

## CHAPTER 23

# The Psychological Unconscious

John F. Kihlstrom

**C**onsciousness has two aspects: By virtue of *conscious awareness*, we gain introspective access to the mental states—the cognitions, emotions, and motives—that cause us to behave the way we do; and by virtue of *conscious control*, we gain voluntary control over the mental processes that generate those states—and, as a consequence, our behavior as well. The idea of the psychological unconscious is that at least some of the mental states and processes underlying behavior are either temporarily inaccessible or permanently unavailable to either conscious awareness or conscious control (Kihlstrom, 2007). Since the time of Freud, the psychological unconscious has been one of the most provocative aspects of personality theory—and it is also one of the most problematic and controversial.

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

The unconscious mind is sometimes considered to be the intellectual property of psychodynamic approaches to personality and psychopathology whose evolution began in the 19th century (Ellenberger, 1970; Macmillan, 1991/1997), and especially the psychoanalytic tradition initiated by Sigmund Freud. Based on his observations of hysteri-

cal patients and his analysis of such phenomena as dreams, errors, and jokes, Freud initially proposed a topographical division of the mind into three mental compartments, or “systems,” which he called *Cs*, *Pcs*, and *Ucs* (Freud, 1900/1953). The system *Cs*, or conscious mind, contains those thoughts, feelings, motives, and actions of which we are phenomenally aware at the moment. Consciousness is explicitly likened to a sensory organ capable of perceiving other mental contents. The system *Pcs*, by contrast, contains preconscious mental contents not currently in conscious awareness, but which are available to consciousness and which can be accessed and brought into awareness under certain conditions. Finally, the system *Ucs* contains unconscious mental contents that are unavailable to consciousness—that cannot enter awareness under any circumstances. According to Freud (1900/1953), contents are exchanged between the systems *Pcs* and *Cs* by virtue of *cathexis*—by having attention paid to, or withdrawn from, them; contents residing in the system *Ucs* are kept out of (or expelled from) the system *Pcs* by means of repression. As others (Erdelyi, 1985) have noted, this topographical model, with its spatial metaphors, may be read as an anticipation of modern multistore models of human information processing.

Freud maintained this account of the vicissitudes of consciousness for approximately two decades, but then introduced a wholesale revision of his view, shifting from a topographical to a functional analysis of the mind (Freud, 1923/1961). Although it might seem natural to graft the topographical model onto the functional one, such a connection proved untenable. The id is strictly unconscious, and except in cases of psychosis, can be known only through inference. By the same token, consciousness is necessarily a quality of the ego—after all, the ego functions expressly to permit us to become aware of external reality. At the same time, however, the defense mechanisms are also part of the ego, and their operations are not accessible to consciousness; and since the ego cannot be conscious of all of external reality at once, some of its contents (and, correspondingly, of the superego) must necessarily be preconscious.

The problem of reconciling the two different divisions of the mind, topographic and functional, was not solved by Freud before he died. Nevertheless, his assignment of some nonconscious mental functions to the ego, in both its defensive and nondefensive spheres, initiated an important research tradition within post-Freudian psychoanalysis. Beginning with the work of Anna Freud, and especially in the hands of Heinz Hartmann, David Rapaport, and George Klein, psychoanalytic ego psychology focused on the nondefensive, reality-oriented tasks of the ego. The research of the ego psychologists dealt with conventional topics of perception, memory, and thinking, and in many respects it resembled that being performed elsewhere in academic laboratories. In other respects, however, their work was quite different: It favored prose over nonsense syllables as stimulus materials, for example, took images and dreams seriously, and emphasized the interplay of emotional, motivational, and cognitive processes. The tradition of psychoanalytic ego psychology was linked most closely with mainstream experimental psychology by the work of Bruner, Klein, and others on the "New Look" in perception and attendant research on such topics as subliminal perception, perceptual defense and vigilance, and repression-sensitization (Bruner & Klein, 1960). In the present context, the most important feature of psychoanalytic

ego psychology is that it took seriously the question of the psychological unconscious, and of the relations between conscious and nonconscious mental processes, at a time when most academic psychologists had difficulty taking even the notion of consciousness seriously.

Whereas Freud described the mechanism of the dynamic unconscious as one of repression, his intellectual rival, Pierre Janet, described it in terms of dissociation (actually, his term was *desaggregation*). Janet's work on hysteria was overshadowed by Freud's, and his magnum opus, *Psychological Automatism*s, unfortunately remains untranslated. For these reasons, Janet's theoretical ideas are known primarily through secondary sources (Ellenberger, 1970; Hilgard, 1977). These ideas were predicated on Claude Bernard's paradigm of analysis followed by synthesis: the study of elementary psychological functions taken separately, and then the reconstruction of the whole mind based on knowledge of these parts. The elementary mental functions were labeled psychological automatism: complex intelligent acts that adjust to their circumstances and are accompanied by a rudimentary consciousness. Each automatism unites cognition, emotion, and motivation with action. Thus, automatism resembles what some contemporary theorists would call productions (or production systems): condition-action units that are executed in response to appropriate contextual cues.

Janet (Ellenberger, 1970) held that under normal circumstances, all psychological automatism are bound together into a single stream of consciousness: each accessible to introspection, and each susceptible to voluntary control. However, the occurrence of mental trauma, especially in a vulnerable individual, could result in the splitting off of one or more psychological automatism from conscious monitoring and control. Under these circumstances, there would exist two or more streams of mental functioning (consciousness in James's broad sense), each processing inputs and outputs, but only one of which is accessible to phenomenal awareness and voluntary control. The dissociated automatism constitute fixed ideas (*idée fixe*), which possess some degree of autonomy with respect to their development and effects on ongoing experience, thought, and

action. The operation of these dissociated (as opposed to integrated or synthesized) psychological automatisms provides the mechanism for the major symptoms of hysteria: They produce the ideas, images, and behaviors that intrude, unbidden, on the stream of conscious thought and action; and their capacity to process information is responsible for the paradoxical ability of the hysterically blind or deaf to negotiate their environments successfully. Janet described these dissociated automatisms as *subconscious* as opposed to *unconscious*, and considered repression as just one possible mechanism for dissociation.

