

Q&A: PSYCHOANALYSIS

16 SEPT 2020 | PHILO 26800 | HUNTER COLLEGE | DANIEL W. HARRIS

Questions about Unconscious Thoughts

p.43 — The alternative account of existence of unconscious... “that pressure sensation was not there when we weren’t looking for them, and that the act of looking for them brought them into being” even though it is logically right – it seems like a forced explanation. —Syeda

I think it’s more plausible for some mental phenomena than for others. Consider pain, for example. Some philosophers have argued that pain just is a certain kind of unpleasant sensation. But how could you be feeling an unpleasant sensation without being conscious of it? That sounds like a contradiction in terms. And so these philosophers have argued that pain is essentially conscious, and that it only exists when you’re conscious of it. I’m not sure if that’s right, but it seems more intuitively plausible than the pressure example, I think.

As the reading continues, the author tells us many definitions on the unconscious mind. Originally before the reading started for me, I felt that the unconscious mind was a link to our so called "conscious" or "soul" from a religious sense, some may call it "instinct" even, to act on something without having the intention to do so. My question to the professor would be is there really such thing as an unconscious mind? and what would the professor's definition be in a simpler and more direct case? —Gibson Chuang

I think it’s basically undeniable at this point that some of what our minds do is unconscious. For example: as I write this, my mind is doing a whole series of computations in order to design a sentence for me to write. How does it do this? What are the specific decisions about which words to use that it is making? Why, exactly, am I writing this sentence rather than a slightly different one? I have no idea, and I can’t introspect the answer. All of this linguistic processing is entirely unconscious. I think there are probably many other examples, including the kinds of examples of failures of introspection that students posted last week. We really do sometimes deceive ourselves about what we want, who we love, and what we believe, particularly when we aren’t comfortable with the truth. At least, that’s my view.

The problem of other minds

The problem of other minds reminded me of another philosophical concept I had studied in another class. The problem of other minds is that we can never know if other people have the same mental states as we do ourselves, we can only observe their behavior. We only generalize that other people have the same mental states as we do based on our personal internal experience, but why does it make sense to generalize if it is only based on a single case (our own

mental states and the behavior that follows them). This reminded me of Hume and his philosophy about empiricism. The principle of uniformity is the assumption that the same processes and natural laws that operate in scientific observations have always operated in the past and apply universally. Science relies on this principle, including the planetary example they provide in the text and it explains why we do assume that other people do have mental states like ours. It ties in with Hume's philosophy that we are able to draw information based on our own experience. —Casey

This is a very astute connection, and you're right that the two problems are intimately related. They're both forms of skepticism that arise from forms of empiricism, which restricts our possible sources of knowledge to what we can gather from the senses. If the only way that we can know what will happen tomorrow is by generalizing from our current experiences, then the problem of induction tells us that we have nothing rational to go on. Likewise, if the only way that we can know what other people are thinking and feeling is by generalizing from our own experiences, then the problem of other minds tells us that we have nothing rational to go on.

A lot of philosophers take these lines of thought to be good reasons to reject empiricism. Maybe we actually have some kind of innate or a priori knowledge that allows us to predict the future, or that allows us to interpret other people. The latter case is perhaps more plausible. And this is one reason that developmental psychologists have put so much energy into studying which aspects of our understanding of other minds are innate. In psychology, our capacity to understand what other people are thinking is called "theory of mind" or sometimes "mindreading". There has been a huge research program since the 1980s trying to figure out when we gain this ability and how. One major contingent (though not everyone) thinks that it is largely innate. This is one way that historical philosophical debates about empiricism and rationalism have made their way into contemporary science.

