

FREUD ON UNCONSCIOUS EMOTION

MARIO DEL CARRIL

In his paper "On Freud's Doctrine of Emotions"¹ David Sachs claims that in 1915 —year in which the papers on metapsychology were written— Freud held that strictly speaking there are no unconscious emotions, no unconscious affects, and no unconscious affect-laden impulses. Even if this claim is correct —and, as we shall see it is not— it does not invalidate the attempt to understand what Freud meant by the use of expressions for unconscious emotions. It is possible that Freud might have repudiated in theory what he consistently used in practice. Sachs, however, goes further:

... for several reasons stated in the third part of his essay "The Unconscious" (1915 XIV), reasons often controverted in later psychoanalytic literature, he (Freud) was inclined thereafter to surround phrases translatable as "repressed affects," "unconscious anxiety, guilt, anger, etc." with scare quotes; or when they were not thus surrounded to regard them as fairly harmless, even sometimes useful, but nonetheless loose phraseology, loose to a degree incompatible with conscientious or scrupulous psychological formulations.²

If Sachs is correct, then attempts to analyze the meanings of these expressions cannot substantially advance our understanding of psychoanalysis: it would be comparable to an explication of Kepler's theory of the solar system through an analysis of the use of "sun sets" and "sun rises". Though such expressions can be used to report observations that are relevant to predictions that are based on theory, analyzing the meaning of "sun sets" and "sun rises" cannot yield an insight into that theory because these expressions are not connected to the theory. However Freud does use expressions for unconscious emotions in clinical practice to make observations and these expressions do have what may be called theoretical significance in psychoanalysis.

¹ David Sachs, "On Freud's Doctrine of Emotions," in *Freud: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. R. Wolheim (New York, Anchor Books, 1974) pp.132-146.

² Sachs, p 138.

Diálogos, 33 (1979) pp.109-124

that it is a common psychoanalytic practice to speak of unconscious emotions. So the question of meaningfulness is raised again, this time with respect to expressions that would designate such emotions: "Is there any more meaning to these terms than in speaking of unconscious instincts?"⁸ And Freud separates the issues by saying that they "are in fact not on all fours."⁹

It is important to emphasize this separation. Expressions for unconscious instincts are meaningless combinations of words, or at best loose phraseology. But the case of "unconscious emotion" and the like is different. To that difference we now turn.

In arguing that it does not make sense to say that instincts are unconscious Freud implicitly relies on a principle that regulates the use of the contraries "conscious" and "unconscious." This principle can be informally stated in the following way: if it is nonsense to claim that X is the kind of thing that can be conscious, then it is also nonsense to claim that X is the kind of thing that can be unconscious. This principle applies only to what Freud calls the descriptive unconscious. Its purpose is to explain why somatic processes are not to be called unconscious in the most directly psychological sense of the term. In the metapsychological essay that we are discussing, and in the one it follows, "Repression,"¹⁰ Freud classifies instinct as a somatic concept. This means that, by definition, it would be nonsense to say that we are consciously aware of instincts. Therefore, according to the principle, it would also be nonsense to say that instincts are unconscious. In other words, to say that instincts are unconscious is like saying that the electrical processes in our brains are unconscious: both statements are category mistakes. The principle I am attributing to Freud explains why he thinks that the expression "unconscious instinct" is a meaningless phrase. The reason provided is that the phrase is a category mistake.

But the same principle does not lead to a similar conclusion with respect to "unconscious emotions." According to Freud emotions are essentially conscious, therefore, on this score, there is no reason to claim that emotions are not the kind of thing that can be descriptively unconscious. The problem with this expression is of a different order: emotions are essentially conscious, therefore it is

⁸ 1915e, XIV, p.177.

⁹ 1915e, XIV, p.177.

