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Toward an Improved Understanding of Sigmund Freud's Conception of Consciousness

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This article seeks to render Sigmund Freud's unfamiliar conception of consciousness more evident and accessible; because Freud was the greatest theorist psychology has so far known, and because present-day psychologists stand in special need of a variety of conceptual frameworks in whose terms they can give coherent and cogent expression to their different hypotheses pertaining to consciousness. The three main sections respectively address (a) Freud's complex property of intrinsic consciousness, which characterizes each instance of every conscious psychical process and includes qualitative content, direct (reflective) awareness, and tertiary consciousness; (b) the cognitive contents of purportedly pure, or contentless, emotions and feelings; and (c) certain limits and variations of Freud's intrinsic consciousness. A special effort is made to be faithful to Freud's own conception of consciousness; though the discussion includes clarification, explication, and extension of parts of his conception that are undeveloped, summarily stated, or implicit. In fact, Freud's conception of consciousness is treated here as something very much alive today. Implications are drawn and developed that Freud probably never thought of. However, note that the conception presented does not belong to the author of this article. Rather, I present here Sigmund Freud's own conception of consciousness as he might have developed it judging from the part of it that he did express.

Sigmund Freud's conception of consciousness is a part of what is, by far, the most influential theory in the history of psychology. For this reason alone, his conception of consciousness should be better known to psychologists than it currently is. Freud's conception is very rarely mentioned in the literature and, often, psychologists seem surprised to learn of its existence. For another reason as well, Freud's conception of consciousness should be better known to psychologists. Following a long period of self-censorship, psychologists are now permitting themselves to discuss consciousness quite openly in their scientific publications, at their professional meetings, and in

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their classrooms. Moreover, academic freedom has recently been extended to psychologists of consciousness, and some of them now hold important university positions. (Revealing comment on the oppressive situation vis-à-vis consciousness that existed in psychology only a short time ago can be found in, for example, Hebb [1974, p. 17], Jaynes [1976, p. 15], and Mandler [1975, p. 229].)

But the long compulsory silence about consciousness continues to have debilitating scientific effects. Psychologists at large stand in special need of a variety of conceptual frameworks in whose terms they can give coherent and cogent expression to their different hypotheses pertaining to consciousness. I should mention that, at present, addressing the problems of consciousness still may carry some cost for a psychologist, though such cost is usually far less than it used to be. We still have a distance to go before we become a community of free scientists—though, every day, we are making progress toward that desirable goal. I urge all psychologists to oppose from the start any effort to unify us, to nationalize us, or to turn us into a single institution. The more we speak with one voice, the less total freedom of inquiry we will have, though I admit that monolithic organization may turn out to be lucrative for many.

In the new intellectual environment of greater freedom to address difficult psychological problems, Freud's conception of consciousness will have, I believe, a special place. After all, does not this conception belong to the greatest theorist the science of psychology has so far known? Before a psychologist proposes a "solution" to "the problem of consciousness," should the psychologist not briefly review Freud's conception and, perhaps, compare and contrast any new conception with the one Freud worked with for so many years? However, to the present time, few authors who address the topic of consciousness acknowledge the existence of Freud's conception of their subject matter. With hope of rectifying this distorted state of affairs, I have been working, in a series of articles, to give more complete expression to Freud's conception of consciousness. Referring to these articles, Smith (1989) commented on the "surprisingly central place" of Freud's conception of consciousness within Freud's general theory (Natsoulas, 1984, 1985, 1989b, 1989c, 1991). As well, let me justify my efforts by quoting Rapaport's (1960) assessment of Freud's conception of consciousness. A prominent psychoanalytic theorist, Rapaport studied Freud's general theory as thoroughly as anyone, and is among the few authors to have recognized Freud's work in the nascent psychology of consciousness. (Additional examples from that small number and well worth consulting are Gill [1963], Laplanche and Pontalis [1973], and Nagel [1974].) Rapaport (1960) wrote,

> Some psychologists have eschewed all reference to consciousness, i.e., to introspective reports, while others have made a more or less deliberate use of introspective reports in trying to discover the laws governing behavior. But it seems that Freud was the only one who proposed a psychological theory to explain the phenomenon of the subjective

> conscious experience. I would like to point out that whether the theory proposed by Freud is valid or not, the very program it implies, namely, the exploration of the processes underlying the phenomenon of subjective conscious experience by psychological methods, is one of his most significant and most overlooked contributions to psychological theory. (p. 227)

In the process of trying to make Freud's significant and overlooked contribution more evident and accessible, I have found that his conception of consciousness reveals greater depths the more it is pursued. As I study Freud's conception, and teach and write about it, further important implications emerge and require, in their turn, exploration and explication. Thus, the present article corresponds to a long footnote near the end of the fifth article of my series on "Freud and Consciousness" (Natsoulas, 1991). This previous footnote can serve to introduce the dimensions of Freud's conception of consciousness that I shall consider in the present article:

> Since all feelings and emotions are conscious psychical processes, it follows . . . that all feelings and emotions possess cognitive (as well as qualitative) content. However, people sometimes report [cognitively] contentless feelings or emotions. For example, see Lewin (1965) on the "blank dream of an emotion" (p. 30) and Husserl (1900/1970) on "sensations of pleasure and pain that continue though the act-characters built upon them have lapsed" (pp. 574–575). These are not claims that nonconscious feelings and emotions occur. The people who report the occurrence to them of feelings or emotions lacking all cognitive content must have, in order to report as they do, conscious immediate awareness of the respective feeling or emotion. Therefore, it follows from the Freudian thesis of intrinsic consciousness that the emotion or feeling has, at least, a content expressible by the meaningful utterance "In this very experience, I feel this" or "In this very experience, this feeling is experienced." According to the final section of Natsoulas (1989c), such vague cognitive content can result from failure by emotion or feeling in the perception–consciousness system to attract hypercathexis from psi [i.e., from the nonconscious part of the psychical apparatus]. Or such vague cognitive content may result from defense, as Arlow (1977, p. 166) proposed from clinical observations. It would be very useful to a censorship operating upon conscious psychical processes to be able to restrict the hypercathexis of an emotion or feeling. Although the emotion or feeling might continue qua qualitative process, its unrepressed cognitive content would turn vague, in the above sense, until hypercathexis was resumed or the emotion or feeling came to an end. (Natsoulas, 1991, p. 100)

The purpose of this previous footnote was to connect, in passing, (a) the Freudian implication that how one is consciously aware of an emotion constitutes its cognitive content with (b) a conclusion that I had reached earlier about how Freud's complex property of intrinsic consciousness varies (Natsoulas, 1989c). I return to this conclusion in the present article.

