The Explanatory Value of the Unconscious

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It is common knowledge that the notion of the unconscious is an essential part of psychoanalytic theory. In recent years, however, Arthur Pap and A. C. MacIntyre have argued that Freud's theory of the unconscious is not explanatory. But a close examination of Pap's and MacIntyre's arguments reveals that they are invalid. If one wishes to show that the theory of the unconscious is unexplanatory, different arguments will be necessary.

Without wishing to defend psychoanalysis in general or the explanatory value of the unconscious in particular, I will argue that the arguments presented by Pap and MacIntyre are invalid and that if one wishes to show that the theory of the unconscious is not explanatory, different arguments will have to be presented.

I

1. Pap's Account of the Unconscious. Arthur Pap has suggested that "the unconscious" should be construed as a dispositional term. On Pap's view, dispositional terms are characteristic of the "pre-theoretical" stage of science. He believes that, usually, to ascribe a disposition is to issue a "promissory note" for the future discovery of a causal generalization which, together with relevant singular statements, i.e., statements of initial conditions, would explain an observed regularity. In making dispositional statements in the pre-theoretical stage of science one anticipates the discovery of a causal law, but one does not assert the existence of such a law. Hence, one can not explain some given phenomenon by reference to dispositional states; one only promises that the phenomenon will be explained when some relevant causal law is found.

In relation to psychoanalysis, to ascribe an unconscious dislike to a person is,
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according to Pap, to ascribe a dispositional state. Hence, it is a mistake to suppose that an item of a person's behavior is causally explained when one says that it expresses such and such unconscious dislike of another person; rather one is issuing a promissory note to the effect that the first person has some intrinsic property K, e.g., traumatic sexual experience in infancy, such that any person with the same intrinsic property K would probably react similarly in similar circumstances. The term "unconscious" cannot appear in any genuine causal explanation because its function is only to mark, not to solve, a problem of explanation. It marks the lack of some causal generalization. When such a generalization is found, this generalization will be used in explaining the behavior. At such a time the word "unconscious" will have no point; the promise will be fulfilled.

Pap is opposed to construing the unconscious as a hypothetical construct e.g., as subatomic particles in physics are usually construed, for two basic reasons:

(1) Pap maintains that psychoanalysis cannot be legitimately compared with physics. He argues:

A methodological justification of psychoanalysis by comparison with theoretical physics is out of place, because psychoanalysis is too young a science still to be in a position to lay a precise and solid theoretical foundation for its rough empirical generalizations.4

(2) Pap argues that uncritical acceptance of talk about unconscious mental events as hypothetical constructs arises from "a tacit objectification of psychological language." Pap seems to mean by this that it is logically impossible for a desire or a wish to occur without the subject of the wish or desire being aware of it when he introspects. This is because desires and wishes "are just the sort of 'private' states that are meant by the old-fashioned expression 'state of consciousness.'"5

There is then only an apparent similarity between an atom and an unconscious wish construed as a hypothetical construct. It is not part of the meaning of "atom," for example, that it cannot be seen; it is just a contingent fact i.e., the impossibility involved in not seeing an atom is just an empirical impossibility. But part of the meaning of the term "wish," for example, as it is ordinarily used, is the possibility of introspective awareness. So, to speak of unconscious wishes as "efficacious mental states" is not like speaking of an "invisible atom" but rather like speaking of a "shapeless cube."

2. "Promissory Note" Analysis. Whatever merits Pap's "dispositional" analysis of the unconscious may have, his analysis so warps the original and present day function of the concept of the unconscious that it is scarcely recognizable.