¹⁰ 1915d, XIV, pp.146-158. In this essay and in the following one, "The Unconscious," Freud considers that instincts are somatic processes. But he is not always so clear about this issue. In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," 1915c, XIV, pp.117-140 he appears to the concepts of instinct and emotion. In the editor's introduction to that essay there is a discussion of this problem.

contradictory to say that they are unconscious. "Unconscious instinct" is a category mistake, but "unconscious emotion" is a contradiction in terms. It is this distinction, hidden in the passage we are discussing, that Sachs has conflated in his gloss.

In the third section of "The Unconscious" Freud tries to explain the apparent contradiction involved in the concept of an unconscious emotion. His explanation is brief and obscure, but serious in intent. For example, Freud says that "unconscious affect" and "unconscious emotion" refer to changes induced by repression in the quota of affect. This last term "quota of affect" is a technical term that refers to a quantity of psychic energy. It is, according to Freud, an "economic" concept. The evident obscurity of this notion contributes to the obscurity of the explanation. However Freud adds that these changes in the quota of affect manifest themselves in the fact that unconscious emotions are perceived, though misconstrued, psychological states. This remark is helpful. As we shall see later on, unconscious emotions can be considered misconstrued, or distorted, psychological processes. The misconstrual, or the distortion, is brought about by repression. But by themselves, and without further elaboration, these remarks do not remove the difficulty Freud himself notices in the concept unconscious emotion. But they do constitute evidence that Freud thought that the terms "conscious" and "unconscious" have a consistent usage when applied to emotions and affects and that this usage has theoretical significance.

All these considerations make clear that we cannot follow Sachs and attribute to Freud Sachs's conflation of instinct with emotion in the passages we have discussed. Whereas Sachs dismisses the term "unconscious emotion" as

... fairly harmless, even sometimes useful, but nonetheless loose phraseology, loose to a degree incompatible with conscientious, or scrupulous psychological formulations.¹¹

Freud's original reference to "loose phraseology" is about "unconscious instinct." Furthermore, Sachs reads Freud as claiming that "strictly speaking, there are no unconscious emotions, no unconscious affects or unconscious affect-laden impulses."¹² But Freud says:

Strictly speaking, then, and although no fault can be found in linguistic usage, there are no unconscious affects as there are unconscious ideas.¹³

¹¹ Sachs, *Ibid*, p.138.

¹² Sachs, *Ibid*, p.138.

¹³ 1915e, XIV, p.178.

This means, as he makes explicit elsewhere,¹⁴ that there are no unconscious emotions *in the sense* that there can be unconscious ideas. In other words unconscious emotions come about in a very different way than do unconscious ideas. But this does not mean—as Sachs's interpretation suggests—that Freud believed that “unconscious emotion” is a meaningless combination of words which at best can only serve as loose phraseology. Freud does think that “unconscious instinct” is a category mistake and therefore meaningless. But emotions for Freud, in these passages, are not confused with instincts, nor does he confuse a contradiction with a category mistake.

An examination of the context in which the expressions for unconscious emotions are used in psychoanalysis, and a discussion of Freud's understanding of what an emotion is, will show that the concept unconscious emotion is not contradictory despite appearances.

II

Sometimes in psychoanalysis the consistent usage of an expression in clinical practice is a better guide for its understanding than Freud's theoretical accounts of the meaning of that expression. One reason for this fact is that the patient in analysis must learn to master many of these expressions. How does this mastery come about and does it always come about in the same way?

Freud to illustrate how a patient comes to understand resistance to analysis makes the following comparison:

If I say to you: “Look up at the sky! There is a balloon there! You will discover it much more easily than if I simply tell you to look up and see if you can see anything.”¹⁵

And to this he adds yet another comparison:

In the same way, a student who is looking through a microscope for the first time is instructed by his teacher as to what he will see, otherwise he does not see at all, though it is there and visible.¹⁶

Freud's idea is that to some extent the therapist teaches the patient to recognize certain attitudes and feelings as resistance. Does the therapist also teach the patient to recognize unconscious emotions? If so, is the analyst involved in the same way and to the same degree? There are, I believe, important differences. These differences can be

¹⁴ 1917, XVI, pp.409,410.