About Freud's conception of consciousness, I write neither as competitor or reviser. I do not propose a conception superior to Freud's relatively defective one, nor do I propose to remove the defects so that Freud's conception might better perform its functions. I write about Freud's conception completely sympathetically, in a way that would meet with his approval, I

believe, as a statement of his position. Some of what I clarify and explicate in Freud's conception of consciousness is, to begin with, undeveloped, implicit, or summarily stated. At such points, I do not bend Freud's claims in a direction that will gain assent from present-day psychologists. I do not try to show that, after all, a certain view of Freud's is like one of our own, praising both him and ourselves for the convergence. Frankly, I prefer a controversial and provocative Freud to one compatible with the psychological views that prevail in this part of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, despite this preference, I try to be as faithful as I can to Freud's conception of consciousness. At the same time, Freud's conception is treated here as something very much alive today, not as a historical curiosity. Implications that Freud probably never thought of are drawn and developed to some degree. It is important to note that the conception of consciousness presented here does not belong to the author of this article. Rather, it is Freud's conception of consciousness that I present here as Freud might have developed it judging from the part of it that he did express.

Pluralistic Approach

This respectful and constructive treatment of another psychologist's thought is part of what I call "the pluralistic approach." In concluding this introductory section, let me proffer a brief, incomplete characterization of the pluralistic approach (which is more fully described in Natsoulas [1990]). This approach is, for one thing, antithetical to the "eliminative" approach that is so prevalent in present-day psychology. The eliminative approach seeks to invent, discover, or identify the one conception of a particular subject matter that possesses the fewest defects, and to reject alternative conceptions as being too defective to be true to the phenomena of interest. The coexistence of mutually incompatible conceptions of a subject matter is believed undesirable for the science; and so, the first order of business is to develop grounds for discarding all but one of the incompatible conceptions. In contrast, the irenic pluralistic approach does not even call for the elimination of the antithetical eliminative approach—though pluralistic psychologists will oppose all efforts by eliminative psychologists and others to restrict or narrow the allowable approaches to a topic.

In the present article, the pluralistic approach amounts to concentrating on a single conception, with motivation to see where it will lead while restraining rejective impulses that may well up. The pluralistic approach's general (though not uniform) attitude is that rejection is premature until much more is known about a conception, as well as about the subject matter for which it is proposed as an account. Even when a great deal more is known, it may be wise not to try to eliminate a conception from considera-

tion, because one cannot predict how it might later get modified and improved. According to the pluralistic approach, different conceptions of the same subject matter are desirable for the science of psychology. (See the emphasis in Natsoulas [1990] on a psychologist's having in mind a multiple rather than singular conception of any phenomenon that he or she is studying—and not for the purpose of eliminating all but one of them.) When one achieves a rather complete grasp of a particular conception, such as Freud's conception of consciousness, its rejection for the defects it contains is not as advisable as encouraging its improvement and fostering its continued circulation in the science.

Freud's Complex Property of Intrinsic Consciousness

According to Freud (e.g., 1915/1957, p. 177; 1923/1961, p. 19), all feelings and emotions are conscious psychical processes in all instances of their occurrence. The same is not true of thoughts or wishes—this is a well known fact about Freud's general theory; both conscious and nonconscious thoughts and wishes occur. The conscious ones transpire at a different anatomical location in the psychical apparatus than where the nonconscious ones take place. A psychical process now occurring in the perception–consciousness system of the psychical apparatus must be occurring consciously. A psychical process now occurring in "psi" (i.e., elsewhere in the psychical apparatus than the perception–consciousness system) must be occurring nonconsciously. Feelings and emotions are proximately produced by (nonconscious) psychical processes that proceed more deeply than the perception–consciousness system (Freud, e.g., 1923/1961, pp. 21–22). But all feelings and emotions themselves are realized, without exception, in the perception–consciousness system. Only there do conscious psychical processes take place (Freud, 1938/1964, p. 196); and emotions and feelings cannot but be conscious:

> It is surely the essence of an emotion that we should be aware of it, i.e., that it should become known to consciousness. Thus the possibility of the attribute of unconsciousness would be completely excluded as far as emotions, feelings, and affects are concerned. (Freud, 1915/1957, p. 177)

Conscious psychical processes (including emotions and feelings, as well as, for example, perceptual experiences and dream experiences; see Natsoulas [1984, pp. 205–206]) exemplify in all their instances of occurrence Freud's complex property of intrinsic consciousness. Each instance includes as part of its occurrence, that is, as part of its own very structure as a psychical process, the following three features: (a) "presence to consciousness," (b) "direct (reflective) awareness" and (c) "tertiary consciousness" (Natsoulas, 1989c, pp. 620–623). In Freud's account, these three features are a single package.

Any instance of any psychical process either exemplifies all three or none of them. There are no intermediate cases.

