



## Acknowledgements

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### Response by Miguel Kolteniuk Krauze (Mexico)

This question, the real leitmotiv of this congress, requires some clarification. First, we could refer to the existence of one or several unconsciouss that could be situated as ‘objects’ of study in the psychic apparatus or, alternatively, we could see it as the existence of one or several concepts of ‘unconscious’ formulated by different psychoanalytic theories.

The author’s paper falls within the second approach. Even though ‘the unconscious’ is nearly universally accepted as the foundational discovery of psychoanalysis and all authors ‘take it for granted’ in diverse post-Freudian theorizations, a close look actually reveals the existence of several concepts of ‘unconscious’ that they assume which not only do not coincide but are sometimes incompatible and mutually exclusive. Is the same concept of ‘unconscious’ used by Freudians and Kleinians, by ego psychology, self psychology, intersubjectivists and followers of Winnicott, Bion, Lacan, Meltzer, Laplanche or Green, for example?

Needless to say, this author does not think so. Each author and especially each school gradually introduces semantic variants into the concept of unconscious in order to adapt it to their needs of consistency and thus delineate a growingly disperse spectrum of meanings.

The author considers that the person most responsible for this ‘multivocal character’ of the unconscious is Freud himself. Until 1915 he held to the conception of the ‘systemic’ unconscious, that is to say, a system ‘beneath’ the preconscious system, separated by the barrier of repression and seat of the primary process in which neither denial, logic, causality nor temporality operate. This is the concept of ‘unconscious’ of his first topic.

However, in 1923, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud introduces an essential modification: the conceptual transformation of the 'unconscious' from 'system' to 'psychic quality' (second topic). This change of epistemological status was a step pregnant with consequences.

The author considers that 'the unconscious' as a psychic quality of agencies (ego, id and superego) involves a relative loss of semantic density in relation to the 'unconscious' as a psychic system, in reference to its components (thing-representations and cathexes and counter-cathexes) and laws of its functioning (primary process).

It is pertinent to ask whether 'the unconscious qualities' of ego, id and superego function exactly in the same way. Are they still ruled by the laws of the primary process described in the 'unconscious system'? It would seem they are not. It is difficult to say that defense mechanisms of the ego (the unconscious part of the ego) function in the same way as repressed contents. Although both are 'unconscious', the idea of 'mechanisms' with their semantic load of causality and logic is incompatible with the primary process.

The same is true of post-Freudian developments. Only by using the concept of 'unconscious' as psychic quality is it possible to preserve the unconscious dimension of such divergent psychic processes. However, here we meet with difficulties.

For example, how 'unconscious' are object relations? How do we understand the 'unconscious' character of ego splitting? What is meant by the statement that projective identification is 'unconscious'? Is it not true that the concepts of paranoid-schizoid and depressive 'positions' involve a high level of defensive organization? And that even the notion of internal object involves an organizing dimension? How could 'defensive and object organization' be made compatible with the concept of 'unconscious' and its primary process functioning? Is it really necessary to accept the presence of a secondary process in the unconscious? Does this acceptance contradict the very notion of unconscious? In sum, 'the unconscious' of the second topic, conceived as a psychic quality of agencies, admits the presence of organizing secondary components.

Nearly all post-Freudian theoretical developments seem to demonstrate this. The concept of unconscious as psychic quality has spread since *The Ego and the Id* to encompass the defensive and structuring functions described by ego psychology, the projective and introjective mechanisms of object relations theory, processes of constitution of the mature self based on object relations of the self, mechanisms of splitting between a true self and a false self and processes of intersubjective exchange in analytic interaction. All this seems to have 'the quality' of being unconscious to a great extent.

This author believes that contemporary French psychoanalysis responded to this dilution of the concept of unconscious. The 'Return to Freud' movement attempts to recapture, among other things, the richness, density and originality of the concept of the Freudian 'unconscious' of the first topic.

A result was Lacan's proposition that 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. Laplanche's proposal to differentiate two dimensions in the systemic unconscious: the primary repressed characterized by fixedness and symbolic disarticulation and the secondary repressed, characterized by pri-

mary process and its vicissitudes, and André Green's proposal based on the recovery of the drive dimension.

The debate on these two meanings of the concept of 'unconscious' introduced by Freud underlies diverse theories that argue this subject.

The author thinks that we need to 'revisit' the 'systemic' concept of the unconscious of the first topic and to compare it to developments of the concept of the unconscious as 'psychic quality' of the second topic in order to continue to work on its difficult elucidation, as it is disseminated throughout present ramifications of contemporary psychoanalysis.

#### Response by **Werner Bohleber (Germany)**<sup>7</sup>

Given the multiplicity of psychoanalytic theories and systems of thought, it is not surprising that a wide variety of conceptions of such a key notion as the unconscious can be discerned today. These extend from the classical definition of the unconscious as the locus of repressed instinctual representatives to dissociated, unformulated self-states. The neurosciences and the cognitive sciences too, as well as developmental research, have contributed significantly to a modification of our view of the unconscious.

Any consideration of our own theoretical thinking inevitably reveals the presence of implicit theories, which every psychoanalyst has developed, and applies, in his<sup>8</sup> clinical work. These often diverge appreciably from the publicly professed and published theories (Canestri *et al.*, 2006; Sandler, 1983; Tuckett, 2008). In an analyst's mind, theories are much less elaborately formulated, and available in less self-contained form, than in their published versions. An analyst may therefore integrate diverse concepts from various preferred authors and schools into a theoretical system of reference that includes personal elements and is consistent with both his scientific and his personal pre-scientific convictions. In this way, he accumulates in the course of time a body of implicit clinical knowledge that possesses a high degree of complexity and cannot be represented directly in words.

I should like to describe implicit theoretical thinking about the unconscious on the basis of spatial conceptions. In any self-reflective questioning of one's theoretical ideas, one cannot fail to encounter the element of metaphor. This applies particularly to an abstract theoretical notion such as that of the unconscious, which can always only be inferred, but never apprehended directly by an empirical approach. The traditional, classical, conceptual edifice is a spatial one (Reed, 2003). Although we know that this geography of the mind is metaphorical, it nevertheless influences our implicit thinking. The psychic apparatus appears in our thought as a space with three superimposed strata. At the deepest level lies the system of the unconscious, which operates by its own laws and is seen as a dynamic reservoir of instinctual wishes and archaic unconscious phantasies that "proliferate in the dark" (Freud, 1915a, p. 149), exert "upward" pressure, and have to be

<sup>7</sup>Translated by Philip Slotkin MA Cantab. MITI.

<sup>8</sup>Translator's note: For convenience, the masculine form is used for both sexes throughout this translation.