In the first place, when psychoanalysts talk about unconscious dislike, they are not "promising" the discovery of causal laws e.g., laws connecting childhood traumatic sexual experiences and adult personality; psychoanalysts are asserting that there are such laws. To be sure, psychoanalysts may be mistaken in their claims, and they would be surely hard-pressed to state these laws in any precise way, but this is not the point at issue. Thus Hartmann, in Die Grundlagen der Psychoanalyse, maintains that psycho-

4 Pap, op. cit., p. 290.
5 Ibid.
analysis deals with causal laws, and argues: "We have explained a process when we have succeeded in discovering by what law it is governed." \(^6\)

In the second place, psychoanalytic statements about the unconscious not only do not "promise" the discovery of causal laws, but on the contrary they purport to explain the causal laws that they assert, rightly or wrongly, to exist. Indeed, the whole purpose of the unconscious is to provide the explanatory connecting link between certain spatially and temporally separated, but supposedly lawfully related, phenomena e.g., certain childhood and adult behavior—relations that remains unintelligible otherwise. MacIntyre is surely correct when he says that in psychoanalysis:

> There is first the claim that it is a correlation between certain types of childhood experience and certain types of adult behaviour. Psychology owes an immeasurable debt to Freud for having suggested so clearly the existence of such correlations, but there is nothing peculiarly "Freudian" about them. Freud argues that a thrifty, somewhat ill-tempered attitude is the result in early life of the wrong sort of potting training or that adult attitudes to one's wife are in some cases correlated with childhood attitudes to one's mother. \(^7\)

And he goes on to say:

> So far as theory is concerned, Freud pins everything upon a ... claim, that the reason why childhood events are correlated with adult experience ... is because memories have been repressed, have been operative in some form or other in the unconscious and have manifested themselves in overt behaviour. \(^8\)

Pap is aware of the fact that psychoanalysts make causal assertions about the relation between childhood experiences and adult behavior, and that these laws can be used in explanations. Pap remarks:

> Thus psychoanalysts often succeed in tracing neurotic adult behavior to certain kinds traumatic experience in childhood. Also Freud's famous case of the bride's disappointment during her wedding night leading to a strange form of compulsive behavior falls into this category. Here we have genetic laws, of an imperfect probabilistic character. ... \(^9\)

He goes on to say: "They [the genetic laws] can legitimately be used for probabilistic and in principle confirmable explanations of abnormal behavior patterns." \(^10\) But in the next breath Pap makes the remarkable comment:

> What I am suggesting is that the word "unconscious" cannot appear in any genuine causal explanation, whether rigorously deterministic or probabilistic, whether in terms of the postulates of a rigorous theory of human behavior or, more modestly, in terms of pragmatically reliable empirical generalizations, because its function is only to mark, not to solve, a problem of explanation. \(^11\)

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\(^7\) MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 67.


In the very examples of "genetic laws" that Pap cites, however, the unconscious is supposed to serve as the connecting link between certain experiences in childhood and adult personality, and also between certain experiences on the bride’s wedding night and subsequent compulsive behavior. Pap is clearly mistaken, therefore, when he maintains that the "characteristically psychoanalytic meaning" of "unconscious" "seems to me to be dispositional [i.e., a promissory note for a causal law]; or more accurately, this is the meaning that remains after it is divested of misleading metaphorical connotations." For, as we have seen, the notion of the unconscious is not, in fact, a promissory note for a genetic law, but rather a conceptual link that purports to connect events that psychoanalysts rightly or wrongly assert to be lawfully related, e.g., it purports to connect certain childhood sexual experiences and certain adult personality. So, after the "misleading metaphorical connotation" is removed, we end up with a hypothetical construct that purports to explain a genetic law, not a promissory note for these genetic laws.

Pap’s two arguments against a hypothetical construct interpretation have very little force.

3. **Argument From Immaturity.** It would be foolish to deny the obvious fact that physics is an established and precise science and that psychoanalysis is not. But the inference that Pap seems to make from this undeniable fact, namely the inference that no hypothetical constructs are permissible in an immature science, is quite another matter. There is no reason why an immature science cannot use hypothetical constructs to explain and relate "the rough generalizations" of which Pap speaks; nor is there any reason why hypothetical constructs cannot be used in a theory to explain "genetic laws of an imperfect probabilistic character." To be sure, the hypothesis of the unconscious may be an illegitimate one e.g., because it cannot be disconfirmed; or, it may turn out that the genetic laws that psychoanalysts assert and that the unconscious is supposed to explain may be disconfirmed or may be so vaguely stated that they are virtually impossible to disconfirm. Nonetheless, the illegitimacy of the notion of the unconscious cannot be because it purports to be a hypothetical construct in an immature science.