[What are actual feelings? or Can we actually determine our/others' actual feelings?]
It seems not to be easy to determine or find what actual feelings/thoughts are. About the "mother-hatred patient example," we are, on many occasions, unsure what our actual feelings towards certain events/objects, moreover those feelings are changeable very much even if we are able to recognize them at a moment. For example, at some point, we like P, but another point, we do not like the P; moreover, oftentimes, we are not sure even whether we like P or not, or neither. So I'm wondering that even if psychologists can observe their patients' unaware or contradicted attitudes, how psychologists determine whether or not they are contradicted, or what the actual mental states are. It seems that we cannot simply tell whether or not they are contradicted; or the roots of them. —Chateldon

I think you're right to say that the problem of other minds is closely related to the problem of understanding one's own thoughts. The philosopher Quine said that the problem of understanding what others think and mean "begins at home". And I think Eric Schwitzgebel's article gives us reasons to think (a) that we all have plenty of trouble interpreting ourselves, and (b) that we sometimes have ways of attributing thoughts to others that go beyond what we can do for ourselves.

The Pleasure Principle

Do pleasure and pain only come from the fulfillment of one's wish? There are certain activities that could be harmful to oneself but do fulfill one's craving or desire. Addictions tend to lead to harmful unwanted effects but people still act on their wish. They fulfill their craving and get temporary pleasure but they are knowingly harming their body and their mind in irreversible ways. This damage could lead to physical pain but I am not quite sure if physical pain and the pain Freud refers to are one in the same. —Emmanuel

I think it's important to distinguish between short term pain/pleasure and longer term pain/pleasure. I think Freud could reply to you by saying that the pleasure principle operates much more powerfully in the short term.

There is some evidence that he would have been write about this. Psychologists and economists use the term "time preference" and "time discounting" to describe this phenomenon. We tend to systematically discount the value of things (and the disvalue of bad things) if we take them to be farther in the future.

"The everyday hedonist's scheme allows that you might still be actively trying to acquire positive pleasures. In the , Freudian scheme, however, if you feel no pain, there's no possibility for pleasure (pleasure being a diminution of pain)" I found this point particularly cool because it invokes the tenets of structuralism. "Binary opposition" is the idea that we tend to conceptualize experience in terms of polar opposites, each of which we understand by means of opposition to the other. This idea aligns with Freudian psychoanalysis because the latter implies that we can only ever feel and understand pleasure in relation to pain, which is a fairly sensical idea. A tenet of psychoanalysis that has the possibility of actually holding up in modern discourse. —Elizabeth

I think that a true structuralist would say that it should go both ways, though. Not only do we understand pleasure only relative to pain, we also understand pain only relative to pleasure. But this is not what Freud thought. He thought that we could understand pain first and foremost, and that it's only pleasure that is a derivative phenomenon. I don't think that qualifies as structuralism.

(Structuralism is usually the idea that things are defined first-and-foremost by the relations that they stand in to other things, and not in terms of their inherent properties.)

Near the beginning of chapter 4, the author explains that Freud's pleasure theory has difficulty explaining situations like when a mother goes hungry to feed her kids. The author then goes on to explain that a descriptive hedonist would say that the mother gets a "glow of self-righteousness that makes her feel good", and then says this explanation is not available to Freud because Freud claims the only source of pleasure is the gratification of instincts (such as hunger, thirst, sex, and avoidance of tissue damage). With this context – I would argue that Freud's counter to the example could be that the mother receives gratification/pleasure from knowing that her offspring is better off and more likely to survive (which I feel should fall under the "instinct" category). Is this a valid explanation for Freud to use for the starving mother example?

Freud could say this, but it would involve a pretty significant alteration to his theory, since it would entail that some of our basic instinctual drives are altruistic (albeit aimed at our own children). Now, I think it's pretty obviously true that humans often are willing to sacrifice our own pleasure and wellbeing for our own family members, and sometimes even for complete strangers. But Freud would have wanted to avoid taking this to be a basic instinctual drive, and he would have tried to cook up some way of explaining this sort of behavior ultimately in terms of non-altruistic drives.

Based on the readings on psychoanalysis, I have some criticisms on Freud's theory on hedonism and on the pleasure principle. Hedonism is the principle that one should live one's life. The idea is that one should strive to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. While I do think that in general, people will try to strive for pleasure-seeking scenarios than painful ones. It doesn't necessarily mean all pleasuring-seeking behavior is a positive one or is valuable to our wellbeing. For example, if a person is addicted to nicotine, they will continue smoking because it provides less anxiety and is pleasurable to them. In terms of hedonism, they would want to maximize that pleasure and continue smoking even though it's not beneficial to their health or long-term wellbeing. —Elizabeth

I don't see how this is a criticism of Freud. You've just describes his theory pretty accurately. He didn't think that we tend to act in ways that are beneficial to our health or long-term wellbeing, unless the pleasure and reality principles led us to do so.