Janet's ideas were championed by the American psychologist Morton Prince, and more recently by Ernest R. Hilgard (1977), who proposed a "neodissociation" theory of divided consciousness. Whether in its original or updated forms, dissociation theory provides a rather different view of nonconscious mental functioning than psychoanalytic theory. In the first place, dissociation theory holds that nonconscious mental contents are not necessarily restricted to primitive sexual and aggressive ideas and impulses, nor are they necessarily irrational, imagistic, or in any other way qualitatively different from conscious ones; they are simply not consciously accessible. In the second place, dissociation theory holds that the restriction of awareness need not be motivated by purposes of defense, nor need it necessarily have the effect of reducing conflict and anxiety; rather, it can occur simply as a consequence of particular psychological operations.

Within 19th-century academic psychology, perhaps the most forceful advocate of nonconscious mental life was William James. Following the onslaught of radical behaviorism, empirical interest in unconscious mental life declined precipitously in the years after World War I. Serious theoretical interest in nonconscious mental life had to wait the triumph of the cognitive revolution (Hilgard, 1980a), with its interest in attention, short-term memory, and even mental imagery. However, by implicitly identifying consciousness with "higher" mental processes, the classic multistore model left little or no room for the *psychological unconscious*—complex mental structures and processes that influence experience, thought, and action, but which are nevertheless inaccessible to phe-

nominal awareness. The giant step—to the idea that mental states and processes could dynamically influence experience, thought, and action despite being inaccessible to phenomenal awareness and voluntary control—required a wholesale revision of our concepts of attention and memory.

## THE COGNITIVE UNCONSCIOUS

The rediscovery of the unconscious by modern scientific psychology began with comparisons between automatic and effortful mental processes and between explicit and implicit memory. Since then, it has continued with the extension of the explicit-implicit distinction into the domains of perception, learning, and thought. Taken together, this literature describes the *cognitive unconscious* (Kihlstrom, 1987).

### *Automaticity and Unconscious Processing*

The earliest information-processing theories of attention were based, to one degree or another, on the metaphor of the filter. Information that makes it past the filter is available for "higher" information-processing activities, whereas information that does not make it past the filter is not. This same attentional filter was also seen as the threshold that had to be crossed for information to be represented in phenomenal awareness. The filter theories of attention, in turn, raised questions about how permeable the attentional filter was, and how much information processing could occur preattentively. In part to solve these problems, the notion of an attentional filter was replaced by the notion of attentional capacity. Whereas the filter models conceived of information processing as serial in nature, the capacity models implied that several tasks could be carried out simultaneously, so long as their attentional requirements did not exceed available resources.

The capacity view, in turn, led to a distinction between *automatic* and *controlled* processes (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Posner & Snyder, 1975; Schneider & Shiffrin, 1977). Automatic processes are inevitably evoked by the presentation of specific stimulus inputs, regardless of any intention on the part of the subject. Once evoked, they are incorrigibly executed, in a ballistic fashion.

Automatic processes are effortless, in that they consume little or no attentional capacity. And they are efficient, in that they do not interfere with other ongoing mental activities. But in any case, automatic processes are unconscious in the strict sense that they are inaccessible to phenomenal awareness under any circumstances.

Challenges to capacity theory, from which the earliest ideas about automaticity emerged, have led to alternative theoretical conceptualizations of automaticity in terms of memory rather than attention. Nevertheless, the concept of automaticity has gained a firm foothold in the literature of cognitive psychology, and investigators have sought to develop methods to distinguish between the automatic and controlled contributions to task performance (Jacoby, 1991).

### *Implicit Memory*

While automatic processes may be considered to be unconscious, the mental contents on which they operate, and which they in turn generate, are ordinarily thought to be available to conscious awareness. The further possibility, that cognitive processes can operate on mental states—percepts, memories, and the like—that are not themselves accessible to conscious awareness, was first raised in modern psychology in response to observations of priming in neurological patients with the *amnesic syndrome* resulting from bilateral damage to the medial temporal lobe, including the hippocampus. These patients cannot remember words that they have just studied, but nevertheless show normal levels of priming on tasks such as word-fragment completion and stem completion. On the basis of results such as these, Schacter (1987) drew a distinction between explicit memory, which involves the conscious recollection of some past event, and implicit memory, which is revealed by any change in task performance that is attributable to that event. Following Schacter, we may define implicit memory formally as *the effect of a past event on the subject's ongoing experience, thought, and action, in the absence of, or independent of, conscious recollection of that event*. Implicit memory is, in these terms, unconscious memory.

Priming has also been observed in various other forms of amnesia, including the

anterograde and retrograde amnesia secondary to electroconvulsive therapy for depression; the anterograde amnesia produced by general anesthesia administered to surgical patients, as well as that associated with conscious sedation in outpatient surgery; memory disorders observed in dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, as well as those encountered in normal aging; hypnotic and posthypnotic amnesia following appropriate suggestions to hypnotizable subjects; and the "functional" or "psychogenic" amnesias encountered in genuine cases of dissociative disorder, including dissociative amnesia, dissociative fugue, and the interpersonality amnesia of dissociative identity disorder (also known as multiple personality disorder).

In each of these cases, the memory disorder primarily impairs explicit memory and spares implicit memory, which is either wholly or relatively intact. It is in this sense that implicit memory persists in the absence of explicit memory. However, implicit memory can be observed in individuals with normal memory functions as well. For example, normal subjects show significant savings in relearning for items that they can neither recall nor recognize. And although elaboration is an important determinant of explicit memory, "depth of processing" has relatively little impact on many priming effects. In non-amnesic individuals implicit memory may be said to be independent of explicit memory, in that priming does not depend on whether the prime is consciously remembered. Although some theoretical controversy surrounds the nature of implicit memory, the essential concept, including its dissociation from explicit memory, is now widely accepted.

### *Implicit Learning*

Closely related to implicit memory is *implicit learning*. In Reber's (1967) classic experiments on artificial grammar learning, which introduced this term to psychological discourse, subjects were first asked to study a set of letter strings generated by an artificial grammar. Later, they were able to identify new grammatical letter strings at better than chance levels; however, they were unable to specify the grammatical rule that they had clearly induced from the study set. Apparently, they had acquired new knowledge (about the rules governing grammatical letter

strings) through experience, but were unable to gain conscious access to this knowledge. In a paradigm somewhat similar to artificial grammar learning, subjects have learned to identify instances of novel concepts, such as patterns of dots that vary around a prototype, without being able to describe the defining or characteristic features of the concepts themselves; subjects can also detect the covariation between two features, such as hair length and personality, even though they cannot identify the basis for their predictions; they can learn the sequence in which certain stimuli will occur, without being able to specify the sequence itself; and they can learn to control the output of a complex system by manipulating an input variable, without being able to specify the relationship between the two.