Again, although psychoanalysis is not “in a position to lay a precise, and solid theoretical foundation” this does not mean that no theoretical foundation should be attempted. Pap seems to imply at times that hypothetical constructs are found only in advanced sciences. But only a cursory examination of the history of science will show this to be false. What Pap must mean is that hypothetical constructs, although they have in fact been introduced into immature sciences, ought not to be. But we can find no justification for this contention.

4. **Argument From Ordinary Usage.** One wonders at times what philosophers who appeal to "ordinary meaning" in their arguments mean by "ordinary meaning." Pap’s claim that the possibility of introspective awareness of a wish is part of the ordinary meaning of “wish” is a case in point. Now a look at the dictionary does not substantiate Pap’s contention, for the terms "awareness," "consciousness" and so

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13 In ancient astronomy, to name an obvious example, "spheres" where hypothetical constructs that were used in explanation. See T. S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1959).
on do not appear in the definition of the term “wish.” So, if a dictionary definition is what is meant by the “ordinary meaning” of “wish,” then we find that the expression “unconscious wish” is not analogous to “shapeless cube” as Pap has claimed, for the latter expression is, in fact, a contradiction according to the dictionary.\textsuperscript{14}

If we are to accept the actual verbal practices of people as determining the ordinary meaning of an expression then, by Pap’s own admission, the expressions “unconscious wish” or “unconscious hatred” are commonly used to refer to some efficacious mental states of an individual. Pap has admitted that “a good many people,” “some professional psychologists” and “some educated laymen” use expressions such as “He really hates him, though he is not aware of it; he is not lying when he denies this emotion, he is just unconsciously repressing it.”\textsuperscript{15} But, according to Pap, these people are somehow in error because this use of the expression makes no “sense” in the “ordinary sense” of “wish.” One begins to wonder if Pap is the one who has the extraordinary meaning of “wish,” or if he is not just stipulating, as he did when he excluded hypothetical constructs from immature sciences.

To be perfectly accurate, Pap does not claim that the actual awareness of e.g., hatred, is part of the ordinary meaning of “hatred,” but rather that the potential awareness of the hatred is, i.e., if one were to introspect, then one would be aware of the hatred. Pap says that “awareness of one’s hatred” of somebody denotes “an act of introspection which need not, and often does not, accompany the introspectable state.” This means that “one can hate a person at a time when, oblivious of the enemy, one is in a relaxed, even loving mood,” so that “emotions and desires may occur without any [actual] awareness of them.”\textsuperscript{16} But Pap insists that the possibility of the introspective awareness is part of the meaning of “hatred.”

So, as far as one can tell, Pap believes that there are some mental states of a person of which the person is aware and some mental states of the person of which the person is not aware, but of which he can become aware by ordinary introspection. It is remarkable how much Pap’s account corresponds to Freud’s description of the mental systems Cs (consciousness) and Pcs (pre-consciousness) in his essay \textit{The Unconscious}.

But the fact that it [an idea] so belongs [to the system Cs] does not unequivocally determine its relation to consciousness. It is not yet conscious, but it is certainly capable of entering consciousness, according to J. Breuer’s expression, that is, it can now, without any special resistance and given certain conditions, become the object of consciousness. In consideration of this capacity to become conscious we also call the system Cs the “preconscious.”\textsuperscript{17}

For the sake of argument, let us assume that Pap is correct in maintaining that “part of the ordinary meaning” of, e.g., “hatred,” is either that the hatred is conscious or is capable of becoming conscious by means of ordinary introspection. But surely this does not exclude Freud from extending the meaning of the term, for the process of redefining the ordinary meaning of terms is a respectable part of the scientific enterprise. Thus Hempel has noted:

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{O.E.D.}, 1933, XII, pp. 196-197; II, p. 1233.
\textsuperscript{15} Pap, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 294.
In its exploratory pretheoretical research, science will often have to avail itself of the vocabulary of conversational language ... but in the course of its growth it has to modify its conceptual apparatus so as to enhance the theoretical import of the resulting system ... without being hampered by the consideration of preserving and explicating the prescientific usage of conventional terms taken over into its vocabulary.\(^\text{18}\)

If we accept Pap's contention about the ordinary meaning of words such as "wish" and "hatred," then we can construe Freud simply as having extended the meaning of these words to include mental states one becomes aware of after therapy. In other words, instead of allowing mental state terms to refer only to (1) states of the mind which we are actually conscious of and (2) states of the mind which we are potentially conscious of by means of ordinary introspection, Freud has allowed mental state terms to refer also to (3) states of the mind which we are potentially conscious of by means of the techniques of psychoanalysis.\(^\text{19}\) Understood in this way, it is clear that Freud was at most extending ordinary usage. Thus John Wisdom has maintained:

Psycho-analysts in order to reveal to us things about ourselves modify and sophisticate our conceptions of love, hate, jealousy, envy, sympathy, sense of responsibility. They use familiar words not with a disregard of established usage but not in bondage to it.\(^\text{20}\)

Indeed, Freud thought he was extending the meaning of the term "mental" and, in keeping with good scientific practice, he justified this supposed extension on practical grounds. In The Unconscious he argues:

But it is more important to make clear to our own minds that this objection [i.e., that latent recollection can not be described as mental processes] is based on the identification—not, it is true, explicitly stated but regarded as axiomatic—of conscious and mental. This identification is either a petitio principii and begs the question whether all that is mental is also necessarily conscious, or else it is a matter of convention, of nomenclature. In this latter case it is of course no more open to refutation than any other convention. The only question that remains is whether it proves so useful that we must needs adopt it. To this we may reply that the conventional identification of the mental with the conscious is thoroughly unpractical.\(^\text{21}\)

I can only conclude that Pap has failed to show that the unconscious cannot be legitimately construed as a hypothetical construct. His notion of the promissory note character of the unconscious misses the whole point of the introduction of this concept, and his arguments from the immaturity of psychoanalysis and from the misuse of the ordinary meaning of mental terms are invalid.

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\(^\text{19}\) Pap seems aware of the fact that Freud used, e.g., the term "unconscious wish," to refer to wishes that became conscious only under therapy. Yet he concludes from this, quite inconsistently I think, that unconscious wishes are "dispositional states." To be consistent Pap would also have to conclude that wishes one can become aware of through ordinary introspection, although one is not aware of them at the time, are "dispositional states." But he argues instead that these wishes "causally determine human behavior," while unconscious wishes do not. See Pap, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-289.


II

5. *MacIntyre's Criticism of the Unconscious*. MacIntyre has maintained that the unconscious, like the electron, may well be a hypothetical construct. He argues:

Certainly the unconscious and its contents are *ex hypothesi* unobservable, and if philosophy were still at the stage when positivism was waging a war to the death against unobservables no doubt the whole conception of the unconscious would have to be rejected. But the positivism that rejected unobservables in so wholesale a fashion was not merely *too a priori* in its framing of criteria by which concepts were to be judged legitimate or the reverse; it was also profoundly in error as to the character of scientific theorizing. For in such theorizing concepts which refer to unobservables have a legitimate, important and necessary place. And in elucidating the nature of the concept of the unconscious the possibility that it is a concept of this kind must be taken very seriously.22

MacIntyre believes, however, that not all theories containing terms which refer to unobservable entities are legitimate in science. Some theories containing terms which refer to unobservables have great explanatory value, e.g., the modern theory of subatomic particles, but other theories containing terms which refer to unobservables have no explanatory power at all, e.g., the theory of the ether. The important question, therefore, is "whether the unconscious is to be classed with the electron as a notion of great explanatory power or with the ether as a bogus and empty theoretical concept..."23

MacIntyre suggests two distinct requirements for the admissibility of theories in science containing terms which refer to unobservables. Presumably, MacIntyre intends his requirements to distinguish theories with explanatory power, such as the theory of subatomic particles, from theories with no explanatory power, such as the theory of ether.