Freud believed that there is no possibility for pleasure because it's a lesser version of pain. Since there is no pleasure, there is no hedonistic motive for drive/action. I don't really agree with this idea because it is possible to feel pleasurable sensations and it can motivate us to take action. For example, if someone participates in philanthropic events and that makes them feel happy and good, they will want to continue doing more events to continue that feeling. —Elizabeth

You've misdescribed Freud's view here. Freud does not deny the existence of pleasure. Rather he defines pleasure as anything that lessens pain. He thinks that pain is the default state and that we experience pleasure when our level of pain decreases. So he does not deny that we are motivated by pleasure.

It is less obvious, however, how Freud would explain the pleasure that we get from philanthropy! I'm sure he would have had some sort of convoluted explanation, but I doubt that it would have been particularly convincing!

Rationalization

“Apparently, the imperative to come up with a rational explanation for everything we do is sometimes so strong that we're impelled to invent rational reasons for our irrational behavior.” I never truly understood the distinction between “making up” rational reasons for irrational behavior and actually rationally reasoning through these behaviors. I don't believe that we can “make up” rational reasons for behaviors — aren't you acting as a rational agent regardless? What renders rationalization any less rationally valid a technique as the rationalization of “acceptable”, non-irrational behaviors? For example, a smoker may doubly want to stop smoking

and continue, and may experience cognitive dissonance as a result. The smoker may justify his smoking, perhaps going as far as to argue that smoking is a source of happiness for them. This is presumed to be true, after all. I can find no logical or argumentative fault in saying that smoking has the capacity to make a person happy, even if it is a temporary happiness. But what renders this technique—the use of rationalization—somehow invalid in the eyes of psychoanalysts and others? If you're reasoning through something and your postulations are plausible enough, that's good enough for me. The duality of wanting a smoke and wanting to stop is exactly that—a duality. Moreover, the consideration of this as an “irrational behavior” seems semantically unsound.. —Elizabeth

I think the thing that you're missing out on here is that our attempts to rationalize our irrational behaviors often aren't all that successful. They sometimes come off as desperate and disingenuous. I'll give you a more contemporary example, which comes from an influential paper by Jonathan Haidt called “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment” ([pdf of the whole paper here](#)):

Julie and Mark are brother and sister. They are traveling together in France on summer vacation from college. One night they are staying alone in a cabin near the beach. They decide that it would be interesting and fun if they tried making love. At the very least it would be a new experience for each of them. Julie was already taking birth control pills, but Mark uses a condom too, just to be safe. They both enjoy making love, but they decide not to do it again. They keep that night as a special secret, which makes them feel even closer to each other. What do you think about that? Was it OK for them to make love?

Most people who hear the above story immediately say that it was wrong for the siblings to make love, and they then begin searching for reasons (Haidt, Bjorklund, & Murphy, 2000). They point out the dangers of inbreeding, only to remember that Julie and Mark used two forms of birth control. They argue that Julie and Mark will be hurt, perhaps emotionally, even though the story makes it clear that no harm befell them. Eventually, many people say something like, “I don't know, I can't explain it, I just know it's wrong.” But what model of moral judgment allows a person to know that something is wrong without knowing why?

Haidt argues that what's really going on here is that the subjects of this experiment began with an emotional and intuitive gut reaction that what Julie and Mark did was wrong, and they started coming up with rational explanations of why it was wrong only when they were asked for one. But the reasoning that they do in order to justify their judgment wasn't what actually caused them to have this judgment, it's just something that they cooked up afterward in order to make it seem as though they had reasons for their beliefs. How do we know this? Well, for one thing, the

explanations of their judgment that they gave don't actually make much sense. But Haidt also gives a lot of other evidence for the same conclusion.