Sandler and Joffe (1969), Smith (1986, 1989), and Wollheim (1984), among others, have presented views worth contrasting to Freud's in the latter regard (see Natsoulas [1989c, 1991]). Here are two quotations showing some of this contrast:

> Experiential content of any sort, including feelings, *can be either conscious or unconscious*. Implicit in this is the view that the individual may "know" his own experiential content outside consciousness, that ideas can be experienced and feelings felt outside conscious awareness; and that he does not know that he unconsciously "knows." (Sandler and Joffe, 1969, p. 82; contrast Gillett [1987, p. 542])

> It is very possible that our own brains work in this way so that every human mental state [including every unconscious one] includes a self-monitoring structure. (Smith, 1986, p. 153)

Thus, Sandler and Joffe (1969, p. 82) held that both conscious and nonconscious psychical processes exemplify "presence to consciousness"; also, both kinds of psychical process are objects of their owner's "direct (reflective) awareness." And Smith (1986, p. 153) conjectured that all conscious and nonconscious psychical processes might give to their owner "direct (reflective) awareness" each of itself, though conscious and nonconscious psychical processes differ in their "presence to consciousness."

First Feature

Next I present the three features of Freud's complex property of intrinsic consciousness. All conscious psychical processes possess qualitative content each time that they occur (Freud, e.g., 1895/1964, p. 308; 1900/1953, p. 615). Conscious psychical processes are qualitative experiential gestalts, whether they are sensations, perceptions, imagery, or hallucinations, or thoughts, judgments, or wishes, or any other kind of psychical process. The individual experiences (lives) conscious physical processes and, in their own very occurrence, he or she is acquainted with them. Qualitative content is the first feature of Freud's complex property of intrinsic consciousness. This feature (probably somewhat amplified; see below) is what Freud (1912/1958) meant, when he included in his property of intrinsic consciousness, a conscious psychical process's "presence to consciousness," distinguishing this feature from the person's "direct (reflective) awareness" (in my term) of the conscious psychical process.

Are these two features completely distinct from each other? Is acquaintance with the qualitative content of a psychical process a part of the pro-

cess's "presence to consciousness" or a part of the person's "direct (reflective) awareness" of the process. I raise this question for expository purposes.

The term "presence to consciousness" suggests more than what James (1890) referred to as the "feltness" of a feeling, or a feeling's "sensitive body" (see Natsoulas [1990]), more than the owner's simply having the feeling with no, even primitive, apprehension of its quality. A conscious psychical process has presence to its owner. Not only does a conscious psychical process occur as a durational component, or temporal section, of its owner's stream of consciousness, not only is the conscious psychical process's owner directly (reflectively) aware of the psychical process, in the sense of conceptually bringing it under a heading without inference, immediately; but also, a conscious psychical process "appears" to its owner; it is phenomenally "there" for him or her. As Wollheim (1984) expressed it, the owner of a conscious psychical process is "exposed" to the conscious psychical process in a way (see below) that the owner is not "exposed" to his or her nonconscious psychical processes. Smith (1989) would seem to be referring to the same feature, the qualitative presence of conscious psychical processes:

> The phenomenal quality of an experience is a property that involves the overall structure of the experience *qua* conscious. The various features of the experience are *phenomenally* present in the mind, "appearing" in consciousness somewhat as if a light were radiating from them. When the light is on, the mental process is conscious, in all its structure; and when the light is off, the mental process is unconscious. (p. 97)

> It is only by experiencing consciousness that we come to know—by *acquaintance*—the phenomenal qualities that are in part definitive of consciousness . . . . That is why we feel we cannot *say* much about qualia: to say something interesting is to formulate a piece of theory, expressing knowledge by description, which outruns the deliverance of inner awareness. (pp. 97–98)

However, the last sentence of the first excerpt could be misleading. One should not take the sentence to correspond exactly to Freud's conception of consciousness, as one might if influenced by a frequent misinterpretation of Freud—consciousness as analogous to a searchlight—due partly to Freud's own unfortunate metaphors. Freud's conception does not allow the same psychical process's occurring sometimes consciously and sometimes nonconsciously, as though the process proceeds sometimes in darkness and sometimes while illuminated by a beam of consciousness. (Psychologists who will cite the "becoming–consciousness" of nonconscious psychical processes, against my last point, are referred to my extended discussion of Freud's "derived consciousness" [Natsoulas, 1985].) Conscious and nonconscious psychical processes differ from each other intrinsically, in their constitution, though their cognitive contents be similar in some cases. Thus, only conscious psychical processes possess qual-

itativeness ("phenomenal quality," as Smith called it; Freud, e.g., 1915/1957, p. 202), or any of the three features of intrinsic consciousness.[1]

Second Feature

The second feature of Freud's intrinsic consciousness is the owner's direct (reflective) awareness (of every instance of every conscious psychical process in his or her psychical apparatus). Certainly, acquaintance with qualitative content is part of such awareness. Probably, the difference between this acquaintance and direct (reflective) awareness of the psychical process corresponds to, on the one hand, a conceptualizing consciousness and, on the other hand, a consciousness that is a more direct encounter with its "object."

One is naturally reminded here, as Smith (1989; above) was, of James's (1890) famous distinction between "knowledge–about" and "knowledge of acquaintance." Wollheim (1984), too, implied this distinction in a quite relevant context. I mention Wollheim at this point, as I just did James, only to highlight the distinction between being directly (reflectively) aware of a conscious psychical process and having acquaintance with its qualitative content.

As Freud did not (see Natsoulas [1991]), Wollheim introduced unconscious emotions, and distinguished them from conscious emotions by emphasizing the following: whereas unconscious emotions are no less qualitative (i.e., possess no less "subjectivity") than conscious emotions (cf. Sandler and Joffe, 1969), conscious emotions are "registered" in a different way; their owner is "exposed" to conscious emotions in such a way that he or she can acquire "the concrete psychological concept under which [the emotion] falls" (Wollheim, 1984, p. 48). Thus, Wollheim would seem to have held that a conceptualizing direct (reflective) awareness depends on acquaintance with the emotion; and this acquaintance is distinct from the emotion's "subjectivity" (Wollheim), or "phenomenally appearing structure" (Smith), or "quality" (Freud). Failure to "register" the emotion's quality would be a case of something's being "given" in a psychical process without its being "taken" therein even minimally.