Following the model of implicit memory, implicit learning may be defined as a *relatively permanent change in knowledge, resulting from experience, in the absence of conscious awareness of what has been learned* (Kihlstrom, 1996). Demonstrations that amnesic patients can acquire new procedural and declarative knowledge through experience, even though they do not remember the learning experiences themselves, have led some theorists to construe implicit learning as a variant on implicit memory. However, there is an important distinction between the two concepts: implicit memory is a feature of episodic knowledge, in which subjects lack conscious memory for a specific event in their lives. By contrast, in implicit learning subjects lack conscious access to certain pieces of semantic and procedural knowledge acquired through a learning experience. Implicit learning should be distinguished from merely *incidental* learning, in which new knowledge is acquired in the absence of instructions or intention to learn, but the subject retains conscious access to that knowledge. Incidental learning is unintended, whereas implicit learning is unconscious.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of implicit learning in terms of the acquisition of unconscious knowledge remains somewhat controversial. In the artificial grammar experiments, for example, the mere fact that subjects cannot articulate the Markov process by which grammatical strings were generated does not mean that they are unaware of what they have learned. Above-chance

classification performance could well result from partial knowledge that is consciously accessible. The best that can be said, for now, is that the subjects in artificial grammar and sequence learning experiments often experience themselves as behaving randomly, without an awareness of what they are doing. However, this assumption rests on relatively informal evidence. A major item on the agenda in the study of implicit learning is to carry out more detailed analyses of subjects' experiences in implicit learning situations, to make sure that they are really unconscious of what they evidently know.

### ***Implicit Perception***

Effects analogous to implicit memory can be observed in perception: Just as there are palpable effects on experience, thought, and action of *past events that cannot be consciously remembered*, so there appear to be similar effects of *events in the current stimulus environment that cannot be consciously perceived*. At least in principle: A variety of methodological critiques have sought to demonstrate that events cannot be analyzed for meaning unless they have been consciously identified and attended to. However, beginning with the now-classic studies of Marcel (1983a, 1983b) and the work of Merikle and his associates (Cheesman & Merikle, 1984, 1986; Merikle & Reingold, 1990), an increasing body of literature has demonstrated unconscious perception in a manner that satisfies all but the most determined critics (Draine & Greenwald, 1998; Greenwald, Draine, & Abrams, 1996; Greenwald, Klinger, & Liu, 1989).

In traditional studies of subliminal perception, the stimulus is of extremely low intensity; otherwise, the stimulus is degraded by means of brief tachistoscopic presentation, or by a masking stimulus, as in Marcel's (1983a) studies. However, in other cases of implicit perception, the stimulus in question is not strictly subliminal. For example, Weiskrantz (1986) and his colleagues reported a patient who suffered extensive damage to the striate cortex of the occipital lobes. Although the patient reported an inability to see, he was nonetheless able to respond appropriately to some visual stimuli—a phenomenon called "blindsight." Similarly, patients with bilateral lesions to the mesial por-

tions of the occipital and temporal cortex are unable to consciously recognize previously encountered faces as familiar—a condition known as prosopagnosia. Nevertheless, prosopagnosic patients show differential behavioral responses to old and new faces—a dissociation similar to the implicit memory seen in the amnesic syndrome. Similar phenomena have been observed in visual neglect syndromes resulting from damage to the temporoparietal areas of the cerebral cortex. In the domain of the “functional” disorders of perception, priming and related effects have been observed in cases of visual and auditory conversion disorder (also known as “hysterical” blindness and deafness), and in analogous phenomena of hypnosis, such as hypnotic blindness and deafness.

Finally, priming and similar effects have been observed in subjects whose attention has been deflected from the stimulus, so that it is processed outside conscious awareness. For example, a supraliminal stimulus may be presented in parafoveal segments of the visual field, or over the unattended channel in dichotic listening experiments. However, there are other circumstances where perception without awareness occurs even though the environmental stimulus is not degraded in any sense. Priming has also been observed in the attentional phenomena of *inattentional blindness*, *repetition blindness*, and the *attentional blink*—although to date there have been no demonstrations of priming in another attentional anomaly, known as *change blindness*.

Because perception without awareness extends to cases beyond stimuli that are subliminal or unattended, it seems more appropriate to make a broader distinction between explicit and implicit expressions of perception, paralleling the distinction between explicit and implicit memory (Kihlstrom, 1996; Kihlstrom, Barnhardt, & Tataryn, 1992). Explicit perception entails the subject’s conscious perception of some object in the current environment, or the environment of the very recent past, as reflected in his or her ability to report the presence, location, form, identity, and/or activity of that object. Implicit perception refers to any change in the person’s experience, thought, or action that is attributable to such an event, in the absence of (or independent of) conscious perception of that event. The term “implicit perception”

captures a broader domain than is covered by the term “subliminal perception” because it covers the processing, outside of conscious awareness, of stimulus events that are normally perceptible in terms of intensity, duration, and other characteristics.

As with implicit learning, implicit perception effects are sometimes discussed under the rubric of implicit memory. However, it seems important to maintain the distinction between the two phenomena. In implicit memory, the subject was perceptually aware of the event at the time it occurred, but the memory of that event has been lost to conscious recollection. In implicit perception, the subjects were unaware of the event at the time it occurred; thus, it is the perception itself that is unconscious. The distinction can be illustrated by preserved priming in general anesthesia: Because the test takes place some time after the primes were presented, the priming might count as an instance of implicit memory; but because the patients were not aware of the primes at the time they were presented, the same phenomenon also counts as an instance of implicit perception.

### *Implicit Thought*

Implicit memory, learning, and perception do not exhaust the domain of the psychological unconscious: It appears we can also have unconscious thoughts. Unconscious thought has been interpreted in terms of automaticity (Hassin, Uleman, & Bargh, 2005; Uleman & Bargh, 1989). However, there is some tantalizing evidence that thoughts themselves, and not just thinking, can be unconscious. For example, Bowers and his associates (Bowers, Regehr, Balthazard, & Parker, 1990) found that subjects could distinguish between soluble and insoluble word problems, without knowing what the solution to the soluble problem was. Employing similar materials, Shames (1994) showed that lexical decision judgments could be primed by the solution to a soluble word problem, even when subjects were unaware of the solution itself, an effect conceptually replicated by Jung-Beeman and Bowden (2000). Similarly, Bechara, Damasio, Tranel, and Damasio (1997) found that subjects showed anticipatory skin-conductance responses when making risky choices, even though they could not consciously discrimi-

nate between choices that were risky and those that were safe.