Of course, this all assumes that there is a genuine fact of the matter about what we were really thinking at a certain time, which is true independent of however we might later reinterpret ourselves. And you could deny that, but that would seem to entail that it's possible to retroactively change what thoughts we had, after the fact, at our convenience.

Criticisms of Freud

I find it curious and surprising that Freud's theories are still so influential.

Most notably, they are not based on scientific principles or even experimental studies; they are based on his personal, limited observations of a limited number of patients who came to him with psychological problems (population bias). Kukla points out that Freud rejected the methodology of the controlled experiment; "he relied exclusively on naturalistic observation" (observations of phenomenon that occurred naturally in everyday life and in the clinical setting) rather than in controlled experimental situations.

I think Freud's "naturalist observation" approach not only lacks any objective scientific foundation, but is also extremely biased. His views/theories were subjective and a product of his particular time, place, and worldview—that is, Victorian societal values; his own personal experiences and situation (his personal biases), and, importantly, his extremely sexist attitudes and male bias.

Just two of many examples: He wrote a paper in 1925, "The Psychological Consequences of the Anatomic Distinction Between the Sexes": "Women oppose change, receive passively, and add nothing of their own." He also argued that "Girls hold their mother responsible for their lack of a penis and do not forgive her for their being thus put at a disadvantage." (1933) Other psychologists (e.g., Karen Horney) dismissed such theories as distorted and demeaning, a result of patriarchal culture.

Can it also be argued that Freud viewed himself in a grandiose way? I came across an article "Critique of Psychoanalysis" (by John Kihlstrom), that argued Freud saw himself "as the last in a line of heroic scientific figures," following Copernicus and Darwin. He believed that he too corrected a popular misunderstanding of how the world works. He claimed his great discovery was that conscious experience, thought, and action were determined by unconscious, primitive instincts, not by rational, conscious thought.

Another troubling issue with Freud's theories: his views create a very negative and pessimistic view of human nature and the capacity for growth (without psychoanalysis). Are our fundamental instincts the key to all behaviors? Upon what evidence did he base his core

pleasure/pain principle? Is our psychological makeup really set for life by the age of six?? He paints a gloomy picture of the capacity of humans to change or make conscious choices.

Much research, criticism, new theories, and new data have disproven many of Freud's conclusions. But they nonetheless still influence our ideas about human nature, consciousness, and how/why we behave the way we do. And his principles and terminology are still widely used in our everyday language, literature/the arts, and culture. Perhaps that's where his influence still remains strong; less so in 20th/21st century psychology. —Donna Sanzone

I agree with all of this Donna, and nearly all research psychologists do as well. Of course, there are still some psychoanalysts who work clinically, and Freud still has a big influence on our popular understanding of the mind, and on the theoretical approaches of some parts of the humanities. I think that much of this is just unfortunate. I am quite skeptical that Freud had much specific to teach us about how to treat mental illness, for example. Indeed, the main reason that I teach this unit in the course is that I want people to understand that psychoanalysis is mostly bullshit, and we shouldn't take it seriously anymore.

However, I think we can recognize that although Freud wasn't a good scientist, still a few of his ideas have lasted for good reason. The most obvious example is the idea of unconscious thought, which Freud didn't exactly invent, but which he certainly did more than anyone else to popularize. By popularizing the idea that some of what our mind does is unconscious, Freud opened the door for psychology to study the mind in ways that weren't limited by what we can introspect. In this way, Freud really did open the door for psychology to become the serious science it is now, even if he in no way exemplified the virtues of that science himself.

...what is the current state of psychoanalysis? I've been under the impression that the field has been sufficiently discredited, has there been any developments since then in regards to the criticisms of Freud listed in the book? or What did Deleuze and Guattari hope to achieve with the development of Schizoanalysis? —Robert Huffman

I am not an expert on Deleuze and Guattari, but I have mostly gotten the impression from their work that their goal is to mystify and seem interesting rather than to figure out the truth about anything. I think that Freud's ideas are particularly useful for this purpose, because a lot of people know a little bit about them, and they sound pretty deep, in part because they have wormed their way into popular culture, and in part because they purport to tell us strange and unsettling things about human nature. In fact, I think this is probably a significant part of what explains Freud's influence. His ideas were so strange and lurid, and they became so widely (but shallowly) known, that they are useful tools for mystification, which can be a very lucrative pursuit.