¹⁵ 1917, XVI, p.437.

¹⁶ 1917, XVI, p.437.

made out with the help of the two comparisons that Freud runs together.

In both cases what is to be recognized, resistance and unconscious emotion, is recognized within a special setting: the psychoanalytic session. This fact is specially prominent in the case of resistance. The patient is taught that he or she is resisting the specific process that he or she is undergoing, i.e., the psychoanalytic treatment. Outside of this setting resistance as such cannot be understood. In fact the concept of resistance, with respect to its dependence on a special setting, is like some notions that we employ when looking through a microscope in that the recognition of what we are directly aware of depends on our theoretical understanding of the situation. In the case of the microscope this understanding may be provided by a theory of cellular structure and, implicitly, by the theory of the microscope itself; in the case of psychoanalysis the understanding is provided by the analyst's explanation of the workings of analysis. Resistance is a theoretical concept in psychoanalysis.¹⁷

“Teaching” a patient to recognize unconscious emotions is more like instructing someone to look for a ball in the sky. A theoretical explanation is not required in order to understand what is to be done. The patient will “know” how to recognize unconscious emotions without the help of any theory though he might need prompting from the analyst. To clarify the nature of this concept the nature of this knowledge must be made explicit.

That Freud believed that unconscious emotions can be recognized without the aid of theoretical instruction and a special setting can be inferred from an incident reported by Freud in *A Case of Hysteria*.¹⁸

Freud, the analyst, informs Dora, the patient, that she is in love with Herr K. Freud's interpretation is based on observing the patient's comments, reported behaviors, and analyzing the themes that appear in the psychoanalytic session. Dora denies that she is in love with Herr K. Her denial is a reason for asserting that she is unconsciously in love with the man. (There are other reasons, more technical in nature, that come out during the analysis.) Freud in pressing his interpretation mentions that a cousin of Dora's had also come to the conclusion that Dora was “wildly” in love with Herr K. After Freud presents her with more facts about the matter Dora finally admits that she may have been in love with this man some time ago, but she adds that she is no longer in love with him.

There are two things to notice in this incident. First, if we accept

¹⁷ 1917, XVI, p.342 and pp.436,437.

¹⁸ 1905e, VII, pp.37,38.

it as an attribution of unconscious love, then the assertion that someone is unconsciously in love can be made independently of the special setting provided by psychoanalysis. We have shown that this is not so for the concept of resistance. Dora's cousin, who has nothing to do with the analytic procedure, can attribute to Dora in a convincing manner an emotional state that Dora does not acknowledge. Furthermore this is a very common occurrence, and in cases like these an understanding of a theoretical explanation of *why* these states come about is not required in order to recognize the emotional process in others. The second thing to note is that one cannot argue that Dora fails to recognize that she is in love because she does not understand the concept of love, though one may argue that Dora fails to recognize that she is resisting analysis because she does not understand the concept of resistance. Dora's understanding of the concept of love is not acquired in psychoanalysis. She acquired this understanding as she grew up within her cultural setting, and it is this natural understanding which is relevant to her ability to recognize emotional processes in herself during analysis.

We may conclude that the "teaching" of a concept such as unconscious love, or unconscious anger, or unconscious fear, in psychoanalysis is unlike the teaching of a concept such as resistance. The former is a prompting to use recognitional skills that the patient has already developed; the latter is a teaching in the instructional sense in which the aims and purposes of the procedures must be explained to obtain understanding.

III

Having made this distinction the problem is to clarify the nature of the knowing-how that permits the patient to recognize unconscious emotions in himself.

Feeling-states appear to have an all-important role in explaining how we recognize that we are in a given emotional state. The recognition would come about in the manner in which we recognize that we are in pain, or that we recognize a sensation such as a tickle. But on a closer examination this view loses its plausibility. For example, if one is to acknowledge that he or she is in love the acknowledgement is not based on the presence of a certain kind of feeling-state that would be like a dull and constant ache. There are many different feeling-states involved with the emotional experience we call love, but none of them can be considered the recognitional key. The same holds for other emotional experiences such as fear and anger.