(1) A theory *T*, containing some terms that refer to unobservable entities, is admissible in science if some empirical phenomena can be explained by *T* that are distinct from the phenomena *T* was originally introduced to explain.24

(2) A theory *T*, containing some terms which refer to unobservable entities, is admissible in science if the elimination of *T* would result in a loss of predictive power.25

MacIntyre judges Freud's theory of the unconscious by these requirements and concludes that the theory has no explanatory power. Briefly, he argues as follows.

The real significance of Freud's theory of the unconscious is that it purports to explain why certain childhood events are correlated with certain adult experiences. However, "from the supposition of such an entity [the unconscious] what consequences

22 MacIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 46.


24 "The theory must not merely be such that statements concerning the regularities which it was originally introduced to explain are deducible from it. We must also be able if the explanation of the regularities with which we were originally concerned is correct, to deduce further statements of a testable kind, the verifying of which constitutes the confirmation of the hypothesis." *Ibid.*, p. 47.

25 "Concepts which refer to unobservables will have a place on the higher steps of the deductive ladder if by using them we can formulate assertions from which observation statements can be deduced which are true and which could not be deduced from the theory unless such assertions were included." *Ibid.*, pp., 47-48.
flow that could not otherwise be predicted? Freud's hypotheses as to the infantile
origin of adult traits and disorders can all be formulated without reference to it."

It should be noticed, first of all, that it is not completely clear whether MacIntyre's
criticism of Freud's theory of the unconscious turns on his first or second requirement.
(Indeed, it is not altogether certain that MacIntyre realizes he has set forth two distinct
requirements.) By his question "From the supposition of such an entity what con-
sequences flow that could not otherwise be predicted?" he could mean (1) that Freud's
theory of the unconscious entails nothing more than what it was originally introduced
to explain, (his first requirement), or (2) that elimination of the theory of the un-
conscious would not result in a loss of any predictive power (his second requirement).

It must be emphasized that these are different requirements. This can be seen from
a simple example. Consider a theory $T_1$ containing some terms that refer to unobserv-
able entities. $T_1$ is introduced to explain only one empirical phenomenon described
by an observation statement $O_1$; hence $T_1$ entails $O_1$. But $T_1$ also entails $O_2$ where this
observation statement describes a different phenomenon. Hence this meets MacIntyre's
first requirement. Assume that $T_1$ entails only $O_1$ and $O_2$. $T_1$ can then be replaced by
a theory $T_1'$ made up solely of the conjunction $O_1 \land O_2$. This replacement would contain
only observational terms and yet would entail everything $T_1$ entailed. Hence $T_1'$ would
presumably not meet MacIntyre's second requirement although it met his first.

6. MacIntyre's Requirement (1). Let us consider MacIntyre's first requirement. This
requirement is often proposed in order to eliminate ad hoc hypotheses that are used
to explain a phenomenon but which no further evidence could refute. It is not strictly
correct to say that such hypotheses are not disconfirmable since they do have empirical
consequences, i.e., statements describing the phenomenon they were originally
introduced to explain follow from the theory. But these hypotheses become discon-
firmable, as it were, on just one move, since no further consequences can be derived.

Now depending on how one interprets MacIntyre, his claim that Freud's theory
of the unconscious fails to meet his first requirement is either (i) false or (ii) unjustified.

(i) Sometimes MacIntyre writes as if he were interested only in what Freud claims
and not in the truth of Freud's claims. In particular he seems to be concerned with
Freud's claim that there are correlations between certain specific childhood experiences
and certain specific aspects of adult personalities and Freud's further claim that such
correlations can be deduced from the theory of the unconscious. On one reading
of MacIntyre, he seems to be asking what more is claimed to follow from the theory.
MacIntyre's answer is nothing, hence the theory of the unconscious is "empty" and
"bogus."