Still, it is not as though the first feature of intrinsic consciousness (i.e., presence to consciousness, including acquaintance with the qualitative dimension) as against the second feature (i.e., direct [reflective] awareness)

[1] Note that the phenomenal quality of a psychical process cannot be bestowed on the process in the inconceivable way "appendage" theorists sometimes propose, namely, by the psychical process's producing some kind of effect, by means of a distinct, consequent process (cf. Husserl [1900/1970, p. 571] on intentionality). See Freud (1895/1964, p. 311) for his use of the word *appendage* to characterize theories holding, contrary to his own, that consciousness can be accounted for by something appended to a conscious psychical process, another process associated with the conscious psychical process's occurrence (cf. e.g., Rosenthal's [1986] modified appendage theory [Natsoulas, 1989c]).

could somehow suffice for intrinsic consciousness. Mere acquaintance with the quality of one's emotion or feeling is not awareness of (a) the qualitative content *as anything*, for example, as the content of a psychical process or experience. Nor is it awareness of (b) the emotion or feeling as a whole, as a unitary occurrence; nor awareness of (c) the emotion or feeling as part of something else, for example, as part of the stream of experience, or as part of the person himself or herself. Moreover, mere acquaintance with the qualitative content of one's emotion or feeling would be a consciousness of which its owner knew nothing—which Freud considered an impossible kind of consciousness and not worth discussing. (See Natsoulas [1989b] for discussion and Freud references.) This brings me to the third feature of intrinsic consciousness, though I need to return to the second feature.

Third Feature

I call the third feature "tertiary consciousness" (Natsoulas, 1989b) to distinguish it from what I think of as primary awareness and secondary awareness. These kinds of awareness are, first, our awareness of matters lying outside the stream of consciousness or the present section of the stream of consciousness and, second, our immediate awareness of being so aware. The concept of tertiary consciousness refers to our immediate apprehension of a conscious psychical process as conscious, that is, as the psychical process of which we are directly (reflectively) aware. Although we can have conscious and nonconscious thoughts about a psychical process, the only kind of direct (reflective) awareness of a psychical process that occurs, according to Freud, is the conscious kind. There never occurs a nonconscious direct (reflective) awareness of a psychical process, such as that postulated by Sandler and Joffe (1969, p. 82; see quotation above). Thus, Freud ruled out the kind of nonconscious immediate apprehension that Armstrong (1968) believed performs the following useful function:

> On a particular occasion we are aware of a particular mental state, but suppose that this awareness is not linked up very closely with the rest of our mental life. Suppose, that is, that we are introspectively aware, but unaware of that introspective awareness. (We might call it "subliminal introspection.") Such "unconscious self–consciousness" might provide feedback required for teleological mental activity that goes on without our being aware. (p. 164)

In contrast, according to the Freudian perspective, any instance of an emotion or feeling, and any instance of any conscious psychical process, makes its owner aware of it as a conscious occurrence. The owner of an emotion (a) is acquainted with the emotion's presence to consciousness, (b) is directly (reflectively) aware of the emotion (as . . . ; to be addressed), *and* (c) is aware

of being so aware. Short of the latter awareness [c], being conscious of a psychical process would be analogous to unwittingly perceiving something, that is, perceiving it without having any inkling of perceiving or experiencing it. Consider, too, that we could not report on our direct (reflective) awareness, on what we directly apprehended of our stream of consciousness, unless we were aware of this apprehension's taking place. Armstrong (1968) agrees on the importance of tertiary consciousness; requiring comment, though not here, is Freud's disagreeing with the proposition that some psychical processes are lacking only the third feature of intrinsic consciousness (see Natsoulas, 1989b).

Return to Second Feature

In Freud's conception of consciousness, primary awareness and secondary awareness, as identified above, are not different features of Freud's intrinsic consciousness. The reason is Freud's indirect realism:

> A psychical process that occurs in the consciousness system must be a consciousness of its own qualities. Only thereby, indirectly, may it be a consciousness of something beyond itself. In reply, someone might point out statements in Freud (1900/1953) holding consciousness to be like a sense organ that "perceives data that arise from elsewhere" (p. 144). However, throughout his work, inner and outer perceptions were treated as representational. Whatever we are conscious of is in the first place internal to the consciousness itself, though, often, a content is taken for a special one of the "perception's" causes. Speaking for Freud, let me say that if consciousness is like a sense organ, it makes us conscious most immediately of the qualitative excitation produced in it, just as does any sense organ [according to Freud] that has a psychical system as part of it. (Natsoulas, 1989b, pp. 114–115)

For example, one is visually perceptually aware of a certain tree in a certain garden through acquaintance with its qualitative effects on one's perception–consciousness system. All qualitative awareness of something beyond the stream of consciousness is actually awareness of the qualitative awareness itself as something else. (Cf. Natsoulas, 1989a, p. 95: "According to [Wilfrid] Sellars, all of our perceptual consciousness is a systematic though adaptationally extremely useful illusion in which our sensory states are taken by us as environmental perceptual objects.") The second feature of Freud's intrinsic consciousness is a conscious psychical process's making its owner either aware of the psychical process or aware of something presented or represented by means of the psychical process. (Again, tertiary consciousness is essential in either case: how can you tell what you're aware of if you're "blind" to being aware of it?)

The Cognitive Content of Pure or "Contentless" Emotions and Feelings

Since all feelings and emotions are conscious psychical processes in every instance of their occurrence, all emotions and feelings possess cognitive con-

tent in every instance of their occurrence. This is a consequence of the Freudian view that consciousness is an intrinsic property of all instances of all conscious psychical processes and includes, as one of its features, direct (reflective) awareness of each particular occurrence as itself exemplifying intrinsic consciousness.