Consider an example that is used by Harvey Mullane.¹⁹ A man sees a poisonous snake and runs away arms flailing in fear. If we could stop him in mid-flight and ask: do you have a special feeling or sensation of fear? , his answer might be that he is too busy to *feel* anything, but that he is afraid. Mullane's example, which he draws out in a different way, illustrates the fact that though feeling-states may be appropriate to certain emotions they are not necessary for having those emotions at a given time. I am using his example to illustrate the fact that *what* we recognize when we recognize that we experience an emotional state or process is not just a feeling-state. In many cases of fear we may have a sensation at the pit of the stomach, another sensation at the roots of our hair, but neither sensation by itself, or even conjointly, account for *what* is recognized when we acknowledge that we are afraid.

What do we recognize in ourselves when we accept the fact that we are experiencing an emotion? To clarify ideas imagine the following hypothetical case: a man has never had feelings of affection towards anyone, where "feelings" refer to all those immediate experiences, including sensations, which normally go along with being affectionate. Could such a man, when told that he experiences affection towards someone, recognize that this is true? If so, how?

If the having of sensations and feelings of a special sort is necessary in order to recognize an emotional process in oneself this man could never recognize that he was affectionate. But his situation is not that desperate. He is not like a man who has never tasted something salty and is given many new tastes to savour, and then is asked to recognize which of the new tastes is the taste of salt. The hypothetical Ebenezer has more to go on. He will have observed throughout his life that people publicly display what they call affection towards one another in many different ways. He will have at his command a language in which words used to express affection have many complex implications. Therefore he will be able to recognize a certain fit and appropriateness between words, behaviors, gestures, beliefs, conventional expressions and objective situations.

For example, if a baby is crying and the mother gently lifts the

¹⁹ Harvey Mullane, "Unconscious emotion", *Theoria*, XXXI (1965) pp.181-190. For Mullane's discussion of this example see pages 182 and 183. I am indebted to Mullane's analysis of emotions, though I find it too rudimentary. In his account Mullane limits himself only to behaviors, feelings and physiological conditions as components of emotional states. He leaves out beliefs and other psychological phenomena. To some extent this limitation is remedied in his discussion of specific examples.

infant and rocks herself as she sings a lullaby, he will be able to tell that the mother is affectionate towards her small child. Imagine that Ebenezer is the child's father, and it is pointed out to him that he always cradles the child and comforts him when he cries. In these conditions, and even though this man, *ex hypothesi*, does not have the usual feelings of affection, he may well recognize that he too is affectionate towards that child.

To recognize an emotional process in others or in ourselves is to recognize a pattern. This pattern involves a complex range of human characteristics: thoughts, behaviors, gestures, physiological conditions, sensations, verbal expressions etc. An emotion is not just a sensation of a special kind, or just a set of behaviors; *what* we recognize when we recognize an emotion in ourselves is a pattern constituted by all these characteristics and not reducible to any one of them. There exists a natural resistance to accept this account because in many instances we do identify an emotion by means of only one of its characteristics. But an explanation of how we identify an emotion in a given instance is not the same thing as an account of *what* is identified. We learn to recognize emotions in ourselves and others as we grow. And with practice comes skill, and with skill short cuts. A given sensation may tell a person that he is angry or about to be angry. Sometimes a mannerism serves as the advance warning. In this way we learn to interpret ourselves and to anticipate the emotional processes that we live through. So the fact that we learn to identify an emotional process by means of a particular sensation or behavior does not mean that what we recognize in such an identification is that particular sensation or behavior.

IV

The point I have been striving to make about the nature of emotional processes has been made in part by Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the second section of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein claims that

“Grief” describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life.²⁰

He goes on to show that the pattern is in some way spontaneous:

What is fear? What does ‘being afraid’ mean? If I wanted to define it at a single showing —I should play-act fear.²¹

²⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, 1958, p.174e.