But if we are talking about what is claimed to follow from the theory, the answer to
MacIntyre's question is "almost everything significant in human behavior." Latter-
day psychoanalysts have claimed to find anal eroticism in all manner of apparently
innocent behavior. Indeed, as any reader of *Imago* must know, new "verified con-
sequences" of unconscious anal eroticism are reported in art, literature and legend
in each issue. Not only are all these things supposed to be accounted for by con-
sequences of the theory, but contemporary psychoanalytic journals report the "finding"
of new correlations between childhood oral and genital behavior and adult behavior
in every issue. That such correlations obtain is also an alleged consequence of the
theory. Moreover, later developments in psychoanalytic ego psychology claim to deduce

\footnote{Ibid., pp. 71-72.}
accounts of all rational behavior, at least in part, from the theory of the unconscious. Instead of nothing following from the theory of the unconscious except what it was originally introduced by Freud to explain, if we take the claims of latter-day analysts seriously, an account of practically all human behavior is supposed to follow from it. Indeed, the alleged "new verified consequences" of the theory reported by Freud's followers make Freud's claims of correlations look modest in comparison.

(ii) MacIntyre may, on the other hand, be interpreted as talking not about what is claimed by psychoanalysts to follow from the theory, but about what consequences, besides the original correlations which did in fact follow from the theory, do follow from it. MacIntyre's thesis, on this interpretation, is that no more consequences follow from it. To determine this, however, is surely not an easy task. MacIntyre seems to assume that the empirical consequences (if any) of a vaguely and metaphorically stated theory such as psychoanalysis should be obvious at a glance. But surely, to determine if anything follows from Freud's theory of the unconscious aside from what it was originally introduced to explain, requires not only a close examination of the relation of the unconscious to other Freudian concepts, but also a close examination of the alleged inferences drawn from the theory by contemporary analysts, ethnologists, experimental psychologists, and so on. One can hardly know the further consequences of psychoanalytic theory without endeavoring to examine the arguments of those who purport to derive further consequences from it. Indeed, one of the major tasks in evaluating experimental and anthropological studies of psychoanalytic theory is to determine whether they do, in fact, test consequences of the theory. MacIntyre argues independently of all recent work purporting to draw testable inferences from the theory of the unconscious; hence it is hardly surprising that he fails to find any further consequences of the theory. This is not to say that MacIntyre is incorrect in his conclusion that nothing else follows from the theory, but only that he has failed to give good reasons in support of this conclusion.

7. MacIntyre's Requirement (2). As far as MacIntyre's second requirement is concerned, it would be a mistake to suppose that it would serve to eliminate theories which postulate unobservable entities such as the unconscious, but not theories which postulate unobservable entities such as electrons. A purely logical finding of William Craig shows that any theory $T_1$ containing some terms which refer to unobservable

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entities can be replaced by some theory $T_2$ which contains no terms that refer to unobservables and yet has the same empirical deductive consequences as $T_1$. So, according to MacIntyre’s second requirement, not only can “Freud’s hypothesis as to the infantile origin of adult traits and disorders” be formulated without the unconscious without loss of deductive power in this precise sense, but all the empirical generalizations which the theories of subatomic particles are supposed to explain can also be formulated without reference to these theories without loss of deductive power. The theory of the electron is as unexplanatory, on MacIntyre’s second requirement, as the theory of the unconscious and for the same reason; namely any theory which contains such expressions can be replaced by another theory which does not without loss of deductive power relative to the theory’s observable consequences.

But as Craig has pointed out, and several noted philosophers of science have argued, Craig’s results do not show that theories which postulate unobservable entities are unnecessary in science. Indeed, a Craigian replacement of such theories is done at a great loss.