Thus, Freud ruled out, in effect, the occurrence of any purely qualitative psychical process; to countenance such a process would be a contradiction: a conscious psychical process of which its owner would have no awareness. Rather, the owner is directly (reflectively) aware of, for example, any feeling or emotion of his or hers *as* a feeling or emotion or *as* something else, for example, *as* a state of the body outside the psychical apparatus. Such awareness–as is necessarily conceptual; it brings the feeling or emotion under a heading or concept. The owner of the feeling or emotion is aware of it, each time that it occurs, as being such-and-such or so-and-so. All conscious psychical processes are, at least, conscious awarenesses of themselves, and so possess cognitive content even when they do not present or represent anything else or do not seem to present or represent anything else. As awarenesses, conscious psychical processes involve more than just qualitative presence to consciousness. In addition to acquaintance with qualitative content, a conscious psychical process gives its owner immediate awareness (i.e., direct [reflective] awareness) of the conscious psychical process as a psychical process, or as an experience, as well as immediate awareness (i.e., tertiary consciousness) of the conscious psychical process as conscious, or as a conscious experience.

Although, according to the Freudian perspective, all feelings and emotions have cognitive content in all their particular instances of occurrence, people sometimes report "contentless" emotions or feelings. Is what they are reporting evidence against Freud, in favor of the existence of nonconscious emotions or feelings? That is, do those feelings and emotions lack content only seemingly, because their owner has less access to them than to conscious emotions and feelings?

If one assumes the existence of emotions or feelings proceeding in psi (i.e., in the psychical apparatus but outside the perception–consciousness system), which Freud denied, one can picture the purportedly contentless cases as follows. An emotion or feeling occurs in psi and causes to occur, in the perception–consciousness system, one or more conscious thoughts to the effect that something of the emotion's or feeling's kind as a psychical process is now occurring in the psychical apparatus. However, the emotion or feeling itself is, *ex hypothesi*, completely nonconscious. The owner of the nonconscious emotion or feeling has neither acquaintance with it nor any kind of direct (reflective) awareness of it.

In Freud's account, a separate conscious apprehension, or presentiment, that something affective is going on in one's psychical apparatus is not a kind

of acquaintance or direct (reflective) awareness—except of the conscious apprehension, or presentiment, itself. Thus, one may consciously and accurately think about one's awful unconscious (repressed) wishes without these wishes either turning into conscious wishes or "becoming-conscious" (Natsoulas, 1985, pp. 211–212). In some conceptions of consciousness, excluding Freud's of course, such "appendages" (to the psychical process of interest) as are those thoughts and presentiments that I just mentioned, are all that our immediate apprehensions of our psychical processes amount to. Thus, any nonconscious psychical process changes status to a conscious psychical process on those occasions when its occurrence produces such thoughts, provided that the thoughts manage to have specific reference to the psychical process that they make conscious in this way. However, according to Freud's conception of consciousness, no amount of associated process attached to a nonconscious psychical process can transform such a process into a conscious one even momentarily. Suppose that a nonconscious psychical process occurs, whereupon one has thoughts about this psychical process, thoughts that have the nonconscious process among their causes. Suppose also that an electric storm occurs, whereupon one has thoughts about it. These thoughts have the storm among their causes. From Freud's perspective, neither the storm nor the nonconscious psychical process changes into a conscious occurrence by virtue of its effects, though these effects include thoughts about it.

In a set of "Reflections on Affect," Lewin (1965) was led to the "old question: can there be 'pure affect,' one without intellectual content or idea" (p. 29)? Among other cases of evidently "pure affect," Lewin mentioned "the blank dream of an emotion." This is an emotion that occurs during sleep and lacks all "content." Here is how Lewin (1965) described it:

> More common than the daytime mystic experiences are certain blank dreams of pure affect. In such nonvisual dreams the sleeper "sees" no dream and has "no ideas" but feels a strong emotion. All such dreams have two characteristics: the emotion in them is intense, whether it be bliss or terror, and there is no projection of dream picture or dream action onto a screen, so that the dreamer and dream are as if one. No Cartesian visual *res cogitans* is there to look at the *res extensa* of a dream picture, and the sense of ego boundaries is lost. The dreamer is "bathed" in the contentless dream. The dream observer (system Cs.) is not detached from an "objectified" dream. (p. 30)

Clearly, such emotions are conscious psychical processes in Freud's sense. Lewin's blank dreams of an emotion cannot be relegated to psi, as I contemplated above. The person's immediate apprehensions of them are not presentiments popping up in the perception–consciousness system. In such cases as Lewin described, the individual consciously feels, has acquaintance with the qualitativeness of his or her emotion, and more (see below). There is, of course, something very common that is absent in such cases, but its absence does not challenge the validity of Freud's account.

As Lewin's brief discussion (beyond the above quoted passage) shows, psychoanalytic explanation of such "contentless" emotions involves reference to rather complex nonconscious psychical processes, which themselves have plenty of the kind of content missing in the case of those pure emotions. Thus, when Lewin calls certain occurring instances of emotion "pure," because they lack cognitive content, it is their own structure as conscious psychical processes, and not the psychical context of their occurrence, that Lewin is characterizing as "pure." In general, a particular occurrence of any conscious psychical process is part of a pattern of psychical processes of which some are nonconscious and may have cognitive content very different from the cognitive content of the particular conscious psychical process of interest.

Although to locate the content of a conscious psychical process outside this process is a mistake, this mistake does occur in psychoanalytic writings, as when conscious psychical processes are given an interpretation in terms of unconscious psychical processes. Thus, conscious psychical processes are described as having both a conscious and an unconscious content, the latter occurring necessarily outside the perception–consciousness system. I suggest that it is erroneous to suppose, for example, that Lewin's "contentless" emotions possess nonconscious content, namely, the content of whatever nonconscious psychical process is mainly responsible for the emotion's occurrence. A conscious psychical process has its own cognitive content, even in the "contentless" case (see below), and it only obscures our understanding of how the psychical apparatus functions according to Freud when we assign to a conscious psychical process a meaning or content that it does not itself possess. The same would no less apply on the supposition that the conscious psychical process that receives psychoanalytic interpretation is itself lacking in conscious cognitive content. However, it may well help to understand the function of a conscious psychical process if one relates its content (or lack thereof) to the contents of its nonconscious psychical causes. In this way, one can determine what the trend(s) or direction(s) or goal(s) of the psychical apparatus may be at the point when the conscious psychical process of interest occurs.