²¹ Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p.188e.

Wittgenstein is claiming that an emotion is a pattern involving many components and which cannot be described by a rule of some kind. The only way it can be exhibited is by putting together the sequence of actions and thoughts by which it is constituted. This would be play-acting. He also claims that there exists a skill in recognizing such a pattern as genuine:

Is there such a thing as "expert judgement" about the genuineness of expressions of feeling? —Even here, there are those whose judgement is 'better' and those whose judgement is 'worse.'^{2 2}

An "expression of feeling" for Wittgenstein is what in this paper I have been loosely calling a "characteristic of an emotional process" or a "component or constituent of an emotional process." Therefore physiological conditions, certain sensations, behaviors, gestures, verbal expressions, etc., can be expressions of feeling. To recognize an expression of feeling as a genuine expression of feeling and not a sham or a pretence is to recognize an emotion. Such recognition requires skill which we exercise with more or less expertise. But Wittgenstein discusses this skill only with respect to the detection of emotion *in others*:

I am sure, *sure*, that he is not pretending; but some person is not. Can I always convince him?^{2 3}

The "him" refers not to the pretender but to the person who disagrees with the first judgement. The subject of the emotional process, the person who has the emotion or is pretending, is not involved in the dispute. It is here, and in order to account for the facts of psychoanalysis, that this account of the recognition of emotional processes should be extended.

Consider the analytic session. For example the incident reported from *A Case of Hysteria*.^{2 4} It can be seen as a dispute about the genuineness of an emotional process. The analyst, the observer, and the patient who is the subject of that process, are both trying to answer the question: Is Dora in love? In general it can be claimed that in the analytic situation both the analyst and the patient try to determine the emotions of the patient. In some cases the analyst will dispute the claim of the patient to have an emotion. A clear example of this situation is found in *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*^{2 5}

^{2 2} Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p.227e.

^{2 3} Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, p.227e.

^{2 4} 1905e, VII, pp.37,38.

^{2 5} 1909d, X.

where the patient claims to love and respect his father and the analyst claims otherwise.²⁶ In other cases the analyst attributes to the patient an emotion that the patient does not acknowledge as we have seen in the case of Dora. This dispute about the genuineness of expressions of feelings, to use Wittgenstein's phrase; between analyst and subject, gives occasion for the use of 'unconscious emotion' in psychoanalysis. In the dispute the fact that a person is an observer, or the subject of the emotion that is to be recognized, does not provide a privileged position. What does?

Again we can follow Wittgenstein:

Corrector prognoses will generally issue from the judgements of those with better knowledge of mankind.²⁷

Accepting the assumptions of psychoanalysis the better judgements will come from the analyst. On the one hand the trained analyst has himself undergone an analysis which improves his skill at recognizing emotions in himself *and* others. On the other hand, still accepting the assumptions of psychoanalysis, the analyst has the benefit of a theory which provides him with a better knowledge of mankind. Though again, I repeat, this theory is not required to explain the ability to recognize genuine expressions of feelings.

Wittgenstein also provides an incipient account of how the skill to recognize emotions is learnt and taught:

Not . . . by taking a course in it, but through experience.²⁸

The interlocutor asks: "Can someone be a man's teacher in this?" To which the answer is:

Certainly, from time to time he gives him the right *tip*. —This is what 'learning' and 'teaching' are like here.— What one acquires is not a technique; one learns correct judgements. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculating-rules.²⁹

This passage expresses admirably the way the skill to recognize emotions, specifically "unconscious emotions" is taught in psychoanalysis. Not by explicit instruction in the use of a rule, as might be the case with the concept of resistance, but by prompting, by tips. It

²⁶ 1909d, X, pp.180,181.

²⁷ Wittgenstein, op. cit., p.227e.

²⁸ Wittgenstein, op. cit., p.227e.

²⁹ Wittgenstein, op. cit., p.227e.

is the teaching of a skill for self-interpretation.