I found the concept of life affirming instincts and life denying instincts to be a bit confusing. What exactly is meant by eros and thanatos. How does it tie into psychoanalysis? —Joshua

I also find this part confusing, Joshua. This book came late in Freud's career and a lot of people see it mainly as an expression of his pessimism about human nature following the First World War. I

think that the lasting impact of it often has more to do with its poetic potential than its scientific potential.

The whole concept of your psychological make up being completed by the age of six to me sounds very ridiculous. This theory just disregards that humans learn and keep learning not only to benefit them, but the people around them. Children are like dogs in a sense that many of them do not seem to take accountability for their actions and because of this we can say that young adolescents are often times without much guilt. The superego revolves a lot around guilt and if your superego is completed by the age of six that must make every kid who is older than six very accountable for their actions and can be trusted since guilt would eat them up otherwise. Can we call a kid who is 8 years and doesn't feel guilt for a particular action they committed a psychopath just because they didn't deem to have a "superego", I do not think so. I have personally experienced my psychological make up be changed recently in my life as I grow and experience new things year by year. It is hard for people to change as they grow older, but people have changed and that is what makes me doubt this psychoanalytical theory. —Miguel

I think that this is an excellent point Miguel. We know so much more about children's psychological development than we did in Freud's time, and almost none of it fits with what he believed!

Culture

I found Freud's and Hartmann's points on sublimation a bit confusing. Hartmann stated that so-called 'additions' to our brains like egos are actually innate, otherwise, we'd perish at the first instance of conflict, "The conclusion, once again, is that we must be born with the capacity and desire to acquire knowledge already in place." (p.64) This then means that culture, as Freud described it, was not actually an outcome of our ungratified instinctive desires. I'm curious as to the connection between our instinctive desires and our developments in culture, art, and science. Similarly, why do these psychoanalysts consider these pursuits as by-products of our behavior? —Brian

A lot of people who read a little bit about natural selection and start from the assumption that our main instincts have to do with survival and reproduction tend to think that cultural products, like art, must be spin-offs or by-products. It's just not immediately obvious how an appreciation of art is something that directly contributes to evolutionary fitness. And so you find lots of people (including Freud) spinning up elaborate explanations of how culture could arise as a byproduct of our more basic drives.

But there is a good deal of more recent work on the interaction of biological and cultural evolution showing that culture is absolutely central to human survival. Our culture is, among other things, our common store of tactics for dealing with variable environments. When people find themselves in a new environment (such as a new climate, or geographic locale) without possessing the cultural inheritance that has been built up to be suited to the place, they tend not to last long. For this and other reasons, many psychologists and anthropologists now argue that the capacity and drive for cultural learning is one of the most basic, innate human characteristics. This is what allows groups of humans to pass on elaborate information about how to survive in different environments, but it is

also in part the need to exercise this basic instinct for cultural learning and expression that leads us to create art. A great book on this topic, which I highly recommend, is Joseph Henrich's *The Secret of Our Success*.

I question and am confused by Freud's view that the creation of culture is a by-product of sublimation of the ego's effort to placate the id. The ego provides the id with a hallucinatory substitute, which would theoretically become the creation as a by-product. One objection is that in order for sublimation to occur an individual would have to be in a primary process thinking phase, not an adult who can differentiate a real from an imaginary object. The hallucinatory substitute would not be accepted and a work of art would not result. My confusion is that Freud then shows Hallucinatory substitutes working in adults even though subjective states can be distinguished from objective states. —Pearl

I agree that this aspect of Freud's theory is not entirely satisfying. Why should an adult who knows full well that their substitute is just a substitute nevertheless be (at least partly) satisfied by it?

Nonetheless, it does seem that substitutes do at least sometimes satisfy us in just this puzzling way. Consider the existence (and ubiquity) of pornography, for example. Isn't that a clear example of the exact sort of substitute that Freud posited? (And it really is quite puzzling, if you think about it, why people should find pornography so compelling!)