In each of these cases, the subjects seemed to be responding to a “feeling of knowing” analogous to that observed in metamemory tasks. Their choices are clearly being guided by something that is neither a percept (because the solution is not currently being presented to them) or a memory (because the solution has not been presented in the past). But by analogy to implicit perception and memory, we defined *implicit thought* as a mental representation—an idea or an image, for example—that influences ongoing experience, thought, and action in the absence of conscious awareness of that thought (Dorfman, Shames, & Kihlstrom, 1996; Kihlstrom, Shames, & Dorfman, 1996).

Implicit thought may underlie the phenomena of intuition, incubation, and insight in problem solving. Thus, intuition occurs when the thought is unconscious, insight occurs when the unconscious thought emerges into consciousness, and incubation may be thought of as the process by which the transformation from unconscious influence to conscious access takes place. Although intuition has acquired a negative reputation as a source of error in human judgment, more recent work on problem solving has been more open to the idea of unconscious influences (Bowden, Jung-Beeman, Fleck, & Kounios, 2006; Siegler, 2000). Although it is possible to “trick” intuitive judgment by taking advantage of priming effects, Bowers and his colleagues argued that intuitions represent our tendency, as intelligent problem solvers, to go beyond the information given by a problem or a retrieval cue (Bowers, Fervolden, & Mermigis, 1995). As the way out of the closed cognitive loop of induction and deduction, intuitions are important elements in the creative process—gut feelings that we are correct, without knowing why, or even whether, we are right. Viewed in this way, intuitions may have motivational value, keeping the problem solver at the problem, in the belief that a solution will be found.

### ***What Does All This Have to Do with Personality?***

The cognitive unconscious—cognitive processes that operate automatically and unconsciously, and percepts, memories, knowledge, and thoughts that are inaccessible to

phenomenal awareness—is, naturally, of greatest interest to cognitive psychologists. But they are also relevant to personality psychologists. Allport (1937) defined a trait as “a generalized and localized neuropsychic system . . . with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and expressive behavior” (p. 295). Setting aside the question of neural representation, the trait of friendliness, for example, can be construed as a cognitive disposition to perceive other people as friendly and to interpret behaviors as friendly (thus rendering “many stimuli functionally equivalent”) and to behave toward others in a friendly manner (thus initiating and guiding “consistent forms of adaptive and expressive behavior.” To the extent that these perceptions, interpretations, and behaviors occur automatically, then they will be perceived as “natural” aspects of the individual’s personality (“That’s just the way he is”), and they will also be perceived as “natural” by the person him- or herself (“That’s just the way I am”).

The cognitive unconscious is also relevant to cognitive social learning approaches to personality. Neither the original neobehaviorist formulations of social learning theory nor the more cognitively flavored versions offered subsequently made any particular reference to consciousness, but it is easy to see the potential relevance of unconscious processes to this view of personality. Imitation, a major form of social learning discussed by both Miller and Dollard (1941) and by Bandura (1977), may occur automatically. If percepts, memories, and thoughts can be represented outside of conscious awareness, Rotter’s (1954) expectancies may be implicit as well as explicit. Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory allowed for preverbal, essentially unconscious, personal constructs as well as those that were consciously verbalizable. All of Mischel’s (1973) social-cognitive learning person variables, including the cognitive-behavioral construction competencies, encoding strategies, and self-regulatory systems and plans, can operate unconsciously and automatically. More recently, Metcalfe and Mischel (1999) have distinguished between a “hot” social-cognitive system that operates automatically and unconsciously, and a “cool” one that operates consciously and deliberately. Although Bandura’s (1986) so-

cial learning by precept (sponsored teaching) would seem to require consciousness on the part of the teacher, if not the learner, social learning by example may well occur implicitly as well as explicitly.

In the “social intelligence” interpretation of personality offered by Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 2000), the individual’s repertoire of procedural social knowledge, like all procedural knowledge, operates automatically and thus unconsciously; declarative social knowledge, represented in episodic and semantic memory, may be either explicit or implicit. Viewed from a cognitive perspective, the self may be viewed as one’s mental representation of one’s own personality, stored in memory just like any other knowledge structure (Kihlstrom, Beer, & Klein, 2002; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; Kihlstrom et al., 1988; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1994, 1997; Kihlstrom, Marchese-Foster, & Klein, 1997). This self-knowledge structure is generally accessible to conscious awareness, which is why people—even amnesics, who have no conscious access to their recent autobiographical memories (S. B. Klein, Cosmides, & Costabile, 2003; S. B. Klein, Loftus, & Kihlstrom, 1996, 2002; Tulving, 1993)—are able to describe themselves and identify which aspects of their appearance, personality, and social relations are particularly important to their self-concepts. However, this self-knowledge is stored in memory, and we already know that memories can be implicit as well as explicit. Therefore, we have to concede that, in principle, some aspects of the self can be unconscious—as seems to be the case in multiple personality disorder, where the interpersonality amnesia appears to cover not just the actions and experiences of the patient’s alter ego(s), but the self-concept(s) as well (Kihlstrom, 2001, 2005).

Now that the concept of unconscious mental life has been liberated from the death-grip of Freudian psychoanalysis, modern personality psychology seems to be more willing to think about unconscious processes (e.g., Asendorpf, 2007; Robinson, 2007; L. A. Rudman & Spencer, 2007). This is particularly the case for the concept of automaticity (Hassin et al., 2005; Uleman & Bargh, 1989). However, personality psychologists who wish to embrace the concept of unconscious life must beware of William James’s

warning that “the distinction between *the unconscious and the conscious being of the mental state* is the sovereign means for believing what one likes in psychology, and of turning what might become a science into a tumbling-ground for whimsies” (James, 1890/1980, p. 163, original emphasis). One of the dangers in psychology is the “psychologist’s fallacy” (James, 1890/1980, p. 196) that his or her explanation of a subject’s behavior is better than the subject’s own. The dangers of the psychologist’s fallacy are multiplied when the psychologist can resort to attributions of the subject’s *unconscious* mental states. Fortunately, the literature on the cognitive unconscious has established fairly clear criteria for distinguishing between automatic and controlled processes, and for establishing dissociations between explicit and implicit perception and memory, that will prove useful as these concepts are increasingly embraced by personality psychologists.

### BEYOND THE COGNITIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Implicit perception, learning, memory, and thought comprise the domain of the cognitive unconscious. But cognition is not the whole of mental life: the “trilogy of mind” includes emotion and motivation as well (Hilgard, 1980b). If we are going to accept the concepts of unconscious perception and memory as empirically valid, why shouldn’t we extend the explicit–implicit distinction to emotion and motivation as well? We probably should—and when we do we come even closer to the traditional concerns of personality psychology.