V

A strong case can be made for saying that Freud did have the understanding of emotional processes that I have been presenting in this paper. Above all Freud was a naturalist and in his discussions of different human phenomena he proceeds by arranging the facts as he knows them in all their complexity. This effort is made quite self-consciously in his two in-depth discussions of anxiety.³⁰ And anxiety for Freud was an emotion.

But an equally strong case can be made for saying that when Freud talks about affects and emotions he only refers to what I have been calling feeling-states, i.e. that which is purely subjective in the emotional process. I think that the reason we get these two opposite impressions of Freud's discussions is that he did not analyze closely linguistic usage. A decision which again he made fully aware. For example in discussing anxiety he says:

I shall avoid going more closely into the question of whether our linguistic usage means the same thing or something clearly different by 'Angst (anxiety),' 'Furcht (fear)' and 'Schreck (fright).'³¹

But he does discuss the usage briefly in that paragraph. 'Anxiety' and 'fear' would not have a different meaning, but would just emphasize different aspects of the affect. We would use the word 'anxiety' to talk about the feeling-state, while the word 'fear' would be used to talk about the object of that state. Matters stand differently however, with respect to 'Schreck (fright)':

It seems that *Schreck*, on the other hand, does have a special sense; it lays emphasis on the effect produced by a danger which is not met by any preparedness for anxiety.³²

The effect that Freud has in mind is the effect that the belief that something is dangerous produces in our behavior and physiological condition. For example, Mullane's case, discussed earlier, of a man running away from a snake that he believes to be poisonous yet who did not feel fear as he ran, would be described by Freud as a man running in fright who did not have anxiety. But such an account of usage does bring problems. Both fright and anxiety have the same

³⁰ 1916-17, XVI, chapter XXV; and 1926d, XX.

³¹ 1916-17, XVI, p.395.

³² 1916-17, XVI, p.395.

object. And if the reaction of fright is not going to be considered an affective reaction what is it? In general: what would the natural expressions of emotional states have to do with our concept of an emotion? It is a disappointment that Freud did not analyze more closely whether our linguistic usage means the same thing or something clearly different in these cases.

Freud comes to characterize emotional processes using terminology which is influenced by his work in physiological psychology. In the dynamic sense, he states, an affect is in any case something "highly composite." He distinguishes two basic components of an emotion which are described in a very general way:

1. Particular motor innervations and discharges.
2. Certain feeling states which include a) the perception of motor activity and b) the feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which give the affect its key note.³³

By 'motor innervations' Freud refers to all kinds of behaviors, including gestures and actions, and verbal behavior. The word 'discharge' is used to indicate physiological manifestations such as secretion of gastric glands, sweat, etc. On the other hand Freud also includes in the concept of an emotion all the subjective feeling-states and sensations we have discussed earlier. And there is still more. To hold the whole combination together Freud postulates³⁴ what he calls "the repetition of some particular significant experience." This notion is itself obscure involving more than one strand. But it makes reference to a *belief* which triggers both the motor innervations and discharges, and the feeling-states. By talking about "the repetition of some particular significant experience" Freud is trying to explain *how* a belief can have such complex effects, and this explanation will appeal to memory, evolution and the general working of animal nature. Freud does conceive emotions as very complex processes involving diverse elements all of which we have singled out in our previous discussion. Emotions are patterns constituted by feeling-states, beliefs, physiological conditions, behaviors, gestures, etc. Freud's evolutionary explanation of how these patterns come about is not needed to make this point. Though it is interesting to note that the original insight was obtained from Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.³⁵ Though there

³³ 1916-17, XVI, pp.395,396. A similar account is given in *Inhibitions Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926d, XX, pp.132-143.)

³⁴ 1916-17, XVI, p.396.

³⁵ Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: Appleton, 1896.)

are many phrases and sentences in Freud's work that leave the impression that Freud analyzed emotions exclusively as feeling-states, when we dig into Freud's detailed discussions of the matter we find that he conceived of emotions as complex natural human processes, if not basically animal processes. Freud does not identify emotions with feeling-states.