The cognitive content of a psychical process is internal to the process though the process may present or represent something else. The cognitive function of the process is made possible by the content that the process itself possesses. For example, in having a certain particular conscious psychical process occur in my perception–consciousness system, I may have a visual perceptual experience of a particular tree in a particular garden. But the content of my psychical process, as distinct from its object in the environment (which the process presents), belongs entirely to the particular conscious psychical process.

Lewin's characterization of such emotions as he referred to in the passage quoted above is based on reports from analysands and others who have experienced such emotions. For them to report on their blank dreams of pure emotion, their respective conscious psychical processes must have included in them, according to the Freudian perspective, not only direct (reflective) awareness of the process but also tertiary consciousness. (I have already suggested the latter for the general case, both above and elsewhere; Natsoulas, 1989b). According to Lewin, these reports give us reason to believe that the respective conscious psychical processes do not possess any visual qualitative content, and do possess terror–qualitative content, or bliss–qualitative content, or the like. However, these conscious psychical processes are not purely qualitative, as Lewin would seem to imply. Rather, those who report blank dreams of emotions have acquaintance with the qualitative dimension of these emotions, and they have conscious direct (reflective) awareness of the conscious psychical process as being of a certain kind—though the kind is not specified in terms of external states of affairs that the psychical process presents or represents; rather, the owner of the emotion is aware of it only as a conscious experience, or as an emotion of a certain qualitative kind of which he or she is aware of himself or herself as undergoing. Since, according to Freud's conception of consciousness, direct (reflective) awareness and tertiary consciousness are not distinct from the pure emotion, pure emotion must have cognitive content. That is, one has intrinsic conscious awareness of the emotion as being of a certain qualitative kind.

Freud's teacher Brentano (1911/1973) would say that the emotion itself is the emotion's "secondary object." But in the case of "contentless" emotions there is no "primary object" in Brentano's sense; that is, there is nothing beyond the emotion on which the emotion is directed. Nevertheless, Brentano's distinction between the primary and the secondary object of a conscious psychical process remains useful. For example, the blank dream of an emotion of terror is not about its secondary object, the emotion, in the same way as other emotions of terror are about that which the person is terrified of.

Husserl (1900/1970) begins the following passage by mentioning that which is, in fact, the missing element in pure or "contentless" emotion, awareness of something or other beyond the stream. Husserl ends the passage with a reference to a pure feeling of pleasure, in Lewin's sense of "pure."

> A concrete and therefore complex experience, [joy] does not merely hold in its unity an idea of the happy event and an act–character of liking which relates to [the happy event]: a sensation of pleasure attaches to the idea, a sensation at once seen and located as an emotional excitement in the psycho-physical feeling–subject, and also as an objective property—the event seems as though bathed in a rosy gleam . . . . When the facts which provoke pleasure sink into the background, are no longer apperceived as emotionally coloured, and perhaps cease to be intentional objects at all, the pleasurable excitement may linger on for a while: it may itself be felt as agreeable. Instead of

> representing a pleasant property of the object, it is referred merely to the feeling–subject, or is itself presented and pleases. (pp. 574—575)

Accordingly, the pleasurable excitation may itself be presented without being referred to anything beyond the conscious psychical process itself, not even to "the psycho-physical feeling–subject." That is, the pleasurable excitation may occur in a nonlocalized form, neither localized in the environment nor in the body outside the nervous system. The pleasurable excitation may be taken as what it is in fact, an experience, or section of the stream of consciousness. In order for this conscious psychical process to be "presented" and taken pleasure in, the person must have conscious awareness of it "from the inside," that is, in the psychical process itself, which includes awareness of it as well as acquaintance with and awareness of the qualitative dimension of the process.

Limits and Variation of Intrinsic Consciousness

Freud's conception of intrinsic consciousness does not entail equally good consciousness in all instances of conscious psychical processes. The cognitive content of such an instance may refer to no more than the fact of the instance's conscious occurrence. That is, the cognitive content of an instance of a conscious psychical process may be merely such as is expressible with the utterance "In this very experience I consciously experience this," or "In this very experience this is consciously experienced" (Natsoulas, 1989c; cf. Smith, 1986; I have inserted "consciously" in these two utterances as a way of expressing the dimension of cognitive content corresponding to tertiary consciousness). In a previous article (Natsoulas, 1989c), I wrote of variation in intrinsic consciousness in terms of how much information was provided to the owner about an instance of a conscious psychical process due to this process's exemplifying the property of intrinsic consciousness. There is a respect in which no such variation is possible. I shall come to this respect by way of a series of comments on limits and informational variations of intrinsic consciousness according to the Freudian perspective.

1. It does not follow from Freud's intrinsicality hypothesis regarding consciousness that conscious psychical processes are, as it were, transparent to their owner, that their owner can "see" them through and through. In marked contrast to such a conception of intrinsic consciousness, according to which a psychical process is fully grasped in all its characteristics, Freud (1895/1964) argued that we should first think of all neuronal processes (including psychical processes) as completely lacking in consciousness, that is, as completely closed to their owner's direct (reflective) awareness of their properties and occurrences. After this initial assumption, we can begin to

state what, exceptionally, about psychical processes the person does have immediate apprehension of. According to Freud, we would need to explain, in time, why a certain property of conscious psychical processes is directly apprehended by its owner while another property cannot be. One fact of this matter is that we do not have any direct awareness of the neuronal nature of our psychical processes.