Of course, feelings and goals can be activated automatically. Just as hunger and thirst arise from homeostatic mechanisms that respond automatically to changing levels of cell fluids and blood sugar, so it may well be that certain basic emotions, at least, are generated automatically in response to certain stimulus inputs, in the absence of conscious cognitive activity. In fact, the assertion that affect is independent of (conscious) cognition was the signal event in what might be called an *affective counterrevolution* in psychology (Zajonc, 1980, 1984), leading directly to the establishment of an affective science, or affective neuroscience, develop-



ing in parallel to, but largely independent of, cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience. But in these cases, although the generating process is unconscious, the resulting affective or conative state is presumably represented in conscious awareness. I feel hungry even if I am not aware of my blood-sugar levels, or how the hypothalamus processes them, and that feeling is conscious.

Similarly, subliminal exposure can influence my preferences, even if I am not aware of the exposures (Bornstein, 1989; Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980), and amnesic patients can acquire affective preferences without being able to remember any encounters with the objects of their affection (Johnson & Multhaup, 1992). But in both cases, the resulting preference itself is conscious. Emotional responses can serve as expressions of implicit perception and memory, but it is something else again for the emotional responses themselves to be unconscious. The question at issue is whether affective and conative states can be unconscious, in the same way that cognitive states such as concepts and memories can be.

### *The Motivational Unconscious*

Paralleling the definitions of explicit and implicit memory, we can define explicit motivation as the conscious representation of a conative state, or the desire to engage in some particular activity, as represented by craving for food, yearning for love, and the like. By contrast, implicit motivation refers to changes in experience, thought, or action that are attributable to a person's motivational state independent of his or her conscious awareness of that state. In terms of measurement, explicit motivation tasks require the subject to reflect on, and report, his or her conscious desires; implicit motivation tasks do not. Of course, the existence of unconscious sexual and aggressive motives, inferred from symbolic representations such as symptoms and dream imagery, were the key to Freudian psychoanalysis. In the laboratory, implicit motivation might be exemplified by post-hypnotic suggestion, in which the subject engages in suggested behavior without any awareness of the suggestion or even of any intention to act.

In the recent history of psychology, the concept of implicit motivation was first artic-

ulated by McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger (1989)—interestingly, without any reference to the already-emerging concept of explicit memory. For McClelland et al., explicit motives are self-attributed: The person is aware of the motive, can reflect on it and report it in interviews or on personality questionnaires. Implicit motives, by contrast, are inferred from the person's performance on such exercises as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). As such, the distinction between explicit and implicit motives is an extension of McClelland's (1980) earlier distinction between respondent and operant motive measures. However, in this later formulation, McClelland and colleagues went beyond issues of measurement to postulate two dissociable motive systems, one explicit and the other implicit. One of these motive systems is accessible to conscious awareness; the other is not, and it influences the individual's experience, thought, and action unconsciously. By virtue of implicit motives, people engage in goal-oriented behavior without being aware of what their motives or goals are.

Or, at least, that is the hypothesis. McClelland and colleagues (1989) offered two types of evidence for the dissociation between explicit and implicit motives. First, the correlation between motive scores assessed through instruments such as the TAT and corresponding scores assessed through self-report questionnaires such as the Personality Research Form is notoriously low, averaging  $r = .09$  in one meta-analysis (Spangler, 1992; Thrash & Elliot, 2002). Second, the two types of measurements predict different performance criteria (Bornstein, 1998; Woike, Mcleod, & Goggin, 2003). However, both types of evidence are ambiguous with respect to the distinction between conscious and unconscious motives. The low correlations between questionnaire and TAT measures may simply be a reflection of method variance, whereas the differential correlates of explicit and implicit motives may be due to the fact that the motives being measured are subtly different, despite their similar names. Most critically, in the present context, while the low correlations between TAT and questionnaire measures provide prima facie evidence of a dissociation between explicit and implicit motivation, the literature on implicit motivation does not yet contain carefully controlled

comparisons that show that implicit motives are, indeed, inaccessible to conscious awareness (Schultheiss & Pang, 2007).

A rather different perspective on the motivational unconscious is offered by Bargh, as part of his general promotion of the concept of automaticity (Bargh, 1990; Bargh & Barn-dollar, 1996; Bargh, Gollwitzer, LeeChai, Barn-dollar, & Trotschel, 2001). According to the traditional folk-psychological model of motivation, the person consciously selects some intended behavior in order to achieve some goal, and then deliberately executes that behavior. Although it is commonly accepted that some skilled goal-directed behaviors are executed automatically and unconsciously, much like a concert pianist plays an arpeggio, Bargh also automates the process of goal selection—the selection of the music, not just the touch of fingers to keys. According to this *auto-motive* model, by virtue of having been frequently and consistently chosen in a particular situation, goals and motives themselves can be automatically and unconsciously invoked by environmental events. Once activated, then, goal-oriented behaviors can be executed outside of awareness as well.

It should be noted, however, that whereas the implicit motives discussed by McClelland and colleagues (1989) are themselves inaccessible to conscious awareness (at least on hypothesis), Bargh's (1997) *auto-motive* model asserts only that the person's motives are selected automatically, in the absence of conscious intention or choice. It does not necessarily follow that the person is not aware of the motives themselves. Thus, it may very well be that achievement or affiliation goals may be primed by events in the current or past environment, but these automatically elicited goals themselves may well be represented in the person's conscious awareness. In the absence of evidence that the motives themselves are inaccessible to phenomenal awareness, the automatically activated motives envisioned by Bargh are probably better construed as motivational expressions of implicit perception or memory, rather than as implicit motives.

### *The Emotional Unconscious*

The idea of an emotional unconscious, too, has its roots in Freud's notion that repres-

sion and the other defense mechanisms were designed to render us unaware of our true emotional states—especially the anxiety elicited by the conflict between our instinctual urges and the demands of external physical and social realities. On the other hand, many modern authorities appear to consider the idea of unconscious emotion a contradiction in terms. According to conventional formulations, both the stimuli that elicit emotions and the processes that generate them may be unconscious, but the emotional feeling state must be conscious almost by definition. But, if we accept the James-Lange formulation that emotions are the perceptions of bodily responses to stimuli, and we have already agreed that percepts can be unconscious, then it does not seem unreasonable to argue that emotions, too, might be inaccessible to conscious awareness under some circumstances. Accordingly, and again following the model of implicit memory, we may define explicit emotion as the conscious awareness of a feeling state, such as fear or joy; and implicit emotion as any change in a person's experience, thought, or action that is attributable to an emotional state, in the absence of (or independent of) conscious awareness of that feeling state (Kihlstrom, Mulvaney, Tobias, & Tobis, 2000).