(1) A Craigian replacement is in general an unwieldy and cumbersome theory with an infinite set of postulates. Theories with terms that refer to unobservables, on the other hand, may preserve deductive simplicity allowing a few postulates to have as their consequences a large body of empirical propositions.

(2) More importantly, however, a Craigian replacement does not preserve in all cases the inductive systematization of the original theory.

(3) Moreover, the history of science suggests that theories couched solely in terms of observables do not have the heuristic value of theories that are not couched solely in terms of observables.

Whether psychoanalytic theory does in fact provide deductive simplicity and inductive systematization and does possess heuristic value is another matter. The point is that MacIntyre neglects these possible values of the theory of the unconscious and judges it on grounds such that all theories in science containing terms which refer to unobservable entities are unwittingly excluded. Indeed, MacIntyre unwittingly excludes from science those theories he considers to have the highest explanatory value.

To sum up: MacIntyre has suggested two requirements for the admissibility of theories in science containing terms which refer to unobservable entities. If we take Freud’s followers at their word, then a great deal more “follows” from the theory of the unconscious than the behavior it was originally introduced to explain. Thus MacIntyre’s first requirement is met. On the other hand, if we don’t take them at their word, then a close examination must be made of the inferences that are supposedly drawn from the theory both in the clinical situation and elsewhere. MacIntyre has not done this, hence his conclusion that nothing more follows from the theory is not justified and he has not shown that his first requirement is not met. MacIntyre’s second requirement is too strong. It turns out to make all theories in science that refer to unobservables inadmissible and, moreover, to overlook the possible values a theory

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like Freud's might have. We may conclude, therefore, that MacIntyre has not done what he set out to do; namely to show that Freud's theory of the unconscious lacks explanatory power.

III

8. Conclusion. Our examination of Pap's and MacIntyre's criticism of the unconscious points up what not to do when criticizing psychoanalytic theory. The question remains, however, whether the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious is explanatory. I will not attempt to answer this question here; instead I will briefly outline what one must do in order to answer it.

In the first place, it is necessary to examine carefully the relation between the theoretical and observational terms of psychoanalysis. This would enable us to determine whether psychoanalytic theory really has any clear empirical implications. In particular, we would be able to determine whether the theory of the unconscious is connected with overt behavior in a way that permits it to be confirmed or disconfirmed. If it were found that the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious could not be confirmed or disconfirmed, the theory could hardly be considered explanatory.

But to determine whether the theory is capable of confirmation or disconfirmation is not any easy task. One way to determine this would be to make a detailed and careful examination of the writing of Freud and other psychoanalysts in order to determine whether there is a clear relationship between the theoretical and observational language of psychoanalysis. One such investigation of Freud's writing has been attempted, but more are needed. Another fruitful approach would be to make an empirical study of the theoretical and observational language used by psychoanalysts in their clinical practice. A third approach would be to examine the writings of ethnologists, experimental psychologists, and others who purport to draw testable inferences from psychoanalytic theory. Here it would be crucial to determine if these investigators are really deriving empirical implications from psychoanalytic theory, as they claim, or if they are actually reformulating psychoanalysis into a testable theory before beginning their empirical studies.

In the second place, since psychoanalytic theory in general and the theory of the unconscious in particular purport to explain certain correlations that are alleged to hold between certain childhood events and certain adult behavior, it is necessary to determine whether such correlations actually exist. Obviously psychoanalytic theory would not be explanatory if the subject matter it purports to explain was nonexistent. It would be necessary, therefore, to evaluate those studies which test these alleged correlations.

Finally, if it is established that the psychoanalytic theory of the unconscious is capable of confirmation and disconfirmation and that the correlations which the theory purports to explain actually hold, then more subtle investigations into the scope, simplicity and systematizing power of the theory can be attempted.

It should be obvious that the undertaking outlined above is a difficult one, but it is precisely what is needed and one should not settle for less. Indeed, one major weakness in both Pap's and MacIntyre's criticisms of the theory of the unconscious is that they are attempts to dispose of the theory in some too quick and easy ways.