2. Freud's (1895/1964) tendency may have been to exaggerate how little we directly apprehend about our conscious psychical processes. At one point, he suggested that our direct (reflective) awareness of our conscious psychical processes gives us awareness only of qualities, or qualitative contents (cf. Freud, 1900/1953, p. 615):

> It follows from the postulate of consciousness providing neither complete nor trustworthy knowledge of the neuronal processes, that these are in the first instance to be regarded to their whole extent as unconscious and are to be inferred like other natural things. In that case, however, a place has to be found for the content of consciousness in our quantitive processes. Consciousness gives us [only] what are called *qualities*—sensations which are *different* in a great multiplicity of ways and whose *difference* is distinguished according to its relations with the external world. Within this difference there are series, similarities and so on, but there are in fact no quantities in it. (Freud, 1895/1964, p. 308).

In a previous article (Natsoulas, 1985, pp. 200–205), I argued that there must be, psychologically, more to a conscious psychical process than qualities; and more to its owner's immediate apprehension of a conscious psychical process than mere acquaintance with qualities. I argued that conscious psychical processes have cognitive content, in the sense that they present or represent (or at least seem to present or represent) states of affairs beyond the stream of consciousness. But I could not see that Freud's account allowed for this obvious fact. Freud had repeatedly insisted on separating all conscious psychical processes from, as it were, the cognitive machinery of traces, meanings, associations, and the like. On the one side of an anatomical divide, there was the continuously clean slate of consciousness; on the other side were the meanings of psychical processes, stored and activated in psi. I wondered how mere causal relations between nonconscious and conscious psychical processes could transfer from the first to the second any kind of cognitive content. I believe that this remains a problem for Freud's account (see Natsoulas [1985]) though I have proceeded as though it were already solved. Accordingly, the conscious psychical processes, though they occur in the always fresh perception–consciousness system, give their owner not only acquaintance with their qualities but also awareness of states of affairs beyond the particular conscious psychical process.

3. Something further can be added here concerning a possible cognitive dimension to the qualities that consciousness gives us according to Freud.

(a) Let me call attention, first, to the relation between qualities and the external world. What I have to say in this regard about Freud's view can be usefully compared to the relevant views of another indirect realist, who also claimed, as Freud did, that our perceptual awareness of the external world is mediated (better: made possible) by our direct (reflective) awareness of psychical processes (Sellars, e.g., 1963, p. 94). (b) Then, let me mention Smith's (1989) recent comments on what is entailed by the hypothesis that a conscious psychical process possesses a qualitative structure.

I have not previously called attention to Freud's (1895/1964) statement that the qualitative differences among psychical processes are "distinguished according to [their] relations to the external world" (p. 308). Note that, at this particular point in his discussion, Freud was engaged in, among other things, contrasting (a) the scientific inferential perspective on neuronal processes with (b) the approach to some neuronal processes based on the consciousness of them that is intrinsic to their own occurrence. Therefore, it is from this latter perspective that differences in qualitative content are distinguished according to their relation to the external world. Of course, Freud might have again been thinking of the scientific inferential approach to neuronal processes. That is, once qualities are introduced into scientific theory based on our consciousness of them, the next step will be to distinguish them in relation to their typical causes in the environment, how these causes differ depending on which qualitative effects in the brain one is considering. However, this whole idea would seem to be suggested by what we find in the first place through intrinsic consciousness. That is, we have direct (reflective) awareness of qualitative content as though it belonged to the environment.

Without reference to Freud, Smith (1989) discussed the phenomenal quality of conscious psychical processes in such a way as helps us to understand that "consciousness gives only qualities" (Freud's claim) does not place as much of a limit on the information provided by consciousness as first appears to be the case. We have acquaintance not simply with the fact that a psychical process is qualitative, or that it is a certain kind of qualitative (e.g., visual qualitative, pain-qualitative). Also, we are aware more specifically of the qualitative character which is a property of the psychical process's entire structure. Smith (1989) wrote,

> Thus the phenomenal quality of the full experience is not simply the generic quality "phenomenally" (the light of consciousness being on), but the full phenomenological structure "phenomenally (I see this yellow rose)." A very different phenomenal quality would be that articulated in the phenomenological structure "phenomenally (I taste this red Bordeaux wine)." (p. 97)

Smith's means of designating the phenomenal quality of a psychical process should not lead to equating the phenomenal quality with the process's cogni-

tive content. He uses those sentences within parentheses to distinguish among different phenomenal qualities, and to imply that conscious psychical processes vary in their phenomenal quality at least as much as they do in cognitive content. Below in this section, I suggest (as I have elsewhere; Natsoulas, 1991) that acquaintance with the phenomenal quality of a psychical process may not be accompanied by a veridical direct (reflective) awareness of the quality. Thus, "phenomenally (P tastes this red Bordeaux wine)" may be an accurate identification of the qualitative structure of P's conscious psychical process despite P's having direct (reflective) awareness of his or her conscious psychical process as though it were not the kind of taste experience that wine in P's mouth normally produces.

4. Some psychical processes (namely, all those instances occurring in the perception–consciousness system) possess "the attribute of being conscious." That is, they are psychical processes that are qualitatively present to their owner and of which their owner has conscious immediate awareness. However, Freud (1915/1957) stated that a psychical process's attribute of being conscious is "the only characteristic of a psychical process that is directly presented to us" (p. 192). Is this the same point as Freud's stating that consciousness gives us only qualities? The context of Freud's statement makes reasonable an interpretation of it consistent with Freud's emphasis on qualitative presence. However free a nonconscious process is from repression (however readily a nonconscious psychical process can "become–conscious"; Natsoulas, 1985), a nonconscious psychical process cannot be itself "directly presented to us." Only if a psychical process possesses intrinsically the attribute of being conscious, can the psychical process be directly presented to us. In contrast, the attribute of preconsciousness is not an attribute of psychical processes that is directly presented to us. Not being directly presented to us, preconscious psychical processes may or may not "become–conscious," even though they are not objects of repression. As I previously explained (Natsoulas, 1985), a nonconscious psychical process's "becoming–conscious" is a matter of this process in psi causing to occur a suitable conscious psychical process in the perception–consciousness system, that is, a conscious psychical process that presents or represents what its preconscious cause represents. This is how I have interpreted Freud's statement to the effect that, among all the attributes of psychical processes, only the complex property of intrinsic consciousness is directly presented to us.