This non-Freudian view of the emotional unconscious has its roots in Lang's multiple-system theory of emotion (Lang, 1968). We usually think of the subjective, behavioral, and physiological components of emotion as covarying together: When people feel afraid, their heart rates go up and they avoid the fear stimulus. When their fear is reduced, heart rate and avoidance decrease as well. However, Lang proposed that these three systems are partially independent, so that under some conditions they can move in quite different directions. Rachman and Hodgson (1974) picked up on Lang's theme and applied the term *desynchrony* to cases where one component of emotional response is dissociated from the others (Zinbarg, 1998). The emotional unconscious represents a desynchrony in cases in which the subjective component of an emotion, the conscious feeling state, is absent, while the behavioral and/or physiological components persist outside of phenomenal awareness.

The emotional unconscious is anticipated in the neuropsychological model of

fear offered by LeDoux (1996) and has begun to attract interest among personality and social psychologists (Feldman-Barrett, Niedenthal, & Winkielman, 2005; Lambie & Marcel, 2002). Nevertheless, it must be admitted that empirical evidence for unconscious emotion has been hard to find. Unconscious emotion is implicated in a variety of individual-difference constructs relating to emotional experience and expression, such as repressive coping style, alexithymia, and even anhedonia. For example, Lane and his colleagues proposed that emotional awareness proceeds through five stages of development, in the lowest two of which people are aware of bodily sensations and actions, but not of emotions, *per se* (Lane & Schwartz, 1987).

Still, very little if any of this research has used paradigms modeled on the study of implicit perception and memory to document dissociations between conscious and unconscious emotion—if, for no other reason than that the subjects in question were rarely actually asked what they are feeling. In the pioneering study of D. A. Weinberger, Schwartz, and Davidson (1979), for example, subjects identified as “repressors” showed patterns of physiological response to sexual and aggressive verbal phrases that were similar to those of highly anxious, but nondefensive, subjects. The implication is that individuals displaying a repressive coping style have a talent for desynchrony: They may not experience high levels of stress, even though their physiology is churning away anxiously. Unfortunately, however, Weinberger and colleagues did not ask the subjects to rate their distress while reading the stimuli; so, we do not actually know what they were feeling at the time the measurements were made.

This problem was corrected in more recent studies by Berridge and Winkielman (Berridge & Winkielman, 2003; Winkielman, Berridge, & Wilbarger, 2005), in which subliminal (masked) presentation of happy and sad faces led to changes in consummatory behavior on the part of the subjects. Here, the change in behavior counts as an index of implicit perception, but because subjects’ self-reported feelings showed no differences between groups, it counts as an index of implicit emotion as well. The change in consummatory behavior is arguably a consequence of changed emotional state, even though the subjects were unaware of this change.

Perhaps the best evidence for the increasing acceptance of the possibility of unconscious emotion has been the widespread interest, among social psychologists, in the concept of implicit attitudes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald et al., 2002; Wittenbrink & Schwarz, 2007), and especially in the popularity of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as a means of measuring them (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003; Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2005; Rudman, Greenwald, Mellott, & Schwartz, 1999). Attitudes are, of course, an aspect of emotion, as the pro-anti dimension of evaluation implies an “affect for or against a psychological object” (Thurstone, 1931). Attitudes, like emotions, are generally construed as conscious mental dispositions, which is why they are typically measured by self-report questionnaires and rating scales. But Greenwald and Banaji argued that people could also possess positive and negative attitudes about themselves and other people that affect ongoing social cognition and behavior outside of conscious awareness.

Implicit attitudes can be revealed by traditional priming methodologies, as when white subjects are faster to endorse positive traits as characteristic of whites and negative traits as characteristic of blacks (Dovidio, Evans, & Tler, 1986), or when words such as *doctor* and *nurse* affect response latencies when subjects classify first names as male or female (Blair & Banaji, 1996). But these and other early studies did not always include an assessment of subjects’ explicit, conscious attitudes. In fact, a study by Wittenbrink, Park, and Judd (1997) showed that the magnitude of race-specific priming was correlated with scores on a questionnaire measure of racial prejudice. It is one thing for priming to serve as an unobtrusive measure (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1966) of attitudes that subjects are unwilling to disclose; it is quite another for priming to serve as an implicit measure of attitudes that subjects are unaware they have (Kihlstrom, 2004).

Thus, the construct of an implicit attitude confronts the investigator with two problems. First is to ensure that subjects are telling the truth about their consciously accessible attitudes—which is to say that any explicit measure must not be contaminated by such factors as social desirability and oth-

er aspects of impression management. The explicit measure must be as good an assessment of the subject's conscious attitudes as we can find. Second is to show that the implicit attitude is dissociated from the explicit attitude. This requires more than a straightforward comparison of scores on the explicit and implicit measures. In the comparison of explicit and implicit memory, for example, the cues presented to the subject—the first three letters of a target word, for example—are held constant across tests. In the explicit test, the subject is asked to recall a list item that began with the step; in the implicit test, the subject is asked to report the first word that comes to mind. When a priming measure of attitude is compared with an attitude questionnaire, or an attitude thermometer, any differences between the two may be due to method variance, not to any dissociation between conscious and unconscious attitudes (Kihlstrom, 2004).

Similar problems crop up with the IAT—which, despite its initial capitalization, is more of a general-purpose method than a formal psychological instrument. In a version of the IAT designed to assess implicit self-esteem (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000), subjects might classify items (such as *John* and *Horseheads*) as self-relevant or not, and then make “good–bad” judgments about words known to have a positive or negative valence (e.g., *diamond* and *poison*), or positive or negative trait labels. When the two concept sets are combined, subjects will make faster responses when connotatively similar concepts share a response. In this way, faster response latencies that occur when a subject has to make the same response to self-relevant items and positive words, compared to non-self-relevant items and negative words, are interpreted as indicating high self-esteem. The IAT has become enormously popular; a quick PsycInfo search yielded 261 papers from its introduction, in 1998, through the end of 2006—but its interpretation is fraught with unresolved difficulties (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004; Blanton, Jaccard, Gonzales, & Christie, 2006; Brendl, Markman, & Messner, 2001). For example, the IAT is essentially a forced-choice measure, in which any advantage in response latency counts as evidence of a corresponding attitude. Thus, an individual who is positively disposed toward both whites and blacks, but who simply fa-

vors whites more (for whatever reason), will be regarded as equally prejudiced as an individual who actually favors whites and disfavors blacks. More critically, perhaps, differences in response latency can be produced by differences in both target difficulty and task difficulty. Thus, an individual who does not know many blacks, or much about blacks, may seem to be prejudiced, when in fact he or she is simply ignorant. Greenwald, Banaji, and others involved in what has come to be known as “Project Implicit” (*projectimplicit.net*) have tried to address these and other problems—sometimes with rhetoric (Banaji, Nosek, & Greenwald, 2004), but more often with data (Greenwald, Nosek, Banaji, & Klauer, 2005; Greenwald, Nosek, & Sriram, 2006). As a result, the psychometric properties of the IAT have improved as its scope has broadened.