Freud's view that the creation of culture is a by-product of sublimation can be challenged by another theory, that creative achievement is motivated by the fear of death. In an effort to achieve symbolic immortality people create works of art, music and other symbolic extensions of the self. A quote in an article in the Huffington Post "How Creative Achievement Eases Your Fear of Dying" by Carolyn Gregoire states that "research in the Journal of Creative Behavior may serve a positive function for the artist in easing existential anxieties and lessening the fear of death." Herman Hesse, the German writer called fear of death "the root of all art." —Pearl

I think that this is an interesting thought, and is at least as plausible as Freud's explanation. But I doubt that most people are thinking much about death when they make art or otherwise produce culture. As I said to Brian, above, I am more convinced by theories according to which humans at some point evolved a powerful drive for cultural transmission because of the ways in which it allowed us to master such a wide range of environments and circumstances in flexible ways. There is still a bit of a story to tell about how such a drive would result in art, but Henrich has some very interesting things to say about it.

Addiction

In chapter 3 of Andre Kukla and Joel Walmsley: *Mind*, mentioned the use of cigarettes and how smokers are unconsciously wanting to smoke because their mind and their body craves the need of a cigarette. But isn't that because of the nicotine which leads to the release of the chemical dopamine in the human brain. As with many drugs, dopamine prompts or "teaches" the brain to repeat the same behavior over and over. So the question I have is, if the companies knows that

these chemicals are addictive and harmful shouldn't it be illegal to produce such a product knowing that people are unconsciously wanting to use them ? —Taiji

I ... object to smoking being a full on mental addiction. Based on my research I have found that smoking is a chemical addiction as well. How it begins is through peer pressure and it lasts through the chemical addictions. —Joshua Mardakhaev

It's true that cigarette addiction has a clear physiological basis. But we should be careful about concluding that it is therefore not a psychological addition. After all: if materialism is true then psychological phenomena ARE physiological. So it may be that something can be both a chemical addiction and a psychological addition at the same time—we're just describing the same process in two different theoretical vocabularies.

Artificial Intelligence

After reading though “Mind: Reality Principle” in chapter 4 by Andre Kukla, states that computers and humans do and think in a similar way, but humans had conscious and computers do not have any conscious. What is consciousness and how does it involve with computers and humans? Does psychology explain the differences between them? What is the function of consciousness in computers and humans? Computers are a tool that are programmed by humans and humans act on their own conscious. They both are capable doing same things but different tasks. However, the reading views that if we had a conscious of the way we think and what we do but computers can do everything without a mind or a conscious like humans do. What exactly is the differences between computers and humans? How do computers work without a conscious, but humans do? Can computer think like a human? For example, if you create a robot or AI, is the robot another form of a human and do they act and think like a human? Do they even feel and had emotion like us? Are computers another type of human? — Adrian

These are all interesting questions (except maybe the last one; computers are not humans!). We're going to spend two weeks on AI later in the semester, and we'll deal with a lot of these questions then, so I won't try to give detailed answers now. Suffice it to say, though, that one of the big ideas behind AI is the computational theory of mind, which says that our minds literally are computers. Although they're made of different stuff than personal computers, the two are, according to this theory, just different kinds of information-processing devices. If this is correct (a big if, but I think it's plausible enough), then there would seem to be nothing, in principle, that can stop true AI from happening. It's just a matter of reverse-engineering how humans work so that we can program computers to do the same. (This is of course easier said than done.)

Methodology in psychology

So if both the naturalistic method and the experimental method have flaws ,or are subject to some form of bias, How do we test these things, the books solution in the final paragraph “that

psychological theories should ideally be tested against both naturalistic and experimental data”(pg.78) doesn't feel like an actual solution. —Robert

I think the answer that psychology has settled on is that the experimental method is the best way to find out how minds work. Of course, it's not perfect, and there will always be biases to adjust for and new and more detailed methodologies to develop. But at this point the vast majority of progress in understanding the mind involves gathering data from experiments and then theorizing about the results (philosophers help with the theorizing part, and once in a while with the data gathering too).

