ellis**

The chief reformer of psychotherapy in the last sixty or so years is, suggest the authors (p211), Albert Ellis. He realised that if you face up to what you fear then usually the fear will often ebb. He found this to be the case as a young man with both his shyness with females and with public speaking too (p213). The more he tried facing up to the fear, by talking to the females or attempting to speak, the more it ebbed. He had a degree in business administration (212) but found he enjoyed helping people solve their personal problems, so he took an MA in clinical psychology at Columbia University in 1941. Then he began a five-year PhD course in psychology (p214). He joined psychoanalysis and was analysed by Richard Hulbeck. He applied some ideas he found in the books of Carl Rogers but thought that more, rather than less, direction was needed, so he opposed Rogers (p214). By 1953, he set out to reform psychoanalysis but this eventually ended up by his abandoning it (p216). The new ideas were called Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy [REBT] (p220) after beginning as Rational Emotive Therapy (p219). The addition of behaviour emphasised the need to act or reform, as well as think, in order to solve problems. We needed to correct the errors as well as to spot

them. He learnt quite a bit from philosophy, especially from the Stoics, who tacitly held a version of Hume's later explicit is/ought distinction. The Stoics saw that we had some choice in response to what we did about any factual situation. The mere facts could not dictate what we ought to do.

Ellis also took a somewhat pragmatic idea of the facts, questioning whether the analysis was factual if our ideas did not work for us (p216). He did not give a proper theoretical account of REBT, despite writing 85 books (p217). He adopted the idea of Epictetus: "What upsets people is not things themselves but their judgement about things" (p218). He thought we had an innate tendency to adopt unrealistic expectations of what we feel we just "must" do, or how reality should be, which tends to cause emotional problems for us whenever we see that our expectations are unrealistic, regardless of any childhood experience that we might ever have had, or not have had (p220). Ellis lived to see the books of David Rowe and Judith Harris, of the 1990s, that seriously challenged the traditional psychoanalytic paradigm about the importance of childhood to our current emotional problems (p221).

The ABC causation where Ellis saw emotional problems emerge is in the activating event [A], the belief or value [B] that has the problem as a consequence [C] (p221). To solve the problem we need to dispute the belief or value [D], to attempt to find a more effective value or to eliminate the false belief – if indeed it is false [E]. That should lead to a new feeling or behaviour [F] (p222). Ellis realised that how we feel depends on what we are thinking, or what we were recently thinking. Life may not be what we make it, or things may never be as we might ideally wish, but reasonable satisfaction, or general contentment, seemed to him to be well within the reach of nearly all of us (or even of all of us), by sheer clear thinking. I think he got it basically right there. As Spinoza once said, to understand all is to forgive all, for if we think clearly we will usually not want to reject the actual world as it is; though we may wish to realistically reform it.

That is not to deny that, in a few cases, suicide, or truly rejecting the world, might be the best option, such as if we face prolonged unavoidable painful cancer with only very unsatisfactory chemotherapy, for example. But such examples are not very common. Even if we decide on suicide today, we still may make the best of our last few hours, as Socrates is reported to have done.

The authors criticise positive thinking (p224) and self-esteem (p225). To say things are good, when they seem to be bad, looks to be merely futile. Albert Ellis opposed the recently fashionable self-esteem movement that similarly attempted to boost only esteem rather than slowly building it up by increasingly successful performance. Ellis held that it was even an error to attempt to rate oneself at all. It is almost like searching for a likely disappointment. We need to accept ourselves as we are, but that is not quite unconditional, even if Ellis says that it is. It is rather just a bias towards oneself. Similarly, the mother who says she loves her son unconditionally has already stated the condition that he is her son. Unconditional love is a myth.

High self-esteem can lead people into becoming thugs (p227) People can become impatient with those they think are inferior to them if they do not get the respect that is thought to be their due from the supposed inferiors. Psychoanalysis has held this to be really, or secretly, low self-esteem but independent researchers have not seen much sign of this behind the appearance of high esteem, say the authors. Instead, the high self-esteem of the thugs looks like it is one of the causes that have led them to abuse other people (p227).

Aaron Beck tended to follow in the steps of Ellis after a common start in psychoanalysis, though his books tend to be a bit more academic (p229) and he lead Ellis when Ellis started. But there is one thing he has not adopted. He tends to be a bit less inclined to instruct than does Ellis, who mainly sees the adoption of the idea that we *must* do this or that, or that the world should not be as it is, as a major, if not the main, cause of emotional problems. Ellis even calls such ideas “musts”. His advice is to drop them. We need to replace the “musts” with the milder idea that we would ideally like to do this or that, but we always need to drop the idea that we absolutely must do it or that things should be different, usually easier, than they are.

This “must” fault is the idea that we have a God-like power to say what reality should be like, with hubris expectations that reality will obey us, as it might obey the thought of God. With humans this often leads to a nemesis of emotional problems when reality fails to conform to what we feel must be done. We need to dodge any “must” meme, but if we do drift into such unrealistic expectations then we need to cut our losses by accepting ourselves as we are, and things as they are, rather than clinging to the hubris “must” meme. Beck tends not to adopt the “must” idea (p233). Instead, Beck looked at the whole of the person’s outlook rather than targeting only the unrealistic particular demands around the “must”



that is usually the cause of the emotional problem (p234). This tends to make therapy with REBT shorter and more to the point than the wider therapy of Beck.

Psychology and psychotherapy have been as distinct as science and technology. Yet there has been a rise in cognitive ideas in both since 1950 and Martin Seligman is unusual in playing a part in both, against behaviourism in the colleges and against psychoanalysis in psychotherapy (p237). In working with dogs in 1965, Seligman noticed that the dogs often gave up on training rather than bothering to learn along behaviourist lines. Then the trainers usually just found other more willing dogs to train. Seligman saw that some humans also learn to give up. Pessimists see poor results as permanent whilst optimists see them as a temporary hitch (p238). He began his own paradigm of positive psychology and also of positive psychotherapy. He aimed to look at how things go right rather than at how they go wrong, for he thought there was more than enough of the latter in psychology already (p239).

CBT therapists in general hold that they can aid people to eliminate errors, or dysfunctional behaviour that gives rise to emotional problems without affecting their basic normal outlook and beliefs apart from the few beliefs that they relate directly to the problem. This is a bit like losing weight or training to solve maths problems (p244).

The authors give a good exposition of Popper's philosophy in the appendix (p255ff).

I think the authors are right when they, more or less, say that the Unconscious Mind is a complete myth.