One critical issue, however, remains unclear: whether the IAT actually measures unconscious attitudes, or whether it is an unobtrusive measure of conscious attitudes. In two surveys, the average correlation between the IAT and self-report measures of the same attitude (the latter typically by means of a “thermometer”-type rating scale) were  $r = .25$  (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998),  $r = .43$  (Greenwald et al., 2003). A recent comprehensive survey of explicit–implicit correlations across 56 different domains yielded median  $r$ s (depending on the details of the calculation) of .37–.48. These correlations, although relatively low compared to those obtained between two explicit measures of the same construct (Cunningham, Preacher, & Banaji, 2001), are far from trivial; they are, for example, far above the correlations reported between TAT and questionnaire scores of human motives (Spangler, 1992). They are higher than Mischel's (1968) “personality coefficient” of .30, and about at the upper limit of what one would expect from correlations between questionnaire scores and measures of human performance. Given that the correlations between IAT and self-report measures are of at least “medium” strength by Cohen's (1988) standards, it appears that the IAT is best construed as an unobtrusive measure of conscious attitudes, rather than as a measure of unconscious attitudes. The impression that the IAT is *intended* to be an unobtrusive measure of conscious attitudes is strengthened by the fact

that much of the evidence for improvements in the IAT (Greenwald et al., 2003) comes in the form of *increased* correlations with self-report measures.

### **THIS IS NOT YOUR PSYCHOANALYST'S UNCONSCIOUS**

Freud did not discover the psychological unconscious (Ellenberger, 1970; D. B. Klein, 1977; Whyte, 1960), but he did popularize the idea of unconscious mental life. Accordingly, there has been some tendency to claim that findings such as those summarized here prove that Freud was right after all (Bornstein & Masling, 1998; Erdelyi, 1985, 1996, 2006; Shevrin, Bond, Brakel, Hertel, & Williams, 1996; J. Weinberger & Westen, 2001; Westen, 1998a, 1998b, 1999). For example, Westen (1998b), after performing a review not unlike the present one, concluded that "the notion of unconscious processes is not psychoanalytic voodoo, and it is not the fantasy of muddle-headed clinicians. It is not only clinically indispensable, but it is good science" (p. 35).

True enough, so far as it goes, but Westen ignores the fact that none of the literature he has reviewed bears on the particular view of unconscious mental life offered by Freud. The fact that amnesic patients show priming effects on word-stem completion tasks and can acquire positive and negative emotional responses to other people, without having any conscious recollection of the experiences responsible for these effects, cannot be offered in support of a theory that attributes conscious behavior to repressed sexual and aggressive urges. None of the experiments reviewed involve sexual or aggressive contents, none of their results imply defensive acts of repression, and none of their results support hermeneutic methods of interpreting manifest contents in terms of latent contents. To say that this body of research supports psychoanalytic theory is to make what the philosopher Gilbert Ryle called a category mistake.

Rapaport (1960) importantly distinguished among four levels of psychoanalytic theorizing. At the highest, "metapsychological" level are broad, and frankly untestable, assumptions such as "the crucial determinants of behaviors are unconscious" (p. 46); nestled under that is a hierarchy of general,

specific, and empirical propositions that are increasingly testable. And it is at these levels where psychoanalytic theory crashes on the shoals of reality. For example, nothing in the evidence reviewed here even remotely suggests that the unconscious is a repository of primitive sexual and aggressive instincts. Nor is there any evidence for the idea that mental contents are rendered unconscious by means of a defensive process of repression. Nor is there any evidence that psychological trauma instigates amnesia via repression, or that the recovery of repressed memories is critical to the success of psychotherapy, or that neurotic symptoms are really implicit, if symbolic, memories of trauma (Kihlstrom, 2006; McNally, 2003; Pope, Oliva, & Hudson, 2000). All that really survives is Freud's distinction between conscious, preconscious, and unconscious mental life. In the modern usage, "unconscious" refers to those that are inaccessible to conscious awareness in principle, under any circumstances, whereas "preconscious" refers to mental contents that could be accessible to conscious awareness, if conditions were right. While preconscious percepts and memories are typically degraded, as in subliminal perception, "subconscious" mental contents are more fully analyzed. But even here, the modern definition of unconscious processes and preconscious contents owes nothing to Freud.

One response to this state of affairs is to argue that psychoanalytic theory itself has evolved since Freud, and that it is therefore unfair to bind psychoanalysis so tightly to the Freudian vision of repressed infantile sexual and aggressive urges, symbolically represented in dreams, errors, and symptoms, and revealed on the couch through free association. Westen (1998b) himself attempted this gambit, arguing that critics of psychoanalysis attack an archaic, obsolete version of psychodynamic theory and ignore more recent developments such as ego psychology and object relations theory. But, to borrow the language of the Vietnam war, this perspective destroys the village in order to save it. Culturally, the 20th century was the century of Sigmund Freud, not the century of Heinz Kohut or Melanie Klein. Freud's legacy is not to be assessed in terms of ideas that emerged since Freud died, but rather in terms of the ideas propounded by Freud himself through the 24 volumes of his *Col-*

*lected Works*. Chief among these is a particular view of unconscious mental life—a view that, to date, has found little or no support in empirical science. And, it must be said, the modern psychological laboratory offers little or nothing to support the theories of Kohut or Klein, either.