VI

Now that we have clear in mind Freud's concept of emotion we can ask: What is an unconscious emotion? We already have part of the answer: an unconscious emotion is a natural process that is not recognized as an emotion by the person who undergoes that emotion. But this answer is not complete. What is missing is the relation of this concept to Freudian theory. That relation is quite simple: we have an unconscious emotion when an emotion is not recognized by the subject because of repression. This last term, 'repression', is a theoretical term. But how is this inability to recognize an emotion in oneself to be explained? What breaks down? In recent discussion two different answers to these questions have been sketched.

Harvey Mullane develops what may be called a naturalistic or causal account of unconscious emotions. According to Mullane an unconscious emotion is an emotional state in which the feeling-component of that state is absent because of repression.³⁶ Mullane conceives emotions as involving three components: feeling-states, behavior and physiological conditions. This account is incomplete, he never mentions beliefs. Furthermore he puts too much emphasis on the absence of the feeling-component in his definition of an unconscious emotion, though in his discussion of various cases he recognizes the fact that the feeling-component of an emotional state may be experienced by the subject and yet an unconscious emotion would be attributed to the subject. This becomes evident in his account of phobias and "free-floating" anxiety. Therefore Mullane's general account should be amended in two ways: His characterization of the nature of emotion must be widened to include beliefs and other phenomena that have been mentioned in this paper. Secondly Mullane's definition of unconscious emotion should make allowances for those cases in which we attribute an unconscious emotion to a subject not because of an absence of an appropriate

³⁶ Mullane, *op. cit.*, pp.182-184.

feeling-state, but because of the inappropriateness of the beliefs that the subject acknowledges. Accepting these changes one might say that an unconscious emotion is an emotion that is not recognized by a subject because it has been *distorted* by repression. The distortion would be a real occurrence. Some element of the pattern would be out of place. A person may not feel, may not behave, may not secrete or may not think like someone who is grieving, yet grieve unconsciously nonetheless. I think that the reason why Mullane does not focus the problem in this way is that he is trying to show that Freud's actual uses of expressions for unconscious emotions are consistent with ordinary usage and, therefore, he does not pay sufficient attention to the conception which theoretically unifies these various uses.

In opposition to this naturalistic or causal account of unconscious emotion a different explanation of the concept has been elaborated by Michael Fox.³⁷ According to Fox an unconscious emotion is a misidentified feeling-state, not a distorted natural process. I shall call Fox's account an epistemological explanation. Repression works because it inhibits our abilities to recognize emotions, but the emotion itself is not altered by repression. It is interesting to note that this epistemological explanation of the concept is compatible with a different account of the nature of emotions. Our capacity to recognize an emotion might be inhibited by repression whether or not we conceive of emotions just as feeling-states or as complex natural processes.

In this paper I have been arguing for an account of *emotions* that is more like Mullane's than Fox's. But this does not mean that a naturalistic explanation of *unconscious emotions* is to be preferred over an epistemological explanation. It is possible that both explanations might be required. In some cases the natural process may be impaired. But to decide this issue we cannot concern ourselves just with usage in clinical practice. The problem is theoretical and has to do with the theory of repression. How does repression work? But this is a problem in psychoanalytic theory which cannot be included in the scope of this paper, but should be included in a discussion of the merits of what I have been calling the naturalistic and epistemological explanations of unconscious emotions. In any case I hope to have clarified somewhat the concept

³⁷ Michael Fox, "On Unconscious Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, XXXIV (December 1973). The discussion between Mullane and Fox has continued in the same journal. See: H. Mullane, "Unconscious and Disguised Emotions" XXXVI (March 1976), and M. Fox's rejoinder, "Unconscious Emotions: A Reply to Professor Mullane."

unconscious emotion as understood by Freud, and to have shown that it is neither a category mistake nor a contradiction in terms.

Georgetown University