Philosophy vs Psychology

p.s. reading these two chapters felt like I was in a psychology 268 not in philosophy 268... lol I am unable to differentiate right now what belongs to philosophy and what belongs to psychology here. —Syeda

The two fields only diverged in the late 19th century, and they are still closely linked in many ways. So although this reading was more about Freud's contributions within psychology, he is also an important figure in the history of philosophy, and his ideas in psychology have had an important influence on philosophy. So although you're right that this week of the course was particularly psychology-heavy (next week will be too), I think it's important to get a sense of how the two fields developed in parallel to the point where they are now mostly partners.

A historical overview of the development of psychoanalysis

Georges Moroz wrote this nice historical description of how psychoanalysis evolved over time, which I think is interesting and useful, so I am putting it here at the end of this document:

1. I feel it is important to present the psychoanalytic doctrine in a chronological fashion and not as a building with foundations, basement, floors, and roof. This is an unachieved and (in my opinion) unachievable construct.
2. The first Freudian theorizings appear in the 1890s and are an attempt to account for two types of clinical phenomena:
 - a. Neuroses: anxiety, phobias, and –predominantly- hysterical. Hysteria is at that time the nightmare of neurologists like Freud, given its ability to imitate organic neurological conditions; Freud reflects on his knowledge of Charcot's work and on his own experience (Studies on Hysteria, 1892).
 - b. Dreams: Freud's self-analysis uses his own dreams, particularly the ones following the death of his father, and free association. It seems to have lasted about 3-4 years.
3. This leads to 2 formulations:

- a. A neurobiological one in 1895: Project for a Scientific Psychology, never published, in which many concepts of psychoanalysis are expressed in neuronal terms. See the article by Mc Carley & Hobson (1977) The Neurobiological Origins of Psychoanalytic Dream Theory, American Journal of Psychiatry 134: 1211-1221. Wish fulfillment, primary and secondary process, ego, Nirvana principle, symptom substitution are defined for the first time and in neurobiological terms. The brain is divided into 3 systems: Ω (consciousness), Φ (perceptual) and Ψ (memory and instinct; ego is a subset of Ψ). It is not an information-processing machinery, but an (obsolete) energetic one, influenced by the physics of the time.
- b. A clinical one in 1900: The Interpretation of Dreams, based on the dreams of the self-analysis and on the dreams from some of his patients. Hidden representations create the imagery of the dream through displacement and condensation; access to the representations is the result of free associations. Unconscious wishes underlie the representations and the resulting dream; their reservoir becomes the Unconscious with a capital U.
4. New clinical observations in the years 1900-1911 lead to new ideas about the psychosexual development of humans and finally to the doctrine described in chapter 4 with the id/ego/superego configuration.
5. After World War I, the idea of dreams as manifestation of wishes faces clinical difficulties: many veterans report recurrent disturbing dreams (“war neurosis”, “traumatic neurosis”). Freud publishes in 1920 Beyond the Pleasure Principle in which he hypothesizes a death drive and, turning his previous theory on its head, presents the pleasure principle as being at the service of the death drive. This is his most “philosophical” work: Plato and Schopenhauer are invoked; and reminiscences of the never published Project for a Scientific Psychology appear in several places.
6. Overall, Freud spent 30 years elaborating and re-engineering his doctrine, a process that has led him to formulate a theory which I find less and less plausible. The id/ego/superego system feels like 3 homunculi fighting each other inside our skulls. And there is the issue of what Karl Popper calls falsifiability: claiming that psychoanalysis can explain everything and its contrary, Popper compares the scientific status of psychoanalysis to astrology’s. A very severe judgment, given the fact that Freud always considered himself a scientist. But there is something to it: as the Freudian Unconscious disguises itself all the time, there is no clinical phenomenology which cannot be explained by Freud and his epigones. Thus, explaining everything, psychoanalysis may explain nothing. Notwithstanding Freud’s extraordinary scientific ambition (see his references to Copernic and Darwin), his remarkable inventiveness, and his elegant prose, one should keep a critical attitude toward the psychoanalytic theory. This does not change the fact that reading Freud’s clinical observations and interpretations remains quite instructive and often exciting.