### THE DENIAL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

One place where Freud's influence can be felt, however remotely, is in the contemporary enthusiasm, among many personality and social psychologists, for the concept of automaticity—a trend that I have come to call the *automaticity juggernaut* (Kihlstrom, 2008). Certainly, the concept of automaticity has come to play a powerful role in personality and social psychology (Bargh, 1984; Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Wegner & Bargh, 1998). The general argument is that some of the processes involved in social cognition, and some of the processes by which social cognitions are translated into social behavior, are executed automatically. Thus, it is generally accepted that attitudes, impressions, and other social judgments, as well as aggression, compliance, prejudice, and other social behaviors, are often mediated by automatic processes that operate outside phenomenal awareness and voluntary control.

Beyond that, however, some personality and social psychologists have argued that social cognition and behavior are dominated by unconscious, automatic processes, to the virtual exclusion of conscious, controlled ones (Bargh, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Bargh & Uleman, 1989; Langer, 1978). Similarly, Wegner concluded that automatic processes typically dominate controlled ones (Wegner & Schneider, 1989), and more recently asserted that conscious will is an illusion, and that the real causes of human action are unconscious, automatic processes (Kihlstrom, 2004c; Wegner, 2002). And Wilson, while initially proposing a dual-process model of attitudes, both controlled and automatic (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000), has more recently concluded that "Freud's view of the unconscious was far too limited. When he said ... that consciousness is the tip of the mental iceberg ... it may be more the size of a snowball on top of that iceberg"

(Kihlstrom, 2004b, 2004c; Wilson, 2002). Both Bargh (1997) and Wegner (Wegner & Smart, 1997) have expressly replaced Freud's view of unconscious determination with the more modern concept of automaticity.

To some extent, the widespread embrace of automaticity is a reaction to an earlier view of social interaction that seemed to inappropriately emphasize conscious, rational, cognitive processes at the expense of the unconscious, irrational, emotive, and conative. But the embrace of automaticity also represents a reverting to earlier situationist views within social psychology (Berkowitz & Devine, 1995; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). This regressive situation has been clearly articulated by Bargh (1997), who noted that "as Skinner argued so pointedly, the more we know about the situational causes of psychological phenomena, the less need we have for postulating internal conscious mediating processes to explain those phenomena" (p. 1). In fact, Bargh has concluded that automaticity solves the problem of Skinnerian radical behaviorism by showing how environmental stimuli are connected to organismal responses by a web of intervening processes that unfold automatically (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). Bargh's position is not classically Skinnerian, because he shares the central dogma of cognitive social psychology: that social behavior is caused by the actor's internal mental representation of the situation, rather than the situation as it might be described objectively. But by asserting that this internal mental representation is itself constructed automatically and perhaps influences behavior preconsciously, he maintains a superficial allegiance to cognitivism while at the same time harkening back to radical situationism. If the cognitive processes underlying social cognition and social behavior are largely automatic, then not too much thought has gone into them.

The irony in the popularity of automaticity is that there is no empirical evidence to support the proposition that social behavior is exclusively, or even predominantly, determined by automatic processes. Most studies of automaticity in personality and social psychology simply do not include a control condition invoking controlled processes. And in the few studies where the power of automatic and controlled processes has been

directly compared, as with Jacoby's (1991) process-dissociation procedure, controlled processes almost always prove to be stronger (Payne, 2005; Uleman, Blader, & Todorov, 2005). The automaticity juggernaut, far from representing an evidence-based conclusion about the nature of human social cognition and behavior, seems rather to reflect a kind of "shyness" about consciousness (Flanagan, 1992)—at best, a stance of conscious inessentialism, which holds that consciousness is necessary for adaptive action; and at worst, a stance of epiphenomenalism, which holds that consciousness has no causal function at all. One who has spent the better part of his professional career trying to get his colleagues to take a non-Freudian view of unconscious mental life seriously is reminded of Aesop's fable of King Midas (or is it *The Frogs Asking for a King?*): Be careful what you wish for.

### CONSCIOUSNESS, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL UNCONSCIOUS, AND THE SELF

More positively, experimental studies of the psychological unconscious shed light on the nature of consciousness itself. At a psychological level of analysis, it seems that conscious awareness requires that a mental representation of an event be connected with some mental representation of the self as agent or experiencer of that event (Kihlstrom, 1993, 1997). Of course, the idea that consciousness and self are deeply intertwined is not new. In his discussion of the stream of consciousness, James (1890/1980) wrote that "the first fact for ... psychologists is that thinking of some sort goes on" (p. 219). He also wrote, immediately thereafter, that "thought tends to personal form" (p. 220)—that is, every thought (by which James meant every conscious mental state) is part of a personal consciousness:

The only states of consciousness that we naturally deal with are found in personal consciousnesses, minds, selves, concrete particular I's and you's [*sic*]. ... It seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not *thought* or *this thought* or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being owned. ... On these terms the personal self rather than the thought might be treated as the immediate datum for psychology. The universal conscious fact is not "feelings exist"

or "thoughts exist" but "I think" and "I feel." (p. 221, original emphasis)

In other words, an episode of ongoing experience, thought, and action becomes conscious if, and only if, a link is made between the mental representation of the event itself and some mental representation of the self (Kihlstrom et al., 2002; Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984; Kihlstrom & Klein, 1997) as the agent or experiencer of that event. Janet (1907) put it so well:

The complete consciousness which is expressed by the words, "I see, I feel a movement" ... contains a new term, the word "I," which designates ... the idea of personality, of my whole person. ... There are then in the "I feel," two things in presence of each other: a small, new, psychological fact, a little flame lighting up—"feel"—and an enormous mass of thoughts already constituted into a system—"I." These two things mingle, combine: and to say "I feel" is to say that the already enormous personality has seized upon and absorbed that little, new sensation which has just been produced.

It is precisely this mental representation of self that is missing in cases of unconscious influence. As Claparede (1911/1951) put it, when describing the implicit memory of an amnesic patient: "If one examines the behavior of such a patient, one finds that everything happens as though the various events of life, however well associated with each other in the mind, were incapable of integration with *the me* itself" (p. 71).

What unites the various phenomena of the psychological unconscious—implicit perception, memory, learning, and thought; implicit motivation and emotion as well—is the loss of the link between whatever is going through the person's mind at the moment and a mental representation of the self currently active in working memory. In this way, the study of unconscious mental life, by shedding light on the importance of the self for consciousness, suggests how James's two candidates for the "datum of psychology"—thought and self—fit into a single, unified whole. The psychological unconscious, which might have remained the province of cognitive psychology, returns to the domain of personality psychology in modern form, without the excess baggage of Freudian psychodynamics.

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# Handbook of Personality

Theory and Research

THIRD EDITION

edited by

**Oliver P. John**  
**Richard W. Robins**  
**Lawrence A. Pervin**



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