5. Freud's conception of consciousness is not of the "mental–eye" type. The claim that intrinsic consciousness varies informationally may give an erroneous impression to this effect. According to the Freudian perspective, variation in the informational value of intrinsic consciousness cannot be explained in terms of the individual's observing conscious psychical processes more or less clearly and more or less distinctly. In fact, no psychical process

can ever be observed (except, perhaps, by instrument directed on the brain). It would also be wrong to interpret in observational terms the following passage from Freud's teacher Brentano (1911/1973):

> Not everything which is apprehended is apprehended explicitly and distinctly. Many things are apprehended only implicitly and confusedly . . . . If this is true of physical phenomena, something analogous is true of the mental activity [e.g., external perception] which refers to it. Thus we have in this case, as in many others elsewhere, mental activities which are not explicitly perceived in all of their parts. Inner perception is, rather, confused, and although this imperfection does not limit the degree to which it is evident, it has nevertheless given rise to various errors. And these themselves have again led some psychologists to dispute the fact that inner perception is evident and even question the correctness of saying that inner perception is universally valid. (p. 277)

Brentano's conception of consciousness was also an intrinsic conception. His above references to "inner perception" are references to the inner consciousness that takes place within the very occurrence of a conscious psychical process. Brentano implies that a conscious psychical process has parts, which may or may not be perceived. In some cases, only the conscious psychical process as a whole is apprehended, though direct (reflective) awareness is a dimension of the process itself. This may recall those pure and "contentless" feelings and emotions that I considered in an earlier section of the present article. One may wonder whether they are cases of confused and implicit inner apprehension. Or are they such as do not present or represent anything beyond themselves? In the latter case, one's inner consciousness of them could not possibly be improved in the direction of their owner's becoming more aware of what, externally, they are about. The Freudian perspective allows for both of the above understandings of pure or "contentless" conscious psychical processes, provided that my previous interpretation of the function of hypercathexis is correct (see Natsoulas, 1989c, pp. 656–659): (a) doubtless, some psychical processes can be relatively intense and receive hypercathexis (i.e., extra attentional charge) without becoming any more "clear," that is, without their coming to present or represent something beyond themselves. (b) Also, some conscious psychical processes can benefit informationally from hypercathexis, as I previously argued:

> The hypercathexis of a conscious psychical process causes the attribute of consciousness to become more informed about the process to which it belongs. Hypercathexis therefore alters the process itself since the attribute is such a fundamental part of the process. The result is a more clear and distinct cognitive content. (Natsoulas, 1989c, p. 657)

6. In the preceding section of the present article, I expressed the following point: a conscious psychical process that (for whatever reason, including low intensity and lack of internal differentiation, which might be improved by hypercathexis) did not present or represent anything beyond itself would

nevertheless possess a cognitive content of which (necessarily; see below) the person would be aware. The minimal cognitive content would be such as might be expressed by "In this very experience I consciously experience this," or "In this very experience this is consciously experienced." A conscious psychical process with such minimal cognitive content (a) would be no less qualitative, (b) would have qualitative content with which its owner would have acquaintance, (c) would not include direct (reflective) awareness of the qualitative content as such, (d) would include conscious immediate awareness of the psychical process as a pure or "contentless" experience. Note that a conscious psychical process does not necessarily make its owner aware of its qualitativeness as such; acquaintance may not bring along with it the appropriate conceptualizing awareness. This would explain (a) those cases in which an emotion or feeling is taken for a different kind of emotion or feeling. See my discussion (Natsoulas, 1991) of "misconstrued substitute emotions," in which occurs "interference, as it were, at the point of the owner's acquaintance"; thus, "there is exercised no concept that adequately categorizes the qualitative dimension of the emotion." Also explained would be (b) those cases in which a conscious psychical process is not taken to have any qualitative character, or is taken not to have a qualitative character, that is, to be purely conceptual or abstract (see Natsoulas, 1989c, p. 637).

7. However, intrinsic consciousness does not vary in how veridically a conscious psychical process makes its owner aware of its cognitive content. The cognitive content of a conscious psychical process is whatever the cognitive content is intrinsically taken to be. A conscious psychical process does not have two cognitive contents, that is, one content corresponding to what the process presents or represents about something beyond itself, and a different content corresponding to the owner's direct (reflective) awareness of the conscious psychical process. If an appendage conception of consciousness were true, then there would be these two distinct contents, as there would be a distinct process of direct (reflective) awareness. If the intrinsicality thesis is true, then how one is consciously aware of a conscious psychical process (in its own very occurrence) constitutes its cognitive content. For example, the cognitive content of a certain instance of gratitude is not simply that A did this or that to help me. Rather, according to the intrinsicality thesis, the cognitive content is that in this very experience I consciously feel grateful to A for doing this or that to help me. Any emotion or other conscious psychical process has this sort of cognitive content; therefore, there is no other cognitive content that its owner can get wrong. To get the qualitative content wrong (e.g., to mistake anger for gratitude) is not to get wrong the cognitive content of this misconstrued emotion. A misconstrued emotion has cognitive content (veridically apprehended) that is inappropriate to the quality of the emotion (and to its unconscious determinants). Emotions of this qualitative kind do not have inappropriate cognitive content except for the operations of defense. There is pro-

duced in the perception–consciousness system a qualitatively appropriate emotion, given its unconscious determination, but with an inappropriate cognitive content. This cognitive content is veridically apprehended—as occurs in the case of all conscious psychical processes, according to the Freudian perspective.

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